



Tails of Aloha

FEBRUARY
2011

*Changing Lives,
One Visit at a Time*

Life at the Serrao Household

My name is Gail Serrao and I have the privilege of sharing my home with several wonderful four legged companions. Three of these beautiful dogs accompany me on visits to people who live in homes where they are unable to care for their own pets or just not allowed to have pets where they live. We have made visits to retirement communities, drug rehab centers and individual homes. Our visits bring smiles, warmth and always reminiscing of the pets that have meant so much in our lives. Everyone wants to share their experiences and rekindle the fondness that they have felt for their pets. They all have their stories and their memories that seem to bring them joy and happiness and I certainly have mine. It's really fun to share and spend time with other animal lovers. My latest team consists of Prince Charming, a 65 pound Shepard/Doberman and Lilikoi, a seven pound Maltese/Papillon/Miniature Pinscher.

To describe Lilikoi's appearance I would have to say she looks more like a gremlin/hyena mix than a dog. She almost looks like a character out a science fiction movie and always attracts attention because of her unusual appearance and spunky attitude.

Lilikoi's mother's name is Milimililani. She is an eight year old, six pound Maltese/Papillon mix. She wanted me to tell everyone that Lilikoi gets her looks and her attitude from her father's side of the family (haha!). Milimililani is a sweetheart and also makes visits with us on special occasions. I have had Milimililani since she was five months old and she gave birth to Lilikoi three years ago at the age of five. It was her first pregnancy and only puppy. Being the only puppy, Lilikoi got too big to be delivered naturally, so she had to be delivered via Cesarean section. We like to tease Lilikoi and say "she has been trouble since the day she was born." Lilikoi enjoys visiting but she prefers to entertain an audience rather than to sit still on someone's lap.

www.tailsofaloha.com

An all volunteer non-profit organization

Prince Charming was around a year old when he joined our family. He is approximately three years old now. He had come to our house two years ago looking for a girlfriend... He didn't hook up with any of our girls, but he did have pups with the girl next door. Hence the name Price Charming. When I tried to find his family, I was told by several neighbors that he was a feral dog that lived next to a dumpster behind Jack in the Box in Waimanalo. One person told me he thought that he belonged to a homeless man that also lived back there. When I tried to return Prince Charming to the man, he said "He doesn't belong to me, he's just a homeless dog." Prince has had quite a life and many experiences that I cannot even imagine. His back leg had obviously been broken in the past and was left to heal on its own in a crooked manner. People threw rocks at him and shouted at him to get off their property. He was nothing but skin and bones, under developed, homeless, and uncared for. We took him in our home and fattened him up over a number of weeks. I taught him a few skills, like walking on a leash, sit and stay, and just in general gave him the incentive to trust people. We already had seven other dogs living on the property so our intentions were to fix him up and to find him a good home.

After fattening Prince Charming up and teaching him some skills, we took him to the Humane Society to accomplish that adoption goal, but we were told that he had heartworms. They didn't feel that Prince was adoptable and intended to put him to sleep unless we wanted him. So, of course, we could not see putting a good dog down so we picked him back up and headed home. He has had to make many trips to the vet for treatments. He developed dermatitis following the heartworm treatments and he broke his leg again this summer when he got caught in the webbing of a lawn chair. We have had to invest a lot of money in Prince Charming's health and well being but he is well worth it. He appreciates everything that anyone does for him. He has always gotten along with the other dogs and he loves to go to the dog park to socialize. He is very polite around his food and often lets Lilikoi finish up his dinner.

When we pull into the parking lot at the retirement communities, he always gets excited and starts to cry. I guess he knows that when he makes those visits he is really special. There is a man named George at the retirement center in Hawaii Kai that wants to adopt Prince. I have to tell him at ever visit that Prince has to go home and that he will be back to visit. We always make it a point to visit George and his wife Nancy in their apartment if they happen to miss the activity that we have attended in the main activity room that day. They always appreciate our visits. Lilikoi will sit up on Nancy's lap and stays there so Nancy can gently stroke her back. When she gets down from her lap she is exploring the room. She always makes us laugh when she gets up on her hind legs and tries to see what's up on the counter or when she chases her tail in circles on their living room floor. We all have a good laugh, and we enjoy each other's company.

We are all so grateful to be part of Tails of Aloha.



Mili & Lili

Gail Serrao
Princess Lilikoi
Prince Charming

Prince and Lili



Gracie and I could not be more excited about being a team member! Gracie is about four years old. We don't really know because she is a rescued dog that had been neglected by her owners. Our family had been looking for a new dog when someone called to ask if we were willing to take on a older dog instead of a puppy.

When we first met Gracie, she was very skinny and had lost of knots in her hair, yet she had the biggest smile on her face! we knew right away that she would be a perfect fit in our home! She is a very loving dog with lots of love to give! That is why we wanted to be a part of Tails of Aloha. She loves being with other people and other dogs and whenever she goes, she is able to draw a smile from everyone.

Gracie has been through some tough time and yet she still smiles. She serves as an inspiration for our family to find the best in any situation to let that smile shine through and get us through the tough times!



