

[Other Towns](#)

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
 - [Police and Fire](#)
 - [Business](#)
 - [Education](#)
 - [Obituaries](#)
 - [Opinions](#)
 - [Letters](#)
 - [Lifestyle](#)
 - [Celebrations](#)
 - [Columnists](#)
 - [Health](#)
 - [Religion](#)
 - [Seniors](#)
 - [Calendar](#)
- [Sports](#)
 - [High School](#)
 - [Youth Leagues](#)
 - [Adult Leagues](#)
- [Fun](#)
 - [Entertainment](#)
 - [Arts](#)
 - [Books](#)
 - [Dining](#)
 - [Calendar](#)
 - [Movies](#)
 - [Music](#)
 - [Pets](#)
 - [Recreation](#)
 - [Food](#)
 - [Gardening](#)
 - [Travel](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Town Info](#)
 - [Government](#)
 - [History](#)
 - [School Info](#)
 - [Organizations](#)

8/21/2009

Lucky dogs: Rescued pooches fro...

- [Your Vote](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Shop](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Ads](#)

Lifestyle 

Lucky dogs: Rescued pooches from Puerto Rico reunite with their saviors

By **Andrea Watson** / Correspondent

Thu Aug 20, 2009, 02:26 PM EDT

Salem - The stray dogs of Puerto Rico, called “satos,” have experienced the very worst in people. They know firsthand the cruel result of an uncaring public, having survived corporate attempts to poison them, government-ordered campaigns to destroy them, and torture by young people with too much time on their hands. They have been thrown from bridges and dumped at “Dead Dog Beach” to die from disease and starvation.

With memories such as these, it’s amazing that satos could ever learn to trust a human being. But they do. Because they have also experienced the very best in people.

Save A Sato is a non-profit organization which partners with shelters in the U.S. to find loving homes for these animals. More than 20 volunteers work for Save A Sato in Puerto Rico, all of whom are unpaid and motivated by what program director Marianna Massa refers to as “the rescuing bug.”

On Saturday, Aug. 15, Northeast Animal Shelter held its 10th Annual Sato Reunion, where canine rescuers from Puerto Rico reunited with the dogs they helped to save and met their satos’ adoptive families. The event was held behind Northeast Animal Shelter’s new facility at 347 Highland Ave. and included raffles, refreshments and tents for exhibitors to provide information and display local canine products and services.

8/21/2009

Lucky dogs: Rescued pooches fro...

Along with heat waves from the blazing sun, the air was filled with the strains of Latin music, the sounds of barking and laughter, and the smell of grilling sausages. "Dog Shows" were held in which satos competed in categories such as "best kissy-face" and "best dancer/prancer," with gift baskets and grab bags awarded as prizes.

Some of the satos who attended the event bore physical reminders of their former unhappy circumstances, but these were overshadowed by their excited tail-wagging and obvious delight with their new families. Amazingly, many satos recognized the individuals who worked with them months, and even years, ago in Puerto Rico.

Anne Wang of Watertown, whose Sato, Abby, won the dancer/prancer event, has actively participated in the sato program. Anne and her husband, Andy, have taken three vacations to Puerto Rico, devoting one day per trip to volunteer at the local shelter, and visiting notorious dumping grounds such as Los Machos Beach and "Dead Dog Beach." On their way home to Boston, they have escorted several animals, including a litter of puppies and a few cats.

"It's terrible," said Anne. "Hotels will poison the street dogs because they don't want them on their property. They're considered a nuisance for the guests."

Thankfully, that has begun to change. Northeast Animal Shelter in Salem has run its Sato Rescue program since 1996, flying over as many as 300 dogs per year and giving them the medical attention they need to become happy, well adjusted pets. The program is funded entirely by private donations and is one of three outreach programs in which the shelter participates.

The majority of sato rescuers in Puerto Rico pay out of pocket for the \$200-300 required per dog for emergency immediate medical attention, inoculations and the crate fee to transport them on American Airlines. The shelter reimburses a portion of the total expense.

Participating in the program does not affect the Northeast Animal Shelter's ability to service the needs of local animals, as the shelter's new facility offers sufficient space. Satos are generally young dogs weighing between 10 and 40 pounds. Because of their size and the fact that the high level of spay/neuter awareness in the northeast has reduced the number of abandoned local puppies, they do not pose much competition with the larger local dogs in need.

Northeast Animal Shelter plans to hold its Sato Annual Reunion again next year and hopes that the current state of the economy will not slow their present level of participation in the Save a Sato program. The rescuers from Puerto Rico look forward to seeing the result of their hard work and connecting with their counterparts here in the northeast.

And through events like this the satos themselves have an opportunity to remember the kindness of the people who saved them.

FYI

For more information about the Save a Sato Program, visit SaveaSato.org, or write them at P.O. Box 37694, San Juan, PR 00937-0694.

For information about the Northeast Animal Shelter, visit northeastanimalshelter.org, or visit them at: 347 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA 01970

Phone: 979-745-9888

Monday - Friday: 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

How you can help:

- Volunteer by contacting the Northeast Animal Shelter or the Save a Sato Program
- Be a sato escort. Are you or someone you know flying from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Boston on American Airlines? The Northeast Animal Shelter is looking for volunteers to help transport satos. If you're interested, contact Northeast Animal Shelter's Sato Coordinator, Marianna, at 978-745-9888, ext 307, or by email at: marianna@northeastanimalshelter.org
- Donate to the program through Northeast Animal Shelter and/or the Save a Sato Program. Donations can be in the form of money, supplies and frequent flyer miles
- Take action. Puerto Rico is part of the United States. Please make your voice heard to the local government.*
- Join a Sato forum.*

*Visit SaveaSato.org for more information.

Related Stories

[PHOTO GALLERY: Save a Sato Reunion](#) [Save a Sato sponsors](#)

Loading commenting interface...

[Salem City Content](#)

