



# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## A PAWSOME GETAWAY FOR SHELTER DOGS AND VOLUNTEERS!

The dogs of MercyLight had a chance to experience a change of scenery with all the volunteers of MercyLight. The event proved a great time for all with smiles and wags all around.

MercyLight volunteers and our furry friends enjoyed a fun-filled staycation at CSC @ Loyang's dog-friendly bungalow in August this year.

Volunteers spent quality time with their favourite rescue dogs and got to know each other better through activities like a pack walk to Pasir Ris Park, games, and a relaxed buffet dinner together. The dogs, meanwhile, had a blast exploring off-leash, meeting old and new friends, getting lots of treats, and just being free to play in the open space! Previously, MercyLight had also hosted volunteer appreciation events at Sentosa, local parks, and even the doggy pool at Wag & Wild.

This staycation left everyone, dogs and humans alike, with happy memories, lots of laughs, and a stronger sense of the close-knit community that makes MercyLight so special. 🐾

**'I'M DREAMING OF A...':** on the right, snacks capture the attention of the pack. On the left, Zane gets a hug from a volunteer.



**Our mission is to improve the quality of lives of stray dogs through rescue, rehabilitation and re-homing; to increase public awareness and acceptance of stray dogs as companion animals and that they deserve to be treated with compassion and kindness.**

## MEET THE ADOPTERS: FAITHFUL

### AFTER MEETING FAITHFUL AT A PET ADOPTION DRIVE AT PET EXPO, SHAR AND NAT REFLECT ON THEIR ADOPTION EXPERIENCE

#### What made you decide to adopt a dog? Why did you choose to adopt from MercyLight?

Shar: I previously owned a schnauzer from a puppy mill who passed on, and I felt ready to welcome another dog into my life again. A close friend of mine who volunteers at SOSD always advocated for adoption, which deeply inspired me to consider adoption. I've been following MercyLight on Instagram for awhile now, and would occasionally come across dogs that catch my eye.

Nat: A few months ago, we decided to visit MercyLight's adoption booth at Pet Expo so that we could interact with the dogs in person and find out more about the adoption process. The volunteers there were incredibly helpful, providing valuable insights that allowed us to make a more informed decision. They also shed light on the different dogs' personalities and requirements. That is also our first encounter with Faithful! Later that night, we wrote in to express our interest, and received a response from Kelly within two days.

#### Why did you pick Faithful? What was the moment you knew Faithful was the one?

Shar: At the adoption fair, Faithful sat beside us calmly and let us pet her. I recall a heartwarming moment when she made eye contact with Nat. We initially expressed interest in both Miyoo and Faithful, and later visited the shelter to see the both of them again. Ultimately, we decided to focus on Faithful wholeheartedly after hearing that Miyoo had other interested adopters.

Nat: I was drawn to Faithful's temperament. Since I have a nine-year-old parrot, I needed a dog that was calm and could coexist with my parrot. Faithful is generally shy and doesn't initiate conflicts, which made her an ideal fit.

#### What was the adoption process like?

Shar: We were initially unsure if we should proceed with the adoption, as during our initial few visits to the shelter, she would often shy away from us. At that time, our house was still under renovation, so a staycation wasn't possible. We persisted with the shelter visits to bond with Faithful - we ended up making about 10 visits, and with each occasion we noticed her gradually warming up to us and letting her guard down a little more.



**'HOME FOR CHRISTMAS': A happy Faithful with Shar and Nat at their home. Faithful is calm and co-exists with their 9-year-old parrot.**

#### To Nat: As a first time dog owner, are there any challenges you've faced?

Nat: It was a big lifestyle adjustment as I have to wake up at 7+ to take her on her morning walk before heading to work. It's still something that I'm getting used to. However, her happiness and excitement during her morning walks makes it all worthwhile.

Working with her on her obedience training (a HDB requirement) was also a new experience for us - she had to learn commands like sit, down, stay, come, and also be able to walk calmly on a leash beside us. Thankfully, she's quite mellow, so there were no major issues aside from her initial disinterest in treats, which made it a bit challenging to motivate her during the training process.

#### Are there any surprises that you did not expect during the adoption process?

Shar: After adopting Faithful, I've noticed that many people are a bit cautious around Singapore Specials, as there's a certain stigma associated with them. Some dog owners tend to keep their distance, refuse to take the same lift, or turn away once they see us. It's always a pleasant surprise when they finally interact with her and see how calm she is, as it breaks the stereotype and dispels their misconceptions about the breed.

