Inside
Woodbridge & Orange
The key to your community

Dogged Determination
Woodbridge Group’s Goal is to Aid Retired Greyhounds
A horseback riding adventure in New Hampshire four decades ago led Eileen McCaughern down an unexpected path. One that would result in more than 5,000 retired racing greyhounds being rescued from almost certain death and placed in “forever” homes. The path also led McCaughern, founder of the Woodbridge-based REGAP (Retired Greyhounds as Pets) of CT, Inc., to national recognition as Animal Planet’s Hero of the Year in 2008 for her rescue efforts.

“I was born an animal lover of all sorts,” says McCaughern. “For as long as I can remember I loved horses, and in a way, my love for horses was responsible for introducing me to greyhounds.”

One day while out riding horses in New Hampshire with folks who worked at the dog track, she asked the fateful question: “What happens to the greyhounds once their racing days are over?” McCaughern shuddered at the answer: they were routinely euthanized. So she rushed “the very next day” to the track to find out “all I could do” to help the dogs. “I ended up leaving the track that day with my very first greyhound, Terry Canary,” she recalled. “What was evident to me then, and what remains clear to this day, is that these greyhounds are in need of rescuing and that organizations like REGAP of CT must exist to provide assistance to provide a life as a pet for these dogs once they are done racing. And even though this was some 40 years ago, that need still exists today and REGAP of CT is still going strong,” said McCaughern.

2008 Animal Planet Hero of the Year
Retired Greyhounds as Pets of Connecticut, Inc. is a non-profit organization devoted to educating the public about the joys of greyhounds as companion animals and finding responsible, caring homes for as many retired racing greyhounds as possible. In recognition of REGAP of CT’s efforts for greyhounds over the years, McCaughern was recognized in 2008 as the Animal Planet Hero of the Year.

“I was totally thrilled and shocked to land this title,” said McCaughern. “It’s truly such an honor and one I’ll never forget. Being nominated along with so many other remarkable people, and then being voted the Hero of the Year by the Animal Planet viewers, reconfirmed to me the importance of the mission of REGAP of CT to rescue greyhounds.”

The experience, recalled McCaughern, “gave me a new energy to keep doing the work I’ve been doing for so many years. I was also so pleased for the greyhounds. The whole Hero of the Year experience gave me a great opportunity to introduce the entire country to the greyhound breed and to educate the public about the need to rescue greyhounds.” McCaughern said she also believes that being selected Animal Planet Hero of the Year gives her Woodbridge organization the responsibility to
set a good example for all other rescue groups. “We continue to be the pioneer organization that got the entire movement going before it was even a thought,” said McCaughern.

Of course, the backbone of REGAP, said McCaughern, is its core of about a dozen statewide volunteers who work alongside her on various project, events, publicity, placing of greyhounds and public relations.

Selective breeding has given the greyhound an athlete’s body with the grace of a dancer.

“We have different types of volunteers. There are individuals who provide support in covering many different types of events or fostering greyhounds when additional help is needed. There is also a core group of volunteers who work tirelessly for the greyhounds to keep the organization’s mission alive and thriving.”

Brenda Ryan of Thomaston, for example, is one volunteer who gives countless hours to the effort. “She is a person who is dedicated to the successful placement of each and every grey-

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FACTS: DID YOU KNOW...?

• The fastest breed of dog, greyhounds can reach a top speed of 45 miles per hour, and can average more than 30 miles per hour for distances up to one mile.

• As pets, Greyhounds receive high praise. They possess superior intelligence, but their character is sometimes undervalued because of their reserved behavior towards their master and toward strangers. The greyhound is sensitive, courageous, loyal and, of course, very fast.

• Greyhounds are much larger than infants, and even some youngsters up to the age of 5. As with any larger dog, small children must be supervised when with a large dog. In general, if the child is good with the greyhound, the greyhound will be good with the child.

• A show greyhound typically stands between 26 and 30 inches and the shoulder, and weighs 60 to 85 pounds. Bitches average around 10 to 15 pounds less than dogs. The average lifespan is 12 to 14 years. Track greyhounds are often between 25 and 29 inches and 50 to 80 pounds.

