

Spotlight on Members!

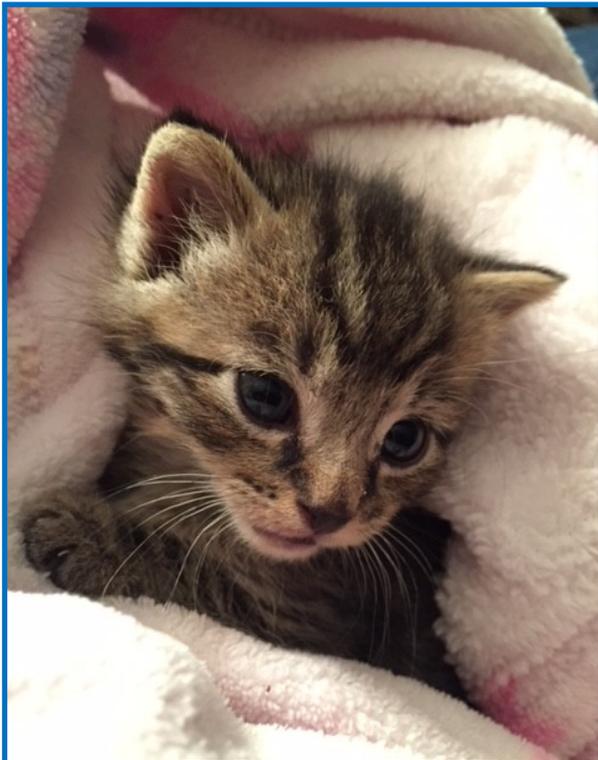
Tonia Adams

My name is Tonia Adams and I live in Schnecksville, PA with my 2 year old Swissy Oliver and 2 year old cat Gabe.

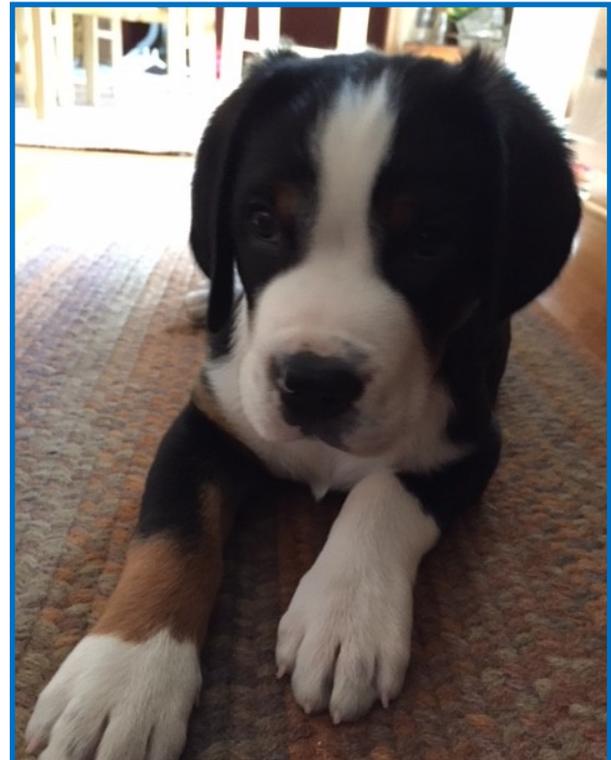
Yes, both are 2 years old and their birthdays are a week apart, September 14th and September 21st. They came home a week apart in November 2016 which made for a very crazy, tree-almost-falling-over-daily, holiday!!! Why would anyone do that to themselves you ask—I had given Kim Wollard, Cherished Swissies, the deposit for Oliver when a week later in early October I was at my Mom's trimming some trees and heard crying coming from her neighbor's shed. As I approached the shed saying "hello" the cutest blue-eyed gray kitten emerged, and he never went back under the shed. He was about 3 weeks old and required bottle feeding every 2 hours. I knew nothing about kittens nor did I ever have a cat, but my sister Val and her neighbor Linda helped me figure it out and the rest is history.



