

Winning the Short Term Lottery

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Like many others who work in shelters and rescue organizations, I've often heard people reject the idea of adopting a senior dog because "I just lost a pet and I can't possibly go through that again so soon."

I try to be empathetic and polite, but sometimes I want to ask them, "Hey, if someone told you that you had won a lottery and would be receiving unlimited amounts of money every year but the catch was that it would end after only a few months or years, would you turn it down?" I doubt it! Not to equate money with dogs, of course (I'll take the dog any time), but "winning a short term lottery" is one way of looking at the experience of adopting a senior dog.

You have the joy of looking into those grateful, adoring eyes every day and receiving back ten times the love you give. Knowing from the start that it may end at any time just makes each moment more treasured and special. You learn not to take anything for granted, to be grateful for every day that you are greeted in the morning by your gentle, white-faced companion. You smile as you watch your senior dog play with toys, bask in the sunshine, curl up and fall into that "old lady" or "old man" deep sleep that wraps a layer of protection around them and keeps them oblivious to the woes of everyday life that we humans have to face.

And when they are gone, your life is surely far more richer than it was before. You've won the short term lottery and if you're smart, you'll jump right back in and buy another ticket!

Thankfully, just when I start to feel discouraged about all those who turn away from the older dogs, along comes another adopter who understands the short term lottery philosophy and knows that seniors need great homes just as much as younger dogs. In all the years that I've been facilitating adoptions, I've talked to many people who were reluctant to adopt a senior, but I've *never* talked to anyone who regretted doing so!