

Greyhound Pets of America Greater Northwest



Volunteer Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Greyhound Pets of America is a national non-profit organization dedicated to finding loving and responsible homes for retired racing Greyhounds. As a volunteer you are our most important asset and we can't stress enough how much we appreciate all you do for GPA and the Greyhounds we serve. Please note that this Handbook is a guide and not an absolute. As in all things living, there are NO absolutes!

Please look at this as a helpful tool and not as the bible on Greyhounds. If you have adopted a Greyhound, you should have read the book, *Adopting the Racing Greyhound*, by Cynthia Branigan. If you have not read it, stop right here and do so. If you have not read it in a while, maybe it is time to read it again (especially chapters 2-4). Other recommended reading is *Greyhounds for Dummies* by Lee Livingood.

If you are new at this, take the time to work with other experienced volunteers and see how they talk with someone asking questions. Then, take what you can use and put it to work with your personality. Your enthusiasm is very important, but do not let it get in the way of your knowledge and the homework that you have done.

Our volunteers are our most important resource, without their help, we cannot fulfill our mission! Thank you!

THE PATH WE HAVE CHOSEN:

Almost every time we are out in public with these glorious hounds, we hear comments such as:

- "Aren't they abused?"
- "The way they force those poor dogs to run just makes me sick."
- "Why don't they just outlaw Greyhound racing?"
- "It's a crime the way they're kept caged (or muzzled) all the time."

When we do, we smile noncommittally, hug our hounds, and tell them what wonderful pets these retired racers make. Purposefully sidestepping their comments and refocusing the direction of the conversation to the dogs, not Greyhound racing. Sometimes it's easier said than done, especially when the four-legged sweetheart at the end of the leash is so shy, she's trying to hide between the bags of dog food on the shelves. Wouldn't it be easier to just agree? We could play upon the sympathies of these possible adopters. Perhaps they would feel so sorry for the poor creature that they would fill out that application and beg to take her home. They would be the Greyhound's hero and the Greyhound would be forever grateful that she was adopted. Wouldn't she? And, while we're at it, why shouldn't we take a stand against an industry that breeds Greyhounds to use only until they are 2 to 5 years old? These are hard questions, and ones we're faced with all of the time. Many groups that have chosen to speak out against the Greyhound racing industry criticize us, accusing us of "sleeping with the industry" or "promoting the industry" because we have chosen to work with the Greyhound race tracks and kennel personnel to find homes for their retired Greyhounds. Why do we do this?

We want our Greyhounds adopted by people who come to understand and love the breed and their unique characteristics, not because they feel sorry for them. Our experience has shown us that sympathy adoptions are not usually life-long homes for the Greyhounds. Many people who adopt because they pity these animals expect them to be forever grateful and are not as flexible or forgiving when the dogs don't live up to their expectations.

Greyhound Pets of America, in the national Policy and Procedure Manual, states that... “GPA is politically neutral and is neither pro- nor anti-racing.” And, “Greyhound Pets of America is primarily interested in the welfare of the Greyhound. We are **not** animal activists.... We do not lobby, march, or picket against anything.... We would also consider time spent in lobbying, marching or picketing to be counter-productive to our stated purposes.”

GPA is the largest Greyhound adoption organization in the world. Many may not know that Greyhound breeders, who wanted to ensure a better future for their retired racers, originally founded GPA. In 2000, 32 chapters and 8 subchapters of GPA helped find homes for more than 3500 Greyhounds across the United States. Greyhound Pets of America works with the American Greyhound Council and the National Greyhound Association to man the toll-free adoption lines across the country. That phone number, 800.366.1472, will put anyone in touch with his or her nearest Greyhound adoption organization, even if it's not GPA. Greyhound Pets of America has a reputation of which all of us can be proud. It also has the potential of making an even greater impact on the futures of retired racing Greyhounds than it is doing now.

We do it for the Greyhounds - not for any political agenda. Our personal convictions are just that, **personal**. We have chosen this path because we feel that we are able to help more Greyhounds find their permanent homes by remaining neutral rather than working against the industry. It's very simple when you understand that we can help more Greyhounds by keeping open lines of communication between the tracks where the Greyhounds live and those of us who want to help them.

