

GUMBY

From Rescue to **Therapy Dog**

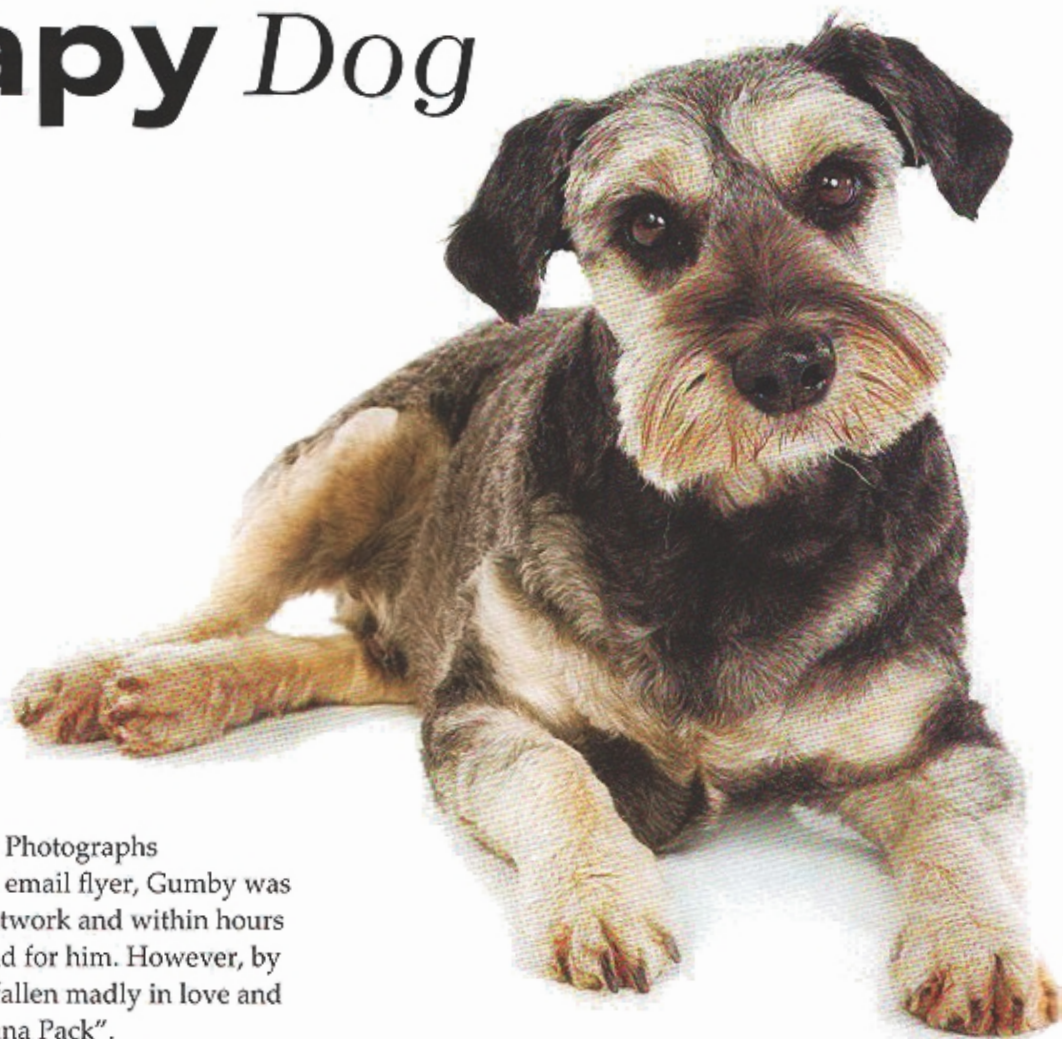
Gumby was one of the luckier rescues. No one knows his age as he was sadly abandoned at a

CLAW (Community Led Animal Welfare) outreach clinic. On the 27th of January 2009, he met Dido Pangiopoulos, who was a new volunteer there at the time, and their wonderful journey together began.

Dido decided to foster Gumby and on his first day home he was treated to "the works" at a doggie parlour and came out looking like a new dog. Photographs were taken and, together with an email flyer, Gumby was put on the "Animailer" rescue network and within hours a suitable forever home was found for him. However, by then Dido and her husband had fallen madly in love and Gumby was adopted into the "Pana Pack".

Soon after his adoption, little Gumby fell terribly ill and was diagnosed with Distemper. It was touch-and-go as to whether he would pull through. It was with huge thanks to the around-the-clock nursing by the CLAW resident vet and his new mom Dido, that luck was on his side again and he survived.

Gumby's little card on his cage at CLAW said he was handed in at the outreach clinic because he was no longer wanted because he dug up flowers. "Well, he came home and proceeded to dig up and eat our entire sprinkler system and most of the plants in our garden. He also was (and sometimes still is) a great burier. If we give him more than one bone or chewy, he will rush off to bury the one and then rush back to steal the second one to



chew now. He likes to have back-up chewys and treats," says Dido laughingly.

Weighing less than 8kg when Dido adopted him, Gumby now weighs in at a slightly more well-rounded 18kg! Apparently he has a "very strong food drive"! He has also chewed through almost every wire or cable in the house. Dido says that they must have gone through gallons of Avert and even today (years later) she still has to be careful to wash her hands after fiddling with any computer cables under her desk in the office because of the bitter remnants of Avert!

Dido explains that Gumby's other peculiarity is that although he's male (he was neutered by CLAW as an



adult dog) he "pees Eau de Toilet", making him very attractive to all dogs, especially male dogs! No one has managed to explain it. Some speculation is that he was in utero only with female pups and so is somewhat transgendered. This also might be the reason he has always been brilliant with kittens, pups and all the foster dogs and pups the Pana's have had. He is very maternal and social. Understandably, as he has aged he has become less tolerant of dogs trying to mount him all the time. "I believe this hormonal anomaly is part of what has made him such a loving, gentle, huggable and tolerant therapy dog!" says Dido.

Dido had previously studied Psychology and teaching and when she saw a programme on Carte Blanche about Paws for People Therapy Dogs, she realised that Gumby had the right PAWsonality (temperament and obedience skills) to be a therapy dog.

Having no formal training bar obedience training, Gumby did very well in his Canine Good Citizen training. Gumby is an absolute natural at socialising. He is such a calm, gentle dog that he and Dido passed the Paws for People assessment, first time around.

Gumby sailed through the supervised visits to become a registered therapy dog, and only then did they commence with specific therapy dog training and visits. Once a month, Dido and Gumby attend the on-going mandatory situational training sessions which take place



inside Cresta Shopping Centre in Johannesburg. There the dogs are desensitised to all sorts of experiences - from riding in lifts, to metal water bowls being dropped down next to them (simulating a bed pan dropping), to the sound of trolleys and cleaning equipment, buzzing restaurants and food manners, and meeting and greeting all sorts of different people.

Gumby loves to be petted and is clearly comfortable in his own skin. He will allow autistic children to braid his ears or will just lean quietly against an elderly or ill person. He seems to personify empathy and is able to just "BE" in the moment - whether it is dealing with out-of-control hyperactivity, a commotion in a ward, or just offering a little love to an elderly person in need of dog healing. 🐾



Gumby, Cyclops, Jumpies & Dini – the wonderful "Pana Pack"



Gumby as a service dog with his Certificate of Achievement

