

WAGS IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

By Trish Kohrt

I've been a volunteer with GSRNC since 2005. I really just wanted a dog; I wasn't looking to get involved with the organization. That's how they hook ya...you just go looking for a dog and somehow end up a volunteer!

When we needed to rebuild our fundraising committee in 2009, it seemed like a good chance to get involved and see what I could do to help. As always seems to happen, my responsibilities started small and grew every year; soon I was managing our biggest fundraiser, the annual Wags to Riches event. The early years were logistical nightmares. There was so much work; so much to figure out and none of the Wags team really knew what we were doing! The events were fun but it was always harrowing trying to get everyone checked out at the end of the night. The Sunday after Wags I was always an emotional wreck.



Maybe I'm a glutton for punishment, but I kept coming back year after year and Wags kept growing. We had around 100 attendees in 2009 but more than doubled that by 2017! Wags to Riches became a passion of mine. Every year I would try to come up with ways to make it just a bit better than the year before. We started little by little adding new elements... Early Bird pricing, sponsorships, bid numbers, contests and on and on. When we added a professional event database about four years ago, things really started clicking. The event was easier to manage and way less stressful. The post-event auction payout was a breeze and Wags started to be more fun! I even brought my boy, Colin, as an Ambassadors a couple times to collect donations. He literally snatched money out of your hand and put it in our donation basket - no chance for second thoughts with Colin!

Planning for Wags starts in earnest every January. When 2020 came we were full steam ahead! Confidence was high—2019 was our best event yet and it felt like we have our act down now. We have a good team and we work well together. We had our kickoff meeting and everything was moving forward. Then.....**SCREEEEEECH!** The world stopped. Now what? What does this mean for Wags? Our event was seven months away; surely things would be back on track before then.... Then April came and went... May came and went... it was time for a decision. Plow ahead? Cancel Wags 2020? Or make the leap to a virtual event?

After stalling the decision as long as we possibly could the committee voted unanimously to make Wags 2020 a virtual event. Everything we know about putting together a fundraising event has been turned upside-down. We're still committed to putting on the same fun event only... different. No in-person get-together with delicious food and good company, but those in attendance online will still know they're at a Wags to Riches event. We'll still have our live and silent auctions, the Rescue Royalty contest has been expanded to include attendees, the Grand Raffle drawing will still happen and we're even working on presenting a K9 demo! It's a whole new world for us. We have a lot to learn but I'm confident we'll pull off a great event. I hope you'll plan on joining us!

[Click here](#) for more information on Wags 2020.