Political issues have a way of clouding everyone's objectives. Anything that gets in the way of adopting Greyhounds is counterproductive to our goals and we don't have time for it. We hope the day comes when all groups can work together. After all, we're all in this for the Greyhounds.

AT “MEET-N-GREET” BOOTHS:

Much of our contact with the general public comes at places like PetSmart or at special events and festivals. When speaking to the public about Greyhound adoptions, it is very important to remember that we are guests of these establishments and that we act accordingly.

Some of the points that you will want to keep in mind when at a meet-n-greet are:

- Remain politically neutral when speaking to the public.
- Keep your dogs on short leashes. If you don't have a 2' leash, double the leash you are using.
- Pay attention to the dog on the end of your leash and to any dogs or people approaching your dog.
- If another volunteer is speaking to someone, do not interrupt.
- If you hear a volunteer giving out misinformation, wait until the conversation has ended before you privately speak with the volunteer about the faux pas. Try not to embarrass anyone.
- If your dog has never had a problem with a cat, never used the crate, never sheds, walks on water, and flies on command, don't brag about it. We want potential adopters to be dealing with realistic expectations.
- Remember that we are guests and respect management's wishes. Stay out of areas meant only for management or employees. Treat other customers courteously. Management will side with the customers if there is a misunderstanding or disagreement and our welcome may be revoked.

GREYHOUND INFORMATION:

A Greyhound is not the dog for everyone. In fact, a Greyhound right off the track needs quite a bit of training to become a housedog. Left to their own devices, a Greyhound may dig, chew, get in the trash and yes, some may actually kill small animals. It is very important that we represent a realistic and well-balanced image of the Greyhound when speaking with potential adopters.

While we believe that a Greyhound is not for everyone, we also truly believe that there is a home suitable for nearly all of the retiring Greyhounds. Our job is to find these homes through careful screening, and especially through accurate information being given to the general public.

To this end, we insist upon being truthful with people. Greyhounds are not perfect. Don't talk people into adopting a Greyhound. If they have reservations, it is probably best for them to wait, do some research, do some volunteering and spend time with the dogs. It SHOULD NOT, however, be suggested that the family try fostering as a way to determine if a Greyhound is the pet for them. A good Greyhound parent comes from understanding where they come from, the patience to train them to become pets, and the understanding that it doesn't happen overnight.

Some of the information you need to cover with every potential adopter:

- While they do make wonderful and loving companions, Greyhounds are not suitable for all homes. They are sensitive creatures, not suited to rough and tumble play with small children or other dogs.
- Greyhounds are HOUSE PETS, and that means they are kept indoors. (It is amazing how many times this can be misinterpreted.)
- Greyhounds have been bred and trained for thousands of years to chase. Given the opportunity, a Greyhound will run. When outside with small animals, you can NEVER be certain that your Greyhound will not chase the small animal. Greyhounds CANNOT be trained to not chase or run. It is instinct.
- Greyhounds MUST BE KEPT ON A LEASH when not in an adequately secured fenced in area.
- We do not recommend that Greyhounds participate in "doggie play parks" where dogs of all breeds are allowed to run off-leash. Unless, it is during times reserved specifically for Greyhounds, with rules requiring that all dogs be muzzled and that the number of Greyhounds allowed to play is limited. The Greyhound's thin skin would put them in danger of being injured by other unmuzzled dogs and the Greyhound's natural instincts may cause them to chase, and possibly injure, smaller dogs.
- Greyhounds can NEVER be tied outside or put on a pulley or runner or on a retractable leash.
- Greyhounds are natural "counter surfers" because of their height. Always keep counters free of food.
- Patio doors, swimming pools, mirrors and bare floors are natural hazards to a Greyhound. Offer suggestions to help them adjust, such as the television or radio, using the crate and/or muzzle, etc.
- Greyhounds often sleep with their eyes open. Be careful not to startle a sleeping Greyhound. Being touched when they are sleeping is something Greyhounds have never experienced before.
- Greyhounds are often kleptomaniacs and will collect things such as knick-knacks, towels, remote controls, candles, etc. For the safety of the Greyhound and the home, "Greyhound proof" your home before the arrival of the dog.

