

## Room for two more BY VIRGINIA L. DAKINIEWICH

**H**ow many of us have ever considered what will happen to our pets if we can no longer look after them? When confronted with life-altering issues such as debilitating illness or the death of a loved one, the fate of a pet is often an afterthought.

When a senior dog is adopted, their life is saved as they are usually the first to be killed in shelters, often passed over for cute and cuddly puppies.

Consider the case of Tinkerbell and Benji. These dogs came to New Hope Dog Rescue (NHDR) after their owner passed away from lung cancer. The owner had asked that a local kennel look after her dogs if something should happen to her. The kennel took the dogs but could not provide long term care for them. Benji and Tinkerbell also needed medical care beyond the means of the kennel.

After coming to NHDR, Tinkerbell's and Benji's health has rebounded nicely. They received significant dental care and their vaccines were updated.

The breed of the dogs is uncertain but they may be Maltese crossed with Shih Tzu. Karen from NHDR adds, "Tinkerbell is just a sweetie." She has a loving disposition and wants nothing more than to sit in someone's lap. She loves people and attention – being petted and fussed over.

Karen notes that Benji is more set in his ways, "like a little

old man." He is not as extroverted as Tinkerbell but he likes company. "He enjoys romping at the off leash park or just on any walk.

He really comes alive," observes Karen.

Unfortunately, NHDR sees this situation all too often. Karen says that they have two other dogs in similar circumstances. Booker's owner was a young woman who lost her fight with cancer and Rocket's owners needed to move to a care facility that could not accommodate the dog. As an organization reliant on foster homes, NHDR has a limited amount of room. The number of dogs they are able to take depends on the number of foster homes available. Recently, New Hope had to turn away two dogs that were left behind when their owners died.

Responsible pet owners should consider the future of their pets even if health is not currently an issue. Owners need to consult with family members and friends to ensure their pets will be looked after in the event of the pet owner's illness or death. There also may need to be provision in wills to help defray expenses for the upkeep of the animals. If no provisions are made for the care of pets, they may end up in shelters that cannot accommodate them or, worse, have to euthanize them.



Karen adds that if you cannot adopt a dog or are not sure about adding another member to your household, consider providing a home to a dog in need. When a senior dog is adopted, their life is saved as they are usually the first to be killed in shelters, often passed over for cute and cuddly puppies. While puppies require a lot of effort to make them into good pets, senior dogs are already good pets. Older dogs are often easier to care for and do not require any training. They usually fit into their new household easily. They don't need to exercise as much as a young pup, plus you won't find your favourite shoes chewed up. They will reward an owner's care with unconditional affection.

Karen notes that "we constantly have to tell people that we don't have room because we don't have a spare foster home. It's really heart-breaking as we know many of them will be euthanized for nothing more than being old." At New Hope dogs stay until they are adopted. If a senior dog is adopted, it saves a life and makes room for one more life at New Hope.

*For more information about New Hope Dog Rescue and/or adopting/fostering see their website: [www.newhopedogrescue.org](http://www.newhopedogrescue.org)*