

FEBRUARY 2026

# THE PAW<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE



Jazmine - Rescued 2017

## LOVE WITHOUT CONDITIONS

When love feels safe again  
The quiet power of companionship

Bella - Rescued 2019

[www.WPP.dog](http://www.WPP.dog)

**THE PAW® MAGAZINE**

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WOUNDED PAW PROJECT® EXISTS  
TO END THE CYCLE OF ABUSE FOR  
DOGS EVERYWHERE.

WE RESCUE, REHABILITATE, AND  
ADVOCATE FOR THE VOICELESS—  
AND WE FIGHT FOR SECOND  
CHANCES WITH COURAGE,  
COMPASSION,  
AND UNWAVERING COMMITMENT.

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# **Table Of** **Contents**

**06**

**Love Without Conditions**

**12**

**Responsible Love**

**17**

**Gentle Is Not Weak**

**24**

**From Farm to Paw, With Love**

Lola - Rescued 2023

Elvis - Rescued 2022

# A WORD FROM THE FOUNDER...

Love is often described as something we give. Animals show us it is something we practice.

At Wounded Paw Project®, love without conditions appears in quiet moments—a rescued dog choosing to stay close, a caregiver slowing down instead of pushing forward. These moments teach us that trust cannot be rushed, and healing cannot be commanded. It must be invited.

This February issue is devoted to those lessons. Within these pages, you'll find stories that reflect the power of patience, trauma-informed care, and the deep bonds formed when humans listen rather than lead. Animals do not ask us to fix them. They ask us to show up, consistently and gently.

You'll also read about what we are intentionally building at Pawville Farms®—a future space rooted in consent, care, and connection. A place where healing will grow naturally through animals, land, and shared purpose.

Thank you for honoring love that asks nothing in return.

With gratitude and determination,  
Ernesto P. Hernandez III  
Founder of Wounded Paw Project®



# BE THE VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS®

Our Mission. Our Programs.  
Their Second Chance.

## WHO WE ARE



WOUNDED PAW  
PROJECT®

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit  
rescuing abused dogs  
and fighting cruelty  
with the PAW Principle:  
Protect – Report abuse  
Advocate – Change laws  
Wagployment® – Give dogs  
a second tail in life®

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Volunteer



Donate



Learn More



Join our mission to protect, heal, and empower dogs.

[www.WPP.dog](http://www.WPP.dog)

## OUR PROGRAMS



### WAGPLOYMENT® 360

Rescues, decompresses,  
trains, and places dogs  
into meaningful roles



### BLACKLIGHTK9

Exposes dog fighting  
and hidden crimes



### PAWVILLE FARMS

Healing farm for  
veterans and dogs



### BE THEIR VOICE

Educates on cruelty  
and inspires change



### DISASTER RESPONSE

Rescues and rehomes  
animals after disasters

# LOVE WITHOUT CONDITIONS

How rescue animals teach us to  
heal without words

Love doesn't always arrive loudly.

Sometimes it comes quietly—on four paws, with eyes that have seen too much and a heart still willing to try.

At first, it looks like distance.

A dog standing just outside arm's reach. A veteran sitting on a bench, unsure whether to speak. A caregiver waiting, not asking for anything at all.

This is where healing so often begins—not with commands or explanations, but with presence.



Daisy - Rescued 2024

# The Language of Safety

Rescue animals do not understand our words. But they understand tone. Consistency. Intention. They notice when a hand hesitates instead of grabs. When a voice remains soft. When someone stays—even after fear shows up.

For many rescued dogs, love does not arrive as comfort. It arrives as confusion. Sometimes as threat. Love has meant loss before. It has meant abandonment, pain, unpredictability.

So they watch. They wait. They learn who will leave—and who will stay.

Veterans understand this language, too. Many carry invisible wounds: memories that surface without warning, emotions that feel safer locked away. Like rescue dogs, they do not need fixing. They need space. Time. Someone who does not demand trust before it is ready to be given.

When these two worlds eventually meet, something profound will begin to unfold.



## When Two Survivors Will Meet

One day—on a quiet farm or in a wide-open field—the connection will not announce itself. It will reveal itself slowly.

A veteran will refill a water bowl.

A dog will choose to lie nearby—not close, but closer than before.

No one will rush the moment. No one will name it. Over time, routines will form.

Feedings. Walks. Quiet sitting.

The dog will begin to recognize footsteps.

The veteran will begin to breathe more evenly.

Trust will grow—not through grand gestures, but through repetition. There will be no ranks here. No expectations. Only two beings learning that safety can exist again.

