Caring for Alexandria’s Animals. Loving Alexandria.

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) is passionate about helping animals in ways that bring aid to the people who love them. Oftentimes an animal in need signals that there is also a human in need. We strive to keep pets with their families, with programs already in place and new programs on the horizon:

Our AniMeals program partners with Senior Services of Alexandria’s “Meals on Wheels” to bring pet food and supplies to animals living with housebound senior citizens. These people often live alone with their pet as constant company between occasional visitors. All supplies and food are provided by generous donors and organized by shelter volunteers. In FY16, AniMeals provided regular deliveries for 26 housebound seniors.

Animals are often surrendered to the shelter when owners can no longer afford to care for them. Recognizing this trend, we have worked with partnering veterinarians to offer a spay-and-neuter voucher program to low-income families. Spaying or neutering a pet improves the long-term health of that animal, defraying future veterinary expenses, and extends the life of the companion bringing joy to the household. In FY16, the AWLA’s partnering veterinarians provided 102 of these surgeries.

Investigation into a case by AWLA Animal Services will sometimes reveal circumstances of abuse or neglect that extend beyond animals to children or other family members. Close working relationships with the City of Alexandria Police Department, Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, and Hoarding Task Force ensure that aid is brought to these members of our community in the quickest way possible. City of Alexandria Police officers, in particular, continue to train in many areas of animal investigation and have just assigned a permanent detective to all animal cases within the City (see page 5).

For owners who have recently lost a pet, the shelter hosts a monthly pet bereavement support group, led by therapist Kathy Reiter, where people (continued page 6)
At the AWLA, we strongly believe that by focusing on animals in the community, we can support people in so many different and unexpected ways.

Our compassion for and connection with animals is innate. Absence of compassion is usually signals something fundamentally wrong: Animal abuse can be a sign of one’s capacity for hurting people. Many times the AWLA has rescued animals from abusers and has worked with authorities to charge and prosecute them with the hope of preventing future abuse of animals and people.

If an animal is neglected, there is often a person in need, as well. Calls alerting the AWLA of a crying dog or hungry cat have led to the discovery of citizens in desperate need of help. For example, AWLA Animal Services Officers responded to a call regarding a dog tied to a porch. Officers discovered that the dog’s owner was very ill and she was unable to care for her dog or her small toddler. The dog’s desperate bark and the attention of a caring community brought help for all of three of them.

Often we are already having trouble taking care of ourselves when we need the support of our pets the most. Animals have proven to help reduce stress and blood pressure and provide a kind of comfort not possible or available from people. At the AWLA, we want to find ways to allow pet owners to keep their animals during times of crisis. For example, AWLA’s protective custody program ensures the safety of an animal for the period of time it may take an owner to recover from illness or tragedy. In addition, we are working to find ways to partner with senior resident homes in order to allow residents to foster animals or bring their own pets with them when moving. We strive to provide more support to people who are considering surrendering a pet, knowing that in so many cases, the person and animal will be happier together if we can help them find a solution.

Connecting people to animals can be incredibly powerful and life changing. Our volunteer and foster programs have not only made a difference in the lives of the shelter’s animals, but also in those of the people who participate in them. Volunteers, after witnessing the positive impact their efforts have made in the community, have reexamined and made changes in their own lives, such as leaving a high-paying job to help animals full time. Fosters have said that bringing a sick/injured animal into their home has strengthened their family relationships and helped them teach valuable lessons to their children.

A mutual love of animals can bring loved ones closer together. Mike Royal (see page 5) came to the shelter after his wife, Ginny, had died. Terribly depressed, he would speak of Ginny and the animals that touched her. After he made a donation in her memory, I would send him updates about the animals he had been able to help. I hope it gave him comfort to know that the AWLA would be helping animals after his death in honor of them both.

Strengthening our compassion and connection to animals can have powerful, positive effects within our community. Everyone can benefit.
Baby Wild Animals May Need Our Help—or No Help At All

Alexandria counts thousands of pets among its residents, but it also hosts a significant population of wildlife—birds, squirrels, raccoons, rabbits, opossum, deer and other wild animals. In one month this winter, four different citizens called the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) shelter to report hawks in distress. Two of the birds appeared to have been hit by cars on Interstate 395.