Nat: We bought many toys for Faithful, but I didn't expect that she wouldn't know how to play with them - she'll even get frightened and run away from squeaky toys because of the noise! We've had to rely on treat-based toys, such as puzzles and snuffle mats, to keep her mentally stimulated and enriched. One funny quirk Faithful has is that she only likes to play with male Shiba Inus - there's 3 in the estate that she's friends with. Other than that, she's quite reserved when we bring her to the dog runs, and she's still learning how to open up and play with other dogs.

## MEET THE ADOPTERS: FAITHFUL

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

**Do you have any tips for those who are considering adopting a Singapore Special?**

**Shar:** If you're adopting a dog that's quieter or more reserved in nature, don't give up and don't take it personally when they don't take a liking to you immediately. It's incredibly rewarding to see them gradually open up over time. Faithful used to hide in the room all day, but now she enjoys hanging out with us in the living room. She wasn't treat-motivated at first, but she slowly began to enjoy treats from us as our bond developed.

**Nat:** We were quite dejected initially as she took a long time to open up to us - even at our 6th or 7th visit to the shelter, she would always walk away from us. To be honest, we almost considered switching to another dog; however, when we learnt that previous potential adopters had also given up halfway, we felt even more strongly about giving Faithful a chance. Kelly was a huge help by offering us plenty of tips and advice, as well as encouraging us not to give up. For example, she suggested taking Faithful out for walks more often and using those moments to gently touch her to build trust. She also recommended showering her as another way to strengthen our bond.

**Shar:** We learned the importance of respecting her boundaries and giving her space. For example, approaching her directly would sometimes stress her out, so we focused on letting her come to us on her own terms. Bonding at the shelter was challenging due to the distractions and stress of the environment, but things became much easier during the home trial. Even now, it's a work in progress as we continue to expose Faithful to new experiences such as swimming at Wag & Wild or attending gatherings with other MercyLight dogs. Every dog is unique - with patience and understanding, they can thrive and become wonderful companions.

**If you could describe Faithful in 3 words what would they be?**

**Shar:** Gentle, Independent, Sweet! 🐾



**'HAVE YOURSELF A...':** merry and cozy home (above). Below, their first meeting at Pet Expo.

## MEET THE ADOPTERS: CHOCO (AND DAZZLER)

### A COMPANION TO DAZZLER AND A STORY ON THEIR JOURNEY TOGETHER



**'THERE IS JUST ONE THING I NEED...':** Cheng and Nick with Dazzler, Choco and Shiro the cat.

**Why did you decide to from a shelter and from MercyLight specifically?**

We had been wanting to give rescue dogs a chance to be in a family that would give them the love and care they needed. We never considered buying a dog from a breeder. We looked around at various dog shelters, and found MercyLight. We liked that the dogs at MercyLight mingled with each other in one big space and were not confined to individual cages. We saw them interact a lot with the volunteers, which meant that they were more accustomed to humans.

**What was the moment you knew you had found the right dogs?**

For the first dog, a key factor was Shiro, our cat. Both Dazzler and Choco got along very well with Shiro. We had our sights set on Harvest initially, but he was coughing a lot in our house, and was likely allergic to cat fur from Shiro, our cat. Kelly then introduced us to Dazzler, who was newer to the shelter, and less confident compared to Harvest. However, we believed that we could make her come out of her shell.

For Choco, Kelly had allowed us to bring her for outings and staycations regularly. During these outings and staycations, we realised that Choco and Dazzler were actually quite similar dogs, and compatible with each other.

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## MEET THE ADOPTERS: CHOCO (AND DAZZLER)

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Choco, who was more friendly to other dogs, also gave Dazzler the confidence to open up to other dogs. She was less wary to other dogs when Choco was around. We decided to make the decision to adopt Choco once we felt that we were ready to take in a second dog.

#### What was the first funny or unexpected thing Dazzler or Choco did after bringing them home?

Choco's first interaction with Shiro was very cute. She went up to Shiro nose-to-nose immediately.

#### What are the dynamics between the two dogs?

Initially Dazzler would get jealous when we were petting Choco, and would come to get pets from us as well. We had to show Dazzler that even though Choco was here to stay, we loved her the same. Now, Dazzler has accepted that she will have to share everything with Choco, and we are very proud of her. They're inseparable, and have learned to appreciate each other's company, and would wait for each other to go for walks or go to the lift.

#### What has been the most rewarding part of adopting a dog so far?

Seeing them come out of their shell has been very rewarding. Dazzler was very skittish and reserved at first, but is so sweet now. It took three months before we saw her softer side.

