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Tomorrow

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Dog Volunteering

BY ANN HODGES

After reading an article in *Tomorrow* magazine, I volunteered to help at Cadela Carlota dog kennels.

I was particularly interested in the fact that training is given to socialise the dogs so that they have a better chance of staying re-homed and not brought back to Cadela Carlota because of minor training problems. Having had various terriers over a 60-year period myself, I wanted to help with this training.

On arrival, I was shown around and I was surprised at how much space the dogs have. They each have their own kennel and shade from the heat of the day. I was also amazed by the care provided by staff and helpers; they know each dog and all its preferences, individual foibles, etc. Every dog is walked at least once a week. A list indicates to any helper the name of dogs that have been walked and those who need a walk. Some are taken to the beach – on a rota basis. Kennel life is not ideal, but at Cadela Carlota, life for homeless dogs is as good as it possibly can be.

Each dog is assessed on arrival. Often their stories are heartbreaking. How can some humans treat dogs so heartlessly? Especially when we all know of dogs who help the blind, sniff out explosives in war zones, save lives in earthquake zones and help with various types of disability. Dogs have amazing abilities – of which we humans know nothing.

I am sure there are *Tomorrow* readers who have lost a dog and who loved it so dearly they cannot face having another. There are people who are unable to walk a dog – for various reasons. To those dog lovers, I would say, please help with the excellent work done by Cadela Carlota. You could donate by direct debit for as little as one euro a month – every little helps.

You can support the two shops, one in Almadena, the other in Lagos. You could come to the kennels and just sit in with a stressed dog. Just sit there, read a book, talk very softly – anything to ensure that its trust in humans starts to return, albeit slowly. There are several young dogs there with sweet and gentle natures who would make lovely family pets, but they are terrified of humans. I cannot bear to think that they might spend their whole life in kennels – they need a loving forever home.

You may not have any experience with dogs, so you may be uncertain about offering a dog a home. Cadela Carlota will put you in touch with a dog trainer, and they will help and advise you every step of the way. All dogs are castrated/neutered, microchipped and vaccinated.

And finally, I must tell you about Castanha. She is everyone's sweetheart. She is so gentle; she just adores a cuddle and being groomed. She loves fuss of every kind. But she has been at Cadela Carlota for five long years. During this time, she has lost her sight, but her hearing is excellent, and when she hears a friendly voice, she heads in that direction. She is too frightened to walk far since she became blind, so she does not need a long strenuous walk. What she needs is a cosy, comfortable and loving environment to live out her days. Maybe you are the person who can offer this to Castanha?

It would indeed be a real red-letter day when we volunteers see Castanha pass through those gates towards her forever, loving home.



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Castanha

