

A Doggone Good Mitzvah Project

Dog lover Haley Blumenkrantz was barking up the right tree with her canine rescue mitzvah project.

About four years ago, the Peabody teen and her family rescued a Labrador retriever through an organization called Labs4rescue.

“Autumn (the dog) was in a shelter in Louisiana. She would have been euthanized had Labs4rescue not taken her,” explained Haley’s mother, Jodi Coburn.

At the time, the friendly black Lab tested positive for heartworm, a serious and potentially fatal condition. In the South, it is common for owners to abandon dogs with heartworm because treatment is expensive. Many of these animals wind up in shelters where they languish for months with little chance of being adopted. After a period of time, the overloaded shelters have no choice but to euthanize a large percentage of these sick dogs.

Labs4rescue trolls shelters in the South seeking Labradors and Lab mixes. The non-profit organization rescues the retrievers, provides them with proper veterinary care, screens their behavior, and then tries to find permanent homes for them in the Northeast.

“We already had a black Lab, a purebred named Teal, and we wanted to get him a friend,” Coburn said. “We learned about Labs4rescue from a link on Teal’s breeder’s website, and decided that giving a home to a dog who needed one was the right thing to do.”

Blumenkrantz was deeply touched by the process of adopting Autumn.

“There are so many Labs that need a good home, and after adopting one dog from Labs4rescue, I wanted to find a way to help them all,” said the 14-year-old.

When considering a service project for her bat mitzvah at Peabody’s Temple Beth Shalom in August 2010, Blumenkrantz was immediately drawn to the idea of helping the organization.

She decided to make gift baskets for new owners of dogs adopted from Labs4Rescue. For almost a year, she saved birthday money and funds she had earned babysitting to purchase supplies. Blumenkrantz bought an assortment of leashes, collars, toys, snacks, Frisbees, balls and food/water bowls. She assembled and shrink-wrapped 13 gift baskets.

Working with Labs4rescue coordinators in Louisiana and Connecticut, several weeks ago Blumenkrantz arranged to meet a transport of dogs arriving in Connecticut. A dozen or so adopters had gathered there to greet and take home their new pets. Blumenkrantz presented her homemade gift baskets to the grateful families.

“The Labs4Rescue folks were so appreciative of Haley’s generosity, and Haley was so happy to have helped in the process of getting these dogs to their new ‘forever homes.’ We are really proud of her,” said her mother.

Blumenkrantz, who is currently a freshman at Peabody High School, hopes to become a veterinarian.

For more information about Labs4Rescue, visit <http://www.labs4rescue.com>.