A publication of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

animal welfare Imallers



SUMMER 2019

Some Shelter Pets Clock In As "Office Animals" on Road to Adoption

Walking through the halls of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), a visitor might notice something a bit unexpected: Many of the offices are guarded by baby gates.

No, toddlers aren't afoot. The gates are keeping the shelter's "office animals" safe and secure.

At any given time, as many as 10 cats, dogs and other animals are receiving special attention as office mates of staff members. Some are cats too fearful for the activity of the adoption floor; others are dogs who need close monitoring as they undergo medical treatment. Longer-term office stays are assigned by managers, but some, says Animal Care Associate Elena Carver, "just come hang out with us because they need a little extra love that day."

Carver is one of about 10 Animal Care Associates who take care of feeding and medications for the dozens of animals at the shelter every day, including the office foster animals. They also assist the staff veterinarian with administering basic vaccines and perform all "intake" medical exams. "Whoever brings an animal into the shelter hands him to someone like me," Carver said.

Dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals who may "shut down" in the shelter, refusing to eat or interact with people, often find their way into the Animal Care office. They've had a big, chunky pit bull who, in his exuberance, barreled around the office, even pushing over the baby gate. And they've been joined by a series of tiny dogs needing special attention. "I love old, small dogs who might be blind or deaf and feel lost in the kennel," Carver said. If they're frightened or trembling, she'll find a heating pad to warm them up. "I want them to know we're there for them."

Besides comforting the animals, the staff learns a lot about

an animal by observing him or her so closely all day. Information gathered during office hours can be useful when speaking with potential adopters about pets' needs as well.

But the value extends beyond collecting information. "To me, it's so

lonely without an office cat," said AWLA's Senior Manager of Community Programs Joanna Fortin, who's hosted about 30 cats in her office over her past four years at



the AWLA. "Of course, some of them can be a bit clingy, so I may have to plop one in my lap in order to type on the computer. I've had a few cats I would call office assistants. They 'helped' with typing or filing — for better or worse!"

Fortin recalls a black-and-white cat named Domino who could be a bit particular about new friends and needed some extra space. Over several weeks in her office, where Domino had room to explore and a cat tree to climb, his attitude (continued on page 3)





pets of all types



a legacy for animals



a terrific twosome



local friends



...and more!



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Monday 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Wednesday CLOSED Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Friday 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Saturday 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Adoptable animals are available for viewing beginning at noon and online at AlexandriaAnimals.org.

From the Board of the AWLA

As the owner of a local dog-focused business, I've known for a long time that Alexandrians love animals. It can be seen in the dog bowls that line the doorways of businesses on King Street, from the number of veterinary and animal care providers across the city and in the pages of local publications. Alexandria was recently rated by Expedia as one of the top dog-friendly locations to which to travel in the United States, and my own personal experience has shown me that it is also one of the top pet-friendly places to live. We even have an annual event called "Alexandria Love Your Pet Day!"

But I never realized quite how animal-friendly it was until I started on the Board of Directors of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. Whenever people hear of my involvement with the AWLA, they have a story for me. This



past winter, I was at a PTA meeting, and when I mentioned I was Chair of the AWLA board, I was told about one of our Animal Services officers who braved a wet, chilly night to help a resident who'd called about a loose guinea pig in their backyard. It was already dark and a little bit rainy, but the officer was out for nearly an hour while they tracked down the potato-sized pet, who was brought back to the AWLA and nicknamed Stormy. I happen to know that, when no owner was found, Stormy the guinea pig was adopted and is living the good life with her new family.

But the team at the AWLA doesn't just help with the animals in their care. In late 2018 through the beginning of this year, the federal government shut down, which left many federal employees in the area without a paycheck for 35 days. The AWLA strongly believes that the best place for a pet is in a home where it's loved, and they wanted to make sure that no one had to surrender a cherished pet during this time just because they couldn't afford food. They made sure that people in the city knew that their Pet Pantry was always open to anyone who needed pet food — regardless of the circumstances — so no one would have to make the difficult decision of whether or not they could feed their pet. And during that time, when AWLA Pet Pantry traffic was at its highest, no one surrendered a pet to the AWLA solely because they couldn't afford his or her care.