Hawks and other raptors are extremely strong and have sharp talons, says AWLA Animal Services Chief Brian Rees, requiring the shelter’s officers to don thick elk-hide gloves to handle them. “Citizens shouldn't try to pick up an injured hawk,” he said. “It's best to call the AWLA for help.” Fortunately, three of the four hawks rescued by AWLA Animal Services Officers were successfully released back to the wild after specialized care from wildlife rehabilitators.

Spring’s the time when people most often encounter wild animals, especially young ones. AWLA receives 300 to 400 calls each spring from city residents reporting baby birds in yards or on sidewalks. “Birds learn to fly from the ground, so the mother is likely nearby,” Rees said. If a young bird does appear to be in harm’s way, such as in a street or near prey animals, the bird should be placed back in the nest or near the tree where its nest is. Contrary to common belief, the bird’s parents will not be frightened away by a person's scent on the young.

Here are some of the wildlife Alexandrians might encounter—and how best to handle those situations:

**Squirrels:** Gray squirrels nest twice a year—in late winter and summer. Baby squirrels found on the ground are generally not orphans—they just need to find their mothers. If it’s not injured, an infant squirrel (that is, without a fluffed-out tail indicating greater age) needs to find its mother. AWLA Animal Services Officers can help if a significant time passes without a reunion.

**Rabbits:** Eastern Cottontail rabbits give birth during spring and summer, making nests in shallow depressions in the ground and covering them with grass; mother rabbits are frequently away from the nest. Rabbits set out on their own by three weeks of age and should be left alone unless they appear to be injured. Any rabbit smaller than a softball with eyes still closed should be placed back in the nest if possible (or assisted by the AWLA). Residents should check lawns for rabbit nests before mowing to avoid injuring the young.

**Opossums:** Opossums breed from February through September. Babies remain in the mother’s pouch until they are two months old and may ride on her back for a few more months, depending on her for food and shelter. Opossums at least eight inches long from the tip of the nose to the base of the tail are old enough to survive and do not need human assistance. Injured animals, especially infants found crawling next to their dead mother (often killed by cars) need help. The AWLA can provide that.

**Raccoons:** Most raccoons in Virginia are born in April and May and stay in nests in trees until they are about five or six weeks old. Babies seen unattended are often waiting for their mother to return and move them to a new nest.

**Deer:** White-tailed deer fawns are born April through July. Fawns are left alone while their mothers go off to feed, returning at dawn and dusk. (continued next page)
(continued from previous page) Fawns standing very close to roads can be moved to safer locations, but generally the best option is to leave the fawn alone.

In general, baby wild animals should not be given food or water because it can harm them if given improperly. Special care should be taken with species at higher risk for rabies, such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats and groundhogs. “Some wildlife carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans; it’s best to let the professionals handle animals when they are in trouble,” Rees said.

A Foster’s Point of View
by Samantha Elfmont, foster caregiver

My husband and I have rescued, fostered or helped adopt over 75 dogs and cats in the U.S. and Malaysia. Of all of those furry beings, Melody has touched our hearts the most. Mel (as we fondly call her now) is sweet hound dog with a tail that never stops wagging (ever).

Our 1-year-old son took to Mel as soon as we walked through the kennels at the AWLA. Mel licked Thomas’ chubby toddler hands as we walked down the hall and instantly we knew she was the foster dog for us, despite suffering from a serious illness.

A few weeks after we had Mel in our home, her radiology reports sadly showed her mammary gland cancer was terminal and progressing at a rapid rate.

We couldn’t imagine having Mel live elsewhere at the end of her life. We feel blessed that AWLA agreed to let us be Mel’s “fospice” family. You may think fospicing is sad, but we actually think it is the opposite. We have the opportunity to ensure that this special dog lives each day to its fullest.

There is never a day that goes by when we don’t kiss Mel good night or give her an extra treat, “just because.” She has quickly become a family member and bonded with our dog as well.

