



THE WOLFWOOD Wayfarer

June 2011

WolfWood Refuge

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Welcome to our twelfth newsletter!

I cannot believe I have been writing the newsletter for six years now. That is amazing to me. For those of you who have been receiving the newsletter during that time, you know I always try to remain positive and share with you all of the good things that are happening here at the refuge. But now something has happened that is the single biggest threat to the work we do in the past 10 years. I want and need to share this struggle with all of you.

For the past fifteen years, WolfWood has been educating the public about wolves, wolf/dogs, rescue work and the importance of the natural world in our lives. We are already regulated by both the state and the county and regularly inspected. We see thousands of people every year, with only positive results. Almost all of you have had a personal encounter with one of our ambassador animals. We never once have charged for anyone to see our animals, tour the refuge or for school and youth programs. Yet the USDA has decided that we are "animal exhibitors" and now need to be licensed through them also. Someone brought us specifically to their attention. We have had a preliminary inspection. It was very frustrating because we do not fit into their normal parameters and many of their regulations just aren't applicable to us. Our primary purpose is to save lives and they regulate show animals and animals used in medical testing. The problem is, that according to the USDA, there is no leeway when applying the rules. For example, all our dog houses must have a wind and rain barrier, even though the wolves are comfortable at -20. The suggestion was to use the plastic strips that cover the doorways of freezers and coolers on the doghouse entrances. Well, that won't work. We wanted suggestions for our travel trailer as it does not meet requirements. It was suggested we use a horse trailer. Well, that won't work. We could build a big silo for our dog food. Ummmm no. We need a "This End Up" sign with an arrow on our giant truck cage. Well, that's just silly. We need to cover the entire perimeter of every pen with dirt over the cow panel. This is not a bad idea since, even though we don't get foot injuries, it could happen. But again, very labor intensive to do within the time limits. We do have 70 animals. And each one is going to need a new dog house. (Both labor and cost intensive.) It is all crazy making. And once we are licensed, they can come and inspect us at anytime, fine us for any real or imaginary fault and basically regulate us out of our life's work. How ironic it is that we battled and overcame so many obstacles to build the special and safe place that WolfWood is, and it may be the Animal Welfare Act that causes us to stop our programs.

The good news is we are working as hard as we can to comply. And the inspectors said that the animals were all in great shape and obviously very happy and healthy and well cared for. This, as you all know, is what matters most. The bad news is we only have until July 15th to be done or we have to wait 6 months to reapply, basically shutting us down for the whole summer. And of course they can't inspect us in the dead of winter, so we will lose almost an entire year.

So here is what I am asking from you. It is not a monetary donation, but a few minutes of your time. We need you to write a letter on our behalf. Lynne has done the leg work and gotten the e-mails and fax numbers of whom to contact. We are launching a POSITIVE letter writing campaign. We ask that you take a minute to tell them what WolfWood has meant to you and ask them to be sure that we are allowed to continue in our educational and public event work. We already have made an impact by beginning the letter campaign with schools and other organizations. Even if you are from out of state, your voice will be heard.

Thank you so much for taking the time to help. This is really scary for us. On page 6 of the newsletter is the information and a form letter you can use. Or you can write your own, just please remember that we want to represent ourselves in a positive way. If you would take the time to do this, it would really make a difference. And if you can shovel dirt or paint a dog house, let us know!!!!

Volunteers

WolfWood currently has a small, but extremely dedicated group of volunteers. Our volunteers are the heart of this organization and help take care of and save lives every day. Neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow, nor even MUD keeps them from their duties.



Tanya, Bronte and Ben



Serena

NEW VOLUNTEERS

Ben Ehlers: Ben has returned to WolfWood. He was an intern here several years ago. He recently moved to the Durango area primarily to be with the animals here. Ben comes three times a week and works very hard. Ben's parents are strong WolfWood supporters as well. The wolves love Ben and so do we!

Serena Mancha: Serena is our newest volunteer. She plays soccer for Ft. Lewis, where she is a sophomore. She is dedicated and will train to be a tour guide. She has a job as a vet tech at Riverview animal hospital, and would like to follow her friend and roommate, Colleen, and become a vet. She is a great addition to the WolfWood family.