Sometimes the AWLA connection is even closer to home for me...or to work. I know several AWLA alumni who join us for dog boarding and playgroup, and their owners have nothing but good words to say about their AWLA experience. Even after the dogs get to their new home, the families can access behavioral resources at the shelter to help their new pet

settle into the home, both right after adoption and years later through every stage of life. Some alumni and their families even stay in touch with the staff, fosters and volunteers who worked with them while they were at the AWLA.

Animals have always played a huge part in my life, which is why I wanted to become part of the AWLA Board of Directors, to help give back to animals in need across the community. But I never realized that in doing so, I would become part of a team: a team of caring, compassionate animal lovers who work every day to make this city a better place for animals, both domestic and wild, as well as the people who care for them. And as someone who loves animals — in such a community that loves animals — well, I couldn't be more proud to be in such admirable company!

Back to School Means Back to Service for Youth Volunteers

Is your little learner looking for a way to earn school service hours while helping animals in need? From our in-shelter Book Buddies program to at-home projects like making cat toys, cutting up hot dogs and even drawing portraits to bring extra attention to our adoptable animals, there are so many ways your student can get involved in animal welfare, both at home and at the AWLA. Learn more at AlexandriaAnimals.org/Youth.

Right: Portraits from our youth volunteers



(continued from page 1) shifted, she said. When a couple who was looking to adopt a lively cat heard about Domino from the AWLA staff, they visited him in Fortin's office and quickly fell in love with him. "They saw his quirkiness and decided he was just the cat they were looking for," Fortin said. He went home the same day.

Staying in an office can be a relief for animals seized in neglect or abuse cases, say the AWLA's Animal Services Officers, who are responsible for enforcing city codes, educating the public about animal issues and responding to animal emergencies citywide. A variety of "case animals" have found a safe place in the Animal Services work area, like Rico, a tiny Chihuahua who had been abandoned in front of the shelter.

When he was found, Rico was extremely underweight, and he needed extra TLC during the weeks that the officers attempted to find his owner and later conducted a hearing to officially take custody of the dog.

"We don't know what Rico went through before we met him, but I think it really helped him to spend some time close to people, including the volunteers who walked him," said one Animal Services officer "But having animals like him around as we work really helps us, too. Everyone is calmer and more relaxed."

A 17-year-old calico cat called Cali is now the picture of relaxation. When she arrived at the shelter over a year ago she was suffering from what the AWLA was told were the effects of diabetes and kidney disease. Recognizing the need for some special attention, a staff manager asked the administrative team to watch over her. She soon asserted herself as the group's office manager and demanded a bed on the desk of Communications Specialist Audrey Alessi, where she could keep an eye on the whole crew, though she tested the desks and chairs of every office staffer during her regular escapades. Diligent monitoring by the staff veterinarian has put her diabetes into remission, and Cali is now available for adoption from the foster home she moved to after her stay in the office.

A "resume" put together to provide potential adopters with more information describes Cali as "AWLA Office Catministrator" whose duties included extensive napping (20 hours/ day), desk redecoration and simplification and "supervising a staff of 35 well-meaning noncats."

Cali didn't seem to mind being confined by a baby gate, though she sometimes tried to accompany staff members to meetings. "When we were all ready to go home at night, she'd

get more energetic," Alessi said. "She'd try to follow us down the hall. But when you said her name, she always came right back." 🌭



"Cuddle Time" Can Mean Cozying **Up with a Rabbit or Lizard**

Non-Traditional Pets Find Their Way Into Hearts of Adopters

Spaghetti Blueberry the bearded dragon likes to ride on owner Teagan Robinson's shoulder and take a walk wearing a harness and leash. Janelle Smith's guinea pig, Winston T. Featherbottom, is fond of sitting in her lap, and he chirps excitedly when she comes home from work. Westley the rabbit flies over the back of the couch to join Olivia Kwong and her husband to watch TV and adores his bonded bunny buddy Buttercup.



