



Attendees of the first New England Golden Jubilee gather for a group photo outside the Dog Chapel at Dog Mountain, Vermont. Forty-nine golden retrievers and 62 people attended the event. Photo by Stew Stryker.

Golden Retrievers Visit Dog Mountain

by June Greig

The first New England Golden Jubilee at Dog Mountain was a treat for the Golden Retrievers that ran the mountain trails, swam in the pond, and played in the fields, while supporting a study to help find a cure for canine cancer.

Organizer Sandra L. Lok of Manchester, CT said, "From the Dog Chapel entry, the gallery porch, the top of the hill overlooking the mountains, to the great lawn and around the pond, around every corner, everywhere was gold. It was a sight to behold."

The May 16 event at Dog Mountain, the home of the Stephen Huneck Gallery in St. Johnsbury, VT, attracted 49 Golden Retrievers and 62 people from New England states, Virginia, Florida and Canada.

It was a celebration of the 3,000 Golden Retrievers enrolled in the Morris Animal Foundation Golden Retriever Lifetime Study, and \$650 was raised to donate to the study, according to Sandra. Nine Goldens enrolled in the study attended the event, including the youngest of the Lok family's dogs, Andy.

Eight years ago, Mary S. Joyce of Cape Cod, MA, read

about Dog Mountain in "The Dog Chapel" book by the late artist and in a magazine, and she decided to take her dog there. She travels to Vermont every year, and has since included a visit to Dog Mountain with her Golden Retriever, "Gabriel."

"Dogs just love it there," she said. "They seem to know it's for them."

She heard about the Golden Jubilee from an employee of Dog Mountain, and Mary thought Gabriel deserves a jubilee after all he's been through. Gabriel, who was 10 in May, has an inoperable brain tumor that has shrunk after radiation.

"He just had a fabulous time," Mary said. Gabriel gravitated to a particular dog and they hung out together. The owners discovered that the dogs are from the same breeder.

"It was just a really special time," she said. "We just had a wonderful time with all those other Goldens."

The day began under cloudy skies, mist in the air and the threat of rain, with an off-leash hike on a mountain trail spotted with enough mud to warrant bringing dirty dogs

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(L-R) Sandra L. Lok, organizer of the Golden Jubilee, with her husband and co-organizer, Peter, take a break on a Dog Mountain trail with their three Golden Retrievers, Nutmeg, Ginger and Andy. The bench with a dog at each end was created by Stephen Huneck and molded into cast resin. Photo by Brianna D'Andrea. One-year-old Sunshine (far right) plays with new friends she met at the New England Golden Jubilee. Sunshine's owner, Linda Hadwen, said it was her Golden Retriever's first time off leash and she had the absolute best day of her life. Photo by Linda Hadwen.

back to the pond to rinse off.

As the day turned sunny, dogs were blessed by Father Chris Micale of the local Corpus Christi Parish at a gathering outside the Dog Chapel. The chapel was built by Huneck and opened in 2000. Visitors are invited to post a picture or note inside in memory of a beloved dog.

A performance by Laurie Sullivan of Tolland, CT, followed, and she danced with each of her three dogs, Ricochet, Georgia and Bowie. Laurie and her Golden Retrievers are the recipients of many dance titles. They have danced in television appearances on Animal Planet, the Today Show, the Rachel Ray Show and more.

Bowie, who is 10 years old, underwent surgery and was diagnosed in April with hemangiosarcoma, a cancer of blood vessel cells. He began chemotherapy in early May. Laurie is unsure whether Bowie will have an opportunity to perform again.

"We all had such a wonderful time at the Jubilee – Dog Mountain really is a magical place, just perfect for showing our dogs how special they are and how much they are appreciated," Laurie said in an interview after the event.

"It was so meaningful to be able to perform, with so many people who understand what a gift a Golden can be, and how much each moment with them means," she said. "I'll always remember how happy Bowie was that weekend, and will always be grateful for the opportunity to be there together."

There was more swimming in the afternoon in a pond loaded with tennis balls. Attendees were also treated to cheeseburgers and hot dogs, and brought home bandannas and goody bags.

Prizes at the Jubilee were awarded for the youngest and oldest Golden Retrievers in attendance. Sunkist Ladd was the oldest at 14 years, 5 months, and Kepler Talbot was the youngest at three months.

Katie White, gallery attendant at Dog Mountain, said, "The New England Golden Jubilee was a wonderful and rewarding event. It was amazing to see so many people and dogs come together to support such a wonderful cause. It was also amazing to see so many Goldens having such a good time.

"We here at Dog Mountain can't wait for next year's

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Golden Retrievers cool off in a pond teeming with tennis balls at the first New England Golden Jubilee at Dog Mountain in Vermont. Plans are in the works to hold the jubilee again next year. Photo by Sandra L. Lok.

New England Golden Jubilee, *continued*

Jubilee. We hope that this will become an annual tradition on Dog Mountain for years to come.”

Dog Mountain is set on 150 acres on a private mountaintop that was purchased by Huneck and his wife, Gwen, in 1995, and the grounds are open to people and their dogs. There is no leash law.

Julia Buckley of West Hartford, CT, said signing up to take her family dog, Daisy, to the jubilee was a no brainer.

“Where else could you go to be around so many Goldens all at the same time? It was like a dream come true.

“We all just had a blast at the event,” she said. “The Jubilee has been an unforgettable experience for our family. The kids will be talking about it until they are old and gray.”

Co-organizer Peter Lok described the event as “joyous.”

“Joyous indeed!” Sandra added. “Smiles and wagging tails, those were the barometers of measure.”

Plans for the second annual New England Golden Jubilee are already in the works.

“With three healthy Golden Retrievers, ages two to 11 years, I know that Peter and I are very fortunate,” Sandra said. “The New England Golden Jubilee, as planned, has helped to build and sustain support for the Golden Retriever Lifetime Study.

“I expect to continue this effort for the lifetime of the study and hope that one day all dogs and maybe even some people will benefit,” Sandra said.



Two buddies from Massachusetts, “Cooper” and “Paddy,” stop to take in the view on their way up a trail on Dog Mountain in Vermont. Both visited the mountain for the first time while attending the New England Golden Jubilee. Photo by June Greig.



After a morning hike on a sometimes muddy trail, Golden Retrievers rinse off in the pond and check out the grounds at Dog Mountain, Vermont. The dogs were at the first New England Golden Jubilee on May 16. Plans are in the works to hold the Jubilee again next year. Photo by June Greig.



Map of St. Johnsbury, VT, showing the location of the Stephen Huneck Gallery at Dog Mountain, home to the New England Golden Jubilee.