

The Middle Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation Edition

# The Tennessee

Magazine

February 2011



**Retriever  
Rescue**

**Tax Time:** *Tips for Filing*

**Honoring Alex Haley**

**History for Kids:** *State Lines*

**Make Room for Mushrooms**

# Golden

Story and photographs by Chris Kirk

# OPPORTUNITY

*Dedicated enthusiasts find loving homes for displaced 'goldens'*

The golden retriever is perennially one of the nation's most popular canine breeds. In 2009, the most recent year for which registration statistics are available, the breed ranked fourth in American Kennel Club registrations,

behind popular Labrador retrievers, German shepherd dogs and Yorkshire terriers. Following the national trend, goldens, as they're shorthandedly called by the humans who love them, were also fourth-ranked among registered breeds in Nashville and Memphis for 2009.

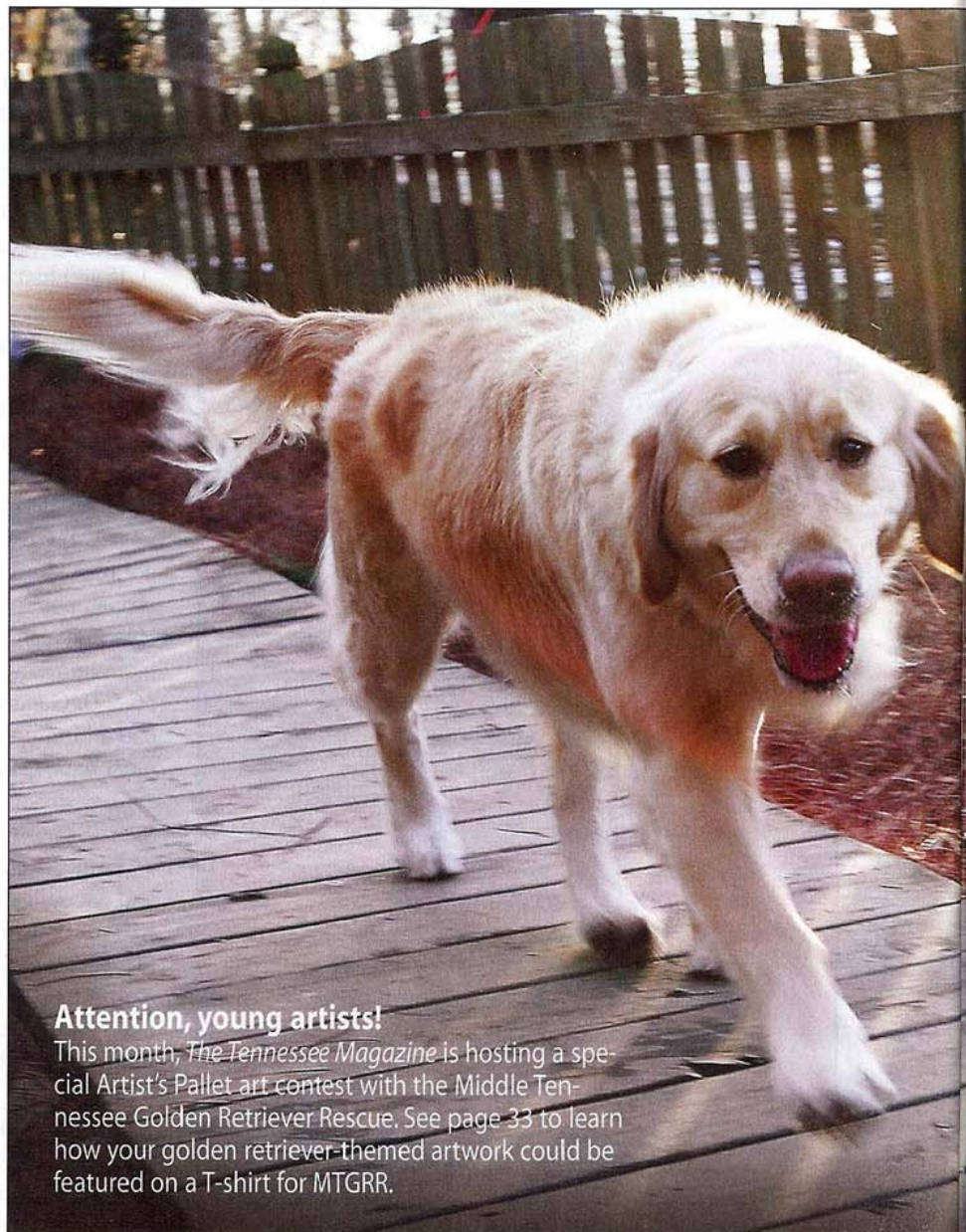
Being ranked among the top breeds each year doesn't mean, though, that golden retrievers are immune from the ever-increasing pet overpopulation problem. So the nonprofit Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue (MTGRR) steps in to save neglected and displaced

