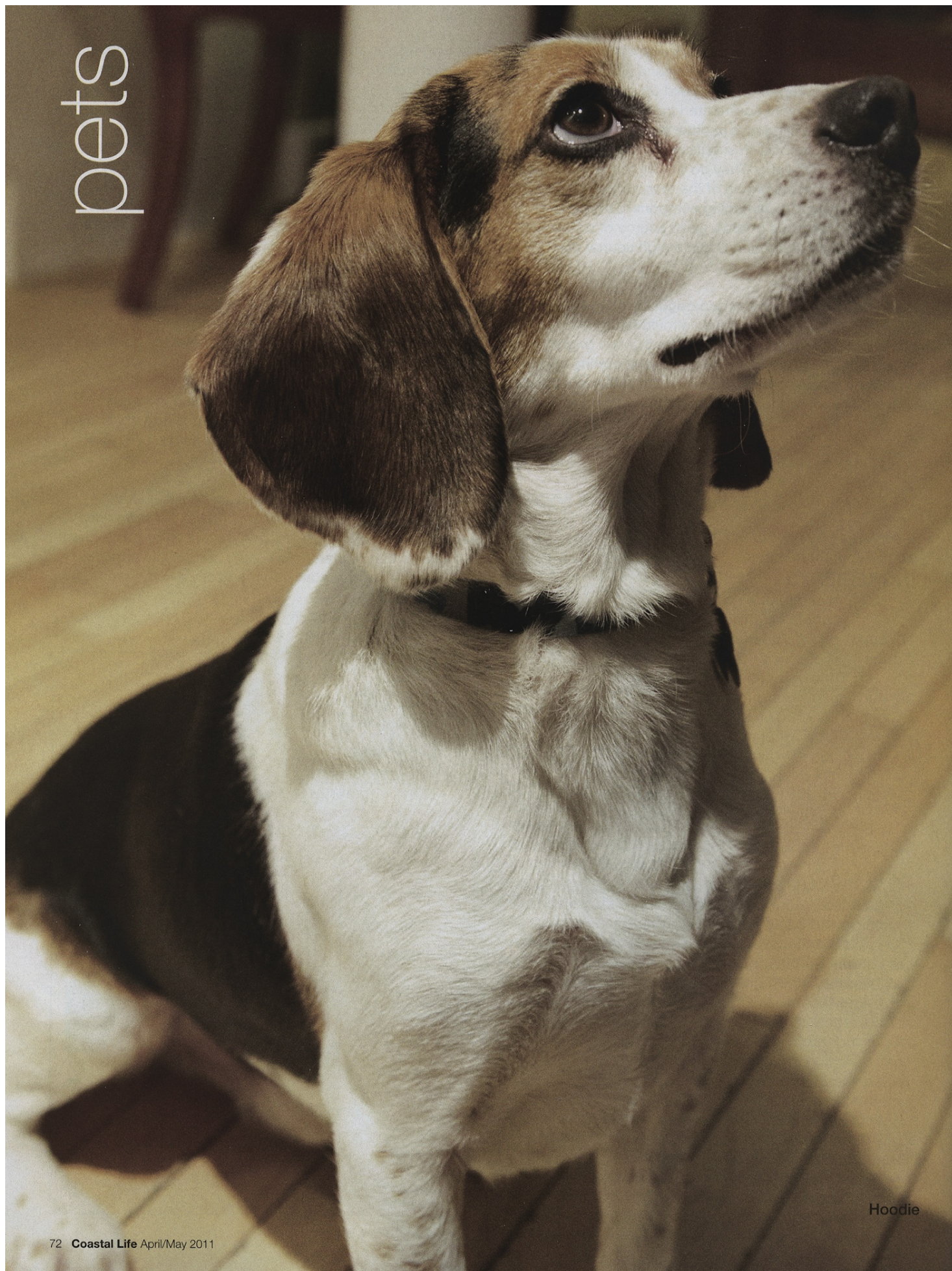


pets



Hoodie



# Spring Training

***Spring training is the time many look to begin anew, but in order for some to have a fresh start, they need your help.***

Springtime is a traditional time for many people to think about getting a new pet – and many think about getting a dog. People looking for a new addition to their family think of dogs as being affectionate, able to give and receive much love and attention and in general as being good companions – doctors even say owning a pet can promote a healthier and thus longer life. The thought process is correct, as in spring it will be easier to take the dog for walks, to play in the fields and to have fun outdoors and bond with the new member of the household. Many people think about all this, and then go looking for Rover.

