A “Very Special” Rescued Golden Retriever

Gold Ribbon Rescue’s mission is to rescue and re-home Golden Retrievers, evaluate them for health and behavior, rehabilitate them if necessary and possible, and place them in their forever homes.

Most adoptive and foster homes desire “the perfect Golden Retriever”. The “Shadow” from “Homeward Bound”.

We call these the “just add water” dogs.

These are not the typical Goldens that we see come into rescue. Our dogs are all Second Chance dogs.

For each dog, the process of matching to a foster and adoptive home is uniquely different, and dependent upon the known (and unknown) history of the dog.

Some of the Goldens rescued by GRR are surrendered by their owners. They come with histories, even if it ends up being “the dog has never seen a vet”. They may or may not have been with children. They may or may not have been with other dogs or cats. They may or may not have some training. If they have known medical issues diagnosed by their veterinarian prior to intake, GRR is aware of them through vet records. Sometimes they come to us looking like the perfect Golden Retriever, because they fit the breed description well: intelligent, eager to please, beautiful flowing coats with feathering, nice healthy weight, warm eyes and a friendly and even temperament. Gentle Teddy Bear dogs are they, but with enough energy to be a fun contribution to any family or home. These dogs are sometimes easy to place, depending on their past medical and behavioral histories, especially those with solid backgrounds.

Some of the Goldens rescued by GRR are considered “Special Needs” dogs. They may have medical conditions requiring one pill a day, or a special shampoo, or restricted exercise due to heartworm treatment or hip surgeries. They may need insulin or allergy injections, may be missing a limb, or an eye, or they may have some other medical need. These “Special Needs” dogs may have come from an owner surrender, unable to handle the medical situation, or from an unknown past.

And some of the Goldens rescued by GRR are just plain “Special” rescues, and they need a Special forever home. They have **unknown** origin and **unknown** history. They have been found wandering the street somewhere, lost, and doing their best to survive. They have been found tied to a tree, left there abandoned by owners who have moved away. They have been turned loose by “breeders” who no longer have a need for them. They’ve been found by someone, shivering, hungry, and near death. And they may have been found at the hand of someone who severely abused them.

Here are some of the characteristics of these VERY SPECIAL rescues:

* They have not been socialized, with humans, children, dogs or other animals. They don’t know how to act around these beings, and sometimes they are afraid of them.
* They have never seen a toy. They don’t know what to do with a ball, or a squeaky, or a stuffed animal, or a bone.
* They have not been fed consistently, so they may hoard food, or protect it. Or they may not acknowledge it at all, having gone many periods of starvation in their short lives.
* They have not lived in a house. They do not know how to act in a house. They may “mark” furniture, chew baseboards, run around like a firecracker and jump on counters, or flee to a corner and hide.
* They have been in some pretty bad situations, and they’ve been resourceful and successful in escaping them. So if they think it’s getting bad, they will try to escape. Even if they think it’s NOT getting bad, their ingrained nature is to try to escape.
* They have not been touched all over their bodies, so they don’t know how to act when you approach them. They may pull away and run, or they may growl at you if you try to touch their feet, or their bellies, or even rub them behind the ears. They don’t understand that this can feel good.
* They have never worn a collar, nor walked on a leash. They don’t understand the purpose of these items. They may fight you if you try to put a collar on them, and they are going to pull on the leash. They may have been hit with a leash repeatedly, and react negatively to it.
* They don’t have any manners. They don’t know to remain calm when a visitor approaches, or not to bark when they feel like it, or that they must wait until told it’s their turn to eat, or not to jump up on people.

Any one of our dogs needs you. Any one of these extra special dogs needs the understanding and patience of a very special home, and needs you desperately to prove that there is good, and caring, and safety and above all, love, in this world.

Each of these dogs needs for you to trust them and they need to trust you. This won’t happen instantly, but they need the time to work with you and make it so.

They need to learn manners. They need for every interaction with you to be an opportunity for you to teach them how to be a good dog, and most importantly, for every interaction with you to be a positive one, as opposed to the negative reinforcement they’ve received for so long.

They need your understanding, that they are not the perfect Golden Retriever. But they can be a great one, with patience and teamwork.

They need to learn that it can feel good to be a dog, to be loved and to love, and to be part of a family, to be a true companion. They need praise and rewards when they are due, and likewise firm correction when necessary.

They are not “just add water” Golden Retrievers. They need constant and consistent reinforcement. They need for you to be willing to learn to teach them, and to take them to training with a professional.

You can develop a strong relationship with a dog like this, and it will not be easy for you or for the dog, but you will both reap the rewards of a complete and happy home.

Please consider fostering or adopting one of our “Very Special” rescued Goldens. They require more work than the perfect Golden, but, with your commitment, they can and will be **the perfect Golden Retriever** for you (and, in the case of a foster, their forever home).