The Most Frequently Asked Questions

How much are they? Don't be afraid of the answer. The adoption fee is \$325.00, which includes the following:

- Special Greyhound (tag) collar with GPA ID tag
- An Initial vet visit, Distemper and Rabies boosters, heartworm and fecal worm check, teeth cleaning, spay or neutering
- Your dog's papers, an adoption manual, and a buddy
- A leash/collar combo and muzzle

It is not expected that you know all of this information, just try to remember enough that the people to whom you are talking realize that they are receiving services that are not included in most adoptions and purchases from breeders of other types of dogs. Remember these dogs are purebred and if you were to purchase a purebred dog from a store or a breeder you might pay upwards of \$750.00. And, this does not include vet costs.

Are they good with children? More so than most breeds. They are not as playful as puppies, being mature dogs, but they are very tolerant of children and will usually walk away rather than growl or snap if children become overbearing. Even a gentle Greyhound has his limits. All small children should be supervised when a Greyhound or any other dog is present. Stress that the key to a successful relationship between dogs and children is supervision.

How old will they get? With proper care Greyhounds can reach a ripe old age of 12 to 15 years.

Are they housebroken? Not really; however, most are considered “crate trained”. Other than a few exceptions, most of our Greyhounds prefer to keep a clean crate. This allows for the transition to housebreaking to be a bit less stressful (for the Greyhound and the adopter). Once they spend time with foster parents and are walked or let out frequently to do their things in the appropriate places, the housebreaking process can become well established. Depending on the Greyhound and his/her new home, most may be housebroken, but there is no guarantee. We do not know for sure that a dog is housebroken until it spends time in a permanent home. This is one of the reasons we recommend crates to new adopters.

They need a large area to run, don't they? Greyhounds enjoy a moderate level of daily exercise. Remember they were sprinters not endurance runners. Greyhounds would rather go out for a while and then come back inside and do what they are famous for... being “couch potatoes”.

They were really mistreated weren't they? Remember we are neutral to the racing part of this question. A good answer is that all of our dogs are completely checked by a veterinarian and are in good condition when they are placed in permanent homes.

How are they with other pets? Before placing a dog in a home with cats, we cat-test to determine if he/she is a suitable choice. This does not mean that they are completely safe with a cat. Remember any animal (humans included) can reach a boiling point and when pushed could respond in the only way they know how. If a Greyhound is introduced correctly to other pets and all are given their space (especially when eating) there usually are not any problems. To avoid problems, it is best to get to know your pets. Then supervise their contact with each other until the Greyhound and the other pet(s) have gotten to know each other. Muzzling is highly recommended until you know your new Greyhound.

What about vets? The new owner can be told where we take the dogs for their vet care before they are placed. They may want to use the veterinarian that they are presently using but be sure that they check with their vet to determine that the vet is aware of the special needs of a Greyhound. Remember Greyhounds do not tolerate some medications well, like certain types of anesthesia and flea control methods, among other things.

Can I go to the park and let my dog run? Yes, if you say good-bye to it first. Greyhounds should NEVER be let off lead unless they are in a confined area that is secure, due to their ability to run up to 40 miles per hour. In the time it would take you to get your keys, get in the car and try to go after your dog, it will be approximately 1/2 mile away. This means that they have crossed any number of streets without looking both ways when doing so - draw your own conclusion. Not to mention, if it is lucky enough not to be hit by a car, it usually cannot find its way home.

Can I use my Greyhound as a jogging companion? Yes, but remember even though the Greyhound is known for speed, they are sprinters, and don't have a great deal of endurance. You can build up the dog's endurance over time, just as you would a human jogger, and it also gives him time for his paw pads to toughen up. Take him for short distances in the beginning and work up. Never take your Greyhound or any dog out to run on a hot day!!

What about obedience and agility training? Always recommended for a Greyhound or any dog. However, Greyhounds do not respond like a lab or golden retriever. Your Greyhound will work and do best in brief spurts as they tend to believe they have mastered a skill, and don't need to do it over and over again and will just stop.

