

THE FUZZBUTT NETWORK



TWO DOGS PLAY AT THE MEET-UP!

Sniffing out the Eugene-Springfield Husky/Malamute Meet-up BY RACHAEL CARNES

At a recent Eugene Husky/Malamute Meet-Up at Amazon dog park, 50 or more huskies and malamutes play like there's no tomorrow — running in giant circles, climbing on tables, splashing in the kiddie pool and pausing for plenty of pats from the charmed crowd.

The meet-up does more than hold regular gatherings. “Our group promotes and facilitates adoptions,” co-founder Helen Lindell says. “We scour Craigslist and pet pages for fuzzies needing new homes.”

Lindell and her husband, Sandy, have a pack of five huskies — Sabaka, Red, Koshka, Spitfire and Pepper — who range in age from 4 to 15. All are rescues.

The Lindells and other group members help adoptees make successful transitions into existing families by offering training, support and even security checks.

“Huskies and malamutes are notorious escape artists,” Lindell says. “We offer tips on containment — be it wooden or metal fences.”

Anyone who's ever owned a husky can tell you stories about the breed's boundless energy and seemingly supernatural abilities to scale fences, destroy gardens, eat sofas, etc.

“Our group has many experienced people who will give advice on food, diets, vet care, training and behavior-correction tips,” Lindell says.

At the meet-up, dozens of huge dogs play happily and without incident.

Their people seem equally pleased to be a part of this supportive social network. It takes a village to raise a husky.

“Some members will do limited day care and, in some instances, longer-term care,” Lindell says.

Jennifer and Travis Jones introduce Odin, a gorgeous 2-year-old rust-colored Siberian.

“His original family was overwhelmed,” Travis says. “He spent forever outside — with no socialization.”

Jones fears that, as a pup, Odin was also likely abused. “When we got him, he was terrified of men with hats and beards,” he says.

But you wouldn't know it now, as Odin merrily cavorts with his pack, including fellow husky Arkyn and their “big sister,” a senior hound dog named Sydney.

“They taught her how to howl,” Jennifer Jones says.

The group keeps an eye out for one another's dogs, providing a safe place for “found” dogs and sharing “lost dog” postings over social media.

“We try very hard to keep them out of the shelters,” Lindell says. “I personally found an older malamute running down the center of Lorane Highway. I got him to jump into my car, but I was on my way to work. So I put out a call and a member stepped up to pup-sit till his family could be found.”

One malamute, who seems too besotted with his many human admirers and canine pals to run anywhere, is the 160-pound Wolfgang.

“My son has autism. And when my previous dog died, I wanted to get a new dog for him,” says Wolfgang's owner, Bob Whitlatch. “I found Wolfe on Craigslist. He was eight months and 80 pounds, living in a one-bedroom upstairs apartment. The previous owner had been getting landlord complaints.”

Wolfgang has clearly landed with his nose in the butter. But not every fuzzer is so lucky, and the buying and

selling of dogs — especially adorable and striking huskies and mals — can be a practice where fraud proliferates.

Though many “rehome” listings are legitimate and often result from changes in economic, medical or living situations, sometimes folks will use puppy cuteness to make a quick buck, Lindell says. Fraudulent ads may describe the lineage of a pedigreed dog that can't be substantiated, or claim that an animal has received its full array of shots when it isn't old enough to be fully vaccinated.

“Never put money up front unless it's a local person,” Lindell says. “And always ask to see parents. Google the picture of the pup to see if the picture just wasn't pulled off of Google images. If still in doubt take a screen shot of the ad you are interested in and post it on our website. Members are more than willing to help.”

Besides teaching members how to spot scams, the group continually encourages adoption, spaying and neutering.

“Our group has blown up into an international club with 1,600 members,” Lindell says. “People come to experience the husky and malamute life, if they can't have one of their own.”

One person rich in huskies is Addi Artemenko, age 9. Her dogs — Po, Jasper, Rhino and an older mixed-breed dog, Diesel — are all rescues. Addi's pack stays near its young mistress, who beams as she describes her role in their lives, which includes helping with their feeding and grooming.

“And I walk them,” Addi says proudly. “One at a time.”

The group meets at a different dog park at least once per month, more often in the summer. The easiest way to connect is to join the Facebook group — Eugene Springfield Husky-Malamute Meet-Up — and watch the page for play dates and other events. ■



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