



# The GREATvine

Greyhound Rescue & Adoptions of Tampa Bay, Inc.

## Freedom Memorial Garden *by Kelly R. Faircloth*



Volume 17, Issue 1

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### Special points of interest:

- Work Day - what does that mean?
- This year's legislative battle for the hounds
- Florida State Fair!
- Join us on our 2013 cruise to Hawaii!

March 23, 2012 marks the five year anniversary of the day we lost Bob Varnberg, co-founder of Greyhound Adoptions of Florida. Bob and Marilyn, Marilyn and Bob... even now, it still feels odd to say one name without the other. Even those in the greyhound world who never met the Varnbergs knew who they were. As I told Marilyn recently, the Varnberg name is its own brand!

I will never forget that day. The call so unexpected, the news so devastating. All thoughts turned to Marilyn and the greyhounds... were they ok? What could we do to help? How on earth could we ever show how much this quiet, unassuming man meant to the world of greyhounds – our world? And then some old conversations with Bob came to mind – conversations about a garden of memories for the greyhounds.

To understand how the Freedom Memorial Garden came to be, you have to understand the history between Greyhound Adoptions of Florida (GAF) and Greyhound Rescue & Adoptions of Tampa Bay, Inc. (GREAT).

We met Marilyn and Bob years ago, at a greyhound advocacy meeting in the Orlando area. During that meeting, we discovered we felt the same way about a lot of things – most importantly, we wanted to stop the injury and deaths of countless numbers of greyhounds at the hands of the racing industry. Not too long after that meeting, Marilyn started calling upon GREAT to help with intake of greyhound farm dogs. These weren't 2 year old, sleek, muscular track dogs. These were dogs that had spent years on farms,

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## Freedom Memorial Garden *continued*

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being bred over and over again, in horrible condition and some were very advanced in age. It wasn't unusual at that time to pick up 12, 13 and 14 year old dogs that had NEVER known life in a home. Marilyn and Bob showed us the ropes, and we learned so much from them. We never could have done as much good as we have done without their guidance and help.

In 2002, Marilyn and Bob found what they had been looking for in Central Florida – a former greyhound farm where they could live and take in farm dogs, brood moms and injured dogs; dogs no one else wanted to deal with. But the place needed some work, and over the next few years, GREAT volunteers joined Marilyn and Bob and volunteers of GAF and we whipped the place into shape! This is where our “work days” were born – and boy, did we do a lot of work! We ripped out fencing and tore old wooden crates out of the kennel building, replacing them with new metal crates that could more easily be kept clean. We painted, we removed fallen trees and brush (I still have scars from a case of poison ivy!), built decks, and spent time with the greyhounds, bathing them, trimming nails, and so on. We helped raise funds for the brand spanking new brood kennel, meant to be a place for the old mamas to go and be cuddled until their forever home came along. It was a pleasure and an honor to help the Varnbergs help the greyhounds, and they in turn helped us by taking in dogs when we simply could not, due to lack of space, and always being a resource when we were dealing with a troubling behavioral or medical condition.

Sadly, before the brood kennel could fulfill its original purpose, Bob passed away. Marilyn had so many hard decisions to make during that time and one of those decisions was to close the big kennel (Bob's kennel) and move the dogs to the brood kennel, to be able to care for them on her own. And in true Marilyn style, she did just that. It's been so hard – I can't even imagine trying to accomplish everything she has accomplished, but if anyone can get the impossible done, it's Marilyn!



Marilyn standing in the future site of the Freedom Memorial Garden

And so, this brings me to the Freedom Memorial Garden. We had talked about it the previous year, and even got to the point of clearing some land, but it was the middle of summer and we simply could not continue due to the summer heat. After Bob passed away, we decided that we were going to fulfill his dream. We were going to take this huge 90' by 60' plot of land that was full of fallen trees and 6' high brush, and we were going to build the memorial garden. We were going to have a pond and paths and fencing and most of all, we were going to make a place for everyone to remember the greyhounds. The ones they had loved and lost and the ones that never made it to a home of their own.

