

Freedom For The Paws R Us Dogs Roseann L. Vorce

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The news broke in mid September: "Hundreds of Dogs Seized Near Shawville Quebec!" Finally, the infamous puppy mill "Paws R Us" (PRU) had been raided by government authorities, and all the dogs were seized. There was much joy about this development in the rescue dog world! Over 500 dogs of various breeds had been placed in crates and loaded onto trucks for transport to an emergency facility. Humane Society Internationale (HSI) was given the monumental task of caring for the dogs until their legal status was decided.

Keeshond Rescue Ontario (KRO) had known all about PRU. Two young adult male Keeshonden from PRU had been fostered and placed by KRO in the past year. The dogs had lived in horrific conditions at PRU, and they were far from normal when they arrived in foster care. It was almost a certainty that Keeshond breeding stock were among the hundreds of dogs seized in the raid. However, no one knew how many Keeshonden were involved, although a reasonable guess was 1 stud dog and 3-4 brood bitches.

Magen, a long-time Keeshond owner and KRO Director, volunteered to serve as the liaison between KRO and HSI. Magen ferreted out the appropriate procedure for a rescue group to become eligible for consideration as a recipient of dogs in HSI's care, and she took the necessary steps for KRO to be placed on the "Approved" list to take any Keeshonden involved. At this point, there had been no confirmation that Keeshonden were included in the seized dogs, although a HSI volunteer reported seeing one in a crate at the emergency shelter.

KRO administration was committed to taking custody of as many Keeshonden as possible, but it was difficult to plan without knowing **if** they would be released, **if** KRO would be selected to take custody, **when** the dogs would arrive, and **how many** dogs were involved. General plans were made, but the details had to wait until more information was available.

HSI was overwhelmed with offers of help from many rescue groups and individuals, so Magen monitored the situation from afar by searching the internet daily for any news articles or blog entries involving the PRU dogs. It then became a waiting game - the dogs could go nowhere until the courts decided their fate. The outcome that rescuers everywhere hoped for was that the dogs would be released to rescue groups or for adoption. Unfortunately, another possible outcome was return of the dogs to a horrendous life at PRU.

The days turned into weeks, and the weeks turned into months, and the wait seemed interminable. Finally, more than two months after the raid, the court decision was announced: all dogs were transferred to Anima-Quebec! The owners of PRU pled guilty to charges of animal cruelty, and they did not get to keep **any** of the dogs! The life sentence of the PRU dogs had been commuted, and rescuers were able to start the daunting task of rehabilitating dogs that had had no experience living life as a normal dog.

Magen was contacted by the HSI volunteer on November 25, the day after the court decision. "Can you pick up 1 adult male and 3 adult females on Thursday, December 1? They will be spayed or neutered on Wednesday, and we need to get them out of here." This was the first confirmation that there were Keeshonden among the seized dogs, that KRO would get them, and the number of dogs involved. Nonetheless, Magen agreed to take the dogs without hesitation. She then contacted the other KRO administration members to plan the next move.

Plans progressed quickly, although there was quite a scramble to find foster homes for four puppy mill dogs. Marie-France picked up the dogs from the temporary shelter and housed them until Saturday. Magen and Kelly picked up the dogs from Marie-France and drove them back to Magen's house, where they spent the night. Magen and Kelly departed the next morning to deliver three of the dogs to their foster families, leaving Lief at Magen's house for foster care. First stop was Mississauga to meet Tammy and her husband Chris from Niagara Falls, who became Grieta's foster family. They continued on to Orillia to drop off Brody, the stud dog, with his foster mom Cheryl. The final stop was in Newmarket, where they delivered Daisy to Marlene. All four dogs were placed in foster care with experienced Keeshond rescuers only **9 days** after KRO was asked to take them, thanks to the incredible generosity and cooperation of the KRO volunteers.

To everyone's surprise, HSI contacted Magen again two weeks later, asking if four Keeshond puppies also could be transferred to KRO's care. Although the puppies had been born at PRU, they had spent most of their lives in foster care near Montreal. Of course, the answer was "Yes!" Magen's father, Richard, volunteered to make the drive back to LaChute QC, where he picked up three of the four puppies. The last puppy, Tug, was recovering from surgery to amputate a non-functioning rear leg, and the HSI vet didn't want him to travel so far only a day after surgery. Fortunately, a volunteer from another organization transported Tug to Belleville later in the week, where Magen picked him up. The driver informed Magen that Tug was the very last of the hundreds of PRU dogs to leave the shelter! All four puppies spent several days with Magen before Tug and Astra went to Gail in North

Bay for foster care. Magen fostered one male and one female puppy, assuming, correctly, that it wouldn't take long for puppies to find their forever homes.

To communicate with people interested in the progress of the puppy mill dogs KRO had acquired, a Facebook group was started. "KRO Puppy Mill Dogs" has been a great forum for transmitting information, from sharing the small successes each day brings to discussing issues common to puppy mill dogs to laughing at the "Brody Body Fling". All of the foster families have been great about posting updates, pictures, and videos of the dogs. The social development of all the dogs has been remarkable, thanks to the efforts of their foster families to teach them to trust people.

Not surprisingly, applications to adopt the dogs have come pouring in, especially after the dogs were listed on Petfinder. So far, the two puppies Magen fostered, Axel and Liza, have gone to their new homes. An application has been approved for the adoption of Lief, although she is not quite ready for her new home yet. Applications for the other dogs are being processed, and most will be placed within the next few weeks. A home for Tug has not appeared yet, but the right family is out there.

The successful rescue of the KRO puppy mill dogs was possible only through the tireless efforts of many, many people. Everyone's contribution matters, whether it's support with a comment on the Facebook group wall, driving hours across the province to move dogs, monetary donations, suggesting a person to do a home visit for a distant applicant, or fostering a puppy mill dog. Although KRO's motto is "Rescue One", when it mattered, it was expanded to "Rescue Eight!"