As the AWLA staff and volunteers know well, dogs and cats aren't the only pets that show affection. And the people who adopt these "non-traditional" shelter animals — rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, rats, birds, turtles, snakes and even the occasional fish report that those pets can and do express affection for their humans, along with plenty of beguiling behaviors.

Spaghetti Blueberry, also known as Ghetti B, changes color at night, transforming from goldish tan to pale yellow. When the reptile gets upset, Robinson says, her chin grows large, black and menacing (thus the "bearded" moniker) and her body flattens out like a pancake, a strategy developed to warn off birds of prey.

Ghetti B loves eating live crickets and salad, especially if the salad is "moving." "I put my finger in and move the salad around, and she'll go to town," Robinson said. (continued on page 4)



(continued from page 3) Robinson adopted Spaghetti Blueberry from the AWLA in January 2018 and has learned the bearded dragon DOs and DON'Ts. The animals need to bask in two different types of light for most of the day — a heat lamp and a UVB light — to regulate their body temperature and promote digestion, she said. Humidity in the animal's tank also needs to be just right: too much humidity and the bearded dragon might contract a respiratory infection, but too little and the animal becomes dehydrated. Once the proper conditions are established, though, bearded dragons are "super easy to take care of," Robinson confirmed.

Winston T. Featherbottom was named to sound like a "vain old English man" to match some of his characteristics, Smith said, and the tricolored guinea pig seems to recognize his name when he's called. "He has a huge personality for a tiny guinea pig," she said. Besides snuggling with Smith and her husband, Edward Bradshaw, in their home in Alexandria, the pet has formed a special bond with one of the couple's dogs, a pit bull-mastiff mix called Gracie. The guinea pig regularly grooms Gracie, and the dog makes a point of greeting Winston in his room first thing every morning and last thing at night.

Smith said they chose a guinea pig at the AWLA in December 2017 after having a series of pet rabbits, rats, dogs and cats. They were looking for an animal that lived as

long as a rabbit but with different needs and personality. "I was stopping in at the shelter to visit one of the guinea pigs, and he wouldn't have anything to do with me," she said. Winston (then known as Morgan) squeaked repeatedly for Smith to walk down and see him and seemed to already like her. She adopted him the same day.

Guinea pigs require a roomy pen — Winston's living space is larger than the average coffee table — with a solid floor rather than a wire or slatted one. Winston isn't very adventurous and doesn't often climb the ramp to his cage's upper level, but he's crazy about the little cardboard red barn in his cage, Smith said. Guinea pigs need Vitamin C in their diet, as their bodies are not able to produce it, so along with guinea pig pellets, Winston gets daily helpings of carrots and other fresh vegetables and fruits.

Olivia Kwong and her husband, Mike Daniels, were looking for a new kind of pet two years ago — they had had only fish — and spotted rabbits Buttercup and Westley on the AWLA's website. Buttercup is a white rabbit with tan markings, and Westley is black with

touches of white fur. "I felt they were destined to be our

bunnies," Kwong says. And destined to be together.

"They run over to each other so they can sit down and snuggle, it's the greatest thing ever," she said. "It's total bunny love. They also try to steal food from each other's mouth, even hay." Besides hay (of which rabbits need an unlimited supply) and daily greens, Buttercup and Westley love occasional treats of carrots and dried or fresh fruit.

Why did Kwong and Daniels choose rabbits? "I just like their little personalities, and they're less noisy than dogs and generally easy to train to use a litter box," Kwong said. She says that some rabbits, however, tend to chew on furniture, and that it's important to find a veterinarian who's knowledgeable about taking care of rabbits.

Buttercup and Westley are "house rabbits" — allowed to roam the couple's Alexandria home under supervision rather than being confined to a pen. As they roam, their individual personalities are on full display: Buttercup is more sedate but in control and is a "bunny who holds a grudge," Kwong says. "She'll remain mad for a couple of days after nail clipping." Westley is no pushover, she said, but definitely low man on the totem pole. He grunts when he's happy and is a more adventurous rabbit than Buttercup.