One place that many are increasingly turning to is the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – the SPCA. The SPCA is a charitable, non-profit, completely self-funded (that is no government funding) operation whose main purpose is to rescue and take care of abused, abandoned or otherwise homeless animals and the SPCA attempts to find good homes for these healthy animals in their care. The Yarmouth shelter, for example, has more than 1500 animals per year admitted, mainly dogs and cats. Some animals are reunited with their owners, some are adopted, and unfortunately some may have to be euthanized – although the SPCAs in Nova Scotia are working on a “no kill” principle that ideally sees almost 90% of animals adopted, with euthanasia being reserved basically for medical or other emergency situations.

Dogs come to the SPCA for various reasons. Some arrive because an owner has passed away and other family members cannot look after the pet, while others come as someone is forced to move perhaps to live somewhere in an apartment that doesn't accept dogs, or in a place where the dog would not do well. Some dogs also come as run-aways, and found animals that someone brings to the SPCA.

There are many advantages to getting your dog from the SPCA. First and foremost is the fact that you are helping a dog find a good home. Doing this feels good, but it is a commitment, a long commitment, as you are taking the dog for the rest of its life, which can mean up to 12 or 14 years. As a result, the SPCA has a process for prospective owners to go through to adopt the pet, to make sure that the adopter knows the responsibility that comes with pet ownership, and is financially able to take on the role of provider for the dog.

The process is pretty straightforward, though. You go to the SPCA, or online, and fill out a form, then you come to the shelter and they will set up an appointment to see the dog you are considering, and which matches your profile. Matching is important as some dogs need lots of exercise and space, and would do best in the country, while other dogs would like living in a smaller space. Some people have owned dogs all their lives, while for some this is a new experience – and that is something that plays a part in selection as some dogs will naturally fit in, while others may need that experienced hand. It may be that you have children, and some dogs excel at being with kids, while others are loyal to one owner. It could also be a lifestyle match – perhaps you are busy and are gone a lot – some dogs do well with this, some like much more contact. In any case, it isn't hard to find a dog that will suit you, and you are making a big difference for that particular dog and giving it a new life.

There is a fee once you are approved and you find a dog that fits; currently it's \$160 for an adult dog and \$225 for a puppy – and in either case, the dog must be neutered. The dog will come to you micro-chipped for identification and will have had its shots, but ongoing vet care and feeding are costs to consider.

A second advantage of adopting from the SPCA is that you can obtain an adult dog that is house trained and has already gotten over the puppy stage of chewing and “accidents”. It may take a couple of weeks to see the new dog's personality come through, but as my sister-in-law notes (she and my brother have adopted two loveable little dachshunds), in that time you are establishing a bond with your new best friend. Many people find that after a couple of weeks, taking the dog to obedience classes or other training sessions helps the dog understand you are the new master, and helps the dog become more social and a better behaved family member. The SPCA does allow you to return the dog if things do not work out for either you or the dog.

Dogs are wonderful pets, but make no mistake, they do require care and control. My daughter, who recently moved to her own house in Dartmouth, had been brought up with always having a dog in the home (we're a very “doggy” family), so naturally she looked to the SPCA and found a wonderful little “mostly beagle” to adopt. She named him





Doggies – the Curry family and dogs

Hoodie, short for Houdini, because the SPCA said, “He’s a bit of an escape artist”. Well, that became quickly evident.

One day she came home from work and opened the door, forgetting for a moment that a little furry blur would run right past her at the sight of his impending possible freedom and a good chance to do what beagles do – run! My daughter’s husband dutifully ran out after Hoodie, but lost the trail in the park three blocks away as it began to snow. My daughter was distraught, but her husband had the good fortune to spot a police officer, whom he quickly informed of the lost dog. The officer instantly put out an all points bulletin to watch out for the runaway Hoodie.

Three hours later, after many tears were shed and family expressed worries about the gathering storm, good fortune came in the form of a police cruiser that came down the road, lights flashing, and stopped in front of the house. The officer unlocked the back door of the car and walked

the vagrant to the front door of the house. Hoodie was welcomed back with many hugs and a warm blanket, and the officer said, “He’s the best behaved client we had all night”!

Hoodie loves his new home and is loved in return; he is a friendly and very cuddly little dog. He has brought a lot of joy to my daughter and her family, and has now graduated from obedience classes and is even in a program at Dalhousie University which trains dogs to track animals such as coyotes in the city. And now everyone knows where Hoodie is before the door opens... 🌸



Stephie – my sister in law’s dachshund



Hoodie and Marsha (my daughter)