Miko and Gracie



Meet Nani

One of our new Maui team members, Jeanneau Marquez and her therapy dog Nani, who is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel/Pomeranian.



Did you know...

Did you know that tea tree oil is not safe to use on cats and small dogs? Commercial Melaleuca Oil are predominantly cyclic terpenes.

Never use dog medications for your cat unless prescribed by a veterinarian.



From the Heart

My sense is that no one gets through life without some suffering. So no matter how "good" or "spiritual" you are, you will get rained on as well as having the sun shine on you when you least expect it. When things are going well, life can seem so simple and smooth. It is truly difficult to make serious errors during this time.

What really defines us is what we do when we are really challenged. Do we keep the faith...or do we succumb to the darkness? There are really no easy answers, and no need to feel guilty if you have lost hope. From personal experience, the more difficult the times, the more blessings you will likely receive in the future.

Develop a set of mindful practices for yourself. Practice calming down and being thankful and aware when life is going well. That will allow you to stay centered when the times get tough. Remember..it is important to maintain a mindful/thankful routine.

Live with compassion, but also be smart enough to keep away from the toxic vampires. Watch out for those fangs!



Board Update

Our sincere thanks and appreciation to Gregg Kamei, Lisa Oi, and Sally Ventura who have cheerfully assisted as a members of the Board of Director for Tails of Aloha!

Board member Paul Marietti will be transferring to a position in Japan for a few years.

There will be a general membership meeting on February 15 at 11:15 a.m.

Kaiser Moanalua



Tails team members Karen Soon with Noe (the Chihuahua), Sharon Black and Al Perkins with Rambo and Polo (the Great Danes) on their December visit to Kaiser Moanalua. We hear nothing but great compliments about the staff and patients!



Have the courage to say no.

Have the courage to face the truth.

Do the right thing because it is right.

These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.



Tails of Aloha - Culture Agreement

A refresher for all team members about our Culture Agreement at Tails of Aloha.

- *Each of us is drawn to volunteer at Tails of Aloha because of its mission to advocate for animals.
- *While we spend our time doing this, we can choose to create a humane and healthy relationship with other animal assisted therapy team members.

Support a United Tails of Aloha

- *Honor and respect differences between teams and representatives of facilities you visit.
- *Minimize competition mentality
- *Practice "team" thinking
- *Seek to understand the different needs of each facility and team you visit
- *We are all responsible for Tails of Aloha
- *Include, rather than exclude

Practice Collaboration, Cooperation, and Coordination

- *Provide access to information about decisions, decision-making processes, and what's going on with team members.
- *Encourage participation of other team members and those you are visiting

Embrace Diversity and Practice Open-mindedness

- *Expect differences
- *Different is not wrong
- *Look for the contribution that each person is trying to make to help the program
- *See commonalities and seek to understand differences
- *Disagreements are not necessarily a hindrance - they keep TOA dynamic!

Practice Open, Direct, Prompt Communications

- *Take a stand to stop gossip
- *Practice proactive listening and seek to understand
- *Deliver and receive complaints, suggestions, and other communications responsibly
- *Hear someone out before responding
- *Take time to check for understanding
- *Practice honesty

Deal with Conflict Responsibly

- *Agree to resolve outstanding conflict NOW
- *Be active in resolving conflicts
- *Deal with conflict directly - with the persons involved
- *Show respect - keep your voice calm and your language clean
- *Promote healthy conflict - view it as an opportunity to explore differences and increase understanding
- *Opinions are subjective - respect other people's right to their own perspectives



Tails of Aloha - Culture Agreement

Promote Trust

- *Everyone takes responsibility for themselves in continuing to build trust and is accountable for their actions
- *Commit to volunteering towards a healthier future
- *Lend support to build trust one person at a time

Trust that everyone at TOA is making decisions for the program in good faith - or check it out if you have questions

Address Problems Proactively and Constructively

- *Treat complaints, suggestions, and ideas with respect
- *Take responsibility for bring issues needing attention to someone who can take action
- *Think constructively, look for solutions
- *Encourage people to work things out between themselves
- *Give up the grudges or let the grudges be a signal to you that you need to go talk with the person in question

Demonstrate Respect

- *Respect people's right to different opinions
- *Respect decisions made
- *Respect the right to disagree
- *Extend compassion to other volunteers
- *Practice courtesy and consideration for others
- *Value each other



Acknowledge Feelings and the Emotional Aspects of our Work

- *Recognize the importance of having a sense of humor - lighten up
- *Identify healthy ways to reduce or release stress - ask for help if you need it
- *Find ways appropriate to the setting to express sadness, grief, and anger when those feelings arise
- *Respects other's response to emotions - help them find creative and appropriate outlets to express their feelings
- *Keep things in perspective - help yourself and others maintain a positive outlook
- *HAVE FUN!

Create and Maintain a Safe Environment

- *Find safe ways to accomplish your tasks
- *Commit to following safety procedures even when you are in a hurry
- *Know your limitations and seek out others to help when needed

Show Appreciation

- *Remember why we have chosen to volunteer with Tails of Aloha
- *Practice appreciation to all we encounter
- *Acknowledge people when they are really fantastic!