"Sometimes a little black blur will go by, and it's Westley," Kwong says. "We call him our little explorer." 🍆

Animal Services Tip #19 The dog days of summer aren't over



Janelle Smith and her guinea pig

Winston T. Featherbottom

Recognizing Our Supporters

Alexandria's Animals to Benefit from Couple's Generosity

Thanks to the estate of Norman F. Garrigus and Katherine Carlene Garrigus, the fall is looking bright for animals in need across the community.

Mr. and Mrs. Garrigus, who lived part of their lives in Alexandria, had made wise investments over the years and were also dedicated animal lovers. The pair determined that they wanted their compassion for animals to live on as a legacy even after they were no longer around to see the impact it would make.

Norman Garrigus, who passed away at the age of 89 in August 2012, was a retired Air Force colonel who specialized in electrical and electronic engineering. After leaving the Air Force, Mr. Garrigus worked for Northrop Grumman Corp, and when he retired in 1996, he continued to work as a consultant for the company for two years. He was born in Tucson and served in the Army Air Forces in the Pacific during World War II, participating in 34 missions over Japan.

Carlene Garrigus, who died at age 92 in January 2018, had been a medical technologist and worked for 14 years in a military hospital and 12 years in the microbiology laboratory at Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Joint Base Andrews. Mrs. Garrigus was born in Pottsville, Pa., and grew up in Tucson. She attended the University of Arizona, where she met Norman; they were married in 1947. Mrs. Garrigus attained the status of Silver Life



Master in bridge, a game she loved. Both Norman and Carlene were interred in April at Arlington National Cemetery.

Although the couple had no children, they adored their pet cats, often choosing not to take vacations so they wouldn't have to leave them behind. Their love for animals will now be extended to the thousands of animals who come through the doors of the AWLA every year.

"We are overwhelmed by the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Garrigus," said AWLA Chief Operating Officer Stella Hanly. "Their gift will make a life-changing difference for countless animals across the community."

If you would like more information on making a bequest to the AWLA as part of your will, please contact us at legacy@alexandriaanimals.org.

Terrific Twosome Helps Keep the Shelter Humming!

Peanut butter and jelly. Batman and Robin. And rounding out this list of dynamic duos, at least at the AWLA, are Helen and Richard Fiske, two of our dedicated long-term volunteers.

The pair have been married for 41 years, and as they neared retirement, they began to look for other ways to get involved in the community. Seven years ago, Helen signed up to volunteer at the shelter. She had experience with felines because she had two Devon Rex cats at home, but she was drawn to the dogs at the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter and trained to walk them and provide enrichment and interaction. "I hadn't really known any big dogs before, but now I know how great they are," recalls Helen. "They can be misunderstood, but to me, they're all therapy dogs.



Two years later, the AWLA needed help of a different kind: holiday Santa Claws photo sessions were right around the corner, and we needed a convincing St. Nick. Enter Richard, who might be a bit less rotund than Santa, but whose acting chops helped convince everyone he was the "real" deal. (He has been a regular star of theater productions across the region.) Soon after, he stretched his theatrical wings again with a role as the former AWLA mascot Alley Kitty.

In subsequent years, both Helen and Richard have found their respective niches at the AWLA. Expanding upon her work with dogs, Helen is now one of the shelter's primary veterinary transport volunteers, driving animals to and from local veterinarians and animal hospitals several times a week for spay and neuter surgeries, dental work, X-rays and other medical procedures. On the weekends, she also assists with visitors, guiding them through the shelter and helping to answer questions. Richard has translated his background as a naval engineer and his skills as an "around-the-house handyman" to provide all kinds of mechanical and engineering assistance at the shelter, from building office furniture to fixing fences, designing (continued on page 6) (continued from page 5) and installing shelter displays and even helping find storage options for the ever-growing amount of donated supplies from the generous community. "If I can help with some of these smaller projects," Richard offers, "then it allows the City of Alexandria more time to focus on the larger shelter needs so we can all provide the best care for the animals in the shelter."