The naming of the garden was no accident, and in fact, it had a name before it ever started. A couple of years before the garden was created, Marilyn and Bob found a dead greyhound on their drive. This was a dog that had been sighted running loose in the area for a long time and had defied all attempts to catch her. The day happened to be July 4th, and so as Marilyn and Bob buried her in the plot on which the garden would grow, they named her Freedom, to stand for farm dogs like her that few knew about, few cared about, and that

spend their lives being bred to feed a “sport” that isn't sporting at all for the dogs who lose their lives when they are no longer good enough.

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## Freedom Memorial Garden *continued*

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We spent several weekends in a row, driving up on Saturday and again on Sunday, breaking ground, tilling the soil, digging a huge hole for the pond, getting the plumbing put in for sprinklers and the electricity put in for the pond, and installing fence, and of course, planting. While we worked on it, we laughed and cried and shared memories, and we truly poured our hearts into it. It was a massive undertaking but before our eyes, the garden started to shape up! We were so touched and proud when the time came for Bob's memorial service, and the garden was the site on which it was held.

The garden has matured over the last few years – plants that were a foot or two high now tower overhead and need to be cut back on a regular basis! We've all gotten a little older and so the weeding and raking and mulching have become more difficult, but there is no greater reward than to walk through the garden at the end of the work day and experience the peace and serenity of this place. Many people have paid tribute to their beloved greyhounds here in the Memorial Garden by placing stones, engraved pavers, and in some cases, their pets' urns. Yet, the garden isn't a sad place... it's a place where you can remember the happy times, and when you leave, you know that your loved one loves you still.



Artist rendering of Freedom, in glass mosaic

I encourage everyone to visit the garden. We need new volunteers to help us maintain it, and while you'll definitely break a sweat, I promise you that you will be enriched and rewarded by the experience! If you are mourning a pet, come to the garden and find comfort knowing that everyone around you knows and understands how you feel. You will NEVER hear "but he was just a dog" in this special place! And if you never got a chance to know Bob... you'll get to know him a little bit by experiencing the enduring legacy he left behind.

## Monthly Meet & Greet

### **MUVICO – NEW TAMPA**

Jean Mauser 813.971.5772  
JoAnn Copertino 813.994.9825

### **PETCO - BRANDON**

Susan O'Hara 813.643.7709

### **PETCO - ODESSA**

BJ Vosburgh 813.920.6477

### **PETCO - PORT RICHEY**

Burke Barnaby 727.697.2394

### **PETCO - WESLEY CHAPEL**

JoAnn Copertino 813.994.9825

### **PETCO - WEST SHORE**

Tony & Bobbie Kovach 813.475.6343  
Cyndi Rennick 727.417.0913

### **PETSMART - CITRUS PARK**

Jodi Frazier 813.969.1310  
Fred Freshcorn 813.891.1861

### **PETCO - PALM HARBOR**

Karen Powers 727.786.4398

### **PET SUPERMARKET - LAKELAND**

Norma Rogers 813.754.4301  
Pamela Wiseman 863.324.6286

See our event calendar at [www.great-greyhound.org](http://www.great-greyhound.org).



## If At First You Don't Succeed... *by Kelly R. Faircloth*

You may remember last year's effort to get a "decoupling" bill passed that would allow track facilities to do away with greyhound racing (which many tracks support, since that's not where the money is and they've been subsidizing a dying industry for years) and still continue with their other activities. This bill actually passed in both houses, but there were minor differences between the two versions so the bill was allowed to expire without being finalized. This year, we take up the fight again!

If you are interested in learning more about this grassroots campaign and how you can help, please keep your calendars open for Humane Lobby Day, which will be on January 17, 2012 in Tallahassee. Several of us went last year and while not everyone got to see their senator or representative, or heard that they would support our bill, it was a rewarding experience and it does mean a lot to the politicians if the citizens they represent actually go to Tallahassee to express their views! My rep was on the fence when I spoke to her because she was concerned that it would aid the expansion of gambling, but she listened closely as I explained why this wasn't the case, and I was VERY gratified to see that a few days later, she decided to support our bill!

If you can go to Tallahassee on January 17, click on the link below to register. You must be registered by January 12.