NEW ARRIVALS



Athena



Riley

ATHENA: Athena came to us from the Aztec shelter. She is not a wolf/dog, she is a malamute. She is eight years old and the shelter could not adopt her, so we helped them out and saved her. All the volunteers have fallen in love with her. We hope to find her a home where she will be loved and get lots of attention. In the meantime she is safe and happy here at WolfWood.

RILEY: Riley came to us all the way from Texas, where she had been mistakenly identified as a wolf/dog. The shelter there could not adopt her because wolf/dogs are illegal there. They paid to have her flown to Denver where Colleen, one of our volunteers, picked her up. She was a cute, 7 month old husky that has already found a loving home.

Meet our Wolves

In each newsletter we feature some of our wolves.



Juno



Siren



Rowan

JUNO, SIREN AND ROWAN

This motley crew is a perfect example of some of the eclectic and wonderful work that goes on here at the refuge. This unlikely trio all live together in one enclosure and consider themselves family. Juno is a mid to low percentage wolf/dog. When she came to us she had just had pups, but they were not with her. Shortly after her arrival, we got a call from a woman claiming to have a litter of “Mexican red wolves.” We assured her there was no such thing, but she insisted. Of course the group did not have an ounce of wolf in them, but we agreed to take them out of their bad situation and brought them home for Juno to foster. She was a great mom and we found homes for all the puppies with the help of the La Plata Humane Society, except Siren, who we kept to be Juno’s pen mate.

Last year, Rowan came to us from Pueblo, the same shelter where we got his sisters, Akayla and Trinity. Even though he has floppy ears, he is a high percentage animal. Despite being very large he was lonely and skittish when he came, bonding to only a few people. We decided to see if the girls liked him and, lo and behold, they did! It is such a unique combination of sizes, percentages and personalities, yet they find a way to make it all work despite their obvious differences. Maybe we should all take a lesson in acceptance and tolerance from our happy and mixed up family here at WolfWood.



Colleen and Craig at graduation



Teesha and Joel



My sister and dad come to visit and get wolfie lovin' from Pan and Rufio



Tessha and Matok



New woodstove for warmth



Snow at the end of May for no reason



Snowmobile for getting supplies up hill



New cargo container for food storage



Sled for snowmobile

THANKS

It has been a rough six months at WolfWood. It is all of you who get us through the hard times. Your support of kindness and donations is what keeps us going. To all of our volunteers who have dug even deeper and given even more, you are our lifeline. Shur-valu grocery in Ignacio, Harry Cole, Foxfire Farms and people cleaning out their freezers kept the wolves in meat all winter. And after record breaking lows, we finally got a woodstove. Tanya and Joel did the tile work and built the hearth. Bill, Joel's father installed the stove. What a difference heat makes! Meg designed new t-shirts, Joanne Roth designed new cards, Monica designed new jewelry and Tanya designed metal wolf sculptures. The Dunn's financed the new food storage container and are helping with the USDA. The Dalzell's funded the snowmobile and sled and are also making major contributions to the USDA process. Colleen's Father (yes, that's his name) has taken over our website and is doing a terrific job. Lynne has done so much work on our letter writing campaign, Ben moved a ton of dog food and at least that much dirt, and Joel builds at least a dog house a day. Keith and Tanya are working almost exclusively on WolfWood projects and everyone is putting in extra hours. Barb continues to make all Bronte's special food and La Vonne worked on tags until her hands froze. For all of you who believe in the work we do and the spirit in which we do it, who continue to support us and whose lives have been touched by one of our beautiful animals: **You are all wolf angels!**

OTHER NEWS

Congratulations to Colleen O'Brien, who graduated from Ft. Lewis this year. The bad news is she will be leaving us in July. The good news is that she has been accepted to vet school in Michigan. Also Tessha Gathings has graduated from CSU's vet school. Good luck to both these wonderful young ladies. We have had a rogue bear at WolfWood. He tore the windows out of Joel's truck, even though there was no food in it, doing over \$500 worth of damage! Joel also has finished his VISTA program, which means no more funding for his staying here. He has committed to stay through the winter or until his savings run out. We are so lucky and if anyone has ideas about sponsorship for him, let us know. He makes such an amazing difference in the animal's lives. My family came and my mom redid all the WolfWood files! My dad painted. It is definitely a working vacation around here.

