

What a Difference a Dog Makes

When Leslie May started working from home, she decided the time was right to adopt a dog. She didn't expect him to change her life.

She logged onto Petfinder.com and found two 12-week-old pups known as Ben and Jerry at Southside Animal Shelter in Indianapolis. Southside lists its pets at <http://southsideanimalshelter.petfinder.com>. One of the dogs, she was sure, would be just the one for her-her first ever.

She went to visit them, and when the shelter worker put Jerry into her arms, he squirmed out. Ben, however, snuggled right in. She carried him around, making sure he liked kitties (because she had two at home), and soon made her decision. She was taking Ben home. She changed his name to Johann, after the composer. He was such a sweet, docile little pup-that is until she got home.



As soon as he settled in, he turned into "a little wild thing," Leslie says.

Leslie began training him immediately, and "he was great at home, but I'd get him in public and he would lose it all." She signed him up for an obedience class, hoping to rein him in. "He spent the first two classes barking, pulling, and trying to play with all the dogs and humans in the class." He was nothing if not social.

By the end of the session, Johann achieved "most improved" status in the class and graduated. But something else happened after the class ended that would change both Johann and Leslie's lives.

One of her classmates suggested that Johann would be a natural for dog agility competition. "You mean those hurdle things?" Leslie asked.

The woman explained what agility encompassed, and Leslie was intrigued. This might be a way her lively pooch could work off some energy. The woman suggested they both join a class with their dogs, which they did, at the same time becoming friends. Johann took to agility and won his first trial six months later. By the end of 2006, he had added over 15 titles to his name.

Leslie was so inspired by Johann that she created a Web site for him that has grown into a business for her. "He is CEO of his own online dog specialty store," she says. He also has a blog where "folks from all over the world keep up with the goings on of Johann." Occasionally, she says, he gets an email from someone who remembers him from Petfinder.com "because they were looking for a dog that same time I was. Just think," she muses, "one of them could have had Johann and my life just wouldn't be what it is today."

About Petfinder.com:

Petfinder.com is an online database of pets that need homes in over 10,000 animal placement organizations in the U.S, Canada and Mexico. The site has facilitated over 10 million adoptions in the 10 years since it launched. Thanks to its sponsors, Petfinder.com is free to both visitors and to its animal placement organization members. Purina signed on as the Web site's premier sponsor. Other exclusive sponsors are BISSELL Homecare, Inc., a manufacturer of home cleaning and floor care products, PETCO, a national pet supply retailer that sponsors in-store adoptions and provides coupon books for new adopters, The Animal Rescue Site, and Merial, maker of the number one veterinary-recommended flea and tick preventative FRONTLINE®, and heartworm preventative HEARTGARD®.

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