



**News: Friday, November 07, 2003 Manila, AR**

## News

### Couple shares love of handicapped dogs

By REVIS BLAYLOCK Town Crier News Staff

Compassion, giving, caring, and sharing are all just words until put into practice. Jim and Deana Kilgos of Scottsdale, Ariz., make those words a way of life as they have opened their home and hearts to three Australian Sheperds that are handicapped. The three canines joined Kalie, the Kilgos' seven-year-old cattle dog. Kalie is not handicapped but they did rescue her from the humane society while they were living in Utah.



**Jim and Deana Kilgos**

Mrs. Kilgos is the daughter of Dora Biggerstaff of Leachville. The Kilgos and their four dogs, Kalie, Chloe, Maggie and Chico, have been visiting in Leachville.

The Kilgos belong to a group that rescue Australian Sheperds. They discovered the group when they found Maggie. They acquired Maggie when she was five weeks old from a farm in Illinois. She is blind and deaf, and while Mrs. Kilgos was trying to get information to help the dog, she discovered the rescue group and the work that is being done to educate people on what she said they call "lethal whites."

"It is a genetic problem that can be caused by Merle to Merle breeding that causes blindness and deafness in the dogs. This is not to be confused with the Pattern White where one parent is Merle," Mrs. Kilgos said. "People don't do this on purpose. Many just don't realize that with two Merles this can happen."

The Kilgos opened their home to a third dog, Chloe. Chloe came through the Arizona fires and was scheduled to be put to sleep as no one claimed her when she became part of the Kilgos' family. Chico, the newest member of the family was acquired on Labor Day. He is featured on the webpage as up for adoption but until the right home comes along, he has a great home with the Kilgos and getting to travel and visit Arkansas.

Australian Shepherds are people dogs.

"Even if they can't see or hear, they learn quickly and their other senses take over," Mr. Kilgros said. "They learn commands by touch. They take a little more patience and attention than a seeing and hearing dog, but they make wonderful pets. These dogs would be superb for older people. They love to lie at your feet. The effort that goes into watching a handicapped dog over a normal one is nominal."

Mrs. Kilgos pointed out that the dogs do need exercise and it is important to have a safe, fenced in area for them to run.

Like people, these dogs, with the right training, don't let their handicap stop them from doing what they want to do. Even though they can't see or hear, the dogs know when they are about to get a treat, learn quickly how to get around in the yard, and can even play Frisbee.

"I don't know how she knows, if it is the smell or vibrations, but Maggie can tell when it is one of us pulling in our driveway," Mrs. Kilgos said.

The purpose of the group is to rescue and re-home existing "Lethal White" Australian Shepherds, to ensure through support and education, a positive environment and successful life-long union for those adopted.

When the Kilgos return to their home, they have a support meeting scheduled.

The dogs are part of their family and they take them everywhere they go. The two oldest ones have traveled coast to coast with their owners. Mr. Kilgos is a pharmacist and works for Target. Mrs. Kilgos works in the corporate office of Albertsons.

While visiting in the area, the Kilgos plan to take Kalie, Chloe, Maggie and Chico to BIC East Elementary school to visit the children.

There are all kinds of ways people can help, the Kilgos said. The group needs contacts in all states, transportation to deliver dogs, and donations to help save the handicapped animals.

For more information on the group, the web site is [www.aussielads.com](http://www.aussielads.com).

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