

# 16 YEARS, 600 LIVES

*JOYE HAWKES' LONG DEDICATION TO SAVING GERMAN SHEPHERD DOGS*

*By Rory Hu*

**Joye Hawkes** has saved nearly **600** lives in the past **sixteen** years. No, she's not a medical doctor, firefighter, or lifeguard. The California resident has been battling on a different frontline, rescuing and rehoming German Shepherds from the crisis that has been looming over animal shelters for years. Unbeknownst to many, every year 6-8 million animals enter shelters across America, and almost half of them are euthanized due to lack of capacity. This chilling fact prompted many volunteers to take action. Hawkes is one of the most dedicated amongst them.

Hawkes joined **German Shepherd Rescue of Northern California** (GSRNC) in 2004, making her one of the longest tenured members of the all-volunteer organization. Each day she juggles different tasks: evaluating and training dogs, finding them medical care and suitable families, providing post-adoption aid, and more. Her work is immensely time consuming and challenging, as well as emotionally draining. Heartbreak strikes when Hawkes must decide whom to save and whom to leave behind because of a limitation of resources. Yet the emotional roller coaster Hawkes rides soars back up each time a successful rescue is completed, and it is these gratifying moments that keep her going. "The memories I have of these dogs are what motivate me to continue my efforts," Hawkes said. "I consider them all my kids. They are my responsibility, and their future depends on us doing our jobs to the best of our ability."



German Shepherds rescued by GSRNC.  
Look at these cuties!

Hawkes has rescued the most dogs in GSRNC according to **Lani Christianson**, the organization's president. "[Joye] is invaluable to GSRNC," said Christianson. "She has gone above and beyond putting heart, soul, time, energy and money into rescuing as many German Shepherds as she can." Hawkes' unparalleled devotion could not even be deterred by COVID-19. Strapping on her mask, Hawkes worked ever more diligently as the adoption applications surged during the pandemic. "Of course I have concerns," admitted Hawkes. "But the job needs to be done."



Hawkes cozying up with Persephone after an exhausting rescue mission.

Hawkes' touch often extends beyond just German Shepherds' lives. A family in Boulder Creek was extremely grateful that 3-year-old **Persephone** came into their life, thanks to Hawkes' well-seasoned instincts. "[Joye] instantly knew Persephone was the dog for us," said the mother of the family. "She would never have been a dog I picked but Joye just knew." Persephone has since become an essential piece in the family puzzle. The joy she brought to them has softened the impact of the quarantine.

While it is easy to do just one good deed, it's heroic to do 600. As eloquently put by **GSRNC Treasurer Joan Hoover**, "Joye seeks no recognition. She is rewarded every time a GSD finds a good home. So yes, she is a **true hero**."