These are some of the most frequently asked questions. This may not be all that you are asked but be aware if you have done your homework you will be prepared for almost any question that may come up. When in doubt, ask another volunteer! There is nothing wrong with saying, “I don't know, but if you can wait, I will find out that answer for you”.

What is the Adoption Process?

1. Adopters should decide if this is really a responsibility that they are willing to accept. These dogs become part of the family and should be treated as such.
2. The next two could be interchangeable. Have the potential adopter complete an Application to Adopt. Suggest the applicant read the Branigan or Livingwood book before the home visit.
3. Assist the adopter in choosing a dog. Ask questions regarding what he/she wants in a dog, i.e., personality type, size, gender, and age. Do mention that potential adopters choose a Greyhound for his/her personality traits and not his/her color and/or appearance. An appointment can be made to see dogs in foster care.

4. The Greyhound is spayed or neutered and is current on vaccinations to ensure sure the Greyhound is sound.
5. If the dog goes to a foster home, he/she is introduced to such things as sliding glass doors, tile floors, other animals and the beginnings of housebreaking are done. The dogs begin to see how much they are loved and that retirement is a really good thing.
6. A home visit is conducted by an experienced (approved) volunteer, and the foster parents are encouraged to attend. This is a time when the adopter can see the dog in his/her home setting and really decide if this is what he/she wants to do. The home can be checked for potential safety hazards that may need correcting. This is also the time when last minute questions may be raised and answered. Remember, our mission is to adopt our Greyhounds to responsible homes!
7. The Officers may decide to evaluate a specific application. Not all applications are approved.
8. Final paperwork is executed and the adoption fee is paid at this final setting. All paperwork is completed with a GPA officer or an authorized adoption representative.
9. The volunteer doing the home visit will make three or more follow up calls in the next few weeks to determine if there are any questions or concerns.

HOME VISITS:

Home visits are conducted by an authorized GPA volunteer. They are a valuable tool in helping us determine if we are placing the Greyhound in the right home for the temperament and personality. It also gives us a chance to review with the prospective family the information they need in order to become good “parents.”

Make an appointment to meet with the adopter at his/her home, at a time when the entire family will be able to attend. Bring a Greyhound with you. If possible, bring the Greyhound they hope to adopt! This will give you a chance to see how everyone in the household interacts with the Greyhound. Look for things like their willingness or reluctance to touch the Greyhound; anyone who is aghast with the Greyhound’s size; children’s gentleness (or roughness or screaming tendencies.) See how the dog reacts to them. Most dogs have better instincts about people than we do!

Bring a muzzle! This will help with introductions to other animals and also help enforce the importance of muzzle use with Greyhounds. Monitor how the Greyhound reacts with other pets, if any, and how they react to the Greyhound. It is best to introduce other dogs to the Greyhound outside on “neutral” ground. A walk around the block will give the dogs a chance to get to know one another before bringing the Greyhound into the other dog’s territory. Watch how the pets interact and listen to comments made by family members.

Explain what we do relative to “small animal testing” (cats/dogs) – and give examples of what we do NOT do (kid, bird, bunny, gerbil, iguana, horse, snake, etc.) Always add that we cannot guarantee that any two animals will get along. A perfectly cat-OK seeming Greyhound may get interested in Fluffy if Fluffy flies around the house like a Tasmanian devil!! Afterall, Greyhounds do chase things that run. The perfectly cat-OK Greyhound MAY take exception to the Yorkie that decides it’s a pit bull! Do not allow them to expect the Greyhound to put up with an aggressive or obnoxious other pet, regardless of size. Stress the importance of supervision when animals play or run together.

Let the applicants tell you what they expect. We’ve already provided them with the information of what we expect and require with regard to care. Don’t just tell them what needs to be done and expect that they will comply. Most people will have some form of predisposition as to how they plan to keep and care for the Greyhound. Listen to what they say... and what they DON’T!

Ask where they expect the dog to live. Some people want to restrict certain parts of the house (formal living room; dining room) but we expect the Greyhound to have access to more than just the laundry room!

