

Fall 2009 NEWSLETTER

Editor's Note

This newsletter concentrates on important aspects of Rescue, rehabilitation and socialization. When we train a rescued dog to walk off leash and to be socialized rehabilitation is sure to follow. It enjoys life to the fullest. We know what it's like to walk early in the morning, with our dogs off leash exuberant and friendly, rather than locked up in an apartment or backyard alone and apathetic.

To the Public Fall 2009

If you ask people what FIDO is they say that's the dog group that serves coffee and cake in Prospect Park once a month, have the blessing of the animals and a Holiday party. We do much more. FIDO is an activist group for off leash dogs and their owners. FIDO has a website where you can learn more about pets. We have kept in touch with NYC Department of Health to find out about diseases such as Leptospirosis, Rabies and Raccoon round worm. We write a newsletter and give handouts on important issues. "FIDO and NYC Dog" along with the Health and Park Departments are responsible for off leash becoming official in designated parks after a law suit brought in the Supreme Court tried to eradicate off leash in NYC, in 2006. We bought trash cans so we would have a place for dog waste, We fought for trash containers to be put in the park to control the trash in Prospect Park; We helped petition parks commissioner Adrian Benepe to have groups remove their own waste. We sponsored an event to help Hamilton Dog House, Sean Casey Rescue on Windsor Terrace. He has taken in snakes and birds as well as practicing wildlife rehabilitation. Sean rescues dogs and cats we find in the park. He cares for wounded animals. Call him if you find any. You can get in touch with Sean Casey by visiting our website at fidobrooklyn.org and click on 'rescue'. On October 15th we're holding an aging dog seminar at the Ethical Culture Society. There is help for older dogs. This meeting will address them. Look for future Seminars. Yes, FIDO does serve coffee, but that's not all. Contact us for information or if you need help with your dog or cat. We may be able to help.

By the President of FIDO, **Anthony Chiappelloni**

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It usually starts with a phone call

Someone calls about a rescued dog they can't handle or don't know what to do with, or I find out about a dog that needs a foster home and offer to help.

I am a real estate agent. For me, that means a six day work week. Where most take their one free day to relax, I spend most Saturdays volunteering for Mighty Mutts (www.mightymutts.net), an animal rescue group. We bring dogs we have rescued to Union Square in Manhattan every Saturday afternoon and try to find homes for them. Shortly after joining Mighty Mutts, I began to foster dogs for them. Since then, I have had many a "temp" dog to go along with Mikey and Shelly my "permanents". I cannot begin to tell you the joy I have gotten from bringing home and helping a dog that has suffered before coming in my front door. There has been more than a fair share of stress and hardship dealing with each new foster (ask me about housebreaking the dog who spent the first year of his life left in a vacant lot utterly neglected). However, it doesn't come close to the joy I've gotten from watching a dog that has suffered turn into a happy animal. There's nothing like feeling and seeing the now healthy and happy dog go to its new home.

The best experience I ever had fostering a dog was "One Eyed" Jack. Jack was the last of a litter of nine puppies from a former street dog. They were rescued from a Coney Island weed filled lot. Jack was born blind in his left eye (hence "One Eyed" Jack). Until I fostered him he was stuck in a group foster situation where he had little time to romp and play. He was shy and timid, afraid to go to the weekly adoption event until he was nine months old. When I met him he was withdrawn, fearful

and curled up in a ball. He refused all attention and attempts to take a walk. He would have to be carried to the van. Not an easy thing with a dog weighing over 50 pounds! My heart went out to Jack. I volunteered to foster him. Almost immediately I saw Jack flower and turn into a real dog. It started the first time he went to the park (Prospect of course), sleep in his own bed, played with children, snuggled with dogs and people who loved him. When I brought him to the next Mighty Mutts weekly adoption event everyone was shocked. Who was this happy playful dog whose tail was wagging a mile a minute? Soon afterwards Jack was adopted by a young couple who moved to Austin Texas. They are now the proud parents of Jack and a baby girl. They sent me a video, that still brings tears to my eyes. Jack's mommy is floating on her back in a Austin creek. Jack, formerly timid and scared, goes swimming for the first time out to her. I will never get over how I helped Jack grow from that frightened puppy to a happy dog with a family.

