

Life after Racing in the USA

Part III: Indivisible Phenomenon

The indivisible phenomenon of cause and effect haunts GPA President, Rory Goreé, whose bucket list is emblazoned with the goal of seeing 100% of adoptable Greyhounds find loving homes, preferably through reputable adoption groups in the USA. Goreé is a mild-mannered man, but he sees red when it comes to a Grey2K effect that translates into the exportation of Greyhounds to countries that have no racing rules and regulations and no identifiable adoption options. Certainly, he is unhappy about the exportation, but he is furious that it could easily be prevented with more foresight, planning, and—to be completely transparent—a boost in funding for adoption groups instead of for lobbying groups such as Grey2K.

“GPA has \$25,000 in reserve for track closures,” Goreé remarked. “I would feel a little better if we had at least \$200,000 in the fund to face what is ahead.” To be sure, the \$200,000 figure is conservative, as a review of calculations reflects. When a track closes, more Greyhounds come up for adoption than usual. The more Greyhounds there are in the adoption arena, the longer it takes to get them adopted. More Greyhounds mean additional (and extended) expense for food, housing, veterinary care, and transportation costs to get dogs out of saturated areas like Florida and into adoption groups elsewhere. The extra cost averages about \$200 per dog. At any one time, tracks have a minimum of about 500 Greyhounds on site. If just two tracks close, up to 1,000 Greyhounds could suddenly be displaced and in need of adoptive homes, thus driving the needed amount for GPA’s reserve fund to \$200,000. Should as many as ten tracks close, which is certainly realistic if legislation passes in Arizona, Iowa, Florida, and elsewhere, up to 5,000 Greyhounds could flood the adoption scene. Instantly, the fund requirements would surge to \$1,000,000. “Getting the reserves to \$200,000 is a start,” Goreé said. “It isn’t ideal, and I won’t be as comfortable as I’d like to be, but it will help. It’s better than no safety net at all.”

Goreé believes that between GPA and about 250 other adoption groups nationwide, there is enough volunteer-power to get the Greyhounds transitioned into adoptive homes. Funding, however, is lacking. Looking ahead to the effects of lobbied legislation is crucial. Grey2K provides no funds to prevent the havoc that unavoidably occurs, and since funds are not included in any legislation Grey2K promotes, groups like GPA must pick up the slack to ultimately protect—and yes, in some cases, save—the dogs.

In the past, a hefty percentage of support has come from the American Greyhound Council (AGC), which was established in 1987 to fund and manage Greyhound welfare, research, and adoption programs for the racing community. It is a joint effort of the National Greyhound Association and the American Greyhound Track Operators Association. The AGC provides adoption grants, Greyhound transportation, and, if needed, temporary housing. Last year, AGC budgeted \$100,000 to help with Greyhound adoption efforts. Unfortunately, as another tsunami surges, AGC may not be able to offer as much assistance as it has in the past due to fewer owners/breeders of Greyhounds and fewer racetracks, which translates into AGC’s decreased membership and funding ability. The bottom line is that plentiful AGC money just isn’t going to be there when some of the most challenging times hit. Individual tracks have helped, but hard economic times have severely reduced their budgets, as well.

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As 2011 state legislatures rev into gear, Grey2K is wooing politicians in Arizona, Iowa, and Florida, ramping up lobbying efforts in those states to see more Greyhound racetracks end live racing. Grey2K's coffers expand as ample funds flow in from the wealthy Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), as well as from people who erroneously believe their donations help Greyhounds when they actually fund lobbying efforts.

Lobbyists certainly know the ways and means of politics, but they seldom know—or care—what comes after they finish their business in government halls. While lobbyists celebrate with satisfied smiles and fat paychecks for pushing a message they are paid to deliver, the real work begins in adoption programs such as GPA and others, none of which have the luxury of hiring lobbyists. As GPA President, Goreé donates his time to appear before legislatures, testifying against bills supported by Grey2K that do not include funding to help Greyhounds displaced by the measures. For his efforts, Goreé has to take time off from his paid position in the telecommunications environment.

Goreé has been a GPA volunteer since 1993. Prior to becoming national president in 2003, he served as vice president for two years. Several years ago, he was on the verge of leaving the presidency because he felt he'd done all he could as a leader of the country's largest Greyhound adoption organization. He'd seen the number of chapters increase through a campaign push towards 100% adoption of adoptable Greyhounds. With adoption numbers hovering over 90%, he felt the goal was within sight.

He was battle-weary after coming through a grueling tangle with Greyhound track operators in Juarez, Mexico. During that process, when he began thinking about his own safety, all he had to do was think about the safety of Greyhounds that were basically held captive at the failed Juarez racetrack, and every ounce of fear fled. In time, a small window of opportunity was wrangled to get the Greyhounds out, and volunteers swooped in to rescue all the Greyhounds and bring them back to the USA to be adopted as pets.

After recharging his energy, Goreé realized his work as GPA President was not yet done, and he accepted another term with the support and encouragement of GPA members.

Being a president, even a volunteer president, is fraught with challenges, not the least of which is criticism coming from every angle. Criticism has always been the least of Goreé's concerns. He made a decision early on to work with the industry, not to fight it. He didn't have to be pro-racing, but he knew he couldn't be anti-racing to accomplish what he wanted. From the beginning of his involvement, his vision remained focused, and it was centered on helping Greyhounds.

In the early 1990s, Goreé became one of the early founders of the Arizona chapter of GPA. Starting a GPA chapter made sense for Goreé because the nationwide organization, which was officially born in 1987, has always maintained a neutral position towards racing.

