

spotlight on

the Animal Welfare League

of Alexandria

60 years of caring

Winter /Spring 2006

1946 – 2006: 60 Years of Compassion



The year was 1946.

Harry Truman was president.

A first-class postage stamp cost three cents.

The Nuremberg trials were held.

Dr. Benjamin Spock published "The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care".

"It's a Wonderful Life" premiered on movie screens.

And a small group of caring individuals founded the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria in an effort to end inhumane treatment of stray animals in our city. With community support, the group was successful and grew stronger, creating the League's adoption program for abandoned animals, run out of the City Shelter. Gaining the trust of residents and legislators who believed the animals would benefit by consolidating animal services under one organization, the League was awarded the Shelter contract for the City of Alexandria in 1989. In 2002, the League moved into its current facility on Eisenhower Avenue, where the work begun so long ago continues to this day. We've come a long way, but there is still a great deal to do as we work toward a future when there are no homeless or suffering animals in Alexandria. With your help, we continue. Here's to another 60 years.

A 1600 Mile Journey Home

The board, staff, and volunteers of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria were shocked and saddened by the reports of the animal victims of the Gulf Coast hurricanes. Ronnie Marjerison, our Kennel Manager, was thrilled to have the opportunity to provide hands-on help to some of these animals during the course of two trips to the region. Here is her story:

During my second week helping with disaster relief in Louisiana, I was assigned to Plaquemines Parish. If you've seen a map of the state, Plaquemines is the toe of the boot jutting out into the Gulf. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had caused 23-foot storm surges that left the lower end of the parish leveled. I helped to establish and run an emergency shelter for the hundreds of animals that had been displaced there. From beginning to end the shelter processed nearly 700 animals.

After two weeks in the parish I flew home, and although my body was in Virginia, my mind was in Louisiana. During a conversation with Megan Brooks, our Director of Shelter Operations, I joked that we should drive to Louisiana and pick up a few of the dogs I'd had on my mind. She took the suggestion seriously, so we added up all the costs that would be involved. We were incredibly fortunate to have Lee Heller, an avid animal advocate and fellow Plaquemines volunteer, offer to come with me and to bankroll the whole operation.

We knew we could only bring back a limited number of

dogs. We did behavior assessments on fifty dogs over two days; it was very difficult to choose fifteen to bring back to Virginia.

Nora, a black German Shepard mix, had broken out of a crate, then a

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A puppy peers out from his holding kennel in Plaquemines Parish.

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about the league

HOW TO REACH THE LEAGUE

Vola Lawson Animal Shelter
4101 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304
703/838-4774 Fax: 703/838-4862
www.alexandrianimals.org
CFC and United Way designee number: # 8372

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday through Friday: 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday: 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.
Closed on Wednesdays for adoptions and animal visiting.

ADOPTION PROGRAM

One of our most important programs involves placing homeless companion animals in carefully chosen, permanent homes. Our animal adoption program is one of the most successful in the country and has been praised by national animal welfare organizations. For more information, please call 703/838-4774.

ANIMAL CONTROL and

24-HOUR ASSISTANCE FOR ANIMALS

The League provides animal control services for the City of Alexandria. Our Animal Control Officers enforce State and City laws pertaining to the welfare and control of animals. They are on duty Monday through Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. At all other times, a trained staff member is on call to respond to animals in need. Please call 703/838-4774 any time you feel an animal needs help.

HUMANE EDUCATION

The League's Community Outreach Coordinator is available to speak to your group. To schedule a presentation or Shelter tour for children or adults, please call 703/838-4774. The League also offers Animal Awareness Camp, a summer day camp for children. Visit our website to learn more.

REDUCED-COST SPAY/NEUTER

Through the cooperation of local veterinarians, the League enables all pet owners to have their animals spayed or neutered at a reduced cost. Certificates can be purchased at the Shelter during regular business hours.

LOST AND FOUND

We offer a lost and found program to aid people in finding their pets. Each year, hundreds of lost pets are reunited with their owners through the League.

LICENSING

The League handles dog and cat licensing for the City of Alexandria. Annual fees start at \$10 for dogs and \$2 for cats. Multi-year licenses are now available also.

SPECIAL EVENTS

We conduct fun-filled activities for pet lovers throughout the year. Find details of upcoming events in this issue, on our website or call 703/838-4774 ext. 216.

