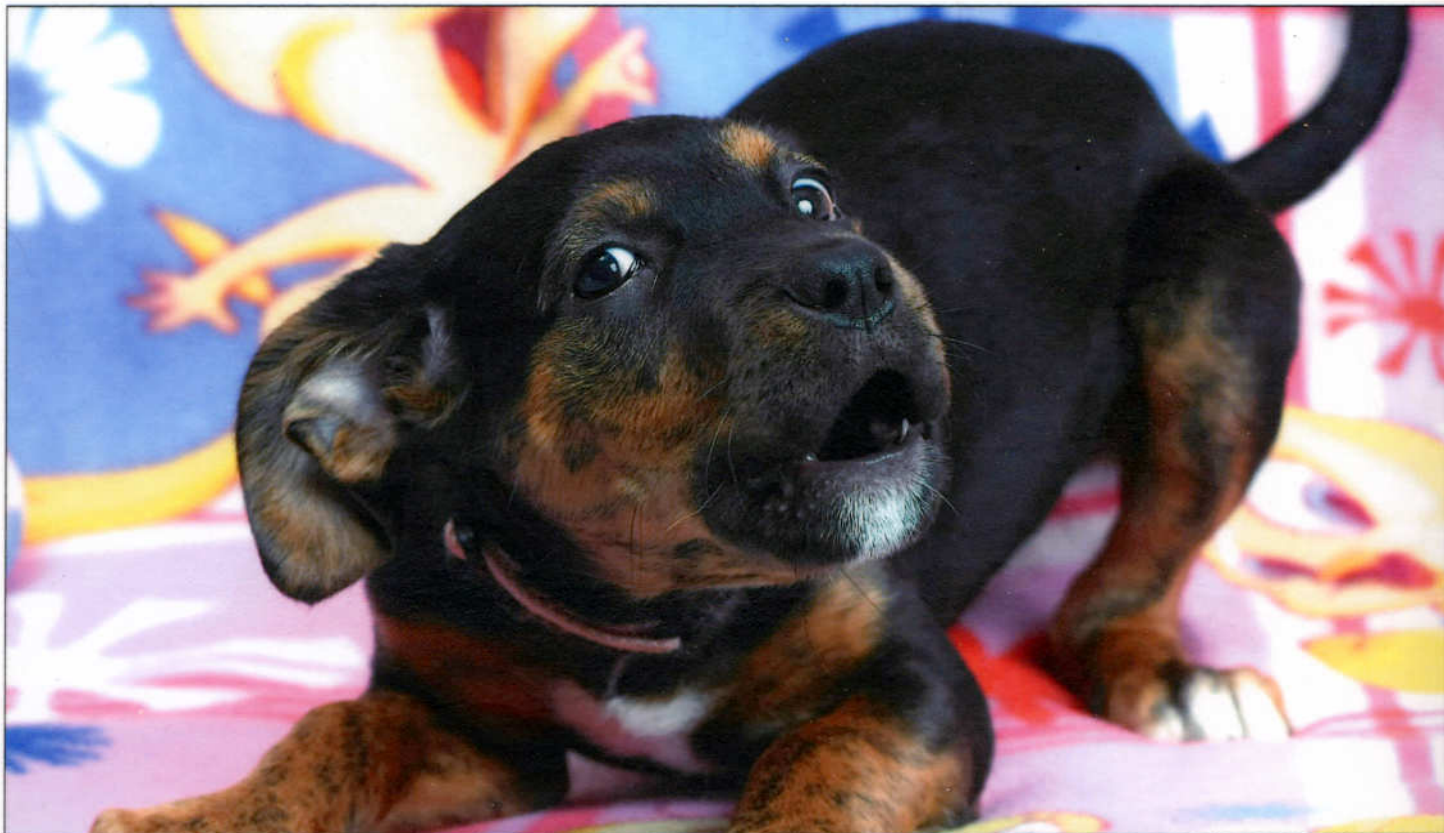


PUPPY HAS A HOLE IN HER HEART



JANA CHYTILOVA, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Three-month-old Sadie was dropped off at the shelter along with two siblings when their owners couldn't give them away or sell them.

Ownerless dog needs \$4,200 surgery to fix energy-sapping hole in her heart

SPCA, animal hospital seeking public donations so a healthy pet can be offered for adoption, writes **SARAH BOESVELD.**

Sadie is not your typical cardiac patient. But the three-month-old German Shepherd-Rottweiler mix has borderline congestive heart failure.

To make matters worse, Sadie doesn't have an owner to pay for the \$4,200 operation that would repair her heart.

She's lived at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' western Quebec chapter since she was dropped off with her two siblings three-and-a-half weeks ago by a family (who didn't know about the heart condition) when they couldn't sell or give away all

the puppies in a litter.

Now the SPCA of Western Quebec and the Alta Vista Animal Hospital are asking the public to help pay for the dog's surgery. The shelter has already paid \$900 for the three drugs the animal is on, and for visits to a dog cardiologist. After the surgery, the playful puppy is expected to recover and then be adopted.

"It's not that difficult to adopt healthy three-month-old pups," said Sadie's foster father, Jim Walker. "But by getting her the surgery and a month-long recovery, we can give away a healthy four-month-old puppy."

Sadie's condition, which was discovered during a routine screening, is called patent ductus arteriosus, meaning she has a hole in her heart. While this is normal for puppy fetuses, the hole usually closes before birth. Sadie's didn't. Instead, she grew an extra vein that now carries unoxidized blood straight to her heart.

This makes Sadie's resting heart rate three times faster than the average puppy's and tires her out very quickly.

There are two options for surgery. One is to undergo open heart surgery to remove the vein, the other is arthroscopic and would seal either end of the extra vein, sending blood down the proper blood vessels.

"Both have a high probability of success," said Mr. Walker.

"But they're both expensive."

While Sadie waits for the money to pay for her surgery, she plays in five-minute spurts with her favourite Mickey Mouse toy.

And when she has energy, it's there in full force. The puppy leaps from the top of a living room chair and lands with her four paws on the floor.

"Though she's not supposed to get much exercise, she does on her own," Mr. Walker said.

But it's hard to keep her endurance up, he added. "After

this, she'll be tired."

Sadie sleeps most of the time and spends her afternoons at the shelter for observation.

"She gets lots of attention here," said SPCA employee Jennifer Montague. "Everybody loves her."

Ms. Montague said the SPCA did not struggle with the decision to appeal to the public to help the dog, even though there are many humans who are in great need medically.

"We don't have an alternative to private medicine," she said of animal health care. "There is no government funding for animals."

In the case of people, at least in Canada, she said, "You can't pay a doctor to have heart surgery. You just can't facilitate that way."

Donations can be made by calling the Alta Vista Animal Hospital at 613-731-9911 or the SPCA of Western Quebec SPCA at 819-770-7722. Cheques will also be accepted by mail.