I walk both my dogs and my fosters in Prospect Park. Look for the tall, good looking guy with three dogs one wearing a vest saying "Adopt Me", that's me. The park is a key element in healing these wounded creatures. Frequently, like Jack, it's the first time they have experienced the rolling hills, grass and friendly people. The Coffee Bark is my personal adoption good luck charm. Therefore, I help sponsor it. Every time I have brought a dog for adoption to the Bark it found a home before the next one came along. People ask all the time if it's hard to give up the dogs I foster. Sure it is; however, the feeling I get seeing these dogs go to there new forever homes more than makes up for it. Many people I encounter in Prospect Park feel and do the same. You should try fostering yourself sometime. It's good for the soul and will warm your heart.

By **Robert Herskovitz**

P1 Editor Betty Dowling, Theme of the newsletter Letter from The President of FIDO Anthony Chiappelloni Rescue, fostering and socializing dogs By Robert Herskovitz cartoon By Howard Spielman

P2 You do What? By Paul Kowacki

P3 Steering Committee of FIDO In Prospect Park

Dog of the Month Boo By Michele Sevik

P4 Fido membership form

Our New Dog Calendar for 2010 is here

Future Events

Steering Committee meetings will be held at Litchfield Villa from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm Future meeting dates are listed below.

October 12, November 9, 2009

In 2010 Steering Committee meetings at Litchfield Villa

January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, and May 10

Dog Show You're invited! email clairecarrio@gmail.com

Saturday October 17th, 2009 Time: 12:30 pm & 2 pm

Near Grand Army Plaza at the corner of Union St and Prospect Park West, in front of the PPW Senior Residence.

Senior Dog Seminar Thursday, October 15th

Where: Ethical Culture Society (PPWest at 1st St.)

Time: 7 pm to 9 pm. How to help your older dogs.

Canine Rehabilitation is on the cutting edge of holistic care for dogs. Just as humans have benefited from the explosion of proper exercise and diet, so can our canine friends. Many of the treatments available to humans are now available to dogs such as: Therapeutic Exercise, Massage, Laser Light Therapy etc. Nancy Keness, who specializes in rehabilitation will address all issues.

FIDO Coffee Barks, south side of Picnic House, Saturdays from 7am to 9am

Coffee Bark November 7

Coffee Bark December 5

Bark The Herald Angels Sing. December 12, 7am to 10am

The Biggest Dog Party in the World! Sing your favorite holiday songs. Have your dogs picture taken with Santa.

Coffee Bark January 9, 2010 **Coffee Bark** February 6

Coffee Bark March 6 **Coffee Bark** April 3.

FIDO Memorial Service For Departed Dogs. May 15, 2010 North of the dog

Beach. near the Hillock of elms on the Long Meadow at the bottom path



You do what?

My wife Chris and I drive from central Massachusetts, with our dogs, into New York City, for off-leash activity. Four hours each way, 400 miles round trip, with one, two, or three dogs. We leave by two am, to be in the park in the City by six am. We do this so they can play with other dogs. This has been going on for five years; we've had them in the parks as often as twice in a week. To people we meet, apparently it sounds extreme, and they typically do a double take: You do what? Actually, it's easy to understand, if you look at it objectively.

We are regulars in Prospect Park, usually the Long Meadow. Often we make Coffee Bark, and other Saturdays, but we've been there on Sundays, and weekdays. We come to Prospect Park most often, but our dogs have also been in several of the fenced dog runs, including Tompkins Square and Union Square Parks in Manhattan, and Little Bay Park in Queens. They also walk the Brooklyn Bridge regularly. Originally we were coming to the new fenced run in Little Bay Park, a gorgeous park on the water at the base of the Throgs Neck Bridge. We still love Little Bay Park, and still go there often. At home we live on a quiet country road, surrounded by forest; we don't bring our dogs to the City for the space to run, or just to play, but rather for the socialization that occurs while they interact in these large, loose, packs.

