

Pilot flies puppies to forever homes

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

Private pilot John Dunlap of Sisters loves to fly and has owned his own small aircraft, a Cessna 180 Skywagon, for six years. He volunteers time maintaining backcountry airstrips in Oregon as a member of the Oregon Pilots Association. The airstrips support rural communities.

And now Dunlap is donating time and resources to help unwanted animals in distant places find their forever homes.

Dunlap left Sisters Eagle Airport on August 24 for his very first flight as a volunteer for Pilots N Paws. He picked up two Chesapeake Bay retriever mix puppies at Lampson field airport in Lakeport, California and brought the siblings up to Lenhart airport northeast of Salem to their new families.

Pilots N Paws, a high-flying animal-rescue organization, was founded accidentally in 2008 when a private pilot offered to fly a mission of mercy to save an abused dog for a friend. Pilots N Paws is now a nonprofit organization that helps save the lives of dogs in need. The intent of Pilots N Paws is to provide an environment in which volunteers can come together and arrange or schedule rescue flights, overnight foster care or shelter.

"I was supposed to fly out on the 23rd, but the smoke

from fires was bad enough that I had to wait an extra day to fly," Dunlap told *The Nugget*. "One of the volunteers, Terry Roy of the rescue group Chesapeake Bay Retriever Relief & Rescue that I was volunteering to help, kept the pups for the night."

When Dunlap left Sisters, he had to deal with smoke all the way to his destination and back.

"I got up above the smoke at 14,000 feet by using oxygen in my aircraft after about 10,000 feet. You really have to watch the temporary flight restriction areas. There are boundaries around the fires that you are not allowed to fly near because of special aircraft."

Becoming a volunteer for Pilots N Paws launched for Dunlap after reading "Dog is My Copilot," a book that tells the story behind this remarkable organization.

"My wife, Robyn, picked up the book one day and gave it to me to read. I was hooked after that," said Dunlap. "We both love animals and have pets, and the book inspired me so much that I went online and signed up for the Pilots N Paws program."

Then Dunlap kept watch on posts from rescue groups for any need for animal transport.

Chesapeake Bay Retriever Relief & Rescue (CBRR&R) came across two puppies and wanted to rescue them.

CBRR&R is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to providing relief and rescue to Chesapeake Bay retrievers and Chesapeake mixes. They are dedicated to finding responsible and loving homes for Chesapeake Bay Retrievers or retriever mixes.

"The pups were a mix of Chesapeake retriever and German shepherd," said Southwest co-regional Director Samantha Shaw from Carlsbad, California. "Since it was an accidental mix the breeders did not want, they were going to drop them off at a local shelter, but reached out to us first. We fostered them until they were old enough to post up for adoption."

"We found wonderful homes for each of them in the Oregon and Washington area and were now in need of a pilot," Shaw added.

CBRR&R frequently worked with Pilots N Paws for transporting animals around their region.

"Our other co-director Michelle Moebius and I cover California, Arizona, Nevada, Mexico, and Utah. It becomes a challenge when the new dog owner lives a distance away but we have a good working relationship with the pilots," Shaw said.

Shaw has been rescuing dogs for over 20 years and officially joined CBRR&R in 2003.

Dunlap had reached out



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Terry Roy and pilot John Dunlap transport puppies to new homes.

to Shaw about another dog rescue in the past that didn't work out, and she took down his information in case they might need a pilot again. And this time it panned out.

Two fun-loving puppies began their journey into the wild blue yonder beginning in Southern California.

Volunteer pilots for Pilots N Paws, Raymond Douglas and Wayne McClelland, flew the puppies from Carlsbad,

California to Lampson field airport in Lakeport, California, where Dunlap then flew the two pups to Lenhardt Airpark in Hubbard, Oregon, where their new families greeted them.

"Anyone who volunteers to do this is amazing. We couldn't do it without them," Shaw said. "This really opens the door for people to go on social media and find the dog they want."

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