For the veteran, the dog will offer grounding without judgment. A reason to rise. A presence that asks for care, not explanations.

For the dog, the human will offer predictability. Gentle hands. A calm voice. Proof that not all connections end in harm.

Together, they will practice something both once believed was lost: **hope.**

## The Caregivers Who Will Hold the Space

Behind every bond like this will be caregivers who understand that

love cannot be forced.

Trauma-informed caregiving—whether for humans or animals—requires patience. It means choosing gentleness even when progress feels slow. It means recognizing fear as communication, not defiance. It means honoring the smallest victories: a relaxed posture, a first tail wag, a moment of eye contact.

At Pawville Farms®, this philosophy will shape everything.

The farm is being intentionally designed as a place where healing can unfold naturally. Dogs will not be rushed into obedience. People will not be asked to perform healing. Instead, both will be invited to participate at their own pace—through feeding routines, garden care, quiet walks, and shared responsibility.

The environment itself will do much of the work.

Open space.

Predictable rhythms.

Time that does not rush toward outcomes.

Pawville Farms® will not promise transformation. It will promise safety. And often, that will be enough.

## Healing Without Words

What rescue animals teach us—again and again—is simple, yet profound:

Healing does not require language.

It requires consistency.

It requires safety.

It requires love that does not disappear when things become difficult.

Rescue dogs remind us that trust is rebuilt through actions, not promises. Veterans remind us that strength can coexist with vulnerability. Caregivers remind us that healing is not

linear—and that love does not need to be perfect to be powerful.

## Love, Redefined

In a world that celebrates loud success stories, rescue invites us to notice the quiet ones.

The dog who will eventually sleep through the night.

The veteran who will laugh again without realizing it.

The caregiver who will wait—and wait—until waiting becomes belonging.

This is love without conditions.

Not love that fixes.

Not love that demands.

But love that stays.

And sometimes, that is where everything begins.



Roxie - Rescued 2024



## From Landfill to Loved: Luna & Diva's Story

Learn how your home loan can  
help save a dog's life.

HELP SAVE A LIFE



Luna and Diva were discovered in a landfill, barely alive —  
traumatized, clinging to each other, after watching their siblings  
crushed by heavy machinery.



Wounded Paw Project® pulled them from the wreckage and rushed  
them into emergency care. Today, Diva and Luna are thriving with  
warm beds, full bowls, and humans who treasure them.

**You can help dogs like Diva and Luna when you get your mortgage  
through Capital Bank Home Loans, a local bank committed to helping  
animals and veterans alike.**

For every loan closed, **Capital Bank will donate \$1,000 to Wounded Paw  
Project<sup>1</sup>** to help rehabilitate and rehome dogs in need.

GET STARTED TODAY

# Responsible Pet Owners Month

## *Love Without Conditions Starts With Responsibility*

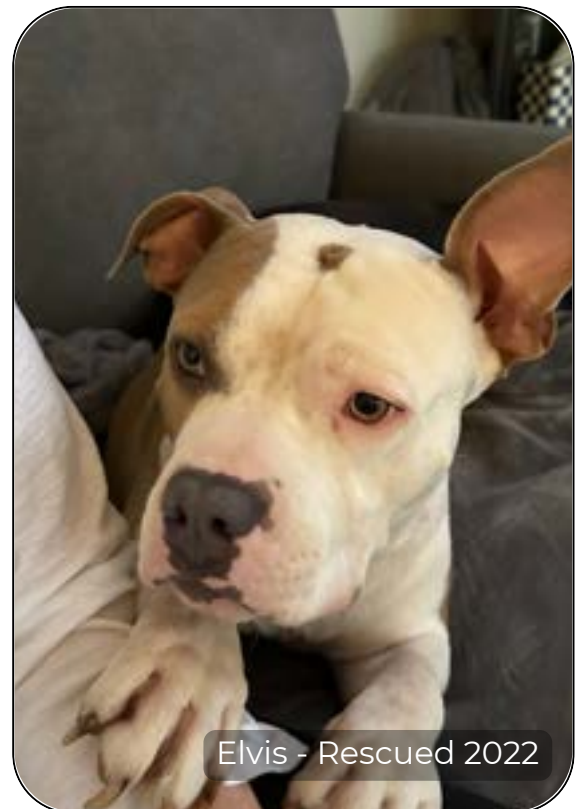
***Responsible pet ownership is not about control.  
It is about commitment—especially when it's hard.***

Responsible pet ownership is often misunderstood. It is not perfection. It is not obedience at all costs. It is the decision to show up—every day—for a living being who depends on you.