Our dog family has evolved over the years, varying in number, recently all golden retrievers. Way back, they were mostly normal, healthy dogs, with no issues. Then, 14 years ago, Chris came home with Sam, an 8 week old pup with a medical problem which was thought to be terminal. She nursed him for months, he came around, and we had the finest dog that ever lived. A few years later we heard of another golden, one who was in trouble, stuck in a shelter, with a tough history. Sebastian was three years old; he'd spent his first two years locked in a basement, with no contact with the outside world, then spent a year in a no-kill shelter, not a lot better off. He was without the basic social skills, and uncontrollable. And he was violent; he gave Chris fractures, twice. And we were in over our heads. Sebastian's story continues below, but despite the challenges, over time we became intrigued by this un-socialized golden retriever, and brought home another, Sugar, and then our most recent, Sista Daisy, for a current total of three mal-socialized dogs. Remember the Belushi movie Animal House?

Using Sebastian as an example, I'll show why we value off-leash so highly. Our local AKC chapter has some good problem-solving instructors. They were great, and Sebastian went through their series of obedience courses, ultimately earning his Canine Good Citizen certificate. But it wasn't easy: he was so out-of-control in his first class that two other participants quit. And there's much more, but we persisted. He did very well when controlled, but there remained a sort of disconnect, a distance, a lack of interpersonal contact. He was energetic, seemed to want to play with us, but remained detached. A psychologist might classify him as a sociopath. I took to call it Detachment Disorder, and assumed it was a result of missing the interpersonal, or inter-dog, activity, as a pup, to develop the neural pathways for appropriate interactive behavior. We puzzled about what to do.

One thing I had noticed was that he was markedly more interactive with me, for perhaps up to an hour, after having been engaged with other dogs, whether performing routines in class, or after play. We realized that we, and his "siblings", were a pack, or family, for him, but it seemed that our contact with him, alone, was not sufficient to keep him in a more interactive state. Then, one fateful day in the Spring of 2005 we were visiting friends in Whitestone, Queens, and noticed the new fenced run at Little Bay Park, and I thought maybe.....

So we took Sebastian. It was fabulous. He played freely with other dogs, but also I developed some specific training exercises to increase his contact with the people and dogs there, and to increase his ability to focus and pay attention to me. And it worked. He soon began to interact with me when I addressed him, and to react with people more directly, and to other dogs more appropriately. I believe what happened is that, being in this situation with a variety of unfamiliar and random, but socially appropriately-behaving dogs, able to interact freely, he was able to participate in countless social interactions "that worked". Enough so, perhaps, that his underdeveloped neural pathways for social interaction were stimulated repeatedly enough to begin to program them to function more normally.

Members may not realize it, but FIDO is legendary in the other parks. It wasn't long before I'd heard of this group in Prospect Park, doing off-leash in the most fabulous ways. So, we checked it out; I got The Tour with then-FIDO president Mary McInerney, and the rest is history. The past few years, in Prospect Park, have been spectacular. The people, the dogs, the Park, they are the greatest. We have since rehabilitated two more goldens that were to be euthanized, Sugar and Sista Daisy. Actually, we didn't rehabilitate them, it was the dogs, and people, in Prospect Park that did that.

There's much more to be said, about the socialization that dogs experience, and provide, during these off-leash activities. Behavioral scientists may want to study this more closely. For ourselves, though, and especially for our dogs, there is no question as to why we would drive all the way to Brooklyn, and whether it's worth it.

By Paul Kowacki

*Paul and Chris Kowacki with
Sugar, Sebastian, Sista Daisy, and Sam*



The Steering Committee Of FIDO In Prospect Park as of October first.



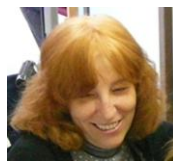
Anthony Chiappelloni
President of FIDO
Green Team Captain
Come to the Peninsula!
FIDO, praised by the
Prospect Park Alliance
for participation in
keeping our park Clean.



