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He Rescues the Dogs That No One Wants

Steve Greig's life mission is taking in last-chance pups

As told to Beth Levine, AARP

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Published August 30, 2024

Video: Animal Lover Opens His Heart and Home to Older Dogs

Steve Greig, 60, is a retired accountant in Newark, Ohio, and coauthor of The One and Only Wolfgang: From Pet Rescue to One Big Happy Family.

The worst thing to happen can create the best thing. In 2012, my little dog Wolfgang was killed by a car. It just tore me apart. That dog was my everything, and I mourned for months. I couldn't make sense of it. I decided that in order to move on, I had to make something good come out of this. If Wolfgang's death meant that another dog would be allowed to live, maybe his loss would be a little easier to bear. I went to a [shelter](#) and asked to adopt the oldest dog they had, the one most in danger of being put down. It was a 12-year-old Chihuahua with a heart murmur and four bad knees. On the ride home, Eeyore was sitting on my lap looking out the window, his tail wagging a million miles an hour. He was just so incredibly happy. And just like that, the cloud lifted.

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It was such a great experience, I thought, *Well, I've got room for one more*. Online, I saw the most hideous-looking dog I've ever seen in my life. Oh, my God, she was so pathetic. She had lost all her fur, had ulcers in both eyes and had rubbed her face raw. I drove a couple of hours to adopt her; I called her Phyllis. After that, I kept rescuing more. They're unbeatable companions. I usually have around nine dogs at a time. When one dies, I get another

to honor them. I also have a pig named Bikini who likes to go for wagon rides, a half-blind turkey named Cranberry, a cat, a duck, and some chickens and rabbits. When all this started, I was living in Denver. But this past spring, I moved East to be with family and friends, and I bought a historic mansion that I'm renovating. There's room there for everybody.

I do arrange one-on-one time with each dog, making sure they get enough attention. I'll go hiking with one or take another to the gym with me. I can walk with one in my backpack. And they all sleep in my bed with me, except the ones who are afraid of heights.

When one of them passes away, the house feels a little empty. That sounds crazy with all these dogs, but it's true.

My Instagram account, [@wolfgang2242](#), has more than a million followers, and I am so glad that I have been able to spread the word about the joy of an old dog. People write me all the time and tell me that after seeing my dogs, they decided to save a life. That tells me I am doing the right thing.

I don't even question my dog-adopting habit anymore — it's part of who I am. And it has taught me that when someone you love leaves, as hard as that can be, the door stays ajar for a new soul to come in, if you're open to it.

Beth Levine is a freelance writer in Stamford, Connecticut.

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