

Too much fun

Now know that a dog can have too much fun. On Saturday, my husband and I took our half-Lab, half-Chesapeake Bay retriever for a mid-morning stroll. The farm, full of luscious green fields and centered around a large pond, looked like doggy heaven.



COMMON GROUND

STEPHANIE JADRNICKEK

Unrestrained by her leash, Ella relished in her freedom. But being the thoughtful, polite soul she is, she didn't stray far and continuously checked in with her walking companions.

Like many rescues, Ella's quite timid and obedient — all she wants out of life is love. But on Saturday, I saw another side to my best friend. She leapt through the fields like a gazelle and, following her retriever instincts, plunged into the pond as if fetching a fallen bird.

Just when I thought she'd worn herself out, she'd recharge her battery by rolling wildly in the grass and charge into the water for another swim.

On our return trip, my husband and I decided to opt for a ride in the golf cart. And although we invited Ella onto our vehicle, the smile on her face suggested she'd rather run. Later that evening I noticed that Ella's tail looked a little droopy. I thought perhaps she was simply tired from her adventurous day. But in the morning I could tell her tail was bothering her and she seemed sad that she couldn't wag it.

So I turned to my trusted friend Google for some answers. I'd been joking with my husband that maybe Ella had had too much fun and broken her tail. But my smile turned upside-down when I realized this predicament is possible.

Evidently, dogs such as Labradors and Chesapeake Bay retrievers — or any medium to large dog with a long tail — often break their tails or pull ligaments in their tails. But the website encouraged dog owners to first read about limp tail syndrome before heading off to the vet.

Acute caudal myopathy, commonly known as cold water tail, swimmer's tail and limp tail, results from overuse of the tail. Possible causes of the condition are hard, vigorous play, swimming in cold water or active hunting. And dogs who are usually couch potatoes are particularly susceptible to this strain.

No disrespect to Ella, but other than her daily walk and a hike every other weekend, she's not the most active of dogs.

I asked my neighbor — the wise grandmother figure in our neighborhood — and she knew exactly what I was talking about. It had happened to her daughter's boxer after a long day of running and playing. She said it was probably just sore and would return to normal within a few days.

I'm happy to report that Ella's tail has almost completely recovered. I've watched it slowly regain its pep, and she's nearly back to normal.

I guess I'll need to condition her for her next big adventure so she doesn't suffer from having too much fun.

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BabyRead honored for its efforts



Above: BabyRead director Caren von Hippel recently spoke to a group of 125 people at a luncheon at St. John's Lutheran Church. Proceeds from the luncheon were donated to BabyRead, which has an early literacy program. Bottom: Each of the 13 tables had creative themes at the Tour of Tables luncheon, an event hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church to honor BabyRead.

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICKEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — St. John's Lutheran Church recently honored BabyRead at its Tour of Tables at the church on Main Street in Walhalla. The biannual event is a luncheon where 13 women from the church elaborately decorate 13 tables in different themes.

The members of St. John's are donating the considerable proceeds of the event to BabyRead, a nonprofit with an early literacy outreach program in Oconee County.

"BabyRead wants to thank all the members of St. John's Lutheran Church for their incredibly generous support of BabyRead," BabyRead director Caren von Hippel said. "The money will be used to purchase books for children who ordinarily would not have any."

Each of the 13 tables at the luncheon had a creative theme — Family Artist History, Lettuce Go Hopping Down the Bunny Trail, Love Bears All Things, For the Beauty of the Earth, When Life Gives You Lemons, God Bless America, Cocka-Doodle-Do, Hope Anchors the Soul, Southern Elegance, Fishers of Men, Angels Among Us, Light of the World and the BabyRead table.

"Each table was beautifully decorated to exemplify each theme," von Hippel said. "After Fredi Hallman, the co-chairman, gave a welcome and Jan Long gave a blessing for the meal, everyone had lunch. The meal was prepared by the parishioners and served by the men of the church."

A quartet of singers from Greenville called Taboo serenaded the group of 125 people with a variety of songs in harmony. Then, von Hippel thanked the group for its generous donation to BabyRead and spoke about the purpose of BabyRead and what it does.

Several years ago, Baby-



Read started out with eight volunteers and five families. Now, more than 20 families are involved in the program and more than 40 volunteers donate time to the program.

"BabyRead is a group of volunteers who read with moms and other caregivers of babies from birth to 18 months living in Oconee County," von Hippel said. "We meet twice each month at public or school libraries for one hour and give a free book and snack each time we meet. We coach moms and caregivers to enhance their reading with songs, nursery rhymes and finger plays, important to many skills, including holding a child's attention."

According to von Hippel, a baby's brain develops more in the first 18 months of life than from the age of 18 months to 18 years. And if a child is not read to and spoken to, the neurons and pathways in the child's brain shrink.

"For your child's brain to grow properly into a healthy, strong, intelligent brain, you have to talk to your child

and read to your child. If you don't, your child will have limited intelligence," she said.

According to von Hippel, it doesn't matter what language is spoken to the child, and it doesn't matter what's read to the child — it could be books, comic strips, the sports page or even a dictionary. It's the communication from a human voice that matters most.

"A lot of people do not read to their children — they put them in front of the TV," von Hippel said. "It's important to engage with your children and keep them away from electronic gadgets. What a child needs is a human being talking to the child, holding the child and engaging with the child."

In spring 2016, some BabyRead volunteers started visiting Early Head Start in Seneca and reading to the babies and toddlers. Early Head Start is a federally funded day care program for children, ages birth to 3 years, from low-income families.

Volunteers continue to read to children at Early Head Start, and BabyRead regu-

larly gives board books the children can take home. The practice is becoming a tradition for the nonprofit.

Von Hippel said many of the children in Early Head Start, as well as other children in Oconee County, have few books in their homes. BabyRead encourages mothers and other caretakers to read and sing nursery rhymes and use finger plays with their little ones.

"Social interaction — listening to whatever your children are saying at whatever age and then responding — is critical to brain development," she said. "Listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension. Children at the earliest age learn a tremendous amount by hearing their parents talk, read and sing to them."

In addition to readers, BabyRead is also seeking volunteers with leadership, management and administrative skills. For more information, call (864) 944-7881, email babyread@charter.net or visit babyread.org.

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