

## Hard to swallow – the story of Lulu Rosie

By Becky Lee

What do you think of when you see a happy dog? Probably, you think of a dog that is adored by its owners, gets plenty of treats and cuddles, has lots of friends, and has a purpose in life. If you ever met Lulu Rosie in person, you would see the epitome of a joyful dog! Much of that is due to the incredible care and love she received despite the uncertain start she faced.

Lulu Rosie entered GSRNC's program as a very young puppy, an owner surrender at the Oakland Shelter. Lulu was extremely sweet from the start, but quite malnourished. Melissa B., longtime GSRNC advocate and volunteer-of-many-hats, offered to foster this cutie pie. It wasn't long, however, until she noticed that though Lulu was always hungry, she often regurgitated after eating. Very concerned, Melissa brought Lulu to a specialist and emergency vet several times.

Lulu was eventually diagnosed with megaesophagus, a disorder where the esophagus can't move food and liquid from the mouth to the stomach. In Lulu's case, it was because an embryonic branch of the aorta was wrapped around her esophagus when she was born, preventing the passage of food and causing regurgitation. Luckily, surgery can correct the problem and follow-up care can usually reverse the effects, especially if done early in a dog's life. In August 2020, GSRNC was able to give her the surgery she critically needed.



food. Melissa found two amazing people, Susan and Daniel, who build Bailey chairs for dogs suffering from Lulu's condition. They happened to live near Melissa, and built Lulu her very own custom chair, charging nothing to GSRNC! (Learn more at their website: <https://www.baileychairs4dogs.com.>) Lulu, being incredibly smart, learned how to use the chair quickly and in no time was eating normally and building up her strength.

In the months after Lulu's surgery, Melissa devoted herself to Lulu's 24/7 care and recovery. Lulu came to associate Melissa's bedroom in particular with security, love, and peace, and intensely bonded with Melissa and her tight-knit pack of GSDs. Bandit, Bravo, and Princess were extremely gentle with young Lulu, sensing her delicate condition. With all this love and TLC in her corner, Lulu gained her strength day by day.

As the weeks and months passed, Melissa could think of only one potential adopter for this spectacular dog - her friend and fellow GSRNC foster/adopter Janet V. The two had gotten close through their connection



Melissa was determined to provide the follow-up care needed to let Lulu lead a normal life. She researched Lulu's condition and learned that she needed a "Bailey chair", which holds a dog in a vertical position while eating to let gravity help process



Lulu in her Bailey chair

over Honey Bee, a very special GSD that Melissa had fostered and Janet adopted. Janet had tragically lost Honey Bee recently after only a few years due to an extremely rare disease, and Melissa and Janet had kept in touch throughout the ordeal.

Janet, who had fostered several dogs during the pandemic (Timmy and Carroll), didn't think she was emotionally ready to adopt another GSD. But she was very excited to meet the pup whose saga she'd followed over the previous months. She finally met Lulu in March 2021 and was instantly drawn to her furry blonde baby face. By this time in her recovery, though still very much a puppy, Lulu had

blossomed into the confident, calm, and happy dog she is today.



Lulu with Melissa's pack

Janet got a chance to walk Lulu, hug her, and noticed that Lulu's eyes always seemed to be asking her "where are you going?" whenever Melissa would walk away. Janet felt it was meant to be through several personal signs and fell in love. After some thought, Janet was ready to say "YES!" - she just couldn't imagine Lulu going to a home other than hers!

Though she will never ever forget or stop loving Melissa, Lulu has already completely bonded

with Janet. She has totally recovered, is feeding normally, and is living her best GSD life with a packed social calendar, which includes puppy daycare and routine neighborhood meet-ups with her new furry Silicon Valley friends! Janet has also found love through adoption again and jokes that since Lulu spent the first 7 months of her life with Melissa and her pack, she is already half trained!

Lulu's most **favorite** activities include full-extension spllooting, cuddling with mom, planning future get-togethers with Melissa and her very favorite furry friends Bandit, Bravo, and Princess, and her daily delicious banana yogurt parfait (her equivalent of a relaxing glass of wine at the end of a big day!)



Banana yogurt parfait, please!



Full-extension splooting!

Lulu's story is one that epitomizes the old adage, "it takes a village." Without the help of big-hearted GSRNC volunteers, fosters, caring veterinarians, and an incredibly generous dog-loving community, this story may not have been possible. Just one look at Lulu's huge grin, and you'll understand what it took to get there.