

## Vernon Ends Family Meetings

Jeanine & Stuart Braithwaite

About six months ago, my older daughter Vivi announced that she wanted us to have family meetings, so we sat down formally to discuss her topics. Vivi had only one agenda item--she wanted a dog. Our younger daughter Kelly immediately agreed, and the meeting quickly turned into a begging session. Several more family meetings were called, and the agenda was always one same thing: the children wanted a dog. However, my husband had been bitten on the thigh by a big dog as a child, and was not initially that interested in a dog (we had cats previously). The children and I embarked on a campaign to convince my husband, Stuart, that a dog would be great for the family.

I had a beagle as a child and I knew how terrific they are with kids. I knew that my own job (with significant travel) meant that I couldn't really make the commitment to train a puppy, and I also knew that rescued adult dogs tend to be quite affectionate, so we decided to find a rescue dog for the family. I went to the animal control shelter but the only beagle they had was reclaimed by the owner, so I surfed the Web. I found a cross-reference to BREW and followed it to the BREW website.

BREW is a terrific organization--the website is well-organized and clear, and BREW's all volunteer management is really impressive. I remain awed by the dedication and countless volunteer hours that the BREW people put into their mission to rescue beagles. We applied and asked to meet some of the BREW beagles up for adoption. The dog we first met was not a good match for us. She was too hyper and too solidly built. Vivi could not handle her on the leash, and I began to get worried whether we would find the right beagle for us, since Vivi is slight and walking the dog was very much a part of her dream, but as you beagle owners know, as a general rule, beagles do not exactly "heel" when being walked.

We then went to a BREW event at the Crosspointe Vet. hospital where we met two dogs. The first dog was much more relaxed and friendly, and we liked him a lot, but still, there was the leash problem. Then we met Vernon. Vernon is a beagle-jack russel terrier mix and is right under 20 pounds even. He behaved (and behaves) very well on the leash, responding (in an admittedly un-beagle like way) to a command of come and a short tug on the leash. Vernon is also extremely affectionate and we fell in love with him immediately. He made a terrific adjustment to our family, and all of us were thrilled with him. He became particular friends with Stuart, who is at home during the day, and spends some of his time in Stuart's home office, where the door has always been open to him.

Vernon is older, around 8 or so, and his foster mother thought that he might be unadoptable because of his age. However, we have found him to be energetic and lively on his walks. He is extremely affectionate, and typically puts up a paw on your leg to ask for pets and attention, rather than jumping up unrestrainedly. Originally, he was in a one-dog family, and seems to really appreciate the undivided attention of the four people in our family. Vernon traveled well with us on our Christmas vacation and will come with us to the beach in August. He is a wonderful addition to our family, and we are very grateful to BREW for rescuing a beagle mix and particularly to his foster mother, Teresa Bridgman, for fostering him.

And since Vernon has come to our house, we have had no more family meetings!