[Register for Humane Lobby Day!](#)

But, if you cannot go, please rest assured that you can still help! In fact, the biggest chance for success will come from your calls, your letters and your emails to the representatives. And remember, we have to keep up the pressure throughout the weeks of the legislative session. We came so very close last year, and this year, we will succeed!

## Support the Decoupling Bill *by Carey Thiel, Executive Director, GREY2K USA*

GREY2K USA is a national non-profit organization working to pass laws to protect greyhounds. Since its formation in 2001, it has helped close 26 tracks from one end of the country to the other, and has prevented the introduction of dog racing to Jamaica and South Africa.

In October, GREY2K USA re-filed a joint greyhound bill with dog track owners to drastically reduce the cruelty of greyhound racing in the Sunshine State. HB 641/SB 382 removes the legal requirement that dog track licensees conduct live racing. By law, the holders of dog track licenses must offer at least 100 days of live racing each year. But while track owners make money from other activities, they tend to lose money on dog racing.

So now, track owners and greyhound advocates are working together to sever this requirement or "decouple the live racing mandate," from law. Track owners want to save dollars and activists want to save the dogs.

You can take action to help greyhounds now:

- Learn more about the progress of the campaign on GREY2K USA's dedicated Florida page at <http://grey2kusa.org/action/states/fl.html>.
- Call your lawmakers right away and ask them to support HB 641/SB 382, the "Greyhound Decoupling Bill." You can find your state representative and state senator here: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/representatives.aspx>
- Stay informed by joining GREY2KUSA's online alert list. Sign up at [www.GREY2KUSA.org](http://www.GREY2KUSA.org).

Go team!





## Adoptions

GREAT congratulates the following adopters on their new four-legged family members!

Marvin Alpern  
 Tammy Brown & David Binge  
 Jennifer & Jay Bryant  
 Jennifer & Jay Bryant  
 Joan & Steve Ferreira  
 Denise Gearghty  
 Rita & Eugene Giampa  
 Carol & Gary Gondek  
 Dee Dee & Bob Jones  
 Jessica Levine  
 Megan Lynn & Jeff Miller  
 Laura Maranto & John Polusny  
 Jane Mullins  
 Diane Scheidle & David Schaffer  
 Sheri & John Stickles  
 Robert & Delores Turner  
 Nancy & Steve Ziel

Atascocita Lexy  
 Atascocita Emil  
 Atascocita Brina  
 Jerry's Jumper  
 Atascocita Elvin  
 Atascocita Apple  
 Atascocita Bronx  
 Hallo Wait a Bit  
 Atascocita Lion  
 Atascocita Melva  
 M's Black Amber  
 Atascocita Corey  
  
 Atascocita Bruno  
 Breezin Thru  
 Kaias Ben Amiss

Lexy  
 Emale  
 Brandy  
 Rhino  
 Chico  
 Apple  
 Bronx  
 Lucy  
 Lion  
 Ellie  
 Amber  
 Molly  
 Ebony  
 Tippy  
 Bruno  
 Dash  
 Lynzie



## Florida State Fair! *by Kelly R. Faircloth*

It's that time of year again - time for the Florida State Fair! GREAT has appeared in the Purebred Dog Tent every year for well over a decade, and countless adoptions have resulted from our appearances. In fact, I met MY first greyhound at the Florida State Fair!

The event is a lot of fun, but it's also a lot of work, and a bit of an endurance test. The fair takes place over twelve days, and the dog tent is open from 9am-6pm every day. The weather varies every day. Every year we have at least one freezing cold day, one quite hot day, and one day where everyone wonders if the tent is going to float away!

We will be asking for volunteers to work 4.5 hour shifts, from 9am-1:30pm and 1:30pm-6pm. Weekdays are the toughest days to fill! We are only allotted a small space in the tent, so we restrict our attendance to two people and two dogs per shift. Often, the 1st and 2nd shift for each day will make arrangements with each other to watch each other's dogs so the humans can enjoy the fair for a couple of hours before or after their shift. Because the shifts are quite long and the fair brings in thousands of people every day, including lots and lots of kids, it's important to only bring dogs who have the energy and confidence to handle themselves at the fair. Fearful or shy dogs, or dogs that have physical difficulties or who are getting up in years are better off relaxing at home away from the crowds!

