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Going grey together

So you've retired, decided its time to kick-up your heels and have a good time.

You've spent years running around at top speed, trying to please everyone and, as the years have gone by, got more than a little peeved at being made to do things you would rather not.

And now, when you can finally look forward to a bit of time on your hands, people will start asking how you are planning to keep occupied.

Finding a new hobby is just fine for many, learning a new skill is just the thing to keep the brain active but, teach an old dog new tricks – no thanks, you have been around the block a few times and been working our magic for years.

But GRWE, the UK's biggest independent charity for the re-homing of greyhounds and lurchers, is hoping to encourage those of a certain age of the wisdom of joining forces with a pet who has experienced a similar hectic schedule in its early life.

The common image of a greyhound is of a dog rushing around a race track, the hare in sight, approaching the finish line and, like many retired people, by the time it comes to hang up their working jacket they have had more than enough of being ferried around the country in vans and made to run for their dinner.

And, in fact, the reality is that outside of racing, greyhounds are actually quite lazy and make great pets for people of all ages, especially for older people as they are taught from being puppies to walk on the lead without pulling.

Authoress Carol Baby is 64 and her still active husband 10-years-older so they choose dogs with his age in mind too.

"Walking the dogs in beautiful countryside helps us to keep well both physically and mentally," said Carol, who has written a book entitled *Retired Greyhounds - A Guide to Care and Understanding*.

"At the moment we have two sighthounds Foxy and Ash.

"We adopted Foxy through GRWE when she was only three and had already had a hard life, running 64 times in 18 months – that's once a week.

"We live on a smallholding with chickens sheep and horses and for the first year after we adopted her we had to be careful with her around the animals. But now she is fine with them all.

"She is lovely with our three-year-old grandson. She loves car travel and going on camping and cottage holidays with us, and she loves to run on the beach.

"She is very, very loving and calm and really enjoys having her ears tickled. She also loves carrying the small feed buckets around for me when I am feeding the sheep and chickens.

"Ash is a 10-year-old brindle greyhound cross whippet who came to us aged 22 weeks through GRWE.

"He is the dog with THE waggiest tail and has a string of rosettes to prove it. He is really agile and clever, but very trainable and lots of fun.

"He is brilliant with our grandson and with our animals and he is the sort of dog you can take anywhere and do anything with, he loves agility, paddling/swimming, boat trips, exploring ruined castles, football - you name it he wants to join in, but he is just as happy to have a quiet day chilling out on the sofa."

Carol says there are two great points about having a dog from GRWE as an older person.

"The main thing is that the dogs are calm and big enough that older people don't trip over them as they might a smaller dog," she said.

"Then there is the reassurance that if anything happens to you the dogs will be taken back into the excellent care of GRWE and found exactly the right homes so that they can continue enjoying a good life."

Philip Mansbridge, trustee of GRWE, supports Carol's view saying: "It's easy to see why people think greyhounds wouldn't make great pets as most people's image of the breed is of a racing dog. "So it is natural to assume that the breed would be extremely active, but racing is all about a short burst of speed and the reality is that greyhound owners commonly refer to their retired racing pets as 40mph couch potatoes!"

Greyhounds also make great exercise partners for the less mobile too and many people are surprised to hear that they generally require very little exercise - two 20 minute walks per day is normally more than sufficient exercise for them before retiring to the sofa for a long nap.

GRWE receives few applications for homing from the over 65s and thinks that people of that age may be missing a trick thinking that a greyhound wouldn't be a suitable pet for them.

"We would welcome homing enquiries from anyone looking to adopt a hound from us, regardless of their age," said Mr Mansbridge.

"Greyhounds are generally very gentle and make great pets for people of all ages, and we will always do our best to match the right dog to the right home.

"We always look at lifestyle, age and location as a matter of course to ensure we always make perfect partnerships!"

If you are interested in re-homing a dog from GRWE, or simply to find out more, please call on 07000 785 092 or visit the website on www.grwe.com.

Ends

Caption: Carol Baby relaxes at home with her two 40mph couch potatoes Foxy (left) and Ash.

Notes to editors

1) GRWE is a registered charity (Reg. Charity No. 1131399) and the largest independent greyhound rescue organisation in the UK working specifically to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome abandoned or abused greyhounds and lurchers. GRWE rehomed over 800 dogs last year and operates across England and Wales.

2) GRWE receives no funding from the racing industry, is run entirely by volunteers and is entirely funded by donations. More information can be found on the charity by visiting www.grwe.com

3) For further information on the work of GRWE, please contact Andrew Kirchin on press@grwe.com
