



## Rescued, and now rescuing others *The story of Gala, beating the odds*

By Linda Fiack and Nancy Kvorka

Linda and Jim Fiack, experienced evaluators, fosters and former RDMs with GSRNC, have a story to share with us. In Linda's words:

"Gala was a stray from the Sac City Shelter. She had been dumped at a marina along the river, likely due to having Systemic Canine Lupus which we discovered and treated to manage after having her for a year. We evaluated

and fostered her, and then adopted her. She was 1 year old at the time and is now 8 years old. Because Lupus is not curable, we were told she would be lucky to live to 3 years old but she has successfully challenged the odds and continues to live strong."

Gala "has a gentle personality and seems to know she was saved through rescue so giving back as a therapy dog seemed to be a natural fit for her. She has had several years of the usual obedience training and has achieved her Canine Good Citizen Certificate, and then became certified as a Therapy Dog through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs 5 years ago."

Linda and Jim are Gala's team for therapy visits. Gala first visited senior care facilities and then discovered "her love was visiting children." Linda, Jim and Gala alternate their time between AZ and CA. In AZ they "found a great program there called *Gabriel's Angels* where pet therapy is used to work with at-risk children to learn values many of us take for granted... Gala has been visiting a residential foster home for 4 years. A *Blessed Nest* serves teen girls (12-18 years old) and typically there are 10 residents; many have been there for a very long time. They look forward to Gala's monthly visits as a stability in their lives and often share feelings with her that are not shared with anyone else. She is a great ambassador for the GSD breed and loves seeing her girls."

In both states Gala has visited many schools and their students: Laguna High School, UC Davis, AZ State University and Lincoln Law School. As Linda says: "It is amazing to watch the stress melt away just being in the presence of Gala."



That is not all that Gala does. She has appeared in state legislature offices in AZ to "advocate for funding for at-risk youth programs."

"In typical GSD style Gala also trials in nosework under the National Association of Canine Scentwork. She has earned her titles at the one and two levels and currently trials at Level 3. Her *Gabriel's Angels* girls often work with her on this skill and it has been a great confidence builder for them. They often write her words of encouragement notes before a trial and think of her when they themselves are going into a competition to a stressful situation. She is their rock."

Gala is a wonderful ambassador for our favorite breed! Thank you, Gala!