

CURRENTS



Do humans need nature?

What does nature do for you, especially during these trying times? Please e-mail Sheryl De Vore at devore@pioneerlocal.com or call (847) 486-7359 and share your stories of enjoying nature and why it's important in your life.

Katrina puppy now is herding cat in Chicago

Wrigley, a border collie mix who lives in Chicago, herds a cat in a house instead of cattle in a pasture. But don't feel bad for him. A year ago he was a homeless Hurricane Katrina victim.

Not much is known about him other than he ended up in the home of Scott and Susie Griffith, a North Side couple who adopted him through PAWS last September.

The Griffiths originally wanted a purebred puppy, preferably a spaniel.

But when they learned of all the pets displaced by Hurricane Katrina they decided to focus on saving a homeless puppy instead. But it had to be a puppy, something that would start out smaller than their cats Zeus and Sherlock, so they wouldn't be scared.

"Here are all these animals that need saving," Susie said about seeing Katrina animals on PAWS' Web site. "It was something I could do to help."

Susie said PAWS called to tell her they had three puppies, litter mates who were 3 to 4 months old. Plus, they appeared to be spaniels, or at least had some spaniel blood in them.

Wrigley, named by Scott, who is a Cubs fan, appeared to be in good physical condition. But he was skittish.

"He may have been separated from his mom too early," Susie said.

She added all the couple really knows about him is he's from Louisiana.

Wrigley's behavior sometimes causes the Griffiths to guess about his life before coming to Chicago. For example, he tucks his tail between his legs and tries to get away from children.

"We do wonder," she said. "He's afraid of kids. I wonder if he had a bad experience with kids."

Or, she offered, maybe he just was never socialized with children.

Until just a few weeks ago, Wrigley was also frightened by large puddles, a fear that Susie thought might be related to Katrina. But now he walks right through the puddles.

He hates the rain, though. Again, she wonders if that's Katrina-related.

What they do know is he has some border collie in him.

Susie said it didn't take long for him to display characteristics of the breed that was developed in the border country between England and Scotland, where shepherds use the dogs to help round up livestock.

Wrigley is agile and smart and possesses a strong yearning to herd. Even if it is just a cat.

Susie said Wrigley will use his nose to nudge Zeus, a big gray cat. After a couple of nudges, Zeus will take off running and Wrigley will corral the cat into the dining room or the kitchen.

Border collies also use an intense gaze, which the American Kennel Club calls "the eye," to control livestock. Susie said Wrigley often gives Zeus the eye when the cat is at the top of the stairs and the dog is at the bottom. When the cat finally comes down, the chase is on.

But Sherlock, a feisty black cat, doesn't care about Wrigley's ancestry, and will jump out from behind doors at the dog, Susie said.

The Griffiths also know they helped an animal who suffered through a traumatic experience, which may or may not be why they spoil him with toys, his own bed and lots of walks. They also like to talk about him.

"Maybe it's because he's a Katrina dog, but maybe it's just because he's such a great dog," Susie said.



Susie Griffith watches Wrigley chew on a toy. Wrigley developed interesting relationships with his feline housemates. — Jason Han/Staff Photographer