Ask where they expect the dog to sleep (near people is much preferred; downstairs while everyone is upstairs can be, at best, challenging...at worst, disastrous). Ask where the dog will be when they go to work, etc. Let them tell you what their ideas are first. Then explain things that are not acceptable. (Greyhound will stay in the uncooled junk filled garage or yard... NOT!! ...while they’re at work.) If they then “agree” not to leave the dog in the garage/yard, ask what the alternative plan is. Simply leaving the dog with the run of the house isn’t a good alternative at first either. We’re not trying to “trick” people; but we want to get a feel for what they will actually do once the dog is left in their care.

Take a walk around the yard, check the fence all the way around. Holes you can drive a VW through will NOT secure a Greyhound. See if they currently leave the fence open to park inside the fenced area. It can be very dangerous if they routinely open the gate to get the car in and out. Also, look for anthills, rubbish piles, sharp or thorny plants, loose wires or fencing, holes... any of these can result in injuries to the dog. If the condition of the yard needs to be improved, advise them that a follow-up visit will be conducted before the Greyhound is placed.

Young children who carry on and don't listen to its parents while you're present certainly won't behave any better when you're gone. If they are unkind to the Greyhound or head strong in what they want to do - or not do - it may not be safe for the Greyhound. Don't expect our docile giants to constantly and forever put up with obnoxious kids. When they finally get "enough" the kid will get snapped at or bitten, and the dog will lose its home. People need to know when adoption is, and is not, a good idea.

Lastly, be friendly, helpful, cordial, and HONEST! If you have reservations, simply tell the family that someone will be in touch. After your home visit, discuss the situations with the area vice-president before the final approval is given. These are merely guidelines and are not meant to be all-inclusive. Home visits can be an overall gut feeling... With experience you will recognize that when someone does not qualify to adopt a Greyhound, it is stronger than a mere gut feeling, perhaps more like flashing red lights! If you need someone to be the "bad guy" in these situations, one of the Officers will be happy to take care of it.

Try to allow one or two hours for the home visit. The more time you spend now, and the more subjects you cover in advance, the fewer problems they will encounter down the road. Be sure to provide your phone number so that if they have additional questions, they can call. Should you have any doubts about the home visit, call your area vice-president or any officer for guidance.

Our goal is to place dogs in homes that are suitable for them, not just any home. Some of the rules for a successful home visit are listed below:

- All household members MUST be present during a home visit. You want to be able to observe their interactions with the Greyhound and make sure that everyone has the same information.
- All household members MUST be in agreement about the pending adoption.
- If possible, bring the Greyhound they are interested. If not, bring your own Greyhound. ALWAYS bring a Greyhound!
- Use the checklist below to ensure that you cover all areas of concern. Add items to the list as you deem necessary.
- Hopefully, the "Adopting the Racing Greyhound" book was purchased. If they have you should be able to tell whether or not they've read it. If you feel they haven't read it yet, stress that they do so BEFORE getting the Greyhound.
- Explain the importance of the crate and muzzle.
- FOLLOW-UP via phone and/or email!
 - The day after the adoption;
 - A week after the adoption;
 - A month after the adoption; Increase contact - if warranted.

HOME VISIT CHECKLIST

CHECK YARD AND FENCE (entire perimeter) in daylight

- No loose slats
- No holes under the fence
- No protruding nails
- No obstacles to running; loose building material, glass, sharp objects
- No sharp or pointed plants
- No fire ants

FATAL ISSUES

- Always on leash (NO flexi-lead or retractable leash) or in securely fenced area ****EXPLAIN SIGHTHOUND****
- Never use flea collars
- Only approved flea and tick control products (refer to Branigan book)
- Veterinarian must be familiar with Greyhounds
 - Anesthesia & medications
 - Low body fat/body mass ratio

INSIDE DOGS ONLY

- Cannot tolerate heat or cold
- No undercoat and very little body fat
- Needs a coat when temps fall below 60 degrees for extended periods