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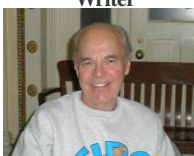
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FIDO News Letter
coordinator Coffee Bark
Photographer, writer



Garry Osgood
Calendar Chair
Membership Chair



Robert Herskovitz
An Advocate for Dogs
Fosters dogs in his home,
writer, our only Resource
for pet friendly housing



Brian Henry
Green Team Captain
Come to the Long Meadow



Dog of the Month Boo Prospect Park was Boo's Retirement Haven

Early in the morning I put on Boo's "suitcase" harness, lift his old bones onto a bright red Radio Flyer Wagon and head to Prospect Park, with my two year old grand dog Mujo. At the lake I meet Carole whose dog, Sammy, died a few weeks ago. Soon I will go through that painful experience with Boo. Carole and I talk about how Prospect Park is perfect for healing and socialization of reserved dogs. Suddenly I see a skinny wide eyed dog at her side. Major, a dog rescued by Carole, is lucky to have a new great home in Prospect Park.

When we enter the Peninsula, Tony, the president of FIDO, is picking up trash, so is Betty, The Editor and chief of this newsletter. Boo, surrounded by old friends, totters out of his wagon and greets 16 year old Baisley, nine year old Puff Daddy, 12 year old Jake, nine year old Molly and younger friends George, Suki and Fuzz. He then lies down with 17 year old Belgium Sheepdog Brandy.

Boo is dying of old age. He is almost 16 years old. We have been together 15 of the best years of my life. When we met Boo he was the smallest dog in a hoarder's small yard. The dogs were knee deep in feces, abused by neglect and lack of socialization. Boo was the only dog to let us near him. He came home with us and never left. Boo fell in love with our dog Bird.

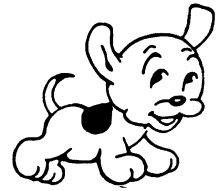
For most of Bird and Boo's life we lived in Ithaca where he was inseparable from our Belgian Sheepdog Malamute (Bird). Boo is a wild animal. Tamed but never domesticated, he's always been tolerant of other animals, but he's no pushover. When he was young he ran through tangled forests, over fallen logs and swam in cool lakes. Now, Prospect Park has been his perfect retirement place. He is able to walk on grassy well tended Meadows and rest his old bones as he floats serenely in the warm water of the dog beach.

A year or two ago, when we first moved to Brooklyn, Boo still played, barking loudly for attention, his wild howling impressed all. These days he's content to sniff fascinating places and doze in the sun surrounded by friends. Our young dog Mujo plays with unfettered enthusiasm along with Opa, Kia, Chinta, Ninja, Remy, Belly, Patches, Ship, Layla, Colin, Kodiak, Koru, and Shayna, while Boo and I rest in the cool shade. Without Prospect Park I couldn't walk my dogs since they move at radically different speeds.

We both have made dozens of friends, walking through the park. People stop and talk. This would never happen if I walked without my dogs. Gregariousness leads to social bonding and thanks to FIDO Boo is still alive. I have people to discuss Boo's problems with, help in finding answers to my concerns and veterinarians I can trust. For the last three weeks the only times Boo ate is when he returned home from the park. The interaction of dogs smelling, licking and people petting him kept him alive through the summer.

On September 10, 2009, after going to the park lying in the grass and staying with friends, Boo took a turn for the worse. Ella, Puff Daddy's mom helped me with him as we raced to the animal hospital. He died on September 11, 2009. He was my son I am grateful for his love. Thank you FIDO and everyone who helped.

Author Michele Sevik
Boo died loved by all.



Fellowship in the interest of dogs and their owners

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Email Fidobrooklyn@gmail.com web address www.fidobrooklyn.org
_____ \$50. _____ \$25. _____ \$15. _____ Other _____ Dues are suggested, its up to you.
Whatever you can afford

Name: _____

Dogs names: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email address _____

Please send my copy of the Newsletter by U.S.. Mail Hold the email

FIDO would like to know ...

On behalf of dogs, their owners and the parks? (*Circle the letter of the one or two most important sentiments to you.*)

- A. the importance of promoting off-leash activities for all dogs and their owners
- B. to protect off-leash and other dog and owner rights that maybe threatened.
- C. To promote use of Prospect Park and the diversity of it's activities.
- D. I like being part of this group, enjoy the social opportunities and being able to help.
- E. I support off leash politically and financially, but have limited free time.

Your comments suggestions, gripes or compliments for FIDO, Prospect Park or other, will help.