goldens and adopt them to suitable homes in Middle Tennessee, southern Kentucky and northern Alabama.

"People are so surprised when they find out we're members of Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue," says Anne Cheek, MTGRR president. "A lot of times the response is, 'How can a golden retriever need to be rescued?'"

"There's just an extraordinary population of unwanted animals," says Sarah Sherck, MTGRR vice president. "We are doing our small part to combat that."

"We have 20-25 dogs available at any given time."  
- Sarah Sherck

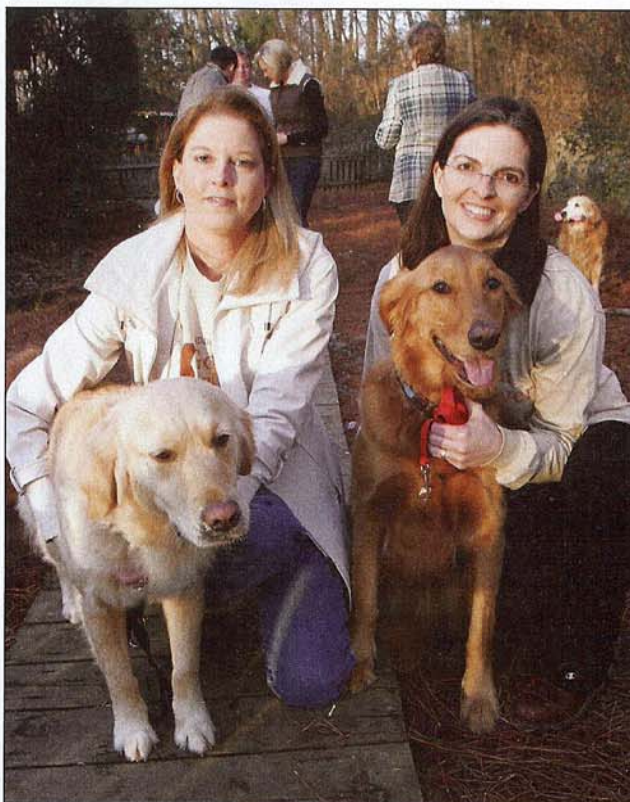


### Attention, young artists!

This month, *The Tennessee Magazine* is hosting a special Artist's Pallet art contest with the Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue. See page 33 to learn how your golden retriever-themed artwork could be featured on a T-shirt for MTGRR.

Cheek, who lives in Murfreesboro, has been with MTGRR since its formation in 1998 and became president a year later. And Sherck, of Franklin, began volunteering with the organization in September 2005 after adopting a golden retriever from the rescue. Started by a group of about 10 compassionate individuals, Cheek says, MTGRR has grown to around 100 active volunteers and members who support the group by freely giving their time, money, accommodations and other resources to help find homes for golden retrievers.

"I'd say that we have 20-25 dogs available at any given time," says Sherck. "We have 3-day-old puppies up to 14-year-olds. It really runs the gamut. We're really only limited in how many dogs we can help by the number of foster homes we have."

