

2018 Annual Chair Report

Good evening! On behalf of the Board of Directors we welcome you to Golden Rescue's 2018 Annual General Meeting. It's always so uplifting to meet face-to-face as a group and take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments over the past year. You have probably met our greeters, Bear #1679 and Oakley #2071, two of the precious Golden Retrievers who represent the many who have been rescued by Golden Rescue. I think they know their lives are infinitely better because of everyone in this room and beyond who have and continue to work so hard on their behalf ~ although the moment might be lost on them if there were chewy toys and treats being offered.

As is our custom with this yearly event, we will tend to some board business and combine it with reports from our directors who have managed all things great and golden over the past year.

Let me begin by saying that it was 15 years ago (which truly seems like yesterday) when my husband and I walked into the Sportsman Show and saw the Golden Rescue booth. We thought it was an organization that trained Golden Retrievers to become rescue dogs ~ that's how little we knew about Golden Rescue. At that time, we had a young Golden named Treble ~ that's *Treble*, not *trouble*. She was our first Golden and we thought he should have a companion. So, we started talking to the folks at the booth and eventually filled in an adoption application. You all know how this story goes...ten months later, we got the call and Jake #424 entered our lives as a much beloved part of our family and Treble finally had a brother.

Jake was the most wonderful boy who, like so many of our rescues, had a bad past and when I watched him sleep, I could tell that his nightmares were probably about the tumultuous life that he once endured. Iain and I were so grateful that an organization like Golden Rescue existed to help Golden Retrievers like Jake. Little did I know that 15 years later I would be sitting here with all of you, a proud member of an organization that has now rescued 2,900 Golden Retrievers. The joy that our Golden Retrievers and GR has brought to our life is immeasurable. What volunteering does for me

personally is hard to describe and I am so grateful and fortunate to work with all the dedicated people I encounter every day. It is their energy and dedication that inspires me to do the things I do and here's a bit of a look at all we accomplished last year together.

After three years of pestering Rick Mercer – a bit like a dog with a bone – we were finally featured on his show, The Mercer Report. Rick and his film crew attended our annual picnic and elevated the excitement, frivolity, and over-all craziness that underscores this event while simultaneously putting our organization front and centre on a national stage with the wonderful television exposure we received. Our tenacity paid off.

We also developed a new video to pull at some heart-strings and to express through music and photographs “What Rescue Feels Like”. This lovely video with original lyrics and music, written specifically for Golden Rescue has been exceptionally well received and lives as our introduction on our website.

And speaking of our website...after much deliberation, we decided it was necessary to update our website to a new content management system, powered by current technology, which makes our website more compatible with all users and especially with mobile devices. One of the many benefits of the new platform is that we can also include instant access to our on-line store. It's been an education for everyone involved and a meticulous process. Christine will tell you more about this.

Our fifth consecutive Wishbone Lottery was another success garnering more tickets sales than the previous year, netting us more than \$110,000. Cynthia will report on the lottery as well in more detail.

We launched our Planned Giving Program which is now gaining traction and our new Gift of Rescue program has also been popular where supporters make donations in lieu of a gift and receive a certificate of appreciation.

We also hunkered down and revamped and updated our adoption guide and all of our forms and agreements to include clearer language and more specific guidelines.

Our social media team is tireless, creative, and exceptionally well organized and continues to strengthen our messages and broaden our reach.

And we recently initiated a foster mentoring program where long-standing fosters mentor new fosters to help them with every aspect of their important role.

At our most recent board retreat, we simplified our mission statement to one concise description of who we are and what we do. We believe that a few poignant words go a long way and it reads: 'Golden Rescue gives second chances to Golden in need'. We also developed core values, which Jane will speak about shortly. While all of our core values are meant to guide our purpose, I did want to mention one in particular that focuses on 'non-judgement', which becomes so important for the intake team who, as front-line responders, hear some pretty harrowing stories. We feel strongly that regardless of our personal views of those who are giving up their Golden, we need to remain compassionate and caring ~ passing no judgement on those who have fallen on hard times or who can no longer care for their Golden. We are grateful that they made the call and that they went to the right place to give their Golden a safe, second chance at a better life. We do not judge. Hence the core value...non-judgement.

Perhaps one of the most significant things we discussed at our board retreat was our approach to rescuing Golden from abroad. We have evolved into (and are becoming known for being) an organization where rescue has no borders. Apart from rescuing every Golden who comes across our radar in Canada, we open our hearts to wherever the need takes us. In Canada, we are already well established in Ontario and Quebec and to our delight we have recently seen more adopters come to us from other provinces such as British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. We can only grow where we have willing volunteers and fosters and this increased interest in our organization from across Canada, although in its early stages, is encouraging. As our operation relates to other countries, we have established a broad reach. Our Rescue Mission of Love which began in Istanbul

has expanded to Mexico and Egypt and we will continue our efforts with our flight volunteer program, which is an economical way to bring Golden Retrievers in need, one or two at a time from abroad. However, as long as our finances allow, we will also continue to bring larger numbers of Golden Retrievers to Canada from Istanbul, particularly now that Turkish Airlines has started cargo flights direct to Toronto. We resurrected Mission of Love 2.0 with the successful arrival on May 10th of 18 beautiful girls and boys from Istanbul. As usual, there wasn't a dry eye to be seen as forever families met their new Golden 'kids' ~ a sight that never grows old.

To help offset costs for this group of 18, we created a spontaneous fundraising campaign called our **Spring Fling Freedom Flight Fundraiser** via social media and raised about \$20,000 which paid for the lion's share of the costs. We are very fortunate to have a long list of potential adopters. In fact, one of our placement team members quipped the other day that we have enough adopters to bring in a double decker Airbus 380 full of Golden Retrievers to Canada. Someone else chimed in to say that if one of us won a lottery, that's exactly what we would do.

Our volunteers are quite amazing ~ they are our rock, our foundation and the engine that drives our success and without them, we would not exist. We are a 100% volunteer-run organization, with no staff, office or expensive overhead. We are simply a passionate group of like-minded people who love everything about Golden Retrievers. What's not to love!

We have volunteers who stay up until the wee hours planning events. Others, in operations, work tirelessly to make sure we give second chances to every Golden Retriever who comes across our radar. Our transport volunteers drive great distances in all weather conditions to pick up a Golden Retriever in need and there are those who drive to Chicago, Boston, New York, and Montreal to meet flights. And then there are our fosters ~ loving, caring, selfless individuals who welcome our rescues into their home and commit their time and energy to rehabilitating these lost souls, showing our rescues that there is a better life that awaits them. And finally, to all those, who venture out of their comfort zone, asking and begging friends and family members to buy Wishbone lottery tickets, who donate their time and money to us and to all of you here tonight who gave up your valuable time to support us at this meeting, we say thank you. We are overwhelmed with

gratitude. It does 'take a village' to do what we do and it's because of our willful community that works so hard that my Jake #424 and Zoey #1526 who was knocked around from home to home before finding Golden Rescue, and goofball Oakley #2071, who was tied to a tree and left outside and the 2,900 others who have been scooped up by loving arms have enjoyed a life that every Golden truly deserves.

Thank you!