Tonia with Gabe & Oliver



Gabe



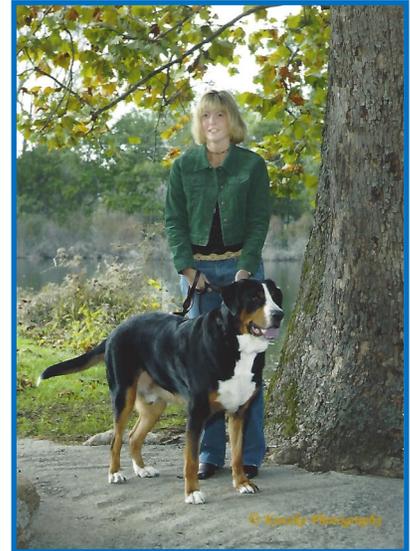
Oliver

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But this is an article for a Swissy newsletter so onto that part of the story ...

I've been blessed to share my life and home with Swissies for the last 18 years. My first Swissy Dante was born in December 1999 and came home in February 2000. His AKC registered name was Seavaridge's Absolute Dante—his Dad was Shadetree Seavaridge Flashing, and his Mom was Seavaridge's Two If By Sea. Dante was a huge lovebug and bigger than life at 150 lbs. He lived a short life of only 7 years, but during those 7 years he was my protector during happiness and the heartache of my divorce. Dante was loved by so many especially my Mom who still cries to this day when she says his name. He always had a big head in my lap even during his last breath.



My second Swissy Dalton came home 8 weeks after Dante passed.

The house and my heart were so empty that I needed another Swissy to love. I'll always remember talking to Blanche on the phone after Dante passed and her saying, "Honey, you'll have a Swissy home in 8 weeks", and she delivered on that promise. Seavaridge's Extreme Dalton came home Memorial Day weekend in 2007. His parents were Seavaridge's Xpressor Adventure and Seavaridge's Knickknack Paddiwack. Dalton loved to walk—rain, snow, sleet, day or night—it didn't matter we were walking. He was the easiest puppy and thank goodness since I was raising him as a single dog parent. In July 2015 he was diagnosed with hepatitis and put on liver supplements. They believed the disease was auto immune caused by vaccines. In September 2015 we were out for our daily walk when he went lame in his back leg due to degenerative arthritis. For 9 months he went for cold laser therapy and used an underwater treadmill to help him fight through the pain. During that time I purchased a twin mattress and slept in the living room next to him every night.



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Losing Dalton on June 11th, 2016 was heartbreaking, and I decided to try life without a Swissy, but that didn't last long.

In September 2016 I came across the Cherish Swissies website and saw there was a litter of pups expected soon. I filled out an application, chatted with Kim, drove to Ohio for a visit and went back in mid November 2017 to bring Oliver home. His parents are Seneca's Stung By a Tracker Jack and Cherished Dancing Til Midnight. Kim was great telling me all about the working dog activities that Oliver and I could get involved in, including joining MAGS. Before Oliver my Swissies didn't partake in any working dog activities.



I joined MAGS in January 2017, attended my first Swissy pack hike in March 2017 and a Swissy fun day in April 2017—little did I know that the group of folks I met at that fun day would soon become my Swissy family and support group.

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At the Swissy Fun Day Oliver tried agility, rally and weight pull.

I thought weight pull was for us and he started training the following week. After 2 eight-week classes Tana, Oliver's weight pull instructor, said we should start coming to the weekly open gym night and that is where we met Denise and Boo Boo. Denise said she was traveling to Ohio for a Labor Day weight pull event hosted by Crooked River Swiss Club at Kim's house and asked if Oliver and I would like to go. I said sure, but Oliver was too young to compete as he wasn't even a year yet, but it seemed like the best way to learn and to see working dogs in action. That was the start of Oliver's love for Boo, and they continue to be travel buddies for weight pull events and the SwissAthlon. Marianne Bonner and Ellie recently joined us on the road trip adventures!!



Oliver competed in his first weight pull event in May 2018 at Jenna's, but missed his first leg by 40 lbs.

In April 2018 at the MAGS weight pull he earned this first leg.

I was so happy I cried!!

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All seemed good until June 5th, 2018 at 2:05 pm.