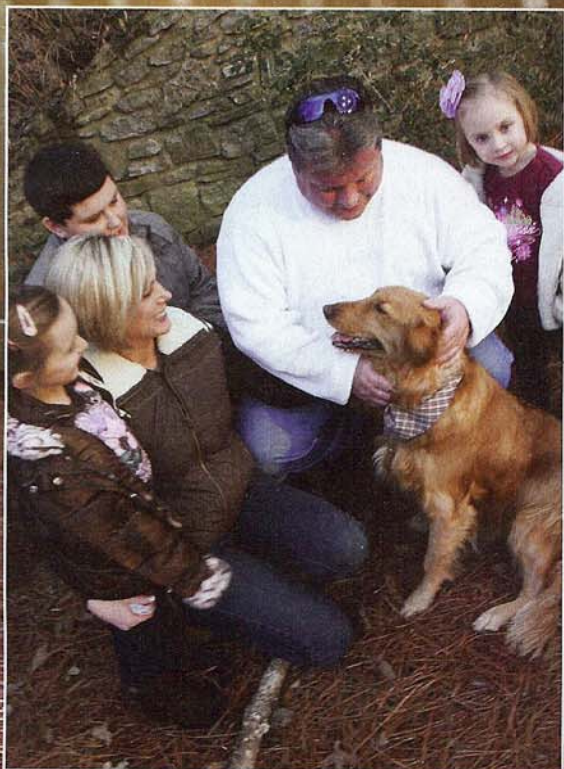


Covering a service territory that stretches from Jackson to Crossville and Chattanooga, north to Elizabethtown, Ky., and south to Gadsden, Ala., MTGRR rescues unwanted and displaced golden retrievers and fosters them in volunteers' homes where they're loved and cared for until they're adopted. Rescued dogs come from a variety of sources like municipal animal shelters, owners who can no longer care for them, puppy mills and hoarders. Dedicated volunteers scour classified ads and websites like Petfinder.com and PetHarbor.com for listings of golden retrievers; transport dogs between those who are surrendering them, foster homes and adopting families; take the dogs into their homes; and facilitate adoptions.

MTGRR doesn't have a bricks-and-mortar facility where the goldens are kept, but foster families across the service area care for the dogs, learning their tendencies and behaviors so they're properly placed with compatible families.

"That's really the value proposition of the rescue group," says Sherck. "Folks want to give a homeless dog a home, but they would love to know a little about the dog. So in our program we'll have the dog for a minimum of seven days in a foster home, where we get the chance to evaluate it. That way adopters can really go into it with eyes wide open and have a pretty good idea of what the dog is like."

"Goldens are such attention sponges. They want to be by your side all the time."  
- Anne Cheek



Above, the Reap family of Mt. Juliet adopted Ruby from the Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue about a year ago. From left are Katie, Debbie, Connor, Tim and Kallie. At top right are MTGRR president Anne Cheek, left, and Vice President Sarah Sherck with their golden rescues, Mia and Hannah. At left, Mia wanders a backyard gathering, seeking attention from humans and other golden retrievers alike.

### Member-driven MTGRR

"We operate 100 percent off of donations," says Sarah Sherck, vice president of the Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue. "There's no subsidy at all from any municipality or anywhere else."

"The adoption fee we charge is basically just a reimbursement for the vetting of the dog," says Anne Cheek, MTGRR president. Every dog MTGRR adopts has been tested for heartworms, given required shots, treated for fleas and ticks and spayed/neutered. But sometimes a dog that's been rescued by MTGRR will need more advanced — and costly — treatments. Instead of trying to recoup the extra expenditure through a higher adoption cost, MTGRR sticks to



Zina Goodin and Gracie

its fee schedule, looking elsewhere for financial help. "That's where the donations come in — to help us treat those dogs that do have other conditions."

Visit the MTGRR website, [www.rescueagolden.org](http://www.rescueagolden.org), to learn more about membership, volunteering and donating.