But the pair aren't stopping there. At 80 years old, Helen is happy that she is still able to work with the animals on an almostdaily basis. "It keeps me young," she admits. She would like to expand her volunteer efforts to work more closely with dogs who need additional training assistance. And Richard is always looking for a new project to take on, often stopping by the shelter with his power drill "just in case." Helen notes, "Sometimes I'll be at the shelter and one of the staff will say, 'Your husband is here.' We literally walk around the corner and run into each other."

Helen encourages her friends and everyone she meets to visit the animals in the shelter. "People worry that it will be sad, but the animals are really lucky to be there. The shelter staff cares so much, and the animals are all loved and safe until they find families of their own." Richard agrees. "It almost feels selfish, because we get so much when we come here, even while we know the animals do too. It's a good place." Always ready with the last word, Helen confirms, "We love it here so much!"

Yates Family Pumped Up About Animal Welfare

Customers who bring their cars in for service at Yates Automotive in Del Ray are in luck if they brought their dog with them: The station provides dog treats, water dishes and even poop bags for the pups in an effort to make customers and their canine family members a bit more comfortable.

But Yates' customers might also notice something else: One month each year since 2017, two cents of every gallon of gas purchased at the station flows to the AWLA. Signs on gas pumps and a banner over the station door proclaim the special effort during that month, and details appear on Facebook and in the monthly Zebra newspaper.

"This has definitely been a popular program," says Heidi Hess, Yates Service Inc.'s Director of Communications. "People even take pictures of themselves pumping gas in front of the signs. They know they're giving back to the community when they fill up." Hess said the effort can garner up to \$1,500 for the featured charity.

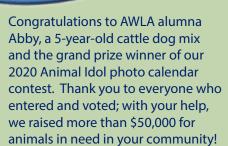
The "Give Your Two Cents" program, which selects a different charity to donate to each month, often reflects the Yates family's love of animals, especially dogs, Hess said. Yates Service owner Jason Yates and his wife, Loren, love all kinds of animals and have had pet dogs in the past. In recent years, the company provided the patio of its restaurant, Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza & Tap, for the AWLA's annual Howl-O-Ween

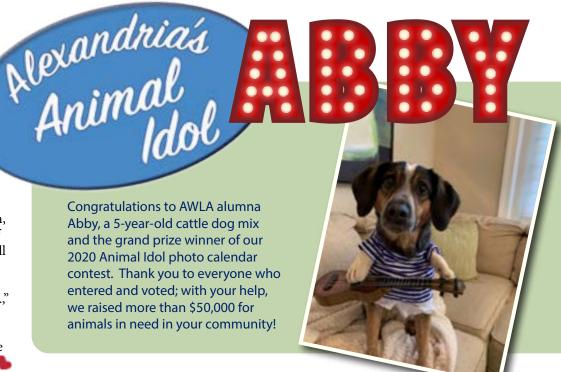
event, offering a special menu for canine contestants as they showed off their costumes.

But the Yates team makes its impact felt in other ways too. In 2017, the company pre-paid the adoption fees for several animals in the shelter, to help make room for animals coming in from the southern United States to escape hurricane conditions. And as part of their role as a 2019 AWLA Business of the Month, they also sponsored the adoptions of four dogs and cats earlier this year, all of whom have been adopted!

"We are grateful for the ongoing kindness Yates has shown the AWLA," said AWLA Chief Operating Officer Stella Hanly. "Their team is really making a significant difference in the lives of animals in our community."







Happy Tails

Comet and Frankie

Comet was known at the AWLA for his big smile and even bigger personality, all in keeping with his sizable Bernese Mountain Dog self. Frankie was a mastiff who had been found as a stray; she was shy and timid around people but blossomed in the company of her fellow pups. But the biggest turning point was when these two found each other.

After the loss of their dog of 10 years, Heather Dinsmore and Steven Kusy decided they were ready to welcome a new canine companion into their lives. They were looking for a friend with energy to keep up on runs and hikes and who would be ready to tackle every new adventure. After viewing Comet on the AWLA website, they knew that they were interested in meeting him, and after seeing his big grin in person, they knew he was the dog for them.