I was working at home and on a skype meeting. Oliver was sleeping on his bed next to my desk when suddenly he fell onto his side, mouth chattering and his whole body shaking. I had no idea what was happening, but thought he might be having a seizure. I had no idea what to do, panicked and crying, I called Denise. Thank God she answered. I said I think Oliver is having a seizure and I don't know what to do. She called Leslie Gillette and both were on the phone trying to calm me down, telling me to put cold towels on his neck and belly and to get to the vet ASAP. My office is in the basement and I had to get him up the stairs and into the car ... not sure how I got him in the car but I did. When we got to the vet Kim called to tell me to get him on Keppra ASAP since his Mom Ella recently started having seizures in January at the age of 6. It was so surreal, and I couldn't comprehend her telling me he should be put on meds. After a moment I caught my breath and heard Kim saying that I needed to be strong for Oliver—she asked me if he had been exposed to any toxins—I said yes, I had given him a bath in flea and tick shampoo 3 days prior to the seizure. She and the vet thought that could be the cause of the seizure. We went home that day without meds, washed him 3 times in Dawn dish detergent and prayed this was a 1-time event, but it wasn't.

On June 11th he had his second seizure and was put on Keppra immediately.

I knew nothing about seizures or the medicines—Kim quickly explained the newer, safer drugs of Keppra and Zonisamide. We went home that day hoping for the best and that the Keppra would help to manage the seizures ... it didn't, and he had a seizure every 7 to 9 days for the next 4 months. It's heartbreaking to witness him have a seizure and how he feel afterwards, usually confused and weak for 15 to 45 minutes. Someone told me it's like they just ran a marathon and are exhausted.

The vet continued to increase his meds after every seizure,

since they started him on the lowest dose possible, and talked about adding another medicine. Again it was so surreal and I couldn't comprehend him being on multiple seizure medicines why wasn't one medicine enough?

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One night in July he had a seizure at 9:35 pm that was different—

he didn't seem to come out of it; he seemed to have a fever and was having trouble breathing. I called my sister Val and Marianne, Ellie's Mom, and told them what was happening and that if he wasn't better in 10 minutes we were going to the emergency vet. Within 10 minutes I had him in the car and were on our way. I really thought he was going to stop breathing that night. I drove 80 mph the whole way there while he just laid in the back with his head down. When we finally got there they ran a ton of tests and found fluid in his lungs—probably vomit or saliva aspirated during the seizure. They kept him overnight and on seizure watch. The next day he had an ultrasound because the emergency vet said his spleen felt soft. It showed his spleen folded and mineralization on the liver and kidney. After hearing all the test results and talking to Kim I decided I had to do more for him—we needed to aggressively treat this disease and find him a neurologist. We found Dr. Brewer at Hope Veterinary in Malvern, PA and he's been under his care ever since. After another ultrasound it was determined his spleen, liver and kidney were fine. I learned that after a seizure all the organs look abnormal and to wait 48 hours after a seizure before performing an ultrasound.

We are still trying to find the right mixture of meds for him.

He currently takes CBD oil, Keppra, Zonisamide and Potassium Bromide daily. We've been able to get him to a 12-day cycle but still not optimal ... one seizure a month is considered managed and is our goal.

The last 5 months have been rough for Oliver and an emotional roller coaster for me.

I had a crash course in epilepsy in Swissies and still have much to learn, but want to share some of the things I've quickly learned—seizure dogs shouldn't have the run of the house or be kenneled with other dogs when left alone. They need a safe spot in the house and a crate isn't the best since they could get their teeth stuck on the bars. Oliver now has a 6 x 6 kennel area in the basement foyer which gives him room to walk around after a seizure since most dogs will pace or walk afterwards. The steps are always gated off so he can't fall down them after a seizure. It's important to keep a seizure log and share with your neurologist and/or vet. Keep certain items close at all times—towels so you can wet them and put on their neck and belly and pooch pads since they usually lose bladder and bowel control.

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One thing I'm starting to come to terms with is that I can't fix this, I can only try to manage it.

Some days I want to curl up in a ball, but a strong person recently said to me "he doesn't curl up in a ball—he has a seizure and goes on with life live by his example". We don't stay home—we continue our road trips with Denise, Boo, Marianne and Ellie. He continues to weight pull since he enjoys it and it keeps his back legs strong which helps after a seizure. His backpack is always packed with his scheduled meds, extra meds, food and his meds schedule. Denise and Marianne know what to do if he has a seizure and I'm not there. I've realized it's okay to ask for help and my Swissy family is there to help and support us.

Swissies are amazing!

They are strong, yet fragile creatures that bring total strangers together to create a Swissy family/support group. In life we get what we need not what we want, but I think Swissies give us both.

Tonia Adams

