

# The Beverly REVIEW



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## HOLIDAY GOOD TIMES & GIFT GUIDE

### Smith Village resident finds new furry friend, offers advice



Smith Village resident Lesley Rokaitis (left) enjoyed showing champion Cairn Terriers. Though she no longer owns a dog, she appreciates how her neighbors, Carolyn and Tom Trinley, share their Shih-Tzu Poodle with her.

Smith Village resident Lesley Rokaitis knows a good-looking dog when she sees one. Four of her Cairn terriers took honors as best of breed champions of physical conformation from the American Kennel Association during the 1970s.

So, it was only natural for her to choose a senior living community that welcomed dogs when she moved this past May to Smith Village from Burbank, Ill., with her 16-year-old shepherd mix, Ginger, who passed away not long ago. Rokaitis has enjoyed owning many dogs of different breeds and mixes, but she's decided to not own another dog right now "because I'm too busy enjoying all the activities here."

Even so, she appreciates small dogs and other pets. And, she's befriended Shenna, a Shih-Tzu Poodle mix, as well as the dog's owners,

Carolyn and Tom Trinley.

For last summer's Smith Village Pet Parade, Rokaitis gave Shenna pink puppy toy, which Carolyn Trinley pinned to the dog's dress. The gift must have brought good luck. Shenna took third-place in the parade competition judged by residents.

Rokaitis started her life on the south side, but her parents moved to Wellston, Mich., when she was 7 years old. They worked for the U.S. Department of Forestry, replanting pine forests in the rural region.

"Some of my experiences there would have been common for previous generations, not mine," said Rokaitis. While in Wellston, she attended a one-room schoolhouse and lived in a farm; a wood burning stove and a water pump in the kitchen.

"Ours wasn't a working farm, but we did have pigs

and chickens—and lots of forest, 80 acres," she said. "I really enjoyed the forests and being around the animals."

Her family moved back to Chicago, settling in the Hyde Park neighborhood, where Rokaitis completed grades eight through 12 at St. Thomas Apostle Grade School and High School. After earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Northern Illinois University, she taught fourth grade at a school in Burbank, Ill., where she met her husband, Jim, also a teacher.

During the next 27 years, Rokaitis taught third-graders and kindergartners, and her husband became assistant superintendent of School District 111. They moved to Chicago Ridge, then to Homebank, where they raised their three children, Jim, Jill and Judy.

A friend of Rokaitis' husband owned a Great Dane,



which prompted her family to consider getting a dog.

"I looked up information on Cairn Terriers, the same breed of dog as Toto from the Wizard of Oz," Rokaitis said. "The rest is history."

She started attending shows and showing her own Cairn Terriers.

The entire family accompanied her to the competitions.

"Our kids became friends with the children of other families showing their dogs," Rokaitis said.

Her husband and son showed dogs with her, and together they won several trophies and the championships.

Rokaitis offers wise advice for those considering dog ownership or giving pets as holiday presents:

Consider your lifestyle. Can you give a dog the attention he or she will need? Dogs require companionship and should not be left alone for long periods. They require lots of care, feeding, grooming, vaccinations and exercise that vary depending on the breed.

If having a dog is right for you, research different breeds through the American Kennel Association. Herding breeds are popular, but they require lots of exercise and large yards for running. Without them, they can become rambunctious. All breeds benefit from some form of exercise, but some are better suited better for apartment dwellers or those wanting lapdogs.

If you opt for a pure breed, preview the dog's temperament by asking the breeder to let you meet the parents. If the father is not available, at least meet the mother.

If you are adopting a mixed breed, spend some time observing the dog in different settings—with people and around other dogs. Ask plenty of questions. Learn about the dog's history, temperament and health needs.

If you are selecting a dog for small children, remember, children form bonds quickly. It's best to narrow your choices first, and then introduce your children.