

"Georgia" Our Prefect Addition

Our wonderful foster mom, Candy, requested I write our "success" story for your newsletter. I'm not sure I agree "success" is the correct word - it's not strong enough for adding the perfect member to your family, but I'll use it for now as no other words occur to me that adequately describe what my family and I have experienced the past few weeks.



First of all, I need to introduce my family. We consist of me, my husband Dave, our 7 year old daughter Cassie, and as of October 20th, our incredible dachshund/terrier mix Georgia. Up until the first part of October, my family included a different four-legged member, an 80 lb golden retriever named Sage. This is not the typical story of losing a dog and adding another one right away to our family. I'm told there is nothing typical about our family life the past three and a half years. Let me explain. My husband and I lost our first rescue dog just before our daughter turned two. His death left a huge hole in our family, and it took us two years to feel ready to love that much again knowing that we would more than likely outlive our four-legged family member yet again. You see, we have always considered our pets to be members of our family. It's how my husband and I were both raised and definitely how we want to raise our daughter. Some family friends were breeding their absolutely amazing golden retriever, and we thought what better opportunity than to have our daughter experience growing up with a "sibling". Unfortunately, it was immediately clear that something was different about Sage. He was extremely aggressive and destructive from the moment we brought him home and seemed to want nothing to do with us. He had no desire to please us or do anything with us other than show his dominance. We believe dogs belong in our house, not outside, and he grew so rapidly that we had to take steps very quickly to make sure no harm came to our family, mainly our daughter. We made so many changes to our house to accommodate him, I can't even count. He also destroyed so many things and even walls in our house -

I've lost track of what all happened. We neutered him as soon as possible and took him to several obedience classes. I also spoke with I can't remember how many behavioral specialists about what we could do. Nothing helped. He became more and more hyperactive and with that destructive and aggressive, and large amounts of exercise did nothing to help, despite what most dog trainers say. By the time he reached three years old earlier this spring, the thinking of "he's a puppy and will grow out of it" didn't hold water any more. We also realized that he had to want to please us to do what we asked and be able to be around us, and he simply didn't care what we thought or wanted. He started developing even more odd behavior traits and was eventually diagnosed with neurological damage as all litter mates also exhibit his same behavior. However, we made a commitment to him to keep him as part of our family, and we were determined to follow through. Due to his increasingly odd behavior, we also started giving him mood stabilizing medication. Then the first part of October, he had what the vet called a "psychotic episode" and attacked me in our home for no known reason. I just thank God every day that Cassie was not there. I amazingly managed to escape with only my shirt torn and a few marks on my arm, but we decided that we had to surrender him to the vet at that time as the risk was finally too great. Surrendering a member of our family is something my husband and I never in a million years thought we would do, and it devastates us and will for the rest of our lives. However, within about 30 minutes of both Dave and Cassie finding out about this episode, they were already on [petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com) looking for another member of our family. It's almost as if we all unconsciously wanted a dog so badly in our lives that we were just waiting for Sage to leave our house in order to fulfill that wish. We also started taking stock of our home life and realized how tense we had been the past three and a half years with never knowing what Sage was going to do, worrying about leaving Cassie around him without us being right there, etc. I'm upset at myself now, as a mom, for letting my daughter be exposed to that level of anxiety and nervousness that her home had become and especially the level of danger our Sage brought. I will never forgive myself for that. I could only hope that the next member of our family would show her the true joy having a four-legged family member can bring.

We found Georgia after a few days of searching. We had immediately decided we were going to be very, very selective this time in what dog we invited to be a part of our family. I cannot tell you how much my whole family appreciates the idea of fostering. It allowed us to already know her temperament, how she got along with other animals, and especially how she got along with other humans. I emailed Candy our application along with our story (as you can tell by now, I'm kind of wordy, so it was a long email!) since I had to explain about our surrendering our Sage. She immediately emailed and called back saying she believed Georgia was the perfect addition to our family. She went above and beyond to make sure we were the family lucky enough to adopt Georgia, and for that, she will be in our thoughts and prayers for the rest of our lives.