For rescue animals, responsibility looks like patience. It means choosing understanding over punishment, consistency over convenience, and safety over speed. It means recognizing that healing does not follow a schedule—and honoring that truth anyway.


Love without conditions is responsibility in action. It is staying when behavior is messy, progress is slow, and trust must be earned quietly.

**This is how bonds are built.  
This is how trauma heals.  
This is how love becomes  
something an animal can finally  
believe in.**



*February is Responsible Pet Owners Month  
Because love isn't proven in words—it's proven in care.*



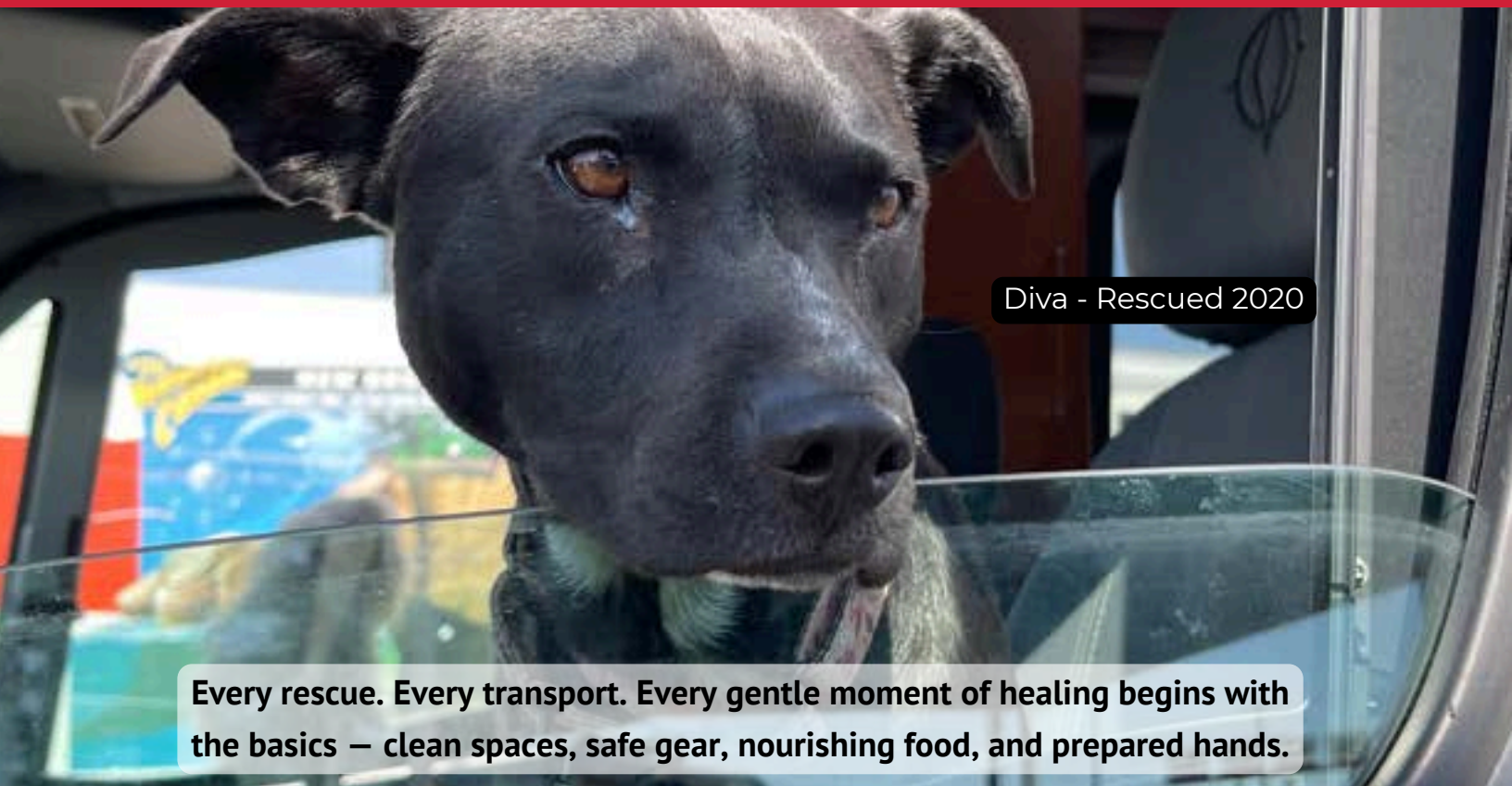


**ONE OF THE MOST  
RESPONSIBLE THINGS  
WE CAN OFFER AN  
ANIMAL IS TIME.**

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Lola - Rescued 2023

WOUNDED PAW PROJECT®



Diva - Rescued 2020

**Every rescue. Every transport. Every gentle moment of healing begins with the basics — clean spaces, safe gear, nourishing food, and prepared hands.**

When you donate tangible supplies to Wounded Paw Project®, you're doing more than giving items. You're freeing critical funds for medical care, emergency response, and rehabilitation — where they're needed most.