DONATIONS *We need your help!*

The League is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and relies on tax-deductible donations to fund our programs and services. Donations of items for the animals are also greatly appreciated. For more information on giving to the League, please call our Development office at 703/838-4774 ext. 206.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers perform a variety of helpful functions for the League, such as dog walking, cat socializing, helping out at special events, transporting injured or orphaned wildlife and more. To learn more, call 703/838-4774.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Gordon Kromberg - President

Gwen Jennier - Vice President, *ITT Industries-Advanced Engineering and Sciences; Angel Dog Music*

Betsy Willis - Treasurer

Rosemary Pollard - Recording Secretary

Patricia Donohue, DVM, *Alexandria Animal Hospital*

Nancy Hamilton

Maurice Levite

Carlos Mejias, *Olde Towne School for Dogs*

Diana Titus-Allen Waller

Wish List

We have an extensive wish list - here are some of the regular items that we always need! If you have an item to donate that you are unsure about, please contact the League ahead of time to clarify if this is something we can use.

- Kitten and puppy milk replacer (unopened)
- Baby food: meat-flavored (unopened)
- Pig ears (unopened)
- Kong toys
- Cotton rope toys
- Ping-pong balls
- Plush dog toys
- Cat beds: washable, donut style (no foam or cedar)
- Liquid bleach
- Washable blankets / quilts (no sheets or pillows)
- Area rugs without stiff or rubber backing
- Plastic cat carriers
- Premium timothy hay for rabbits to eat
- Peanut butter
- Roll paper towels
- Roll toilet paper
- Dawn dishwashing liquid

inside the shelter

A Tale of Two Westies

My adventure began when a gentleman walked into the shelter one Saturday afternoon to surrender two West Highland White Terriers. He filled out the paperwork and I began to discuss with him the background of his dogs. They were just over a year old, and his biggest complaints were that they were not housebroken and they barked in their crates. Upon further discussion, I discovered that these two dogs were kept in crates ALL of the time, except for one 15 minute walk per day. When I asked him if he knew that dogs needed to go out several times per day, he replied "I don't have time for that – I'm giving them to you so that YOU can train them"

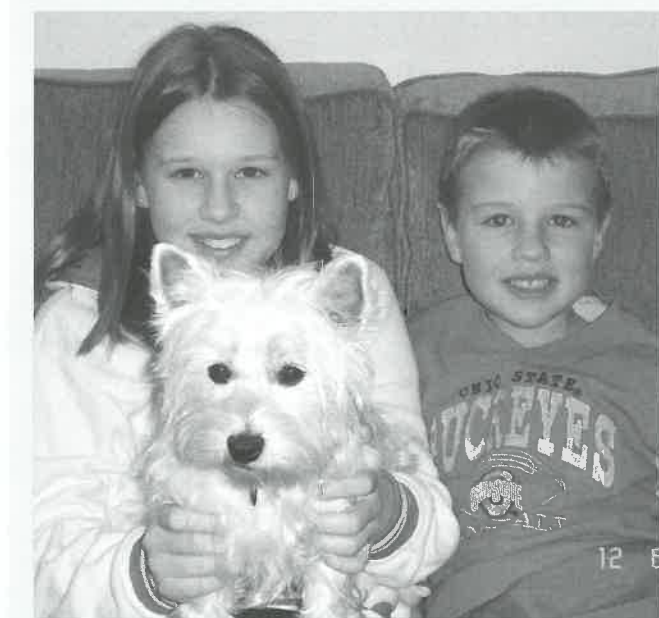
I went back to visit the dogs after he left, expecting to find two dogs who were scared, and undersocialized, but to my surprise they ran right up to me, crawled in my lap and gave me big kisses. I was happy that these dogs seemed friendly, but at the same time was concerned about whether they may have behavioral problems after such a terrible start. We noticed that the female looked a bit "chubby" for a young, unspayed female – we would soon confirm that she was pregnant.

At that point I agreed to foster her in my home, as the shelter is not the best place to give birth to puppies. I took

"Lexie" home and we turned our dining room into a "birthing center". To my amazement she got the hang of housebreaking quickly, despite the fact she had been forced to sit in her own excrement for months. But she had absolutely no stamina, and her legs would splay out on my hardwood floors. Concerned, we consulted a vet, who explained that her muscles were atrophied from sitting in a crate 24/7, getting no exercise.

Three weeks after I brought her home, after a difficult labor, Lexie gave birth to two adorable puppies.

