

LIFESTYLE

## Vallejo couple thrilled with senior dogs

'Lily's Legacy' gives hope to aging canines



Jan and Dan Miller of Vallejo are happy with their senior dog, Kiera. Behind the dog is the Miller's daughter. (Courtesy Photo)

---

By **RICHARD FREEDMAN** | [rreedman@timesheraldonline.com](mailto:rreedman@timesheraldonline.com) | Vallejo

It was roughly six years ago and Dan and Jan Miller had zero interest in welcoming a dog into their Vallejo home.

“I had gone years without wanting a dog. Our kids were in junior high school and we were busy doing stuff all the time,” Dan said. “We didn’t want to have a dog that would have to be boarded or in the home alone most of the time, so I resisted.”

But in 2013, Jan’s brother had an older Labrador retriever — “Shaggy” — he couldn’t keep any more.

“So she convinced me to have Shaggy here,” Dan said. “It was an epiphany for me.”

Though Miller said he loved dogs as a kid, “I thought people were getting ridiculous over dogs” in pampering of their pooches.

No matter. Shaggy became an instant member of the Miller household.

“He and I became fast friends,” Dan said. “I was home with him all day.”

Shaggy died around four months ago at the ripe age of 13. According to Pedigree.com, that’s equivalent to a 96-year-old human.

“We wanted to get another dog but didn’t want a puppy,” Dan said. “We just gone done raising kids. I didn’t want to raise a puppy. I didn’t want to go through the potty training and all the shots.”

Jan searched around and found Lily’s Legacy Senior Dog Sanctuary in Petaluma.

Celebrating its 10th year of “rescuing, rehabilitating, and re-homing of senior large-breed dogs,” Lily’s Legacy was founded by Alice Mayn in memory of Lily, her 14-year-old golden retriever she had fostered.

“We went to their website, found out what they were about, visited them a couple of times, and brought ‘Banjo’ home,” Dan said. “He reminded us of Shaggy.”

Before the Millers could adopt the new — though old — canine, a Lily’s rep came to their house “to make sure it’s dog friendly and secure so the dog couldn’t get out,” Dan said. “We went and picked up Banjo a week later.”

“It’s like getting a pre-fab home,” Dan said of the senior dog.” They know what they like. They’re happy. It was just easier for me. They love you unconditionally as long as you treat them right.”

Because of their age, the obvious down part of adopting an elderly dog is their lifespan, Miller confirmed. Banjo was with the Millers a little less than two years.

“You know they’re not going to be around 15 years, but it’s satisfying giving the old guy an old dog,” said Dan.

“It was very difficult but it was the right thing to do. It’s like losing a family member,” Dan said. “He wasn’t himself any more. He was a fantastic dog and very happy with his tail always wagging. He was a really good dog. he’d lay down or sit in front of the TV so you would see him.”

After a few months, the Millers sought another dog. And they found “Kiera” at Lily’s Legacy.

Initially, the Millers fostered Kiera.

“We didn’t plan to adopt,” Dan said, laughing that “they knew well that we would never bring that dog back.”

Kiera’s been with the Millers 3 1/2 years.

“She’s a nice, gentle, sweet dog,” Dan said of the part Chow, part Lab. “She’s very

According to Lily's Legacy website, there are about 14,000 animal rescue organizations nationwide, but less than 40 are dedicated exclusively to senior dogs.

Lily's Legacy is a volunteer run nonprofit.

"There's a misconception that large senior dogs are hard to adopt out and that's really not the case," Mayn said in a press release. "The majority of them just need a loving home and second chance and that's why we're here."

Lily's Legacy was able to purchase their "forever home," a 5-acre property in Petaluma, with the help of a generous benefactor, but they still "deeply rely on continued donations to operate the nonprofit," Mayn said.

*For more, visit [lilyslegacy.org](http://lilyslegacy.org).*



**Richard  
Freedman**