SCHEDULE

This schedule is **tentative!** All events will be cancelled if we can not meet the USDA requirements. **July 15th**, Final Inspection. **July 24th**, Lake City. **August 6th**, Five Branches. **August**, reschedule Salida. **Aug 26th**, Manco's Elementary. **Sept 3rd & 4th**, Hermit Park. **Oct 1st & 2nd**, Elk Fest.

NEEDS

I was asked to provide some examples of specific needs that were important now, instead of a general list. Here are some things we are struggling with at this time:

WOOD AND BUILDING MATERIALS: John Mason had delivered us a semi truck full of plywood and 2x4's, siding and paint. It has all been used and we always need more, especially for the over 65 new dog houses we need to build!

VET BILLS: We have lost so many wonderful animals over the last six months, some of them after many medical struggles. We started the New Year caught up but once again, we owe about \$2000.

FENCING: Joel has been very busy enlarging many of the smaller pens, but he has reused and recycled all the material he can. Keith and Tanya are ready to build brand new fence panels as soon as we have the funds.

VISITOR CENTER: John Mason came down and gave us pointers on our Visitor Center site. Dale has cleared the land and Bill, Joel's dad has committed to building the foundation. We **MUST** have this completed this year. The USDA has set us back so much that we can only hope we can raise enough money to get this amazing gift of a new building here.

AHBRs: Since the water buckets can have no bite marks on them, (Really? Have you seen Ra's teeth?), these bucket retention systems are more important then ever.

Letter Writing Information

Here is a form letter with space at the end for you to add your personal comments, thoughts, and stories about WolfWood and whatever experiences you have had there or with the wolves. If you could take the time to complete and submit the letter *to all three officials named in the letter* that would be great. All you need to do is this:

1. Read the first part of the letter.
2. Add whatever you see fit to the end, plus date the top. You can also edit the top as you see fit.
3. Send in the completed letter by fax or e-mail. If you choose e-mail then for Senator Bennet you will need to cut-and-paste the letter onto the form they provide on his website because he does not have a published e-mail address. A regular letter will not work because it takes over a month to go through security.
4. Know you are helping to ensure that children and others may continue to experience the wolves as a result of your contribution to this letter writing campaign.
6. Please feel free to pass this letter along to other WolfWood supporters who might be willing to help.

RE: WolfWood Refuge in Ignacio, Colorado

Dear Senators Bennet and Udall and Secretary Vilsack:

It is my understanding that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has decided that WolfWood Refuge must have a License, under the federal Animal Welfare Act, in order to “exhibit”, or share its rescued wolf/dogs with school children and other members of the public. It is also my understanding that the USDA is in the process of conducting licensure inspections at WolfWood. I have been informed too that the USDA plans to continue to inspect WolfWood in the future so they may continue programs for educational purposes.

I am writing to express my support for the USDA licensure for WolfWood if that will allow them to carry on their invaluable educational activities. As you know, WolfWood promotes the hands-on, often outdoor education of people of all ages about wolves and wolf/dogs. In my experience of Wolfwood-----

Thank you for considering my comments,

Sincerely,

Name

Title or occupation

Address

e-mail address

The Honorable Mark Udall

Via Facsimile: (970) 247-0254

E-mail: Wanda_Cason@markudall.senate.gov

The Honorable Michael Bennet

Via Facsimile: (970) 259-9789

E-mail: <http://bennet.senate.gov/contact/>

Secretary Tom Vilsack

Via facsimile: (202) 720-2166

E-mail agsec@usda.gov

KIDS AND CANINES



A special group of kids came out from Aztec High School for an educational program.



Trinity, Keith, Bronte, Lynne and Paula at a Miller Middle School presenting an assembly



The Ft. Lewis Volleyball team with Colleen and Ben on a service work day.

