

GPA Hosts National Convention, by Vera Filipelli

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Greyhound Pets of America held their national conference at the Westin in Atlanta, GA over the weekend of Aug 10th. The GPA/Atlanta and Southeastern Greyhound Adoption was the host for the event. They worked hard with the management to get special room rates and even worked with an airline to reduce airfare. Adoption groups from across America attended to hear what keynote speakers had to say and to network on the difficulty and rewards involved in Greyhound adoption.

Several vendors were on hand to show their Greyhound wares. What made the weekend special was the fact that Greyhounds were welcome at the beautiful hotel. The Greyhounds were all the rave. One could not enter the hotel during the weekend without bumping into a hound and its caretaker on the way to a meeting or a potty break.

Although the event was set in a casual tone, it was apparent from the start that these groups take their work seriously. Topics in the seminars included pet first aid, transitioning from elite athlete to pet, grant and funding, as well as author Lee Livingood's "Ain't Misbehaven" speech. Lee was on hand all weekend to sign her newest book *Retired Racing Greyhounds for Dummies*.

Gary Guccione of the NGA spoke on Saturday and showcased the new video from the NGA, *Heart of the Sport* that was launched at the spring meeting. He encouraged the groups to request funding through the AGC. He told them that the American Greyhound Council had dollars available that met with certain criteria. Other guests included Tara Tisopulos who wrote *The Adventures of Buddi the Greyhound*, Robert Gillette, DVM, MSE and Jean Bourassa.

It was announced at the meeting that Bev Doan of the Southern Nevada GPA would be the National GPA, PR person. Bev has non-profit experience and brings a wealth of information to the group. She will assess the group, make recommendations, and implement programs to further aid in Greyhound adoptions.

The recent closing of St. Croix was a topic discussed outside of the meeting and reports were very positive on the placement of the runners. The Greyhounds have been placed quicker than expected. The track will keep a kennel open until the end of the year, or until all the Greyhound left in the kennel have been adopted out.

This year's convention was a hit and it was confirmed that next year's convention will be held in Las Vegas followed by Washington, D.C. in 2003. It will be hard to match the luxury provided by the Atlanta group included the buffet provided on the patio sponsored by Birmingham racetrack. The Emerald Isle Greyhounds from Pensacola stole the show waterside and confirmed to hotel guests that wonderful companions Greyhound make.

The GPA convention is one that should be attended by everyone involved in the sport. The groups have come a long way from just placing a dog in a home. They are well educated on Greyhound behaviors and care very deeply about the former racers. All of the groups in attendance had one thing in common. Funding. Although money is desperately needed, the groups need other things like muzzles, leads, collars etc.

Greyhound owners and trainers: The next time you are cleaning out your kennel and getting rid of old collars, etc. Please call your local GPA before you toss out items that could be of use to the groups. Paws down, the GPA and related adoption agencies deserve recognition for their outstanding work. After meeting the team leaders at the convention I am convinced that the goal of 100 percent Greyhound placement is obtainable in the near future.