



by Jackie Perrone

Kelli Howell

Kelli Howell fell in love with a German Shepherd dog when she was a little girl. She never got over it, and today, hundreds of these special dogs have her to thank for their lives and their happy homes.

"They are so special," she says. "Sometimes they are thought of as fierce or dangerous, but that trait comes out only when they feel threatened or scared." A German Shepherd can be your sweet, faithful and loving companion for many years, according to this caregiver, and fitting the right dog to the right family is an action she loves to complete. Rescue mission, indeed! She can't reform the whole world, but one dog at a time can settle into a home because of the Carolina German Shepherd Rescue mission she founded.

Kelli grew up in Barnwell, and graduated from USC-Aiken before marrying and settling down in Leesville. Now she is a single mother of three, and did not tackle this project until her youngest was in kindergarten several years ago. She teaches math at Gilbert Middle

School, and devotes her personal time to the Rescue Service.

"I am the owner, founder and president of this service," she reports. "I am based in Leesville, but we serve areas of North Carolina and Georgia also. 'We' means four dedicated women who believe in doing what we can to save these wonderful animals from being put down at overcrowded shelters.

"We work with two shelters locally, the Lexington County Animal Shelter and the City of Columbia shelter on Humane Lane. Also, sometimes puppies are offered on Craigslist, and we save them as well." Their records show that about 200 dogs are saved every year at this rescue port.

Kelli praises two other individuals whose expertise contributes to their efforts. "I have a colleague in California who handles our Web page, and I could not possibly do this without the help of Dr. Tim Loonam, a veterinarian who operates Grace Animal Hospital in Lexington. He is always there for me with advice and help and discounts. They both believe in our program and do a lot to help it succeed."

The work accomplished at this Rescue Service is challenging and constant. A rescued dog must have a careful medical evaluation and the treatment necessary to bring him/her back to health. Every dog has an individual temperament; special attention is given to identifying the ones who relate well to children. And training can overcome what may be poor habits or problems due to neglect or abuse.

Adoption or fostering are the two avenues available for saving these dogs. It's satisfying when one can be settled permanently into a loving home. Sometimes, while that process is ongoing, volunteers may volunteer to foster a dog that is waiting for a home.

Every effort is made to keep fees low so that families can afford to take on the care of this pet. Fees may vary from \$150 to \$500, assuring that health and safety issues have been addressed, and part of the fee goes to the continuing work.

Carolina German Shepherd Rescue is a 501©3 non-profit organization; donations are tax- deductible and always appreciated. carolinagsrescue.com ■

