



BRIAN LEWIS/THE GAZETTE

husband, Norman Marks (not pictured), adopted Leopold, a three-legged rescue dog, in the Purina's national Rally to Rescue ambassador contest. The winner will promote ani-

Down, Gaithersburg dog rescue ambassador

MORE ONLINE

To vote in the Purina Rally to Rescue contest, go to www.rallytorescue.org before Oct. 1.

family in Wisconsin to nurse him back to health.

The foster family created a blog to document his story, which Marks found one Saturday morning.

"Norman was almost choked up and showed me this dog he'd found on the Internet," Benkendorf said. Leopold had such a courageous and endearing story. This dog just really needed a family like ours."

They filled out the adoption papers that day. Leopold arrived a few weeks later, in April.

Leopold's story now has gone national. Benkendorf and Marks found out in June Leopold was named one of 10 finalists in Purina dog's Rally to Rescue contest, an annual program that promotes animal rescue adoptions. One dog will win a public vote to become the organization's ambassador for the next year. If Leopold wins, Great Lakes Weimaraner Rescue will get \$5,000 in dog food.

The experience of adopting

Leopold already has turned Benkendorf and Marks into rescue ambassadors, they said.

"I've learned to appreciate the whole rescue movement. It is so compelling," Marks said. "There are so many dogs or cats that need homes. And I'm sure most of them are like Leo; they're just nice, sweet dogs that need homes."

Leopold has been faring well so far.

He weighs 60 pounds — and must keep the weight down with only three legs — but loves to snack on long licks of hummus. He can open all the doors in the house, chases birds at the dog park and licks the dishes clean before Benkendorf or Marks loads the dishwasher at night. One of his favorite pastimes is sleeping on the family's couch with their other Weimaraner, 5-year-old Lucy.

Benkendorf and Marks say they've never regretted adopting a dog with three legs, nor do they really notice Leopold's stump.

"He has no medical needs now. There's nothing any different that we do for Leopold than what we do for Lucy," Benkendorf said. "He's got a lot of energy and a lot of love. He's such a fighter and so brave."

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The mural of the story

Gaithersburg mom heads effort to get rid of vandalism

BY DANIELLE E. GAINES
STAFF WRITER

At the edge of Brian Court near Kelley Park, a wall used to greet residents with new messages every week — and not polite ones.

"Horrible words, horrible pictures" is how Lesley Estrada, a mother of two, described it.

The city painted over the graffiti tags every few weeks at the residents' requests, but the vandalism continued.

So Estrada thought of a new deterrent: replace the blank white canvas with a mural painted by the neighborhood's children. She asked the city for permission and learned the Newport Estates III homeowners association was responsible for the wall.

With the association's permission, Estrada soon was in possession of three cans of donated paint from Home Depot, which she and her 14- and 2-year-old sons mixed for more hues.

"Welcome to Newport Estates," they wrote, in big bubble letters on a hot Thursday afternoon.

The following Saturday, July 31, the neighborhood hosted a National Night Out event, to get people out of their homes and into the community as a crime deterrent. About 25 neighborhood children showed up to dip their hands in paint.

After the color was rolled onto their palms, the kids raised their hands and took an oath from Gaithersburg Police Chief Mark P. Sroka.

"It was their promise and com-

HOW TO HELP

Lesley Estrada is looking for volunteers for a new neighborhood watch program. Interested residents can sign up at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewportEstatesIIIHOA>.

mitment to their family that they would be law-abiding children and teenagers," he said.

Then they squished their handprints into the wall to create colorful flowers.

"We decided if we had the kids do handprints on the wall, when they came home from school they would see it as their wall, their neighborhood," Estrada said. "It gives them a sense of pride."

Officer Dan Lane, police spokesman, said the department received three reports of vandalism in the neighborhood in the past two years, but Estrada said the problem was much more widespread.

Sroka said isolated incidents of disorderly conduct, vandalism and drugs were the main issues in the area.

Estrada said the event and the wall already have had an impact.

"I'm not saying everything will change overnight, but something can grow from this," she said.

Estrada is looking for volunteers for a new neighborhood watch program. Interested residents can volunteer at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewportEstatesIIIHOA>.

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In the Newport Estates III neighborhood of Gaithersburg, Lesley Estrada spearheaded a campaign to convert a graffiti-covered retaining wall into a community mural. City officials and police officers helped with the project. Pictured at the wall are (from left) Bodhi Estrada, 2; Lesley Estrada, 32; George Estrada, 31; and Sebastian Matson-Estrada, 14.