The puppies were like night and day from the beginning. One was almost twice the size of the other. My children named the bigger pup Morgan, and the tiny pup Sarah. People who came to visit would ask if Sarah was the "runt", the answer was an emphatic, no! I liked to refer to her as small but mighty. From day one, she had stronger opinions than her big sister. If you picked up Sarah, she would squeal wildly for her mom, but if you picked up Morgan, she would fall asleep in your arms. Sarah reached all of her puppy milestones first: opening eyes, walking, running, barking and climbing out of the "nest". This is not to say that there was anything wrong with Morgan, in fact she was just a sweet, low-key



Kevin and Katie snuggle with Lexie.

puppy, content to snuggle in my children's laps. Sarah had places to go and things to do!

By the age of four weeks Sarah had almost caught up to Morgan in size. Most people couldn't tell them apart, but I could, just by their personalities. At this age we would frequently take them out of the pen and let them run around the house. When it was time to put them back in, Sarah would sit inside and yelp and howl for ten minutes, while Morgan would sit and stare at her as if to say "why are you making all that noise?" While Morgan would put up with any kind of handling, Sarah would fuss and squeal at any handling that she deemed inappropriate, which could include taking too long to snap a leash onto her collar.

Another interesting difference was their attitude toward my cats. Sarah would run right up to my very

confident male cat and yap in his face and bite at his feet. Even after being smacked on the nose by him numerous times, she never backed down and would continue to harass him until he finally ran away. On the other end of the spectrum, Morgan would retreat to a safe distance away, tail tucked between her legs, if the cat even looked at her.

There were so many differences in these two pups it was hard to believe that they had the same parents. At the shelter, we often debate the issue of "nature vs. nurture". In this case, I have to say that I learned first hand that nature has A LOT to do with it. So often we have potential adopters come in to the shelter to look at puppies, and when they find that the one they like is not available, they often look at one of the littermates and say "I'll just

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upcoming events

For more information about any of our special events, visit www.alexandrianimals.org or call 703/838-4774 ext. 216.

Calendar

April 2 Reduced-cost Rabies and Microchip Clinic (see article at right for more details)

April 17- July 10 Art Walk for the Animals (see article at right for more details)

May 6 2nd Annual Black Tie and Tails Gala (see article at right for more details)

May 17 Canine Melodrama Benefit (see article at right for more details)

June 8 Putting for Pooches Mini Golf Classic (see article at right for more details)

June Feline Follies & Adopt-a- Cat Month

October 7 Canine Games

Oct. 15 Reduced-cost Rabies and Microchip Clinic (see article at right for more details)

Nov. 4 Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

Dec. 1,2,3 Pet Photos with Santa

2005 Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

A special thank you to all of our sponsors for the 2005 Annual Dinner and Silent Auction:

Best Friends: Alexandria Animal Hospital, Gordon Kromberg, Katherine Ward, Your Dog's Best Friends Positive Playcare

Cat's Meow: Mount Vernon Voice

Fine Feathered Friends: Elpaw Veterinary Clinic, Evergreen Ttouch, Diann Hicks, "Van" Van Fleet.

Rabies and Microchip Clinic

Come on out and protect your pet! The League will offer clinics from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, April 2nd and Sunday, Oct. 15th at the Shelter for dogs and cats in need of a rabies vaccination or microchip. A rabies vaccination protects your pet and is required by Virginia state law. Three-year vaccines will be given to animals with proof of current inoculation; others will receive a one-year vaccination. The cost is \$10 per pet. A microchip ensures that your pet can be easily returned to you in the event that they become lost. Microchips are available for \$30 each, and you must provide proof of ownership. No reservation is necessary. Dogs must be on leashes and cats must be in carriers.

2nd Annual Black Tie and Tails Gala

Oh, what a night! Our Black Tie and Tails Gala will be held on Saturday, May 6th at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites in Old Town Alexandria. Champagne, hors d'oeuvres, fancy finger desserts, live auction with exclusive items, and the highlight of the evening: the canine couture fashion show organized by Carlos Mejias of Olde Towne School for Dogs! This year, we are adding new, exciting activities for the pooches to have a great evening as well!



5th Annual Putting for Pooches Mini Golf Classic

Mark your calendars now! The 5th annual "Putting for Pooches Mini Golf Classic" will be on Wednesday, June 8th from 5-8 p.m. This event will be held at Cameron Run Regional Park at 4001 Eisenhower Avenue, next door to the Shelter. Tickets to the event include a round of miniature golf, free food and beverages, and the silent auction. This year, to add to the excitement, dogs are invited to attend as well! All proceeds benefit the Eisenhower Partnership and the League.