The AWLA has been nothing but supportive: booking her follow-up radiology appointments, providing food and medications, and—most importantly—when Mel’s health gets worse, we know the AWLA will be there to support us.

It seems crazy to say, but we really believe her health has improved since being with us. We’re bringing Mel to the beach next month; we know she will love running in the sand, chasing seagulls and just lounging in the sun. (She loves to sunbathe).

Like Mel, my mother-in-law is also at the end of her life with stage IV terminal breast cancer. Having Mel has helped us during her unfortunate battle. At the end of the day, a snuggle with Mel makes everything better.

Melody sunbathing (top), out for a ride with the family (middle), and keeping watch over her young charge, Thomas (above). For more information on becoming a foster family, contact fosters@AlexandriaAnimals.org.
Abiding Love for Each Other—and for Animals

It started in 2013 with a first-time visit to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. Mike Royal had come to report a wildlife issue but soon found himself taking a tour of the shelter with Executive Director Megan Webb. The tour led to a heart-to-heart conversation between the two, Mike revealing that he was grieving for his wife, Ginny, who had died just a few months before. “Mike's love for his late wife was so palpable,” Megan recalled. “He said she had been his soul mate. He was grief stricken.”

Mike and Ginny had married in 2006; it was Ginny's second marriage, Mike's first. Director of security for a nonprofit, Ginny had grown up in Alexandria. She was known as the “Raggedy Ann lady” to locals who stopped at the Old Town Farmers Market to buy the dolls and other items she had crafted. Mike had worked in education and for an airline before retiring. Both Ginny and Mike liked cats, recalled Ginny’s twin sister, Mary Aronov. “They were private people, hard working and frugal,” she said. “But they told me many times they wanted to leave most of their savings to help people and animals who couldn’t help themselves.”

After Mike’s first visit, Megan stayed in touch with him, sending him notes and calling to check up on him. Mike made a habit of dropping by the shelter once a year to talk to Megan and inquire about progress in her work at AWLA; he always seemed interested in hearing about how she was doing in reaching the many goals she had identified with him on that first tour. The last time he came, in late 2015, he seemed thinner and even more despondent over the loss of Ginny. Worried, she inquired about how he was doing, and he gave his usual response—that he was fine. “I remember, though, that he perked up when I gave him the update on AWLA—he seemed pleased,” Megan said.

Soon after that meeting, Mary Aronov called to inform Megan that Mike had died of cancer. She then let Megan know that Mike and Ginny had agreed to donate a major part of their estate to several charities. “It was such a surreal call to receive,” Megan said. “I was overwhelmed with sadness to learn of Mike's passing but also with immense gratitude to learn of their generosity.”

AWLA has received more than $250,000 from the Royals’ bequest. These funds already have been critical in improving the lives of Alexandria’s Animals.

Partnering with a Police Detective

The AWLA and the City of Alexandria Police Department continue to build a strong working relationship. In 2016, the department assigned a detective to handle all misdemeanor and felony animal related cases in the City. AWLA Animal Services Officers now work closely with Detective Adrienne Miller on these cases, collaborating on scene responses, witness interviews, and evidence collection.

Miller, a 23-year veteran of the force, has served in the department’s investigations section for many years, focusing on child abuse and sexual assault cases. Her primary assignment now is in property crimes, working with pawn shops to recover stolen items. She said she is delighted that her current responsibilities include animal cases. “I love animals, so it seemed like a natural fit,” she said.

Miller, whose household includes a dog and a cat, expressed that the AWLA’s Animal Services Officers—the city’s front line in enforcing laws protecting animals—take their work very seriously. “You can tell they love animals, and they don’t hesitate to bring charges when an animal has been abused or mistreated,” she said.

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria’s Annual Pet Photo Contest

Will your pet appear HERE?

June 1–30, 2017

It’s that time of the year—the AWLA is planning all kinds of fun activities for our Annual Pet Photo Contest! Don’t miss your opportunity to get in on the fun(draising) for Alexandria’s Animals—or the 2018 calendar!

