# FROM SHELTER DOG TO SPOKESDOG, HOW NELLIE GOT A SECOND CHANCE

**by Rene Agredano**

If you're part of the GSRNC community, you probably know that California shelters are overflowing with GSDs who never get the chance to live up to their potential. Our Nellie was one of those dogs, and I'm forever grateful that GSRNC helped bring her into my life.



In 2022, a tan and black female German Shepherd was found wandering the streets of San Jose, badly limping and wearing a pink collar embroidered with "Chanel." A Good Samaritan turned her in to the nearest shelter, but whoever cared enough to customize her collar never came to claim her.

While volunteering to answer GSRNC emails, I came across her story in a message from a shelter volunteer who was desperate to save this sweet girl. And as a senior dog, she didn't stand a chance against younger, healthier dogs waiting to be adopted. With just hours left before her name rose to the top of the euthanasia list, the volunteer was advocating for the "vet favorite" who probably wouldn't be alive much longer.

Chanel was sweet and friendly, even with other dogs, but she was also ten pounds overweight and an orthopedic disaster. She didn't stand a chance against the healthier dogs in the shelter. But she was exactly the kind of dog my husband and I had been searching for.




As founders of the Tripawds.com support community for amputee pets and their people, we'd been looking for another three-legged spokesdog ever since our previous pup and GSRNC alum, Wyatt Ray, had passed away at age twelve. A lifelong amputee due to abuse by a former owner, our devastatingly handsome, high-anxiety GSD was the quintessential "challenge dog" who constantly tested our pet parenting skills—and our patience.



Anyone who's ever loved an emotionally challenging Shepherd can understand why we waited two years to look for another GSD rescue. After Wyatt's passing, we took a much-needed break from always being on alert for his triggers. But when Chanel's photo popped up on my laptop, I knew it was time to open our hearts again. I alerted the GSRNC Dog Operations Team, and within days she was on her way to a new life, and a new name: Nellie.

It's been three years since she joined our pack, and this girl is everything anyone can hope for in a Shepherd. She's sweet, mellow, and mostly friendly with other dogs. Oddly enough, she even resembles our first GSD rescue, Jerry, the three-legged inspiration behind the Tripawds community.

With regular rehab therapy, Nellie shed her extra pounds and even got to keep her damaged foreleg (likely the result of an old, untreated injury). She quickly embraced her role as Tripawds' "three-and-a-half-legged" spokesdog and from day one proved that she's always up for an adventure. Nellie travels the U.S. with us in our RV and even spent a year in our Alaska cabin, where she discovered the joys of snow and eating moose poop.

Every day, I'm grateful for Nellie and for the GSRNC team who made her rescue possible. It's hard to believe anyone could give up on such a sweet-natured Shepherd. I often joke that Wyatt Ray placed this pretty girl in our path as our reward for never giving up on him. And sure, she's by no means perfect—but neither are we. Together, the three of us move through the world, learning to be our best selves while savoring every moment as a pack.