CRATE

- Set up in central area, away from curtains, bedspreads and upholstery
- Strongly recommended for the first several weeks for the Greyhound's safety and security
- Slowly wean out of the crate after several weeks, if desired

FEEDING SCHEDULE

- Feed dogs separately if there is more than one dog
- AM and PM – be consistent
- About 2 cups dry food per feeding
- Do not free feed if more than one dog in the home
- Potatoes, corn, or fat from meat is not recommended

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

- Crying, whining, pacing
- Location of bed

FURNITURE PRIVLEDGES

- Be consistent

CHEW TOYS

- No buttons or hard pieces on stuffed toys
- Supervise play if more than one dog
- Watch for tears or loose pieces that could be ingested

ROUTINE GROOMING

- Teeth
- Ears
- Bathing
- Brushing
- Nails

INITIAL ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

- Contact your GPA representative or a GPAGNW officer if you have any problems
- Accidents
- Shyness
- Privacy in Crate
- Closely supervise children, other dogs, cats and birds, etc.

DISCIPLINE

- Firm but gentle “NO”
- Spray bottle with water (one squirt only)
- Shake can
- Bitter Apple

ADVISE THAT, IF (FOR ANY REASON), THEY CANNOT KEEP THE GREYHOUND, THEY MUST (PER THE SIGNED CONTRACT) RETURN THE GREYHOUND TO A GPAGNW REPRESENTATIVE. THE GREYHOUND MAY NOT BE GIFTED, SOLD, ADOPTED OR GIVEN TO ANYONE NOT ASSOCIATED WITH GPAGNW, WITHOUT OUR WRITTEN PERMISSION.

FOSTER HOMES:

Foster homes are intended to help Greyhounds make a smooth transition from life in the racing kennels to home life. Foster “parents” must understand the life of a racing Greyhound as outlined in the book “Adopting the Racing Greyhound”. A clear knowledge of where racing Greyhounds are coming from, and the transition they must make, will help you to help them.

We ask a lot of our foster homes, but our need for them is great, as are the rewards. Some of the things that are expected of our foster homes are:

- Do not encourage bad habits - even if you allow your dogs these privileges.
 - No lounging on furniture
 - No sleeping on human beds
 - No table scraps/people food
 - No jumping on people
- Introduce them to home life and teach them how to cope with its oddities.
 - Gently press their noses against the sliding glass door and mirror
 - Adding decals, or even sticky notes or masking tape to the door and mirror will help!
 - Show them how to go up and down stairs
 - Show them how to lie on a dog bed (this takes just one time!)
- Teach them that they can't counter-surf, rush out the door, walk into the refrigerator, stick their heads in the oven or drink out of the toilet.
- Use a crate and muzzle
 - ALWAYS crate them when they are left alone at home. Any exceptions must be cleared with the area vice-president.
 - Always use the muzzle to make sure they aren't chewing furniture, slippers, children or other pets. Also muzzle all dogs when they go outside to play.
- Housebreak them. Keep them within your sight until you can trust them. In order to house break them, you need to catch them in the act. Let them know the behavior was inappropriate, get them outside, praise them when they go and clean up the mess.
- Feed all dogs separately, in crates, behind closed doors, or however necessary to keep them out of each other's food. The same applies to any treats unless they are eaten immediately. Put away toys when you are not monitoring the play. Food, treats, and toys are the main causes of dogs biting dogs.
- Observe your foster dog's eating habits and potty habits. If he's not eating or has loose stools, something may be wrong.
- Observe morning stool for tapeworm. De-wormer is available from our veterinarians for treatment.
- Know what veterinary needs your foster dog may have and arrange with the area vice-president to have it taken care of.

- In emergency situations, contact the area Vice-president/Board member or one of the other Officers if the area vice-president is not available. If it is a life or death situation and after hours, go directly to your Veterinary Emergency. If possible, call the area Vice-president and/or Board Member first. At a minimum, identify yourself as GPAGNW volunteer when you arrive.

EMAIL/CHAT LIST: An email/chat list has been set up to be used as an information and support line for our volunteers. To subscribe to this list, send an email to **bruce@brucecaplin.com** .

Any questions? Contact us!

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