### Golden-Age Golden Retrievers

The Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue works hard to place golden retrievers in loving homes, but it has particular difficulty finding adopters for senior dogs, those 8 years old and older.

"If somebody wants to surrender a 12-year-old golden retriever, it's really hard for us to adopt it out," says Sherck. "And yet older dogs are so easy to keep."

In an effort to match these senior dogs with senior citizens, MTGRR volunteer Zina Goodin began Golden-Age Golden Retrievers. The program allows senior citizens to foster or adopt the older, calmer dogs and enjoy the friendship of an adoptable golden retriever. MTGRR also

provides assurance that should something happen and a senior citizen no longer be able to care for the dog, the rescue group will take it back at no cost.

Sherck notes, too, that senior dogs, which have long grown out of their puppy stage and its associated behavioral issues, are wonderful dogs for people of all ages and can provide years of loyal companionship.

"A lot of people unfortunately are afraid that they're going to adopt a dog that's going to die tomorrow," says Cheek. "I myself took in a 13-year-old golden, and he lived to be 16, three more years. He was one of the best dogs I've ever had."

For more information on Golden-Age Golden Retrievers, e-mail [gagrgmtgr@gmail.com](mailto:gagrgmtgr@gmail.com).

Once someone decides they'd like to adopt, the first stop is the MTGRR website, [www.rescueagolden.org](http://www.rescueagolden.org), where available golden retrievers are listed along with guidelines for adoption. The process begins with an application, which is reviewed by an adoption committee. An adoption coordinator next sets up a home visit to be sure that a prospective family has the capabilities to properly care for a golden retriever. The coordinator also works with the family to match it with the proper dog. All told, the process from application to adoption averages two to three weeks, says Sherck, adding, "No one's waiting six months for a dog."

"They're just fun dogs to have," says Cheek, in describing the reasons for golden retrievers' popularity. "But first, research the breed to see if it fits with your family's lifestyle," she advises. "Some people adopt a little golden puppy, and seven, eight months down the line they have an 80-pound puppy. Golden retrievers are in their puppy stage until they're at least 2 years old, and a lot of people just can't deal with that."

In the very rare case that a dog and its adoptive family just don't work out, Cheek says the dog must be returned to MTGRR. This ensures that each family gets a dog that best fits its lifestyle and that a dog is adopted by the most suitable family.

"Golden retrievers are such attention sponges," says Cheek, describing the qualities that make golden retrievers such

great companions. "They want to be by your side all the time. They're actually bred to be people companions and not just left in the yard."

"They really need to be with their people, so if somebody isn't intending on having the dog inside where the family is, it's probably not the right breed," emphasizes Sherck. "One of our volunteers says that although a lot of people view the golden as a large-breed outdoor dog, it really is a large-breed indoor dog."

Volunteers with MTGRR insist they aren't ignoring the greater pet overpopulation problem by concentrating on one breed. Rather, they've simply found a specific way to target unwanted pets. And area animal control facilities are enlisting the services of MTGRR as they come across unwanted golden retrievers.

"A lot of people say, 'Why just golden retrievers?'" says Sherck. "Well, there are enough golden retrievers out there that need saving for our group of volunteers to stay busy all the time. We work full-time jobs, and a lot of core volunteers spend countless hours every week doing what they can to save these dogs. And it is a relief for the shelters and municipal animal controls to call us because that usually opens up a run for another animal."

For more information on the Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue, visit [www.rescueagolden.org](http://www.rescueagolden.org), call 615-496-PAWS or e-mail [mtgr@rescueagolden.org](mailto:mtgr@rescueagolden.org). ☺