Every time we come home, both dogs are our welcome party. They will dance and wag their tails.

#### What are the challenges that you faced with Dazzler or Choco?

It was a struggle feeding Dazzler at the beginning. Many times, I had to cook her meals several times so the food will still be fresh.

Choco was much less challenging, as she was very used to both humans and dogs already.

#### Do you have any advice for others who are considering adoption, especially those who have cats in their homes?

Be open and patient. We had no idea that Shiro loved dogs and got along so well with dogs until we had Harvest come for a staycation.

Rescue dogs have a past before they come to you, and need hard work. Some dogs take longer to trust you, but it is very much rewarding when you see them starting to trust you and returning your love. Nothing can match this feeling.

I would also advise them to ask for help if they need it. MercyLight has such an amazing community of volunteers and other adopters that have been through similar experiences. 🐾

“Everytime we come home, both dogs are our welcome party. They will dance and wag their tails.”

## MEET THE ADOPTERS: ROCCO

### ROCCO FOUND HIS FOREVER HOME WITH MERCYLIGHT'S HELP

Rocco the Rottweiler was on rehoming broadcast under NParks for a total of 8 times. The situation was quite desperate as NParks was not able to keep a Schedule 2 dog for much longer. MercyLight circulated Rocco across their network (volunteers and others contacts), and five families were shortlisted, with Lay Kian being the fifth one to share their interest in adopting.

#### What is a Schedule 2 Dog?

In Singapore, Schedule 2 dogs are dog breeds that are considered mildly vicious and include:

- Bull Terrier
- Doberman Pinscher
- Rottweiler
- German Shepherd Dog and related breeds
- Mastiffs, including Bull Mastiff, Cane Corso, and Dogue De Bordeaux

Owners of scheduled dogs in Singapore must: Carry insurance for at least S\$100,000, provide a banker's guarantee of up to S\$5,000, microchip their dogs, and undergo compulsory obedience training.



“TIS THE SEASON’: after months of rehoming messages and calls to action, Rocco found his forever family.

## MEET THE ADOPTERS: ROCCO

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

#### Why did you decide to adopt Rocco?

I've always been a Rottie lover. The morning after my previous Rottweiler's cremation, I was feeling down and prayed about getting another dog. That same afternoon, 7 friends sent me Rocco's adoption notice - the timing couldn't have been more perfect.

When I met him and played with him, we bonded instantly - it was truly love at first sight. Even though Rocco barked fiercely at another person, we were not deterred.

I believed that his reaction was simply triggered by the situation, and didn't imply that he was an aggressive dog by nature.

#### What was the adoption process like for you?

The adoption process involved several steps:

1. Application: Pre-qualification was required, ensuring that I met NParks and MercyLight's criteria.
2. Meet & Play Sessions: Since many people applied for Rocco, I was the fifth potential adopter to meet him. Both NParks and MercyLight put in a lot of effort to facilitate these sessions.
3. House Inspection: MercyLight conducted a home visit to ensure my living environment was suitable for Rocco.
4. Follow-Up Meet & Play Sessions: NParks went out of their way to accommodate repeat visits, despite their busy schedules, to ensure Rocco bonded well with me.
5. Sterilization & Recovery: Before coming home, Rocco underwent sterilization and recovery.
6. Homecoming: Finally, Rocco arrived at his permanent home!

It truly takes a village to save a dog like Rocco. I want to express my deepest gratitude to NParks and MercyLight for their tireless efforts in rehoming him. I witnessed firsthand the incredible care and dedication they put into every aspect - ensuring Rocco's well-being, screening potential adopters, coordinating meet-and-play sessions, conducting house inspections, arranging transport, and handling the necessary paperwork for a Rottweiler. Their commitment made this adoption possible, and I'm forever thankful.

“As the new owner, you need to understand the tremendous amount of work that went into the rehoming process and be prepared to make a lifetime commitment to your dog.”

#### What has been the biggest surprise about adopting Rocco that you did not expect?

Rocco's intelligence never fails to amaze us. For instance, he'll sit patiently and wait for us to open the door for him, but if no one is watching, he'll take matters into his own paws - opening the door and entering the room by himself!

