

Members of the Month

September Members of the Month Diana & Eric Gartz

Hello from Diana and Eric Gartz from Brockport, NY. My husband and I got our first Swissy in January 2010. Eric and I lost our first dog, Winston, in January 2009 at the age of 13 ½. After going through the Summer without having a dog in the house, Eric started a search for a new dog in the Fall. I wanted a big dog that didn't drool and didn't need allot of maintenance (brushing is not fun with burdax in long hair) and that was about it for me. Eric spent time at the local bookstore researching different breeds and came home on Thursday night (December 17, 2009) and said he found the breed we wanted. He Googled a picture for me because I had never heard of the breed - Greater Swiss Mountain Dog.

We began looking for breeders in the area and found one that had a litter of puppies with one puppy available. We looked on the breeder's website and saw pictures of the litter of 7 puppies. I immediately pointed to the blue boy with the crook in his tail and said "that's the one I want!".

We didn't know which puppies were available or if we would even be able to get a puppy. We emailed the breeder the next morning (my birthday) to inquire about the puppy. She sent an email back and asked us to call. We were on the phone within 5 minutes of the email being sent. After being vetted as to our ability to care for such a special puppy, we were told that the blue boy was the one that was available and we were told we would be good owners. He would be available to be picked up on the very weekend we were going to be in the area for a wedding. So Happy Birthday to me!

Aren - the picture that started it all!



Members of the Month, *Eric and Diana Gartz*

We anxiously waited for that day to arrive, sharing pictures of him to all of our family and friends throughout the holiday season. The wedding of our nephew on January 8th was a great day but I was more excited for the next day when we got to pick up our boy, Aren. So we got to the house and we were greeted by a big “Barroo” and a shaking front door when his paws landed on the door. After we signed the papers, we met our boy. We played for a while with the other puppies then we were on our way. It was a 4 hour drive home and of course I had to lay in the back seat with Aren laying on me. We thought something was wrong with him as he didn’t cry, whine, bark or do anything. Aren was so mellow and calm. We brought him into our home on the 1 year anniversary of the death of our Winston. I took the whole next week off from work to hang out with Aren. Our first night home Eric and I slept on the floor with Aren in the middle of us. The 2nd night I slept with my head in his crate and the 3rd night I slept next to the crate. He did great in his crate, I was the crazy one!

Eric insisted I take Aren to some sort of dog training class due to his size and potential strength. I started class in the Spring and we completed his CGC. I really enjoyed going to class and started Obedience classes. I decided that I didn’t really like Obedience but a friend told me about Rally, so I tried that. We had much more fun with that. Aren and I have spent the last 4 years in Rally class with some of the same dogs and humans. He loves going to “school”. He begins barking and whining when we turn in the driveway for class. We completed his Rally Excellent title in June 2015. We continue with class but just for fun. His real love is doing therapy work. He has been a certified Therapy Dog since 2012. He loves visiting and we wish we could do more. We mostly visit with individuals with developmental disabilities and did some visiting people with cancer.

After a year and a half we decided that it was time for another Swissy. You know you can’t have just one! We thought it might be fun to show a puppy in Conformation. We picked up our girl Amdis (Aren’s sister) in August 2011. Amdis also completed her CGC and we began taking Conformation classes in the Spring. Then she developed a food allergy and lost the hair on her back. We went to our first show in the Fall and we immediately found out that her shy nature is not a quality for the ring even though she is a beautiful girl.



Aren and Amdis enjoying a hike

Members of the Month, *Eric and Diana Gartz*

We continued to show Amdis because we were having fun and thought she would eventually start enjoying it. NOT AT ALL! But she still did it for us. So we were enjoying showing in Conformation and decided to find a girl that we might have more success with in the ring.

Eric started looking for other breeders in the northeast region and I had a business card from a gentleman that I met in Syracuse 6 months earlier when showing Amdis. Eric thought I should give him a call to get on his wait list because this breeder has bred show quality puppies. He had looked on the Kismet Swissy website and noticed he had a litter of puppies out of Penzie and Oliver (2 top dogs in the country at the time) almost 3 months prior. I called him on a Monday night and Joe remembered who I was. We chatted for a bit and he happened to have a female puppy from that very litter available due to circumstances. He asked if we would like to co-own a puppy with him. I did not know what this was nor was Eric home to say yes. I told Joe I would give him a call back after I was able to talk with Eric about this proposal. We decided to take Joe up on his offer and off to PA we went the following Sunday. We met Joe and Carol then Odet. We spent a few hours talking and going over details then it was time for the long drive home.



Aren, Amdis and Odet

We took Odet to Conformation class and she was a natural. She walked in the class ring and strutted her stuff like she owned it. I was amazed at the confidence and ability she was showing. Odet completed her CGC as well. Odet became a Champion in September 2014 at the Macungie, PA Supported Entry show and became a Grand Champion in April 2015 in Harrisburg, PA with lots of support from our Breeders and Swissy friends there.

Members of the Month, *Eric and Diana Gartz*

When we first decided we wanted to show our girl Amdis we were told that the show world could be a very unfriendly and competitive place. There must be something about the breed that attracts a better group of people because we have met many people that we now call friends. From fellow owners to breeders that have been showing the breed from the beginning to the professional handlers who make their living showing swissys we have received an incredible amount of help and advice on showing and raising our “kids”.



Diana and Aren sledding



Diana, Aren, Amdis and Odet at Hamlin Beach

As for hobbies, it's all about the pups (and the Grandchild): Rally and Conformation classes and shows, going for walks in the village of Brockport where we meet lots of people, camping, hiking and backpacking.

Our 5 year old Granddaughter, Evie, wants to show and train Swissies too. She has traveled with us to a few shows and has made friends as well. In a couple years, she will be in the ring. All because we got a Swissy!