Now, since I'm a proud new mama, I have to brag! Our whole family, extended members included, agrees that Georgia is the absolute perfect addition to our family. She already had Cassie and I wrapped around her little paw before we even met her due to all the wonderful information Candy was able to provide about her, and she won over Daddy immediately, too. Dave, who I have always known as a "I want a big dog" kind of guy but who agreed we needed a smaller dog due to our previous experience, fell totally in love with her immediately. It was he, even though he won't admit it, who looked at me with his puppy dog eyes the first night Georgia was home and insisted that he thought she was too scared to sleep anywhere other than our bed. She has slept there or with Cassie every night since, and Dave and Cassie sometimes get in to friendly arguments as to where she should spend the night as each want her in their own bed. Dave also comes home every night and immediately starts playing with Cassie and Georgia. Our favorite is when Georgia goes "nuts" and starts running around the house and jumping on our bed and tackling whomever is there. Dave is greeted with a smile and laughter by his whole family every night, which is such a change from the anxiety that was there before. (I have told him and Cassie that I am always glad to see them when they come home as well, but Georgia shows it best as I don't always jump up and down, lick their faces, and piddle on the floor from excitement when they walk through the door.) We also don't have to be on edge in our own home every day wondering what is going to

happen. We know the worst that will happen is Georgia will hog the bed. The other night, Georgia was running around the house, and Cassie ran to the bed to be tackled. She started laughing so hard, and Dave looked at me and said "I haven't heard her laugh that hard in the house in years". I almost started crying right then, but Georgia came out and did something funny and made me laugh instead. Cassie doesn't like to go places any more that we can't take Georgia along, and I don't either. I didn't think I was going to get Cassie to go to school the first few days after Georgia came to live with us! The best way to get her to go is by promising Georgia and I will pick her up from school so all her friends can see Georgia again. Cassie is so proud of her! She goes to ballet classes with Cassie. She doesn't participate but does watch intently through the window when she is not wandering over to have someone pet her. She also goes to Cassie's soccer practices and games and has been officially adopted as the team mascot. She even has a pink fleece jacket she wears on cold days which matches the uniforms. The soccer girls all love her, and I have to keep her on the other side of the field during the games so the girls will concentrate on the game and not on petting Georgia. She gets along so well with any and everyone. I no longer have to worry about keeping our family member away from other kids when they come to play with Cassie - they all love Georgia and want to play with her as much as they do Cassie! Cassie's teacher has also heard our Georgia story, has met Georgia and fallen in love with her, and is now talking with her roommate about adopting a rescue dog. I told her she will never be as lucky as we were and will never find a family member like Georgia, but she is going to try. We are also now able to take all our family members along on outings to see the rest of our extended family here in the area and are trying to find a place to go on vacation next year where we can take Georgia. We take her any place we can because she is family and should be with us everywhere we go. She agrees. I cannot describe the feeling of peace I now have in my house and also the feeling of joy. It is overwhelming at times to think of the anxiety we had - I didn't realize it at the time, but Georgia has taken all that away and replaced it with all the love and joy her little heart can hold.

I could go on and on with many more *Georgia* stories, but I just realized how long this is already! I'm not a good writer, and I apologize for that, but I don't believe anyone could adequately describe the love, joy, and peace our family and home now have because of *Georgia*. Please know that I thank everyone that was in any way remotely responsible for bringing *Georgia* in to our lives. My daughter will now know what it is like to love and enjoy a four-legged family member every day. She is already talking about wanting to be an "animal rescuer" when she grows up. We are eternally grateful and owe everyone so much. We are also making it our mission in life to make sure *Georgia* is just as grateful every day of her life. I hope we succeed.

Barb, Dave, Cassie, and *Georgia*