Upon becoming national GPA president, Goreé was in a better position to meet and form alliances with the American Greyhound Council. He also established contacts with state and national racing regulators. In fact, Goreé made it a point to attend industry conferences and meetings when invited, always ready to share GPA's mission, which is, "To find responsible loving homes for Greyhounds, to acquaint the

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public with the desirability of Greyhounds as pets, and to inform them of the availability of Greyhounds for adoption.” His connections ultimately paid off through financial as well regulatory support, especially when crises occurred that needed immediate attention, such as the Juarez incident. U.S. regulators couldn’t help the Greyhounds in Juarez, but AGC funding to help get them transported to safety could, and did.

Critics such as Grey2K and others have claimed that funding provided by the industry is “blood money for a blood sport,” and that GPA is nothing more than an industry appendage. In a 2009 email, for example, Dorchak circulated an email urging New Hampshire “animal advocates” to “refrain from interacting” with GPA based on its history of testifying against Grey2K bills. As a true Greyhound advocate, Goreé simply laughs at such allegations. He knows better. He indicated that before he takes action, he asks himself if Greyhounds will be served. If the answer is yes, he goes forward, simple as that.

Unlike Grey2K, GPA is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization where 100% of the donations are used to directly benefit Greyhounds. While Grey2K President Dorchak and her husband, Cary Theil, Executive Director, are paid salaries by their organization, no salaries are paid by GPA. Goreé has a full-time job elsewhere, as do many GPA officers, directors, and volunteers. Some are retired from income-producing jobs. Regardless of job status, everyone’s GPA work—often full-time in itself—is gratis.

GPA has 49 chapters spread throughout the country. Having so many chapters is a positive because there is an expansive network of support. Conversely, such numbers are inherently challenging because from chapter-to-chapter, member-to-member, there are many different opinions and viewpoints. As organizations, GPA National and GPA chapters embrace a neutral position on racing. However, there is inherent flexibility and adaptability in that position because individual GPA members vary in stance with a blend of pro-racing, anti-racing, and true neutrals forming a diverse mix. The unifying touchstone for all GPA members is their bipartisan commitment to Greyhounds.

National GPA is incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit with policies and procedures as well as bylaws that serve to guide individual GPA chapters. Each chapter is required to be incorporated in its state of operation with its own board of directors along with policies, procedures, and bylaws in accordance with state requirements.

Chapters are responsible for raising their basic operational funds in service to the hounds, which most do through various means: special event fundraisers, donations, and grants, for example. However, in times of unusual circumstance, the national arm of GPA provides financial aid and support. For example, it provides grants from its Emily Griffin Injury Fund to help defray extraordinary veterinary expenses for medical or surgical costs. It also offers grants for the purchase of transportation trailers or vans, capital improvements, such as kennel repairs, electrical upgrades, fencing or crate purchases. In addition, it provides aid to chapters when there are natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina or track closures that flood the adoption arena with huge numbers of Greyhounds.

Although Goreé’s paying job has nothing to do with Greyhounds, everything else in his life does. In fact, it is hard to catch him discussing any other topic. He met his wife, Kathy Hoynes, through a shared love

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of the breed. She recalls that when they originally met at a 2004 GPA conference in Richmond, Virginia, she walked over to introduce herself, and he seemed more interested in meeting her Greyhound, Winston. Later that year, Goreé asked Winston to be in charge of the party desk for the “Greyhounds Make Great Pets” radio show he hosts. Since Winston’s speaking skills were limited, Goreé invited Hoynes to co-host the show, and they’ve been co-hosts ever since.

Hoynes remarked, “Rory is one of those animal loving souls, and it seems he’s always been that way even when he was very young ... he just seems to understand and communicate with dogs and cats in a very unique way. Not in the animal communicator way, but as someone who loves and respects them for who they are.”

Indeed, dogs have loomed large in Goreé’s life since childhood. As a birthday present in 2006, Hoynes, who is an artist, presented Goreé with a watercolor she’d painted of him with his first dog, a mixed breed named Cinnamon. The painting, she noted, was inspired by a faded black and white photo of Goreé as a young boy hugging his dog.

Goreé and Hoynes married in December of 2006, and their corner of Glendale, Arizona, tends to have more Greyhounds than people roaming about. The couple attends many GPA and other Greyhound-related events around the country, spreading the word, admiring the breed, sharing the love.

These days, it’s difficult for Goreé to relax at home or in public because he’s always thinking about the flood of adoptable Greyhounds that must be taken care of as more tracks close in the very near future. Having just been through a massive wave of nine tracks closing over a short period of time with another major wave on the way, disaster preparedness is crucial. “We can’t just wait to see what happens,” Goreé remarked. With a cautious, but fearless, eye to the future, he is not about to forget that Greyhounds are his mission, always.

Endnotes Part III: What you can do

Members of the public can help by making monetary donations and considering adopting or fostering a Greyhound. For more information on Greyhounds as pets and to locate a nearby chapter, visit GPA-National’s web site at www.greyhoundpets.org. A discussion board about Greyhounds is also available at www.greyhoundsmakegreatpets.com for questions and answers about the breed. As with any group you make donations to, check GPA out on www.guidestar.org, a free service that posts financial and other information on nonprofit organizations.

To make a tax-deductible donation, make checks payable and mail to GPA-National; Track Closure Fund; c/o Vicki Phanco; GPA National Treasurer; P.O. Box 40; Highlandville, MO 65669.