

OPIN

A dog's best friend

COMMENTARY

By Jody Russell

The sidewalks were slippery, the wind frosty, and it was just plain busy this winter. No excuses, but it's all I've got to say for myself about the extra five or so pounds I found room for on my body. These are the pounds I swear I'll take off after New Year's, on the vernal equinox, or whenever else I make my avowals. These are the pounds I am certain everyone sees on me, thinking, "Oh, she put on some weight!" I am self-conscious of these pounds and working hard to get them off. Perhaps you're familiar with this scenario? No more ice cream, I swear to myself every night after the bowl is rinsed out.

And so, in this frame of mind, I found myself taking my dog, Erin, for her annual checkup and shots. We trotted happily in. My sweet shepherd-lab mix tentatively got on the scale, less reluctant than I have been. The vet assistant came over and exclaimed, "My, has someone gained weight!" She knew! How did she notice that so fast? Is it that obvious? Oh, not me. The dog.

"You mean Erin?" I asked sheepishly.
"Yes, she's put on, let's see, five pounds."

"I thought her hips looked a bit padded," I remarked, pulling my vest down in the back.

It was as if I was the one at the annual exam. I listened to a bit of information (lecture) from the vet on how to eat right and the importance of getting more exercise. This sounded very familiar. Erin now eats only what's in her bowl. Only twice a



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Erin, the shepherd lab mix.

day. No scraps. No morsels. Nothing that she ought not eat. She goes on a walk at least once a day. Sigh. I sure wish someone were giving me just two bowls a day of low cal food and keeping the rest of the good stuff from my paws.

We are a great team. We watch what we eat and we walk a lot. We walk around the park, through the woods, past barking dogs, past kids playing baseball, and past the UPS truck where treats can be found squirreled away for dog emergencies. Sometimes we get hot and we rest under a shady tree. And we come home feeling good.

After a couple of weeks, Erin has lost two pounds and she's looking dandy. As for her best friend, well, I'm doing my best. I think I'll join a gym.

Jody Russell is a resident of Eden Prairie.