## Supplies That Fuel the Mission

For Pawville Farms®:

- Dog-safe cleaning supplies
- Chicken feed & bedding
- Gardening tools (hand tools, gloves, durable hoses)
- Storage bins & weatherproof totes

For WPP Rescues & Transport:

- Collars, slip leads & harnesses
- Crates & transport carriers
- Blankets and towels
- First aid supplies (vet wraps, gauze, saline)
- Gas gift cards for transport volunteers

Giving is simple — and every item makes an immediate impact.

Email us at [donations@woundedpawproject.org](mailto:donations@woundedpawproject.org) and tell us what you'd like to donate, and we'll guide you through next steps.



**SADIE**

**SAYS**

**LOVE ISN'T ALWAYS CUDDLES**

Affection looks different to every dog. Some show love through proximity, play, or simply sharing space—not constant touch. Honoring how your dog expresses comfort strengthens the bond and reminds us that real love adapts instead of demands.



Elvis - Rescued 2022

# Gentle Is Not Weak

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## *Trauma-Informed Caregiving for Abused Dogs*

Gentleness is often misunderstood.

In a world that prizes control, obedience, and quick results, gentle caregiving can be mistaken for hesitation—or worse, indulgence. But when it comes to abused and neglected dogs, gentleness is not a lack of strength. It is a deliberate, informed, and profoundly powerful choice.

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*Fear is not defiance.  
It is memory.*

---

Trauma-informed caregiving asks us to see behavior differently. It invites rescuers, fosters, adopters, and donors to understand that what looks like resistance is often resilience—and that healing does not happen through force, but through safety.

## Fear Is a Survival Skill, Not Disobedience

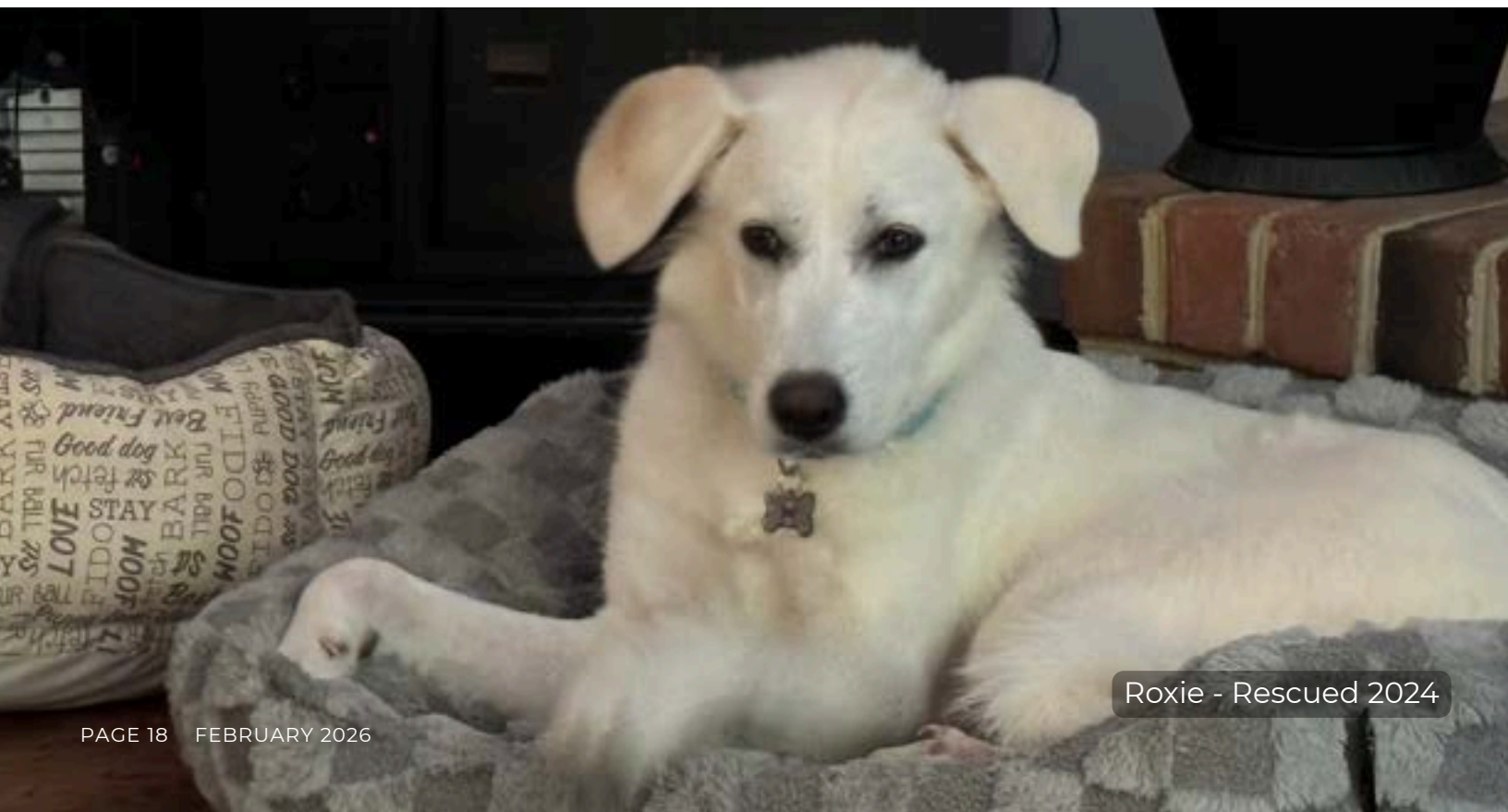
An abused dog is not “being difficult.”

