

## **It's A Wonderful Life**

Many of you have probably had people ask why you bother being in a kennel club. Dog rescue and shelter dogs are so popular today, why would you get a purebred dog, like an English Setter, and belong to some hoity-toity club? Are you an elitist or trying to be better than other people? And so on.

Of course, the truth is nothing like these people seem to think. Being in a kennel club, whether it's a local kennel club, a regional club, or a national club is usually a lot of work. You have people running around like chickens without heads trying to put on shows and please as many people as possible. Some clubs hold hunt tests, agility, and other events. There are people behind the scenes trying to keep all of the club matters no one ever thinks about running smoothly like finances, insurance, public education, judge's education, and more. There are editors and a slew of writers and proofreaders always trying to make annuals, newsletters, and other club publications look good. There are club rescue people reaching out to help dogs that have lost a home. And there are lots of loving pet owners who enjoy their dogs at home. These fanciers may be members of your club for decades without saying much but they are devoted to the breed.

All of these people work and do these volunteer jobs because they love their dogs. The club makes use of their various talents so the public can appreciate the breed. But that's still not all that a kennel club does. Kennel clubs are made up of people and those people can be there for you when you need them most.

Perhaps we don't appreciate the real value of a kennel club until there's a crisis. Steve and Shelley Garland, in Canton, Georgia, had that kind of crisis in December when their two young dogs Hunter and Hawk (Windsor's Hurricane Hunter of Pinewalker and Windsor's Stormy Nighthawk of Pinewalker) ate an amaryllis bulb and possibly toxic mushrooms on their property. The dogs ate dinner that afternoon around 4:00. They were playing without a care in the world. A few minutes later Hunter was drooling, having severe vomiting and diarrhea. He had to be rushed to the vet's office. A little later Hawk would show similar symptoms and have to be taken to the vet as well.

Parvo was ruled out but the Garlands had no idea what the dogs could have ingested. Hunter was so sick that he crashed and it took the vets 10 minutes to revive him.

By evening the dogs were at All Pets Emergency and Referral Center, a specialty veterinary hospital in Alpharetta, Georgia, just outside Atlanta. The doctors there had to rely on treating their symptoms since they didn't know what the dogs might have ingested. Mushrooms were suspected but no one had seen any on the Garlands' property. Hawk improved overnight and was able to go home the next day but Hunter continued to get worse. He was in critical condition in the intensive care unit. He was being treated for severe vomiting and bloody diarrhea that continued to leak out; and swelling of the brain with neurological symptoms. His pancreas, liver, and kidneys were all affected. According to the vets, the problems with the pancreas, liver, and kidneys could each individually kill him. He also had fluid in

his lungs which led to some pneumonia. His breathing was labored and he was on oxygen for several days.

The Garlands stayed with Hunter as much as possible, even sleeping in their car in the parking lot when they were asked to leave the building at night. After the first couple of days with Hunter still in the intensive care unit, Shelley and Steve began to take turns spending time with Hunter. That way one of them could be home with Hawk for a few hours. Hawk had rebounded and was acting like his old self again while his brother was still struggling to survive.

Checking the property, the Garlands did find a partly-eaten amaryllis bulb which is toxic to dogs. That provided an important clue to what had poisoned the two Setters. Hawk's reaction was typical of a dog that had eaten an amaryllis bulb. But Hunter's reaction was so extreme that the veterinarians believed he must have also eaten toxic mushrooms. It was only later that the Garlands finally found a mushroom on their property which seemed to confirm what the vets suspected.

After a week of round-the-clock treatment, treating one problem only to have another one pop up, Hunter was finally well enough to go home. He wasn't fully recovered but he was walking, eating, responding to quail feathers, and so happy to see his people. He could continue to recover at home taking medication and eating a special diet for a while.

Almost as soon as Hunter was taken to the vet, Shelley had turned to friends asking for prayers. Hundreds of friends on Facebook, including countless ESAA members and field trial people, sent prayers and Setter Zen, suggestions, and encouragement to Shelley, Steve, Hunter and Hawk for the next week. By the time Hunter was finally able to go home with the Garlands a week later, over 1000 messages of love and support had poured out on Shelley's Facebook page. In the darkest hours it looked like Hunter might not make it but with the work of Dr. Randy Itkin and the wonderful staff at All Pets Emergency and Referral Center, the love and devotion of Shelley and Steve, and so many prayers from the English Setter community, family, and friends, Hunter is back to sleeping next to his brother Hawk.

Deb Jauron, leaving a message for Shelley on Facebook, may have said it best: "As I have been reading all of the comments about your Facebook community praying for Hunter and Hawk I have to think about the movie, "It's A Wonderful Life," when everyone bombarded God with prayers for George Bailey. It seems like God is being bombarded with prayers for your boys. My prayers continue right along with a multitude of others!"

The next time someone asks you why you are part of a kennel club, tell them it's because we care so much about each other and our dogs. We do it all for love.

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