He's also incredibly expressive. One morning, my helpers found a broken food cover and half-eaten bananas scattered across the kitchen floor. Assuming Rocco had stolen the bananas, they scolded him. He was visibly upset, making sad growling noises. Later, when he saw me, he sighed dramatically as if to "complain" about the unfair treatment. This behavior made us reconsider the situation, and we remembered that the doggy gate to the kitchen was locked, meaning Rocco couldn't have entered. Upon closer inspection, we noticed claw marks on the broken food cover and realized the bananas were likely stolen by a civet cat. We had wrongfully accused Rocco, and his reaction made it clear just how much he felt misunderstood!


#### What does a typical day in Rocco's life look like?

Rocco's day revolves around the essentials: eating, sleeping, and playing. He loves to sit on my feet or sometimes jump into my lap, leaning his full weight against me as a way of expressing his affection.

#### Any advice for those considering adopting?

When it comes to training and bonding, take your time with socialization. Don't introduce your dog to strangers, new activities, or other animals too suddenly. Patience is crucial. And never be discouraged by challenging behavior - try to understand where it's coming from and correct it. There are no bad dogs, only ones that need a little extra guidance.

It's important to realise the amount of effort that goes into rehoming a dog. From the person who found Rocco and called NParks, to NParks' investigation in trying to find his owner, to the care he received while waiting for his owner to claim him - it all takes time and dedication. Once that didn't work out, MercyLight stepped in to raise awareness through its network and assisted with the entire adoption process. As the new owner, you need to understand the tremendous amount of work that went into the rehoming process and be prepared to make a lifetime commitment to your dog.

One key piece of advice is the importance of getting a dog license. Rocco was once lost and found by NParks, but since he didn't have a license, they couldn't locate and return him to his original owner, which turned out to be my good luck! He's now licensed and officially my Rottie. 



## NEW RESCUE: DIAMOND ALONG WITH HER PUPPY, LEO, THESE TWO BRIGHTEN UP THE SHELTER

With teamwork and persistence, Diamond was rescued on 7 September 2024. Many groups had attempted to bring Diamond to safety, but she had always managed to evade capture.

Mercylight tried twice but initially couldn't succeed either. Diamond's intelligence, while remarkable, made her cautious of humans, and she didn't yet understand that people were there to help, not harm. It took careful planning and a coordinated effort to ensure her rescue, proving that sometimes it truly takes a village.

Part of the urgency behind rescuing Diamond was her role as a mother. She had recently given birth, and her puppies wouldn't have survived the dangers of the wild. On that same day, her puppy Leo was also rescued, along with his brother Beyn. Unfortunately, Beyn had already passed away, likely due to the recent floods and heavy rains. Diamond's surviving puppy, Leo, opened his eyes just two days after the rescue. 🐾



**“GOOD TIDINGS”** also means good news and that's what Diamond's rescue delivered! Thanks to the planning and efforts by her rescuers, puppy Leo can now grow up safely alongside his mum.

## ADOPT DIAMOND

Diamond has now fully settled into Mercylight, where she is warmly welcomed and is preparing for the next step: finding her forever home.

Diamond, named for the distinctive mark on her forehead, is a true gem in every sense. Her name reflects her resilience and value, a reminder of how every life is precious. Although she has a strong survival instinct, Diamond is learning that not all humans meant harm. With time, her curiosity and intelligence will guide her to see that there are gentle and loving people who want to care for her. Her journey to trusting humans may take time, but her watchful, observant nature means she's learning and adapting every day.

With the right family, she'll be able to experience the love and security she deserves, growing alongside her loved ones. And as a bonus, she's HDB-approved, making her an ideal addition to any loving home.



## ADOPT LEO

Leo is also up for adoption! Leo, whose name means “Brave like a Lion,” is a little adventurer in the making. As a young puppy, his personality is still developing, but he's already proving to be strong and resilient, just like his mother. With a safe and loving environment, Leo will grow into his name, embracing bravery and love as he finds his way in the world.

## FEATURED: AVERY++

### A FAMILY AFFAIR FOR MUM, AVERY AND ALL HER SIBLINGS

Avery, now living her best life on Sentosa, gets to enjoy the perks of island living, from buggy rides to yacht and speedboat trips. This lucky girl has come a long way from her humble beginnings, born inside our shelter after her mother was captured by us when we spotted a heavily pregnant dog who is hiding in the deep forest.

Avery's owner chose her with purpose, specifically looking for a black dog, knowing they often face challenges in finding a forever home. Since then, Avery has been showered with love, adventure, and plenty of outings.

On 2 November 2024, Avery's owner extended a heartwarming invitation to Avery's family for a fun day on a speedboat.