They are remembering.

A growl, a flinch, a refusal to move, or an explosive reaction to something seemingly small is not a failure to comply—it is a nervous system doing exactly what it learned to do to stay alive. For dogs who have endured violence, neglect, confinement, or instability, fear-based behavior is a survival response etched into muscle memory.

When a dog freezes instead of approaches, they are not ignoring you.

When they snap instead of submit, they are not defying you.



Roxie - Rescued 2024

When they shut down entirely,  
they are not giving up.  
They are protecting themselves  
the only way they know how.

Trauma-informed caregiving  
shifts the question from *“How do  
I stop this behavior?”* to *“What  
happened that made this behavior  
necessary?”* That reframing alone  
can change the course of a dog’s  
recovery.

## Predictability Creates Safety

For traumatized dogs,  
unpredictability is danger.  
Many abused dogs come from  
environments where rules  
changed without warning—  
where affection could turn into  
punishment, where silence  
preceded harm, and where  
nothing felt reliable. In those  
conditions, hyper-vigilance  
becomes essential.

Predictability, then, becomes  
medicine.

Consistent routines, familiar  
voices, repeated patterns, and  
clear expectations tell a dog  
something their nervous system  
may never have known: You are  
safe here.

This does not require  
perfection. It requires reliability.

Feeding at similar times.  
Walking the same route.  
Using the same calm tone.  
Responding to mistakes with  
patience rather than correction.



Roxie - Rescued 2024

Over time, predictability lowers a dog's baseline stress. It teaches them that the world is no longer a constant threat—and that they no longer need to be on guard every moment of the day.

## Consent Builds Trust Faster Than Control

Trauma-informed caregiving respects autonomy.

For abused dogs, control was often taken away completely. Paws restrained instead of guided. Leashes pulled instead of held. Commands enforced instead of offered. Even well-intentioned caregivers can unintentionally recreate these dynamics if they rush interactions or override a dog's signals.

Consent does not mean a lack of boundaries.

It means allowing a dog choice within safe limits.

Letting them approach rather than being grabbed.

Allowing them to sniff before being touched.

Pausing when they lean away.

Listening when their body says “not yet.”

When dogs are allowed to choose, something remarkable happens: they choose connection.

Trust grows not because they are forced to comply, but because they learn their signals matter. In trauma recovery, being heard—even silently—can be transformative.

## Patience Is How the Brain Heals

Trauma lives in the nervous system.



Lola - Rescued 2023

Healing it takes time—measured not in days or weeks, but in repeated experiences of safety that slowly rewire the brain. Each calm interaction, each respected boundary, each predictable outcome sends a new message: This is different now.

Progress is rarely linear.

A dog may make strides for weeks, then regress after a loud noise, a visitor, or a moment that echoes the past. This is not failure. It is the brain recalibrating, testing whether safety still holds.

Patience is not passive.

It is active, intentional, and deeply skilled.

It is staying regulated so the dog can borrow your calm.

It is celebrating small victories others might miss.

It is understanding that trust earned slowly is trust that lasts.