The educational programs WolfWood offers youth of all ages are in jeopardy. We are sorry to announce we had to cancel over a dozen events effecting hundreds of kids until after July 15th because of the risk of a \$10,000.00 fine *per animal* from the USDA. We sincerely hope that this page will not be completely empty next newsletter!

IN LOVING MEMORY

Nyla: Nyla was a victim of a den robbing in Minnesota. She came to us in 1999. We got her as a puppy and she lived most of her life with her partner Titus. She died at the age of 12. She was always shy, but loved to be talked to. She would do a happy dance when I went into her pen.

Rain: Rain lived with Yukon most of her life and even though she was a three legged low percentage female and he was a full wolf, she still kicked his butt everyday. She was a strong animal that was used for breeding until her owners thought she was too old and then they were going to kill her. We saved her in 2003 and she lived a full life. She died at the age of 16.

Shasta: Shasta was the third animal we ever rescued. She came from Bloomfield, NM where they had recently outlawed wolf/dogs. The breeders were going to drown all the 6 week old puppies to avoid any fines. We got Shasta in 1995 and she died at the age of 16, having lived a full and happy life at the refuge, first as part of a pack of nine, and then she spent her golden years with her companion, Bruno.

Yellow Dog (Sundance): We got Yellow Dog in 1999 through the court system. He was part of an extreme abuse case where several animals had been left for weeks tied to a tree. One of the animals died and the others survived by eating it. Needless to say, Yellow was a hard case when we first got him. He was a very strong animal throughout his 16 years, going blind in the last few. He eventually learned to love all the WolfWood volunteers and knew us by the sound of our voices. He was a tough old guy and a favorite.

Taboo: Taboo lived in a house with four other dogs, and when his owner, a single mom, had twins, Taboo was too much to handle. He started the trip down from Washington to us, but when their car broke down, La Vonne went to bring Taboo to the refuge. He was a very good friend to one of our other animals, Trucker, who was very sad when Taboo died. Taboo was 10 and died because he had a very enlarged heart.

Matok: Matok came from Berkley, CA in 1999. We picked him up in the airport in Las Vegas. He was a strong, athletic wolf that could even climb trees. He always had a free spirit and is featured on the front of our calendar. Matok and Kia were life long companions and favorites when people came to visit the refuge. You could count on getting a good wolf rub from Matok. He died at the age of 12 from lung cancer.

Teesha: Teesha came to us when her owner died. She was a very sweet and loving animal, and was a good influence on some of our more skittish animals. She came to us as an elderly animal in 2009, and though we didn't have her for a really long time, we all loved and cared for her.

Tom Russell: We were all devastated to learn that our good friend and long time WolfWood supporter, Tom, died while piloting his plane in Guatemala. Tom was one of the most beautiful and gentle souls to ever walk this earth, doing both volunteer work here and working with Mayan families. Some of you met him at Estes Park or Salida, where he had a home. He was dear to us and we miss him greatly.

Jim Dunn: Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Tom and Barbara Dunn. As you know from the newsletter, they are great supporters and have come to our rescue many, many times over the years, literally saving us from going under. They lost their son in a tragic accident, where he was hit by a bus while saving the life of another person. The Dunn's have our utmost love and respect and we honor them in this most difficult time.



Taboo



Yellow Dog (Sundance)



Nyla



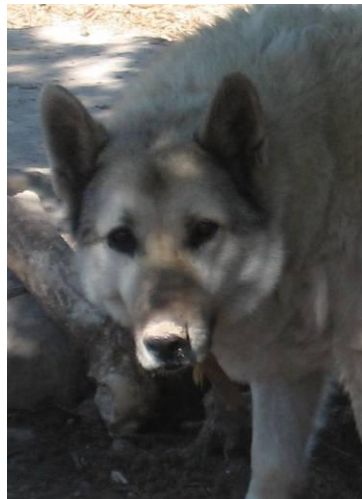
Tom and Willow



Matok



Kadyn and Teesha



Shasta



Rain

Wolf.....Teach me to Know