Avery's mom, along with her siblings Gia, Zeki, and Bethel, joined her for a reunion on the water, where they enjoyed the breeze, the waves and the thrill of the open sea. The pups loved the freedom to explore the boat, surrounded by their family and the gentle lapping of waves—a truly special day to celebrate the bonds they share.

Here's to many more adventures, happy reunions, and the joy that comes from finding a forever home! 🐾



**"OH, WHAT FUN IT IS TO RIDE..."** in a speedboat with all the family. Some photos of Avery with her mum and siblings out in Sentosa. It was a special day for all - including some of those who have yet to be adopted.



## MEET THE ADOPTERS: MERLIN (AND ELLA)

### MERLIN JOINED ELLA'S FAMILY AND HELPED BRING OUT A NEW SIDE OF ELLA

#### Why did you decide to adopt?

At our core, we are pro-adoption. We will not buy from a breeder. Our two cats, who were foster fails, were also adopted from a cat rescuer. Having pets is not like buying a toy; we want to help the animals. We wanted to bring dogs out of the shelter, to open up space for the shelter to rescue other dogs.

We had reached out to a couple different shelters in with the key information being that we already had two cats at home. One of the shelters we wrote to replied us saying that they only had dogs with problems and that we were not suitable adopters. On the other hand, Mercylight responded to us with a list of questions, which were very detailed and made us think quite hard. We were very impressed with how thorough Mercylight's questionnaire was, which made us consider things that we had not even thought through.

Mercylight made it very clear to us throughout the whole process that it was okay for us to change our minds, if we decided that we were not up for it. They also informed us that if they felt that we were not suitable at any point, they would also let us know. We also appreciated the comprehensive adoption process, which we felt was there for a reason.

#### Why a second dog? And why Merlin?

Ella was still deep in her shell, one year in. She would hide by herself in the corner, and would not even come downstairs by herself. It got to the point where she was not really doing much, and it was not good for her in the long run. Kelly suggested that we could consider getting a second dog to help Ella come out of her shell by being more open and friendly. The objective was very clear for us - we could not confuse our objective and pay more attention to Merlin and ignore Ella.

At first, we explored other dogs from Mercylight, such as Choco and Miyoo, but they weren't the right fit for Ella. Mercylight suggested for us to consider Merlin, so we did. We brought him home, and he adjusted so easily. Merlin has helped Ella come out of her shell so much, and we saw a strong improvement in her fairly quickly. Now, she behaves more like a regular dog. She feels safe at home, would come downstairs by herself, and is happy to come back to the house. Ella also behaves like a different dog when we bring her out to the dog run, galloping and jumping, and has been showing her more playful side more often recently.

#### How do the dogs get on with your cats?

The first two weeks, the cats were afraid, but they have gotten over it. We implemented a gate system at home, so that the cats would have a safe space. Merlin even tried to initiate play with one of the cats, but he is not aggressive. It was important for us to



**HAPPY TOGETHER:** Nerissa and Vikram along with Ella (adopted first) and Merlin (adopted recently). Merlin has supported Ella to come out of her shell and be more confident.

have a dog that did not display any sort of aggression. Merlin is smarter and knows the cats' boundaries now.

#### What are the dynamics like between the two dogs?

Merlin is definitely the leader, and Ella is the follower.

#### What has been the most rewarding part of being a dog owner?

Adopting dogs was always something I wanted since I was young - to take care of dogs, walk them and to be responsible for them. The dogs have also given me extra incentive to get out of bed early to walk them, which I wouldn't do in the past.

It has also been nice to get familiar with our neighbourhood, which is a very nice neighbourhood with grassy sidewalks. We also greatly appreciate Mercylight's supportive community of like-minded people who champion adoption over buying. We also have seen the volunteers who got very attached to Ella, who know that she is in a decent home now.

#### Any advice for others who are considering adoption?

For those adopting for the first time, it is very tempting to give up halfway through the adoption process and to just go to a shop and get a puppy, but our main advice is to persist through the extra steps. Those due diligence steps are in place to help you, and help you figure out the things you need to consider and prepare.

For those facing a similar issue with getting their dogs to open up, be patient and trust the process. Seek help, and don't get discouraged. Consider getting a second dog if you have the means! Lastly, if you are an experienced dog owner, consider adopting the more difficult dogs that are not suitable for first time owners, so that they too can get a chance. 🐾

Mercylight is dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming stray dogs so that they may get a second chance in life. Rescue efforts require a great amount of time, effort and manpower, but we believe that every single dog rescued makes it worthwhile.

Catch the next issue in March 2025!