## **GENTLE IS NOT WEAK—IT IS REVOLUTIONARY**

Trauma-informed caregiving challenges long-held beliefs about dominance, control, and obedience. It replaces them with compassion, science, and respect for lived experience—both human and animal.

For rescuers, it means creating environments that prioritize emotional safety alongside physical care.

For fosters, it means allowing dogs to unfold at their own pace.

For adopters, it means redefining success beyond “good behavior.”

For donors, it means supporting programs that value healing over haste.

Gentleness is not the absence of structure.

It is structure delivered with empathy.

And for dogs who have known only fear, gentleness is often the first proof that love can exist without pain.

**Because sometimes, the bravest thing we can do—for them and for ourselves—is choose patience over power, understanding over expectation, and care that heals instead of controls.**

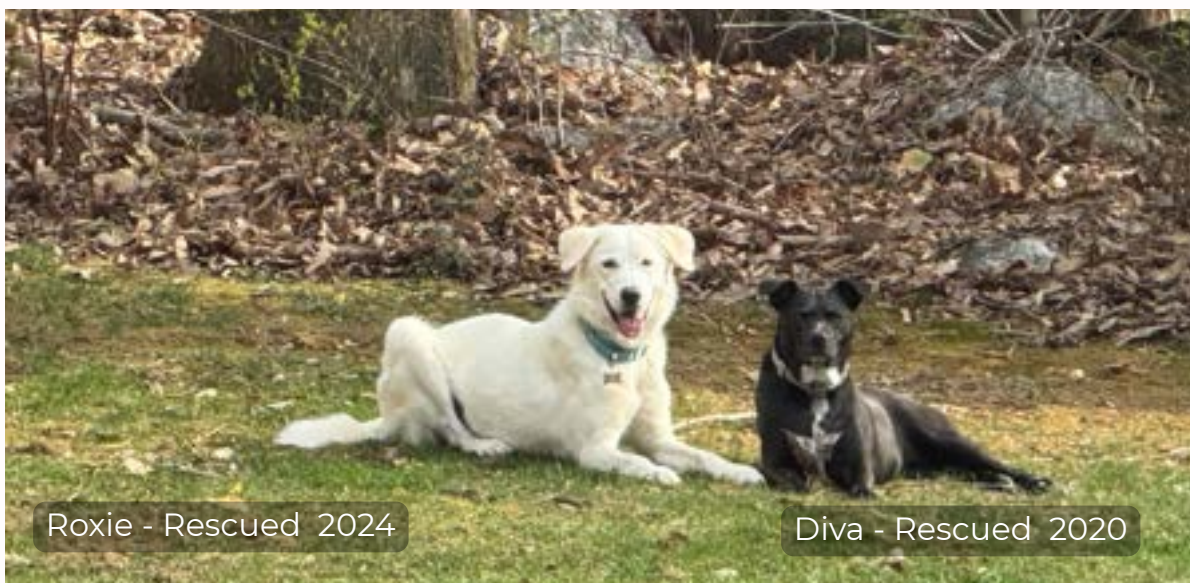
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*Healing began  
when nothing  
was demanded.*

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Elvis - Rescued 2022



Roxie - Rescued 2024

Diva - Rescued 2020



Lola - Rescued 2023



Diva - Rescued 2020

## FROM FARM TO PAW

### INSIDE PAWVILLE FARMS'® GENTLE TRAINING PRACTICES

There is a quiet philosophy guiding everything at Pawville Farms®. It isn't built around

obedience charts, rigid commands, or fast results. It is rooted in something softer—and far

more powerful:  
**trust.**

At Pawville Farms®, what happens with dogs is less about training and more about creating conditions where healing can occur. The work unfolds slowly, intentionally, and with deep respect for each animal's lived experience. Here, progress is measured not by how quickly a dog responds, but by how safe they feel.

## **A Calm Environment That Speaks First**

Healing begins before a single interaction ever takes place.

The farm is envisioned as a space that feels different from traditional training facilities. Open areas replace confinement. Natural light replaces harsh interiors. The gentle rhythms of the land—chickens moving through grass, wind passing through garden beds, long quiet stretches of time—create a steady, predictable backdrop.

For dogs who have lived in chaos, inconsistency, or confinement, this calm is not decorative. It is regulatory.

At Pawville Farms®, the environment is

designed to lower nervous systems before any expectations are introduced. There is no rush to “do.” Instead, dogs are given time to simply be. The absence of pressure allows curiosity to return, often before confidence does. And that is enough.

## **Choice-Based Handling: Consent as Communication**

Gentle training practices at Pawville Farms® center on one core belief: cooperation cannot be forced—only invited.

Choice-based handling means dogs are never

compelled into interactions.