# Artist's Palette Assignment for February

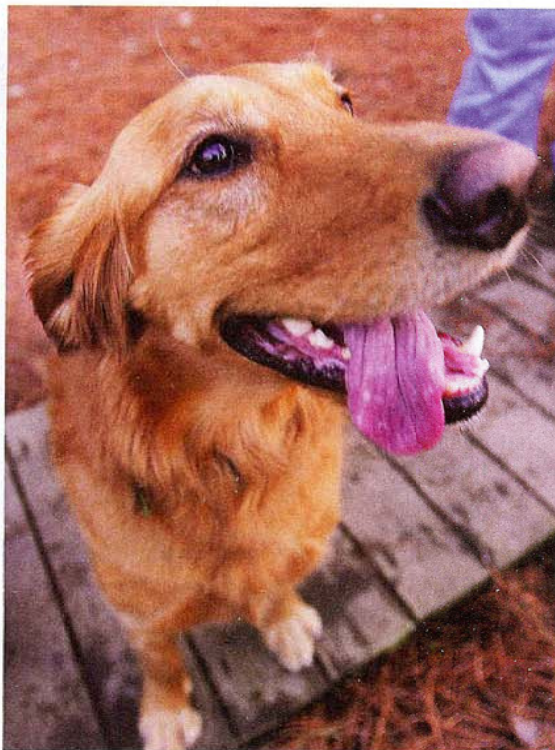
**T**hey're athletic, loving, beautiful. They're companions, confidants, friends. They're our dogs.

Tennesseans love dogs of all breeds. But this month, the Artist's Palette is helping spotlight one particular popular breed: the golden retriever.

We're pleased to partner with the Middle Tennessee Golden Retriever Rescue (MTGRR) for this month's art contest. As a special bonus, one entry will be chosen as the grand-prize winner to will be featured on a T-shirt to be sold by MTGRR as an important fund-raiser.

Staff at *The Tennessee Magazine* will still choose first-, second- and third-place winners in each age group. But then MTGRR volunteers will help us select the design to adorn their shirt. Just think: If your drawing is chosen, you'll help raise funds that will pay for the sheltering, vetting and adoption of homeless and displaced golden retrievers!

**Subject: Golden Retriever Reflections** — Capture the essence of the fun-loving golden retriever. Look to your own golden for inspiration, or imagine how a golden retriever brightens his or her owner's life.



**Three age categories:** 1 to 9, 10 to 14 and 15 to 18 years old. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners.

**Media:** Drawing or painting on 8½-by-11-inch **unlined** paper. We encourage the use of color.

**Entry:** Send your original art to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Artist's Palette — **Golden Retriever**, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224.

**Deadline:** Entries must be post-marked by Tuesday, March 1.

**Include: Your name, age, address, phone number and electric cooperative. Leaving anything out will result in disqualification.** Artwork will not be returned **unless** you include a self-addressed, **stamped**

envelope (SASE) with your submission. **Each entry needs its own SASE, please.** Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes.

**Winners** will be published in the April issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*. First place wins \$50, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Winners are eligible to enter again after six months. Winners will receive their checks, artwork and a certificate of placement within 30 days of publication.

## December's Flag Spotters

**W**e received hundreds of postcards and e-mails again this month identifying the correct location of the flag, which was found on the grocery sack on page 10.

The winners are drawn randomly from each month's entries. December's lucky flag spotters are:

**William Rogers**  
Dyersburg  
Forked Deer EC

**Richard Bradley**  
Waverly  
Meriwether Lewis EC

**Gereda Fletcher**  
Winfield  
Plateau EC

*December issue, page 10*



## Can you find the Tennessee flag in this issue?

**W**e have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured here. It could be larger or smaller than this, and it could be in black and white or any color. If you find it, send us a postcard with the page number where it's located. Please include your name, address, phone number and electric coopera-



tive. One entry per person. Three sharp-eyed winners will be chosen from a random drawing, and each will receive \$20.

Please note that the icon we hide will not be on an actual flag or historical marker, will not appear on pages 16-20 and will not be placed in any ads. This month's icon will not appear on this page. (That would just be too easy.)

Send POSTCARDS ONLY (no phone calls, please) to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Find the Flag, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Or e-mail entries to [flag@tnelectric.org](mailto:flag@tnelectric.org). Entries must be postmarked by Tuesday, March 1. Winners will be published in the April issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.