Register and vote at AlexandriaAnimals.org/calendar
By the Numbers

532 vouchers offered by 9 partnering veterinarians

The following veterinarians provided discounted vet vouchers, available for purchase at the AWLA by low-income families, so that more pets in our community can have this critical surgery. Thank you to:

Arlington Animal Hospital
Del Ray Animal Hospital
Fort Hunt Animal Hospital
Gunston Animal Hospital
Hayfield Animal Hospital
Hybla Valley Vet Hospital
NOVA Cat Clinic
Town and Country Animal Hospital
Loving Touch Animal Hospital

163 donors

gave $11,887 on April 5, responding to Act for Alexandria’s Spring2ACTion campaign, a 24-hour drive that brings focus to area non-profits. Thank you, Alexandria!

LOVING ALEXANDRIA (continued from page 1) can connect in their grief and offer each other support and solace.

“A Plan for Pets” is a recent addition to the services offered by the AWLA: City of Alexandria residents can register a pet’s information with AWLA, making sure that vital information on health and caretaking is on record for Animal Services to access at a moment’s notice in case of emergency. In addition, arrangements can be made for the care of an animal if it survives its owner’s passing.

Finally, the AWLA is developing a fostering program with the hopes of partnering with City of Alexandria’s senior living facilities. Residents who would like to foster a cat may do so at no expense to themselves and with the help of visiting shelter volunteers when necessary. Fostering an animal gives residents a “pet” project that provides company in their living space as well as another volunteer visitor who engages them regularly. The cats that have long been in the shelter get some much-needed socialization—a win-win situation!

Several volunteers were honored for reaching new thresholds of commitment last quarter at an appreciation event held at Vola’s Dockside Grill on March 25, 2017 (above). Marnie Moore was surprised earlier in the day (inset) with a “Gold Paw” for reaching a personal lifetime achievement of 1,000 lifetime volunteer hours. Because we have so many to thank, a similar event was held at the shelter on April 22. Thank you volunteers and fosters:

VOLUNTEER AWARDEES 🐾 Gold Paw (1,000 lifetime hours):

FOSTER AWARDEES 🐾 Gold Paws (1,000 adjusted lifetime hours):
Linda Coleman, Donna Dawe, Jodi Horton, Abbie Hubbard, Tara Zurawski.


Blue Paw (100):
Alexandrian Jean Schumann didn’t know where to turn. She loved her three cats, all domestic shorthairs, but two of them had quit using their basement litter box, attracted by carpeting newly installed on another level of her home. A check with her veterinarian had turned up no health concerns, and adding more litter boxes to other levels of the house had failed to solve the problem.

In desperate need of help, Schumann made a call to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), where she had adopted two of her cats. She received a response from Jennie Lane, one of the AWLA’s animal behaviorists, who asked Schumann for details about the cats and the home so she could analyze the problem. “It’s really an investigation,” Lane said. “Once any medical issues are ruled out, we gather as much information as we can and make recommendations to the pet owner. There’s always hope.”

In litter box cases, Lane, who has worked with animals for 15 years, often studies a home’s floor plan to determine if the box is near too much activity, which might cause anxiety for the cat. In one case Lane helped with, a cat was distracted from using his box because of a hawk often perched just outside a nearby window; a fake owl was mounted outside the window to eliminate the threat.

Lane and AWLA’s other behaviorists, Danielle Grand and Abbie Hubbard, also hear from plenty of worried Alexandrians about their dogs. To redirect dogs who bark and pull on the leash when around other dogs, Lane recommends seeking help from a certified applied behaviorist or a trainer who uses humane methods. Dogs with this problem often can be trained to concentrate on their owners by using focus commands and rewards. After mastering this in a quiet setting, dogs can be moved to higher-stress environments to practice the skill.

In Schumann’s case, Lane offered several recommendations: Use a special enzymatic cleaner on the soiled carpet; remove litter-box liners; wash litter boxes only with dish soap; and switch to a specific brand of litter. Schumann put all of the suggestions to use, and after a few months was able to remove the extra litter boxes. All is now well. “If people can’t solve these problems, they don’t have a good relationship with their pets—the people aren’t happy and the pets aren’t happy,” Schumann said. “The AWLA help line is a great way to make sure that pets keep their forever homes.”

