



## at your service

BY LINDA CHILDERS

# Little dogs, big comfort—a rare breed helps people in pain.

**N**ancy Gordon remembers a time when pain ruled her life. There were days when even driving a short distance to the grocery store would leave her feeling sore and exhausted.

After a 1992 car accident, doctors diagnosed Gordon with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue immune disorder. In 1998, after continuing to battle daily pain, Gordon resigned from her job as a licensed social worker.

“Letting go of my career was one of the most painful experiences of my life,” she says today.

### A LITTLE RAY OF SUNSHINE

While seeking alternative treatments to relieve her pain, Gordon discovered Xoloitzcuintlis—or Xolos (pronounced *show-lows*)—a rare breed of Mexican dogs known for their ability to exude extraordinary body heat.

A lifelong dog lover, Gordon acquired Toaster from a breeder. She was amazed how the puppy could not only lift her spirits, but also relieve her intense pain.

“Before I got Toaster, my pain management required me to wear a microwaveable wrap around my neck almost 24/7,” she

says. “Yet Toaster can intuitively lay on my neck for 15 to 30 minutes, and her warm body instantly relieves my pain.”

Toaster, now 8, inspired Gordon to start a nonprofit organization, Xolos for Chronic Pain Relief (X-CPR), which matches chronic-pain sufferers with service dogs who provide heat therapy

and unconditional love to their owners.

“Xolos have a history as healers that dates back 3,500 years to the Ancient Aztecs,” Gordon, 53, says. “In addition to exuding heat, they are highly intelligent and make excellent service dogs.”

### ALL IN A DAY’S WORK

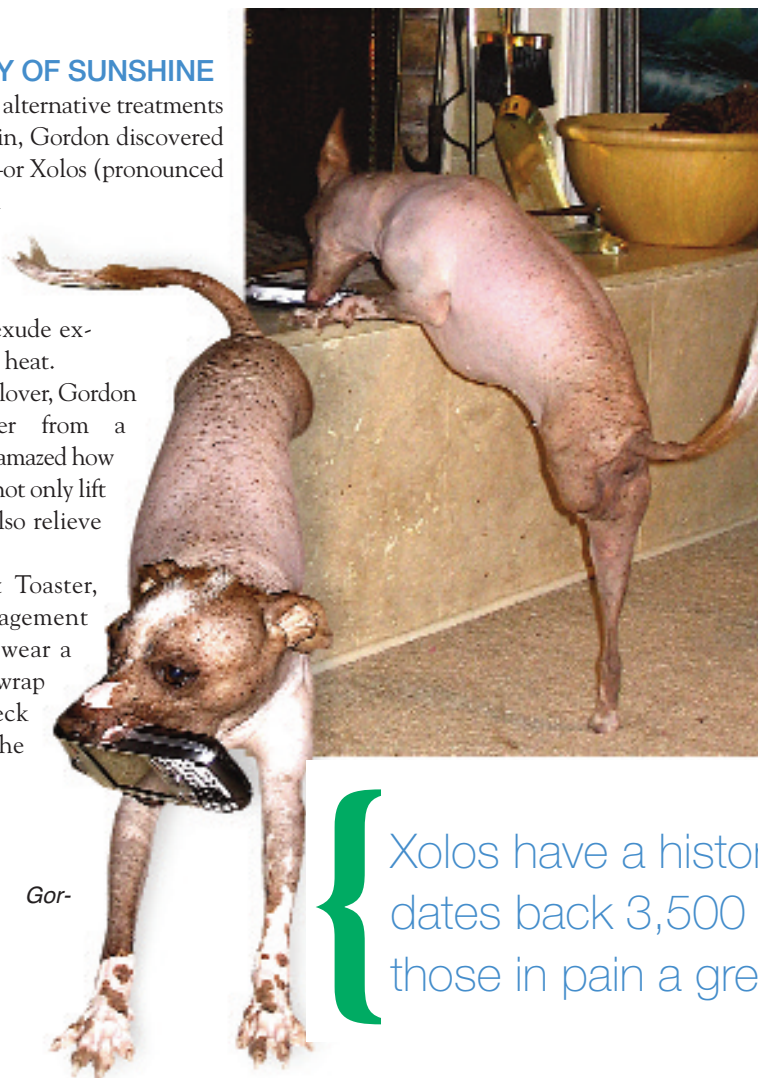
Toaster has been trained to recognize over 100 words, including the names of Gordon’s entire family and commands such as “Go to bed” and “Cross street.”

She also sings. Some of her favorite melodies are “Happy Birthday” and “You Are My Sunshine.”

Janet Wachenheimer, of Riverside, California, was one of the first people Gordon matched with a Xolo puppy.

“CheChe has changed my life dramatically,” says Wachenheimer, 54, of her 3-year-old Xolo. “I used to be housebound and bedridden with fibromyalgia, arthritis, and ligament issues. With her help, I’m able to live a much fuller life.”

Gordon added to her own Xolo family in 2002, when Toaster whelped her first and only litter, and she instantly fell in love with one of the puppies. Although she only has three legs, the dog Gordon christened Pink has undergone service training and knows at least 14 items by name. She assists Gordon by retrieving hard-to-reach items including her remote control, cell phone, and cordless phone.



*Pink retrieving Gordon's cell phone*

Xolos have a history as healers that dates back 3,500 years. They offer those in pain a great deal of hope.

PHOTOS COURTESY NANCY GORDON





*Gordon and her Xolos*

“Pink helps me get undressed before bed by pulling off my socks and helping me to pull off sweaters,” Gordon says. “If I drop something on the ground, she picks it up so I don’t have to bend down.”

A television crew from Animal Planet was there when Toaster gave birth to her litter and they filmed a segment on the

healing power of Xolos. Six years later, Gordon continues to receive requests from people who have seen the dogs on TV and hope to add a Xolo to their family.

### PLAYING MATCHMAKER

“The sheer number of requests from people all over the world wanting a Xolo of their own inspired me to create X-CPR,” Gordon says. “Since they are a rare breed, it’s hard for everyone who wants a dog to purchase or adopt one.”

Gordon has placed 10 Xolos in loving homes, where they provide their owners with comfort and pain relief. She hopes to increase the number of service dogs available through X-CPR and is looking to partner with breeders. Wachenheimer, who

credits CheChe with saving her life, has agreed to begin breeding her this year for the program.

Gordon also hopes to secure corporate funding to cover the cost of Xolos for people who can’t afford to buy a dog. She has designed a line of greeting cards featuring Toaster and Pink, and sells the cards on her web site, with proceeds benefiting her organization. To date, the cards and individual donations have accounted for her only source of revenue.

“Xolos offer those who live with chronic pain a great deal of assistance as well as hope,” Gordon says. “I’d love to be able to match a Xolo with everyone who needs one of these wonderful dogs.”

Linda Childers lives with her husband, son, and two retrievers in Martinez, California.

For more information on Xolos For Chronic Pain Relief (X-CPR) or Gordon's greeting cards, visit [www.pawsforcomfort.com](http://www.pawsforcomfort.com). The Xolo is part of the AKC Foundation Stock Service (FSS), and has been eligible to compete in AKC companion events since January 1, 2007.

*Toaster belting out one of her favorite tunes*



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