**Chair report**

Good evening all and welcome. This time last year, we were praying the pandemic would be over soon and, maybe just maybe, we could celebrate by having our 30th anniversary picnic. Who would have thought a whole year later we would still be struggling to get back to normal…whatever normal is. Not to minimize the devastation of the last year, but it did prove one thing…that humans are much harder to train than dogs. Our Goldens are much better at ‘sit’ and ‘stay’ than we are.

Certainly, for Golden Rescue, things will likely never be the same but I’m not entirely sure that’s a bad thing. COVID has forced us into new ways of thinking…new ways to communicate…new ways to fundraise…new ways to screen adopters and fosters. And let’s not forget, new ways to deal with our own Goldens who are now used to being with us almost all the time. Our boys, both rescues, are both exhibiting signs of separation anxiety…something they’ve never had before.

Let’s look at the bright side of this pandemic year. For starters, the picnic was sadly cancelled but it forced us to reinvent the silent auction by putting it online. It was so successful that we are now doing it three times a year, more than quadrupling the amount of money we raised from our yearly picnic auction…thanks to Wanetta and her amazing team and donors. Our monthly donors have increased and our overall donations are up as many of our supporters have said, ”Well, I can’t use my travel fund this year so I’d like to contribute some of that to you”. Our foster applications have soared as people find themselves with time on their hands and the desire to help. Our education team kicked into high gear and we have done many virtual presentations by telling our story and promoting rescue and responsible pet ownership. Our Wishbone Lottery last year was our most successful yet as perhaps more people were dreaming of where to go once this pandemic is over. The company that managed our online store closed because of the pandemic so we brought the store inhouse and with Carol and Tom at the helm, they made it bigger and better. And speaking of bigger and better, our social media platforms have always been fantastic…but they are even more incredible ~ always entertaining, fresh, fun, and full of great content. We managed to figure out and set a date for the Guardian to go digital, saving paper and $25,000 a year in printing and mailing costs. We updated our foster and adoption guides and made many of our forms online friendly and easier to use. And, as always, we have continued to grow our teams and today we are even stronger with incredible volunteer talent and passion.

So overall, Golden Rescue fared the pandemic surprisingly well and our financials are sound thanks to the ingenuity, enthusiasm, commitment and hard work of all our volunteers, supporters, and donors. We are so fortunate to have you all.

Of course, last year was not without its challenges. Although we rescued 193 Goldens, only 61 were domestic. SPCA’s, Humane Societies, and shelters are reporting the same thing…that they have never been so quiet…some not even having any dogs to adopt. On the surface, this looks like good news but we are steeling ourselves for the day that people return to work and realize they can’t care for their pets any more. We know this is going to happen and we are ready.

In the meantime, our International Mission of Love was very busy and with the crisis in Cairo, we are doing everything we can to help. Our 24-Karat Gold program was very successful and we knew that the ‘100 Goldens for 100 Families’ campaign was extremely ambitious. Well, we actually exceeded our goal and raised enough money to bring in 104 Goldens into our care. Nothing short of stunning and a testament to our fabulous supporters.

One thing I’m particularly proud of is that Golden Rescue doesn’t give up on our Goldens. If there is a way to rehome even the most challenging of Goldens, we will persevere. JC is a perfect example of this. It took over a year and a lot money (we don’t even want to count) but we found the perfect family and he’s doing amazingly well. Dear Gracie, struggling and totally paralyzed in her back end was able to leave Cairo and be adopted by a family of angels who have fallen in love with this amazing girl ~ a girl who simply refused to give up. There is no doubt that Golden Rescue put the light back in her eyes. There are many more stories like this and for sure, sometimes our hearts are bigger than our pocket books but we always find a way.

So, to reiterate, although this year has been difficult due to the pandemic, we have actually done pretty well. This is 100% due to our dedicated, tireless volunteers, our committed board members, and our amazing fosters, supporting vets, monthly donors, supporters, and adopters. We stayed positive and we stayed strong. On behalf of the Board and our Goldens, I want to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts and I’m crossing my fingers that I can see you at our picnic this year where we can celebrate our 30th anniversary plus one years together and maybe even have a much-needed hug and some licks and slurps from all our Goldens.