After some rather sour experiences at leash-free dog parks, and too many walks through our neighbourhood involving off-leash dogs attacks and toe pads sliced on broken glass, I wanted a safer and more enjoyable physical outlet both for my retired racing greyhounds and myself. I had adopted my first retiree in 2003 and had added to my pack in rather quick succession to end up with 3 handsome boys who loved to run. The backyard was big, but as I stood feeling the ground rumble as the hounds thundered past me, I knew it was not big enough. My search began to create something better.

A family that lived nearby had seen a decal for our adoption program on the back of our truck. They ended up adopting two beautiful girls from the same adoption program, and we started going to a tennis enclosure during the early months of 2006. We did have some fun, but we kept hunting around. We found a baseball diamond that looked more promising, and started using snow fencing and bungy cords to block the 2 gates. Another family with a new greyhound joined us, and the South Simcoe Greyhound Group was born.

In the spring of 2007 we opened a Yahoo Group so that we could communicate more easily with others. We posted a link to our group on a local greyhound forum, and people started to find us. We held runs every weekend that conditions allowed us to, and we spent many a Saturday morning standing in drizzle that pelted us mercilessly, but our greyhounds were happy and they got to do what they loved best – run like the wind.
One particularly cold winter we even rented a barn to give the greys some space to run and socialize.

Summer runs are often dubbed “Bingo Runs” because the hounds tend to rest more than run, but that’s fine with us too. They love socializing with one another, and members do too!

In the years between then and now, the group has turned into a lot more than a place to run our greyhounds. It is a place for new adopters to come and bring their greyhounds and learn more about this wonderful breed. For newly adopted hounds – alone and without other greyhounds for the first time in their lives, totally lost in a sea of new experiences – it can be a real godsend just to spend that time with the other hounds. I’ve seen several cowed hounds do a complete turn around
and regain their confidence after coming to a run and realizing that there are still other greyhounds on the face of the earth.

It’s a place for experienced adopters to share their wealth of knowledge and resources, simple things like the best boots for our wonderful winter climate here in Canada. It’s a place to turn to when something goes wrong and the best course of action isn’t clear. And when the worst happens and a beloved hound is called to the bridge, it’s a place of understanding, comfort and support.
We are very fortunate to have some good photographers in our group – we have an amazing collection of photographs.
We now hold annual picnics every autumn, and we’ve done a bit of fundraising for groups that help to re-locate retiring racing greyhounds. We’ve done some advocacy and educating too.
The weekend runs have gotten a little more specialized this past year, due mainly to the fact that we now have 75 families signed up. Many of our members drive an hour or even more to attend. We have 3 different types of runs: Weekend Warriors for our regular runners, Gentle Souls for our seniors and timid greys and Unruly Hounds for the trouble makers who were, I am sure, retired for interfering! We have gatemasters to set up and man the gates when people are leaving or arriving; and we've trained ourselves well on how to handle any pack drive incidents that may occur. Injuries can and do happen, but rarely serious enough to require a vet’s attention.
We have very few rules: muzzles must be worn in the field, and members must pick up after their dogs.
I can see a time where the group will have to split into two, simply due to numbers, as more and more hounds are coming up to Ontario to retire.

As we enter our 5th year, I look forward to meeting all the new families that will join us this year.