



Angela Andersen

BEST FRIENDS: Leslie Houston, local altruist, adopted her pal Ranger from Labs4rescue and hosted a 'not-birthday' fundraiser for the cause.

'Save a Lab, Have a Friend for Life!'

Locals Give Goodwill for A Dog-gone Happy Home

As a way to celebrate "I did not turn 50," local resident Leslie Houston hosted a charity event on Sunday at the Sea Shell Club in Beach Haven for a cause near and dear to her heart and home, the Labs4rescue.

Labs4rescue is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing and finding permanent, loving homes for abandoned or displaced Labrador retrievers and Labrador mixes. With her Lab4rescued-dog Ranger by her side, Houston emceed the charity event among friends and family.

"How many over-the-hill tiaras can you have? I'd rather see money go to a leash or a box of biscuits for a dog," she said.

In a karmic course of events, it happened to be that the event was held one year to the day since Leslie got Ranger. They gave him a birthday December 2006, which makes him the same age as his 'brother' Remy, a black Labrador that Leslie got from a breeder as a puppy.

"Remy was thrilled the day I brought Ranger home. I could see his doggie voice saying, Oh yeah, you bought me a live toy," Houston joked. "I could see every part of his doggie excitement throughout his body language.

"The meet and greet with Ranger bought tears to everyone. It was like he knew me all along," she added. "That was a great day."

"It is in my nature to give," Houston added. Houston and her friend Deborah Whitcraft hosted a local charity event for Neighbors in Need for 15 years. A lifelong

public servant, Houston has been with the Long Beach Township Police Department for 27 years. She is the deputy police chief and the township emergency management coordinator. Houston is also the volunteer treasurer of the Beach Haven First Aid Squad and a trustee for the N.J. Museum of Maritime History in Beach Haven.

Labs4rescue is dedicated to promoting and advancing responsible pet ownership through sponsorships, fostering or adopting. Since the organization's inception in 2002, more than 7,000 dogs have been adopted in 34 states.

"The thing they need the most besides money is good foster families," Houston said. She now volunteers with the organization to do the home visits to interview prospective families.

The fundraiser raised a grand total topping \$2,800.

"I can see from the success and the good time had by all that it will become an annual event," said Houston. "My friends were so generous, and the donations from their local businesses were incredible. I cannot say enough about my friends at the Labrador and More Store and Island Knits."

To finish off her celebration of "not turning 50," Houston is going to head south for a few days in the RV with the dogs and go "chill-ax ... Lab style."

Anyone wishing to make a donation can go to www.labs4rescue.com.

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