



Potcake rescues dogs on
the Turks and Caicos Islands

Description

Dedicated volunteers arrange international adoptions for island stray dogs

By **Michael Walsh**

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Whoever declares that love at first sight doesn't exist has never witnessed the purity of a puppy or looked deep into a puppy's eyes. If they did, their lives would change considerably.

[Elizabeth Parker, Paw Prints in the Sand](#)

I have always been a huge proponent of using shelters to find "forever homes" when deciding to make a puppy part of one's family.



Did you know that puppies are available for adoption from the

Turks and Caicos Islands? They are called “potcakes” – a local term derived from food leftover at the bottom of a cooking pot that is shaped into patties and fed to island pets.

At this point, you might be wondering where the Turks and Caicos Islands are located. They comprise an archipelago of 40 islands and cays in the Bahama island chain north of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the largest of which is Providenciales. (Read Michael Walsh’s article: [Turks and Caicos Islands](#))

Within this tropical paradise that comprises aquamarine waters in turquoise shades so vivid that it takes one’s breath away another story emerges: the island’s stray dog population.

For the past 17 years a group of dedicated volunteers, under the direction of **Jane Parker-Rauw**, manage **Potcake Place**, a facility that fosters and relocates potcake puppies from the island to the mainland (mainly the US and Canada).

The existence of Potcake Place begs the question: how large is the stray dog population on the island? Recent estimates put the number of strays at 5,000 – that’s within a 37 square mile island. To put things in perspective, 100 male and 100 female dogs can produce up to 1,000 puppies per year. Government action has included trapping (and euthanizing) stray dogs in “problem areas”.

Fortunately, Jane Parker-Rauw becomes cognizant of this problem and decided to become part of the solution. As such, Potcake Place was founded and still, to this day, receives and relocates puppies.



Staffed entirely by volunteers and funded donations, Potcake

Place offers a second chance to puppies that would otherwise live out their lives scrounging for food and living in the island's dense underbrush.

On a steamy hot August afternoon, I had the opportunity to meet **Lynn Robinson** at their facility located in a busy shopping area. Opening the front door, one is greeted with eager yelps of puppies amongst the throng of visitors that could not resist coming inside to share the dynamics of happy puppies playing in their air-conditioned environment. Most visitors are "just-looking"; however, some are intent on going home with a potcake.

Those visitors "in the know" are aware that the puppies can be "borrowed" for a few hours during the day. Interacting with people and being exposed to different environments is an important part of their socialization process. Visitors are given a shoulder bag and a puppy and allowed to spend time on the beach, or simply taken for a car ride to another residence. As one who has done this, several times, I can attest it's a rewarding experience for both the puppy and the volunteer walker.

Adoption involves a rigorous screening process to, in part, identify those adopting solely on impulse. "We tend to dissuade people from adopting", Lynn stated. She added, "We make no guarantees about health or behavioural issues that might occur in the future".

'We couldn't do this without our dedicated group of volunteers. Some live on island, others are visitors donating their time. Collectively, they all share one thing: a passion for making the world a better place,



one potcake at a time.'

Lynn Robinson

Nevertheless, Potcake Place finds forever homes off-island, to approximately 500 puppies per year. The adoption process involves meeting with potential owners, a telephone call to their veterinarian and a bit of preparation for their new environment.



Following approval, there are two methods of shipping the

puppies. The first option involves the new owner using a cabin airline bag and paying the additional fee of carrying it onboard the aircraft. The second option uses volunteer couriers – visitors returning to the mainland. These volunteers are met by the new owners at their arrival airport.

Fortunately, the island is rabies-free, minimizing the requirements for the puppies to enter the US. Canada; however, still requires a valid proof of rabies vaccination.

“We couldn’t do this without our dedicated group of volunteers”, Lynn added. “Some live on the island, others are visitors donating their time. Collectively, they all share one thing: a passion for making the world a better place, one potcake at a time.”

Those seeking further information can visit Potcake Place’s website potcakeplace.com or contact them by email at mail@potcakeplace.com

Check out Potcake Place’s Facebook page at facebook.com/PotcakePlace, or their Instagram page at instagram.com/potcakeplacek9rescue/

I would like to thank Lynn Robinson for taking the time, during her busy day, to assist in discussing this article.

Images: Michael Walsh




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Michael Walsh is a long-time Westmount resident. He is happily retired from nearly four decades in the field of higher education technology. A “professional student” by nature, his academic training, and publishing, include statistical methodology, mycology and animal psychology. During this period, he was also an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. Prior to moving to Montreal, he was contracted by the Ontario Ministry of Education evaluating bilingual primary and secondary school programs. Today, he enjoys spending time with his (huge) Saint Bernard while discovering the city’s past and sharing stories of the majestic trees that grace the parks and streets. He can be contacted at michaeld2003@hotmail.com or through his blog [Westmount Overlooked](#)



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- 3. dogs
- 4. Jane Parker-Rauw
- 5. Lynn Robinson
- 6. michael walsh
- 7. Potcake Place
- 8. stray dogs



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- 9. Turks and Caicos Islands
 - 10. volunteers

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