They are offered options. A dog may choose to approach—or not. To engage—or step away. To participate—or observe from a distance.

This approach recognizes that consent is not a luxury; it is a language.

When dogs are allowed to say “no,” their eventual “yes” becomes meaningful. Over time, many begin to seek connection on their own terms. A voluntary step forward. A relaxed posture. A quiet presence beside a

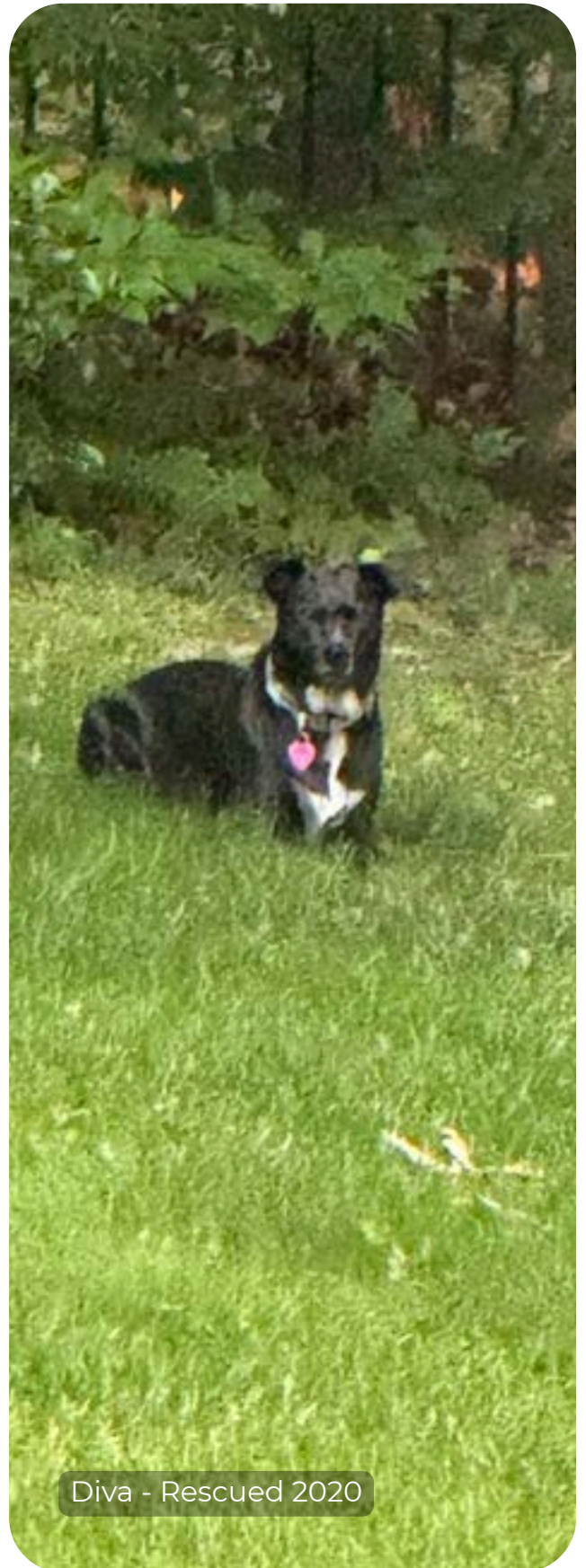
human rather than behind them.

These moments are not trained. They are earned.

## **Food as Safety, Not Control**

At Pawville Farms®, food is never used as leverage. It is used as reassurance.

Meals are predictable, nourishing, and unhurried. The consistency of routine helps dogs learn that their needs will be met without competition or fear. For animals who once guarded every resource, this reliability can be transformative.



Diva - Rescued 2020

Food becomes a bridge—not a bargaining chip.

Shared feeding routines offer opportunities for connection without demands. A human preparing a meal. A dog waiting without tension. Trust forming quietly in the space between.

In this setting, nourishment supports emotional healing as much as physical health.

## **The Power of Routine**

Trauma thrives in unpredictability. Healing requires rhythm.

Daily life at Pawville Farms® is designed around gentle,

repeatable patterns. Wake times, meals, outdoor time, rest—each element reinforces stability. Dogs begin to anticipate what comes next, reducing anxiety and hypervigilance.

Routine does not mean rigidity. It means reliability.

As dogs learn that nothing sudden or punitive follows their choices, they begin to relax into the flow of the day. Some find comfort in structure. Others simply find relief in knowing what won't happen.

That absence of fear is where learning—real

learning—can finally begin.