-- Courtesy of Eileen McCaughern
hound REGAP of CT rescues,” said McCaughern. “She takes all the wonderful pictures for the website and talks about each dog’s energy level and personality, portraying the available dogs at their best. Those of us who work in greyhound adoption know that there is a right grey for every household and it is a goal of the organization to make the right match for every family and every home.” Ryan also coordinates PetsAffair, the organization’s annual fundraiser, scheduled for this month (see details, page 17). “The event is an enormous undertaking and she takes care of the endless details that make it happen. She also seeks community support, does our monthly meet and greets at the area PETCO stores and pitches in for other events as they occur -- things like parades, speaking engagements,” said McCaughern. “She is indispensable!”

Since that fateful day horseback riding in New Hampshire, efforts to save greyhounds have taken on a life of their own. No longer, said McCaughern, are the dogs euthanized after their racing days are over, as other groups, trainers, tracks are now reaching out to place the dogs in loving homes. “Greyhound placement has truly done turnaround as to what I’ve seen in the 70’s to the present. Now, everyone is on board with finding homes for the greyhounds,” said McCaughern.

Terry Canary may have been her first greyhound, but he wasn’t her last. “I am currently owned by the most wonderful eight greyhounds you’ll ever want to meet,” she says. “Their ages range from going on 4 to over 14. Of course they all have their own unique story and how they arrived at my home. They’re a variety of colors, sizes, sexes, energy levels and personalities. Some had impressive racing careers, having raced some 100 or more races with many wins. Meanwhile there’s one of my prettiest, who seemed to know from the beginning that she was best suited for being a pet and a couch potato. She never raced.”

Once people become aware of all the special traits that greyhounds possess, McCaughern said, she believes that they, too, will fall in love with the breed. That is why a key mission of her organization is to spread the word about greyhounds and how they make wonderful pets.

About greyhounds

For thousands of years, greyhounds have been bred to hunt by outrunning their prey. They were not intended to be solitary hunters, but to work with other dogs. Switching from hunting to racing has kept this aspect of their personality very much alive. The fastest breed of dog, greyhounds can reach a top speed of 45 miles per hour, and can average more than 30 miles per hour for distances up to one mile.

Selective breeding has given the greyhound an athlete’s body with the grace of a dancer. At the same time, the need to anticipate the evasive maneuvers of their prey has endowed the greyhound with a high degree of intelligence.

Greyhounds hold several unique distinctions among their canine brethren. Not only are they the oldest purebred dog, dating back to the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, but they’re also the fastest dog on Earth.

As pets, greyhounds receive high praise. They possess superior intelligence, but their character is sometimes undervalued because of their reserved behavior towards their master and toward strangers. The greyhound is sensitive, courageous, loyal and, of course, very fast.

McCaughern assesses each dog’s personality, which ensures that prospective greyhound parents will be matched with the dog that is best suited for them and their lifestyle. Most dogs will blend well with existing pets, including cats.

According to McCaughern, the greyhound was bred as a hunter 5,000 years ago. Some greyhounds have a keen prey
PetsAffair: Sept. 28

6th Annual event was born out of the love of greyhounds and the need to raise funds to help rescue this breed.

Mark your calendar for this fun event!
REGAP of CT, Inc. (Retired Greyhounds as Pets of Connecticut) will be holding its 6th Annual PetsAffair on Sept. 28, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
This event was born out of love of greyhounds and the need to raise funds to defray the expenses incurred caring for this wonderful breed.
REGAP is an all-volunteer organization that has been rescuing greyhounds for 40 years. PetsAffair is a fun-filled day for human and canine alike. The event includes silent auction, cook-out, tag sale, pet-a-cures, pet photography, bake sale for human and canines. In addition it’s an opportunity to meet greyhounds available for adoption. The event is also a greyhound gathering although all canines are invited to attend.
• Location of PetsAffair is 105 Fairwood Road in Bethany.
• Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
• For more information contact Eileen McCaughern at 203-393-1673. A list of dogs available for adoption can be found at regapct.com.

About REGAP of CT, Inc.
Retired Greyhounds as Pets of Connecticut, Inc. is a non-profit organization devoted to educating the public about the joys of greyhounds as companion animals and finding responsible, caring homes for as many retired racing greyhounds as possible.
The organization has been helping retired greyhounds find loving homes for more than 35 years. In recognition of REGAP of CT’s efforts for greyhounds over the years founder Eileen McCaughern was recognized in 2008 as the Animal Planet Hero of the Year.
If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to REGAP, or would like to work as a volunteer, please e-mail regapct.com, or contact us via mail or telephone at:
REGAP of CT, Inc.
P.O. Box 3814
Woodbridge, CT 06525
203-393-1673
Please Note: Our email address is info@regapct.com. Please use it for all email exchanges.

—Courtesy of Eileen McCaughern