As Comet acclimated to his new home, Heather and Steven saw how much he loved spending time with other dogs, and they thought that perhaps their new friend could use another friend. That's when they saw Frankie. Heather recalls, "When the AWLA posted the "Frankie The Interior Decorator" video to social media, we knew we had to meet her." This video featured shy Frankie in her kennel with a look of satisfaction as she wagged her tail through a cascade of down from her recently dismantled comforter. Frankie was cautious when meeting her future people, but when she met Comet, the pair started playing, and they haven't stopped since.

Frankie's shyness continued as she settled into her new home, and her new family knew she needed time, patience and, on Comet's part, lots of play time as a reward and a guide. Heather and Steven also reached out to the AWLA's Behavior and Training Hotline to make sure they were doing everything they could to set Frankie up for success. Frankie's family says it took some time, but that "a few months after adopting her, she is a totally new dog!" While Frankie is growing more confident by the day and starting to cuddle with her family and make new friends on walks around the neighborhood, one constant has been Frankie and Comet's friendship. They can be found chasing a soccer ball in the yard, begging for treats in tandem or snuggled up for a nap, always side by side.





Spot

When Erika Pierson began her search for her new best friend, she saw it as an opportunity to lend a hand to an animal needing to get back on its feet. In Spot's case, that was three feet. The 5-year-old cat came to the AWLA with a front leg injured in a dog attack. After consulting with a veterinary surgeon, it was determined that the best course for Spot would be to amputate the badly damaged leg. As she recovered from this traumatic experience, Spot also began a new chapter of her life, spending time in a foster home and adapting to her tripod life.

Spot has no trouble catching her toy mouse.



Spot's foster caregiver, Kerin Ord, recalls, "After what she'd been through, Spot spent the first few weeks with us hiding under our bed, but with time she got braver and her playful personality began to shine."

"When I went to see Spot at her foster home, even though she was nervous and scared and hid for most of it, she was still so sweet," Erika remembers. "You could tell that she would be a kind and gentle cat once she settled in and got to know her people." And that proved true. Spot is now a talkative companion, who greets Erika when she enters a room and waits for her at the front door every evening as she gets home from work. The once-shy feline is now rarely apart from her person and even comes out to greet newcomers to her home.

It's been less than a year since Spot came to the AWLA, but Erika says Spot hasn't slowed down since then. She loves to play with her toys and has a special pebble that she enjoys pushing around the house. She has no trouble reaching any bed, counter or windowsill that offers a potential perch, but if she needs a helping paw, Erika is always ready with a well-placed chair.

Spot is proving her best friend right as she shows her sweet, affectionate side a little more each day, but Erika still remembers the first day she met Spot, and fosters Kerin and partner Martin Parr were encouraging Spot all the way. "I have no doubt that Spot is as loving and playful as she is today because she was taken such great care of!"

VOLA LAWSON ANIMAL ADVOCATES

January 1 - June 30, 2019

The AWLA commends our Vola Lawson Animal Advocates (VoLAAs) for contributions made from January 1 through June 30, 2019. Thank you to the City of Alexandria, which allows us to continue to provide care, control and sheltering services to Alexandria's Animals.

VolAAs are recognized individuals and businesses who give support at the highest levels. The program includes several levels of recognition for monetary donations and volunteer hours as well as in-kind donations made fiscally. **Animal Guardian** — \$25,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 5,000 volunteer hours; **Animal Champion** — \$10,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 1,000 volunteer hours; **Animal Friend** — \$5,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 500 volunteer hours; **Animal Companion** — \$2,500 or more financial or in-kind support or 250 volunteer hours; and **Animal Advocate** — \$1,000 or more or 100 volunteer hours.

For more information about becoming one of Alexandria's Animal Advocates, contact development@alexandriaanimals.org.



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Thank you to everyone who donated in memory or honor of a loved one between April 1 and June 30, 2019. Donations of \$250 or more are recognized below.

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