The fair starts on Thursday, February 9 and runs through Monday, February 20th. If you can help this year, please let me know at [greymom2008@gmail.com](mailto:greymom2008@gmail.com). Looking forward to seeing you all at the 2012 Florida State Fair!





## Forever in Our Hearts...

With Greyt sadness, we say goodbye to the following beloved pets, canine, feline and equine:

Jennifer & Jay Bryant  
 Kelli & Steve Chickos  
 Barbara Groner  
 Charlene & Steve Hasley  
 Arline Isaacson  
 Bobbie & Tony Kovach  
 Jean & Augie Mauser  
 Amanda & Fred Mortimer  
 Tracy & Kevin Nicholson  
 Natalie Restivo  
 Carol & Gary Robling  
 Norma Rogers  
 Magda Smith  
 Marilyn Varnberg

Maria  
 Shamu  
 Spike  
 Kimmie  
 Charlie  
 Cassie  
 Popeye  
 Runner  
 Mocha  
 Fancy  
 Bentley  
 Abby  
 Bambi  
 Maple, Phoebe & Zeana



## The Last Battle *Author Unknown*

*If it should be that I grow frail and weak,  
 And pain should keep me from my sleep,  
 Then will you do what must be done,  
 For this, the last battle, can't be won.*

*You will be sad I understand,  
 But don't let grief then stay your hand,  
 For on this day, more than the rest,  
 Your love and friendship must stand the test.*

*We have had so many happy years,  
 You wouldn't want me to suffer so.  
 When the time comes, please, let me go.*

*Take me to where to my needs they'll tend,  
 Only, stay with me till the end*

*And hold me firm and speak to me,  
 Until my eyes no longer see.  
 I know in time you will agree,  
 It is a kindness you do to me.*

*Although my tail its last has waved,  
 From pain and suffering I have been saved.*

*Don't grieve that it must be you,  
 Who has to decide this thing to do;  
 We've been so close, we two, these years,  
 Don't let your heart hold any tears.*





### *Shamu by Kelli Chickos*

On Christmas morning, we had to say a sudden and very sad goodbye to my Shamu.

To say that I LOVED him is an understatement and these hours without him have been pure misery. We adopted him right off the track 9 years ago and every moment spent with him was wonderful - he was the best dog you could wish for. Things will just never be the same without him.

Shammy, your memory will live in my heart forever, proving that such a love is eternal.



Shamu, 11/15/98 - 12/25/11

### *Cassie by Bobbie & Tony Kovach*

It is a very sad day in our household.

This afternoon we had to put Cassie down because a very quickly developing osteosarcoma that started visibly about 4 weeks ago and rapidly developed into serious bone destruction.

We would not let Cassie suffer any longer, so our son Mike took her back today to Sunset Point Animal Hospital & Dr. Freeman helped her over "THE BRIDGE".

She ("QUEENIE") will be greatly missed. Cassie was very special to us & will always be in our hearts.



Cassie, 12/1/04 - 12/20/11



## Greyhound Rescue & Adoptions of Tampa Bay, Inc.

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### GREAT's Board of Directors:

President  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Members at Large

Kelly R. Faircloth  
Liz Lynch  
Brenda Hodges  
Jordena Backnick  
Karen Powers



### **GREAT is going to Hawaii!**

In fact, we started planning our next cruise before disembarking from our last cruise! We will soon have information on dates and rates, so stay tuned!

We'll be flying to Honolulu and boarding Norwegian Cruise Lines' Pride of America for 7 days of cruising throughout the Hawaiian islands! The ship will take us from Honolulu to Kahului, Hilo (including a night sail past Kilauea Volcano), Kona, Nawiliwili and back to Honolulu.

We will have more information for you soon, and we hope you will all consider joining us in Hawaii! As always, GREAT will receive a donation for every booked passenger, and any other greyhound group's members who join us will earn a donation for their group!

For more information, please contact us at [GREATinfo@great-greyhound.org](mailto:GREATinfo@great-greyhound.org), and of course, Aloha!

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