## **Connection Without Expectation**

Perhaps the most defining element of Pawville Farms'® gentle practices is what isn't asked of the dogs.

There is no requirement to perform. No demand to prove progress. No pressure to meet timelines.

Connection is offered without expectation of return.

Humans sit nearby. They speak softly. They notice. They wait.

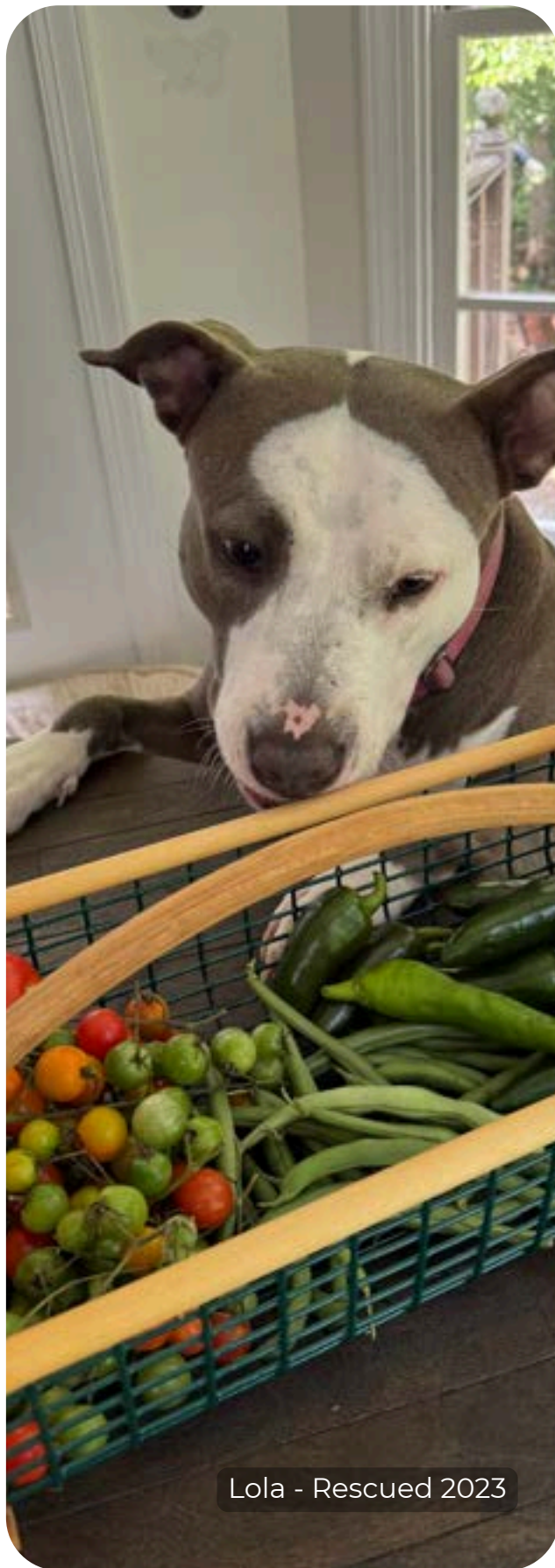
For dogs who have learned that affection comes with conditions—or consequences—this kind of presence is unfamiliar. But over time, many begin to lean into it. A head resting briefly on a knee. A shared nap in the shade. A calm walk without tension at the end of the leash.

These moments matter more than any command ever could.

## **Healing Over Training**

At Pawville Farms®, training is not the goal. Healing is.

When safety comes first, behavior



Lola - Rescued 2023

follows naturally. When trust is prioritized, cooperation emerges. When dogs are met with patience instead of pressure, they begin to show who they truly are—often for the first time.

This work is slow. It is quiet. And it is deeply intentional.

From farm to paw, every interaction is guided by love, respect, and the understanding that healing cannot be rushed—but it can be supported.

And sometimes, the most powerful thing we can offer a dog is simply this:

**You are safe now.**

***Our mission is stronger  
because of partners like  
you. Together, we are  
creating safer futures for  
animals in need.***



# This is what a second chance looks like.

The ride that changes everything.



Kane didn't always know what freedom felt like.  
He came to Wounded Paw Project from Washington, D.C.,  
having survived a life no dog should know.  
Today, what you see in the mirror isn't his past-it's his future.  
Vehicle donations help make journeys like this possible.  
They support rescue, rehabilitation, and the road forward  
for dogs like Kane-and the people who walk beside them.  
Turn your vehicle into a second chance.  
[woundedpawproject.org/vehicle-donations](http://woundedpawproject.org/vehicle-donations)



*From shelter to riding shotgun.*