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Placing Great Labs in Great Homes around the Great Lakes

THANK YOU FOR ADOPTING A GREAT LAB!

Not only have we provided you with a rescued Lab, we consider this the beginning of a relationship with our adoptive families. Many of our volunteers have experience in dog training, dog behavioral training and some are veterinary technicians. We are here to provide helpful advice or instruction if needed. Please feel free to call if you have any questions or concerns. We're here for you.

We always like to hear from our adopters from time to time so send us emails and pictures of your new furry family member.

Here are a couple of helpful tips to acclimate your dog:

- **Introducing your foster Lab to your own dog(s).**

Introductions on neutral ground are best. Have another family member bring your dog outside on the sidewalk away from your home - down the block, across the street, a nearby park. You can have your new Lab there waiting. When your dog arrives, don't allow them to sniff one another yet. Walk everyone together on the sidewalk or the park for about 20 minutes. Then allow them to sniff one another.

When walking into your home keep a leash attached to your new Lab at all times and monitor him/her closely. The leash will allow you to correct the dog if he/she shows behavior you don't approve of.

- **Please keep the chaos to a minimum for the first week.**

It's important to bring your new Lab home to an environment that's as low-key and calm as possible. The ideal time is when there are no family gatherings, large dinner parties, out of town guests, etc. This allows your dog to bond with the members of your household. Outside distractions, as listed above, may disrupt your Lab's ability to settle in quickly.

- **Allow at least 2 weeks for your Lab to settle in.**

We often don't know the complete background of our rescued Labs. They may have been moved around a bit from their previous environment (stray, owner surrender, a shelter or pound). As a result they may act nervously, jittery, or experience frequent or persistent panting. Once they know they're in their forever home and bond with you they'll settle down and stop the nervous behavior. Usually this behavior stops within a day or two but can sometimes take a week or two.

- **Develop a routine for your Lab.**

To help your Lab settle in quickly please adopt a routine for your dog as soon as possible. This means feeding at a consistent time every day, exercising every day and giving routine potty breaks. Your Lab needs to know what to expect from you and when.

- **Give your Lab frequent potty breaks.**

Remember, your home is foreign to your new Lab. Treat the dog as if he/she is an 8 week old puppy when acquainting them to your backyard or potty location. This means frequent trips (as often as every hour for the first couple of days), taking them out the same door each time, and praising them each time they urinate and/or defecate. Food rewards will expedite the process.

- **Crate train wisely.**

We highly recommend using a crate for your Lab initially. All our Labs are trained by the foster home to enter their crates on command so remember to follow all instructions from the foster home. Your Lab may have earned his freedom from his crate at the foster home but he may be destructive because he's nervous in his new environment.

A crate is not to be used as a substitute for exercise and your dog should never be left in a crate for more than 6 hours without a break. Labs need to be with their pack (i.e. you) so don't leave him in a crate on another level when you go to bed.

- **Exercise, exercise, exercise - and, when all else fails, exercise some more!**

A tired dog is a good dog. Exercise is a must for Labs; the younger they are the more exercise they'll need. If daily walks aren't always possible please consider using a local doggie day care center to provide proper exercise. Dog walking services are another option. It's unrealistic to leave your dog home alone all day and expect him/her to be a calm, well behaved dog when you get home. Labs need mental and physical exercise daily.

- **Obedience class is a must.**

Obedience classes are part of your contractual agreement. Even though your Lab may have learned good obedience skills from his foster home, it's important to take him/her to a basic obedience class. These classes will help you learn how to manage your dog and will establish and reinforce the bond between you and your dog. There's no magic to teaching a dog obedience, it just takes consistency and frequency.

- **Obedience Training/Leash Walking**

Your dog will need to be taught that you are in charge while he is on a leash, and always for that matter. To do this you will need a training collar and leash. We highly recommend a 6 foot leather leash. In our experience, prong collars seem to work best for training purposes. A prong collar should fit snugly high up on the dog's neck, just behind the ears and under the chin. When fitted and positioned correctly the prong collar acts just like a nylon collar.

It's also important to note that not *all* dogs need a prong collar. Once your dog has proven his good doggie manners and etiquette while on a walk, you can switch to the matching collar and leash sets, although we have found that the nylon leashes may be hard on the hands.

- **Schedule an appointment with your Veterinarian to obtain heartworm preventative.**

Heartworm Disease is very painful and can be deadly. Most importantly, it's totally preventable! Dogs must receive monthly heartworm preventative all year round to prevent the disease. All GLLR Labs are given monthly heartworm preventative while in foster care. Your Lab must visit your vet immediately to dispense additional heartworm preventative.

Be sure to bring your Great Lakes Lab Rescue adoption documentation (Contract and the About Your Lab information) which provides proof of vaccination. Also, don't forget to bring a fresh stool sample to the vet when you visit to check for parasites.

- **Training advice is available.**

If you identify any problems with your Lab we have trainers who can help. Please contact us to discuss some of your options.

- **Support is available.**

If you identify any topic we have not covered here, just call. We want your fostering experience to be a good one so if you have questions, just ask. We'll do our best to resolve any concerns or issues that you may have.

**We appreciate your opening your hearts and homes to a Great Lab!
We hope you find it as rewarding as we do!**