

special needs, unadoptable dogs began to gain traction, and funding for these “Hospice” care dogs was largely underwritten by private donations for those dogs’ specific needs according to Allyn Johnson, BSR Executive Director from 2008-09. One of the first dogs of this classification was Handsome Harry. Harry was just four years old when he came to BSR in 2009, suffering unimaginable pain from severe skin and ear infections, eye contusions, broken teeth and a broken heart that was heartworm positive. With an amazing foster family, Harry received incredible care and has now blossomed into something of a BSR Ambassador for all our PFC charges. Hunter, “the man from Memphis,” soon followed and his care involved eventual removal of his eyes due to glaucoma. But with dedicated funding from donors that believed in the cause and amazing volunteers who stepped up to care for these dogs, Hunter, Harry and others like them were treated and given a second chance. Although Hunter has crossed the bridge, Harry is still going strong, advocating for the Boykins that might otherwise have been left behind.

Today, BSR has come to see that these cases are not “one-off’s;” but are a definite trend as the breed becomes more popular and the population of dogs age. The need for formalizing a plan for these dogs, and the need for more organized fundraising, has grown with the years; these dogs are now no longer classified as “hospice” cases, but rather have become a distinctly different type of intake, a Permanent Foster Care (PFC) dog as opposed to a “Standard” intake which will be fostered for a short time and then adopted out. Today, we see Boykins that, due to severe medical or emotional issues, need lifelong medical care or need experienced fosters to deal with their issues. Some are dealing with the repercussions of genetic disorders or traumatic injuries. Some are young, but most are seniors who want to spend their twilight years basking in the love most have never known. We are fortunate that the dedi-

cation of our volunteers from the beginning has never wavered in recognizing and accepting these tough cases, and with the growth of the organization we can now plan for these PFCs and get them to just the right forever home for their needs.

What does it take to be a PFC parent? Beyond being an approved volunteer, it takes an open heart. Every PFC case is different. Some have severe separation anxiety, due to emotional trauma they experienced, so do best with people who are home most of the time. Others require daily medication for seizures or cardiac conditions. Some just need extra love and allowed to be just who they are. And then there are the severe cases that need fosters who are willing to go the extra mile, those who either have experience in complex rehabilitative care or are willing to learn. If you do want to be considered for a PFC foster, let your Regional Coordinator know, or indicate as such on your application. You will be contacted when a PFC case is available and you will learn what the needs for the dog are prior to accepting. While being a PFC foster parent isn’t for everyone, we are so grateful for those that step up to care for them. And for those that cannot be a PFC foster, we are forever grateful for those that support BSR through other volunteer activities and to our incredibly generous donors, who believe in our mission to *Rescue, Rehabilitate and Rehome at-risk, purebred, Boykin Spaniels.*



So hard to say goodbye to my sweet girl.

You can read more about the Permanent Foster Care Program, see photos and read bios of all our PFC dogs by visiting our website at:

boykinspanielrescue.org/permanent-foster-care-program.html

You can also keep up-to-date on the “Friends of BSR’s Permanent Foster Care Dogs” Facebook page:

facebook.com/BoykinSpanielRescuePFCpage/

IN TOTAL, BSR HAS HAD 43 PFC intakes since the Program’s inception. As of this writing, we have 19. We have had the privilege of being with 24 amazing souls as they crossed the Rainbow Bridge, with love and dignity. Just this week, PFC “Allie” crossed the Rainbow Bridge, after two years with her PFC family (see sidebar). Allie had spent her life outside with another dog, but not much by the way of healthcare. She was

surrendered when the owner had to move. A PFC foster was found in upstate New York, and, at 12 years old, Allie was transported into a world she had never known: a warm home and warm hearts to care for her. Allie’s hips had become problematic and she found relief with acupuncture. She found the wonders of a good swim, and enjoyed her daily walks, then coming home to a warm bed. In November, her PFC family found that Allie

was struggling more than usual with the cold weather. Loving her enough to let her go, Allie went to “winter” in South Carolina with another PFC foster. The warmth did revive her spirits, and she spent time basking in the sun with her special “smile” on her face. Then with a suddenness that surprised her fosters, she began to decline, likely brain cancer had begun its terrible advance, and she was unstable and hurting. At the end, she

was surrounded by both her PFC families, and knew she was loved and adored as she crossed the Rainbow Bridge. The completely selfless acts of both foster families and the love and care they gave her right to the very end is THE reason the PFC program exists...the most at-risk are given the same love and compassion that our standard dog adopters give their new “perfect” Boykin family members.