Alexandria residents who have questions or problems with their pets can email behavior_training@Alexandria-Animals.org or call the shelter at 703-746-4774.
2017 Vola Lawson Animal Advocates

AWLA extends a special welcome to the 2017 Vola Lawson Animal Advocates (VoLAAs). Thank you to our Legacy Donors and those who gave monetary donations during the period of January 1–March 31, 2017. (Volunteer and in-kind contributions will be announced in the annual review.)

Animal Guardians $25,000+
Estate of Beverly Kimes

Animal Champions $10,000+
Kirk Fedder
Suzanne Fedder

Animal Companions $2,500+
Peterson Family Foundation
George Mason Elementary School
Christopher Alullo

Animal Advocates $1,000+
Musser Family Fund
Jill Kale
H.N. (Jay) Hoffman III & Arline M. Hoffman
Mike Shera
Network for Good
America’s Charities

Legacy Donors
Jean Marie Antone
Allen Argentieri
Doreen A. Bradford
Hillary & Jean Brant, Jr.
Richard & Erica Burnam
Harriett Forster
Margaret Hodges
David Pierce & Lilly Doggendorf Pierce
Marlene Roesen
Julian & Elizabeth Watson

Glen & Ronda Bernstein
Karim Stack
Linda Michae
Mary S. Hall
Nancy Hindman
Suzanne Post

Vola Lawson Animal Advocates (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 given in the previous calendar year and 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. Legacy Donors have made provisions for Alexandria’s Animals through planned giving. For more information about becoming one of Vola Lawson’s Animal Advocates, contact getinvolved@alexandriaanimals.org.

2016 Guardians and Champions
Linda Coleman, Donna Dawe, Kirk Fedder, Suzanne Fedder, Yolande Frommer, H.N. (Jay) Hoffman III & Arline M. Hoffman, Jodi Horton, Ty & Linda Hosler, Tara Zurawski; the Estates of Daniel T. & Barbara Chapman, Constance Virginia Doberenz, Gloria Petersen, Winifred Williams Rabbitt, Michael & Ginny Royal, and William S. Torrick; and:

Tribute Donations
Thank you to everyone who donated in honor or memory November 16, 2016–March 31, 2017. AWLA mails a card to the recipient; donations of $250+ are recognized here.

In Honor of . . .
Jake by Harold “Mike” Curry
Kenneth Howes by Melody Fennel
Dixie by David Stephen Goodin
Eve Young by Rachael Hubbard
Tubs Jelly by Christopher Jones
Zoe (the Best Dog Ever) by Kate Niner
Palmer Saxena by Ellen Saxena
Diva & Tank by Warren Wystrup & Kate Reich

In Memory of . . .
Kristina Anstrom by Becker Anstrom
Janet Cooper by Marla & Bobby Baker
Butterbean Davis by Xavier & Stephanie Bignon
Totsie Cicconi by Helen Bolger
My faithful dog Dudley Pierre by Richard Burnam
Winston & Teddy Burr by Mara & Ladonna Burr
Handsome Howard Katz by Mary Ann Collins
Lunar & Seua by Will Elsbury
Jake, our cat for 16.5 Years by Kevin & Anne Farmandis
Woody & Miyuki by Mara Hurwitt
Chapin Johnson by Katherine Johnson
Rugby Kent by Meaghan Kent
Foxy by Benjamin Klein
Natasha, Radar, Hunter, Louise, Tut by Jules Kolberg
Molly Luther (AWLA adoptee) by Sharon Forsythe Luther
Ellie Mathews by Alice Mathews
Chester by Leah Marshall & Jason Youngblood
Java and Hannah by Joanna McIntosh
Sweetpea, Hannah & Java by Joanna McIntosh
The teeny tiny adoptive baby 14 years old. She is now so adored. by Margery Nelson
Daak & Ritz by Karen Diener
Picard and Fisan Nirell by Lisa Nirell
Kaluha by David Pierce & Lilly Doggendorf-Pierce
Otis by Julia Robbins
Riley & Lemmy by Greg Sullivan & Amanda Petteruti
Kimi by Lynn Whittaker