



Barbara Masi (Submitted photo)

By Jennifer Shapiro-Sacks, Special Correspondent

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Name: Barbara Masi

Residence: Boynton Beach

Birthplace: Larchmont, N.Y.

Family: Sons, Scott, Todd and Keith Masi; grandchildren, Darin, Stephanie, Samantha, Tyler and Austin Masi; and great-grandsons, Connor and Korbin.

Career: Marketing and promotions consultant. She currently works part-time in the Animal Kindness Unit of the **Palm Beach County** Sheriff's Office and part-time as executive director of the Independent Insurance Agents of **Palm Beach County**.

Organization: Awesome Greyhound Adoptions, a **Boynton Beach**-based nonprofit no-kill shelter run by volunteers, who find homes for retired racing greyhounds that no longer qualify to compete at the track. The dogs are placed as pets, therapy dogs or fully trained service dogs for veterans.

How long have you been volunteering there?

I founded this organization two years ago but have been in greyhound placement for 13 years.

Why do you volunteer?

I have always volunteered with one organization or another. I volunteer with the greyhound re-homing and placement programs because I love [them] and love to see them in happy forever homes once their career as an athlete is over.

Why did you choose this organization?

I started this organization with a special sub-program called Hounds and Heroes, where we train the retired racers exclusively as service dogs and donate them to veterans in need. We currently have four AGA dogs placed with veterans in the Fort Lauderdale/Miami area and have four in training now for veterans in Palm Beach and Martin counties. The four just happen to represent the four branches of the service, and we are having a challenge going on with which dog will be fully sponsored first — the dog for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or the Marine veteran.

Describe your volunteer role.

I enjoy all the aspects of placement of these magnificent creatures — from selecting the dogs for the program to final placement with their veteran owner (or their pet owner if they are not in the Hounds and Heroes program). I recruit volunteers for foster homes, [provide] meet and greet assistance, train the dogs for this special program and for solicitation/grant writing.

What are your goals when you volunteer?

To place each dog in an ideal environment for the animal and the new owner.

What challenges have you faced?

As with any start-up, we are getting the word out about what we do. We are out there as much as we can be talking about the program and the dogs that have been or are being placed.

What does your organization need?

Foster homes and positive trainers to work with us. Of course we need funding — sponsorship of one of the dogs by businesses or personal donations always helps.

Are any special events coming up?

A Memorial Day celebration at the Palm Beach Kennel Club.

Is there a moment that stands out that made you think, "This is why I volunteer?"

The look on the face of the applicant and the dog when they "click" and you know it is the perfect match, especially true with the veterans when they have that epiphany.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

We are always looking for people to help; even if you can not in any other way, please visit our store on the website. All items are exclusive to our organization and benefit the placement of the dogs with veterans or in good pet homes.

For more information, visit Awesomegreyhoundadoptions.org or call 561-737-1941.

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