

## PERSPECTIVE

# Earplugs free with every hound

Fosterer recounts the joys (and noise) of the dogs that pass through her home.

Every foster dog affects her fosterer's life. I think back fondly on the funny, cute, and loving dogs who have passed through our home in the past seven years.

A few dogs I wish I'd kept, but mostly I'm glad that I have placed them in good homes with loving, responsible owners.

Some dogs you remember because they presented a particular challenge by chewing, digging, or barking too much. Perhaps they were difficult to houstrain or loved to counter cruise. Kate was one of those rare foster dogs who did it all.

Found wandering in southern Houston, the young hound mix had followed her nose and gotten herself lost. A local rescue group was willing to help her if I would foster her. I named her Kate in honor of a local hound rescuer. Often when I was scrambling to figure out which dog to correct, I'd simply yell "Get that hound!" as she tipped trash, peed on rugs, danced over furniture, and ripped up any paper she could find.

For the many weeks she was in my house, I thought I was losing my mind: Things I set on the kitchen counter had mysteriously vanished when I returned to the kitchen. Every item presented a challenge to her. I was programmed to say, "Kate, off!" whenever I heard a noise in the kitchen.

She also had a true hound bay. "Aaahhhrooooo!" she would yell, her mouth a tiny circle pointed straight up in the air. She bawled when she was happy, frustrated, sad, playful, or trying to get food or attention.

One day I had an inquiry from a couple, so my husband Walt and I took Kate to their house to do the home visit and let them have a look at her. Kate took to them



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**Left: Fosterer April Warchol gets a kiss from Kate. Right: Kate and friend.**

right away, and the couple decided to try her to see how they'd all get along. The first night, they gave a glowing report. Four days later, I tentatively checked on her. They loved her. Two weeks later, they signed her adoption papers, changed her name to Maggie, and enrolled her in obedience training classes.

Five weeks later, I went to her graduation. As I approached, I saw Kate stiffen, turn, see me, and jump straight up in the air. Then she started to bawl. I tried to sit down unnoticed as she stared at me, straining at her collar and yelling like a toddler on a sugar high.

As soon as she got her certificate, her proud family brought her over, and she covered my face with kisses. Every correction I had ever given her was forgiven as she made apparent her joy at seeing my husband and me again. What a good dog she had become under the tutelage of this loving family! They sung her praises; she

could do no wrong.

That night I thought about the joys of dog rescue — taking a dog to the edge of a new life and letting her go.

When people ask me how I can foster dogs, then let them go, I always tell them, "Fostering is the sweetest heartbreak you will ever know." How do we stand it? We love, we hope, we act as their advocates, and when one more finds a good home, we rejoice.

The gratification we get from helping a dog enter her next life is something I can't fully describe, but I encourage any dog lover to give fostering a try. Even the most challenging dogs teach us a great deal about ourselves. In fact, I think I have learned the most from the Kates who have come and gone, leaving their gnaw marks on my heart and their voices echoing in my memory. 🐾

*April Warchol works fulltime as a wife, mother, and community volunteer in Kingwood, Texas.*

DOG FANCY would like to know what part dogs have played in your life. If you have a humorous, touching, or inspirational tale, send it to Perspective, DOG FANCY, P.O. Box 6050, Mission Viejo, CA 92690-6050; perspective@dogfancy.com