Art Walk (and drive) for the Animals

Between April 17 and July 10, several businesses in Old Town, Alexandria will display the vibrant animal art of Karen Derrico to help raise funds for the League. 25% of the proceeds from artwork on exhibit will benefit the League, and Karen will also donate 25% of the proceeds from commissioned pet paintings. In addition, Karen is creating a painting of one of the Katrina animals rescued by the League. The painting will be on display at the shelter, and will go up for auction at the Black Tie and Tails Gala on May 6th. For details, visit our website or to see more of Karen's animal art, visit her website at www.painting4paws.com.

Canine Melodrama Benefit

From April 26-May 24, New Old Theater will present *Caesar, the Watch Dog of the Castle* at the Lee Center Kauffman Auditorium in Alexandria, Virginia. This drama, written in 1844, is an example of a nineteenth-century theatre phenomenon called "canine melodrama," in which dog actors played lead roles. Tickets will be \$15 general admission, \$10 for seniors, students, and those arriving in Victorian dress. On May 17th, 25% of ticket sales will benefit the League. For more information, contact Buff Huntley siriusdrama@yahoo.com or at 703/548-0956. Visit www.dogdrama.com to purchase tickets.

Journey Home (continued from page one)

kennel, and jumped two fences every day for a week to visit me on the porch every evening. She'd slink up with her head down and her ears back as if to say, "Don't be mad, I just wanted to say hi."

Prairie was a cattle dog mix that everyone loved the instant they saw her. When we met, she was a slightly tubby mom-to-be with missing teeth that gave her a crooked smile. By the time I left to go home from my first trip, she was waddling around the clinic looking ready to burst. Her puppies were born the day after I left. When I returned on my second trip, her pups were weaned and placed in new homes but Prairie was still in the shelter with her big brown eyes and funny expression.

Lynx had come to the shelter on a National Guard truck, having been found wandering with a sibling behind a devastated deli. Lynx had bands wrapped around the end of his tail that had cut off the circulation and caused a giant bulb to form. Despite the pain, he wagged his tail at everyone he met.

A boxer named Lola came into the shelter and was charming for every step of her evaluation. A week after we arrived in Virginia she gave birth to two baby boys. Her figure never gave away her secret.

On Saturday night Doc, the local vet, and I worked late to heartworm test and microchip all of the dogs who were coming with me. Doc's wife, Patsy, stayed up too, entertaining us and writing up the rabies and health certificates for our dogs. They were in their eighth week of working non-stop, often 16-hour days, and were still in high spirits.

Lee and I left for Virginia at 8am on Sunday in a box truck loaded with crates strapped to the inside. We drove for 22 hours and stopped five times to let the dogs out for breaks. By our second "potty break" we had a system down so we could both stretch our legs, use the facilities and get all of the dogs off the truck for a break in about half an hour. After 10pm, the dogs all fell asleep and we were able to drive the rest of the night without worry. We rolled into the Alexandria shelter parking lot at 6am Monday morning.



The staff had everything set up and ready for whatever we brought. Crates, kennels, water and food were all at our disposal. It took less than half an hour to get everyone off the truck and safely tucked into the comfort of their new home. Most of the dogs had lived outside their entire lives with few comforts. Since the storms, none of them had had regular bathroom breaks, consistent food, toys or access to the indoors. As we settled them into their new residence, it was gratifying to know that we'd been able to help them.

We are happy to report that Prairie the last of our plaquemine pavish dogs has just been adopted.

Community Outreach

Shelter Tours

Brownie and Girl Scout troops have been coming in for tours of the shelter in order to complete their Pet Care badge requirements. A typical tour is an hour long and consists of a 20-minute introduction and information exchange, a 10-minute video, and a walking tour of the cat, small animal, and dog adoption areas. To do their part in helping the animals, very often these children bring donations they've collected beforehand. Their hard work and thoughtfulness is appreciated and acknowledged by both the League staff and its furry residents!

Animal Camp

Registration will begin in March for Animal Awareness Camp 2006! Please check our website or call Lesa Miller, Outreach Coordinator, for more information at 703/838-4774, x-210.

Brochure Now Available In Español

The League is happy to introduce its newest piece of literature - a Spanish version of the general brochure. This is a growing segment of the Alexandria community that must be addressed with comprehensive information that allows them to better abide by City codes and encourages responsible pet ownership. Other literature in Spanish can be found in the shelter lobby or by asking the Outreach Coordinator at 703/838-4774, x-210

about our volunteers

Volunteers are a very big part of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. League staff and volunteers work hand in hand in helping the many homeless animals in our community. Volunteers play many roles, including being companions to our cats and dogs, and working with our kennel staff ensuring the animals' stay is as comfortable as staying in a local hotel! The League also hosts many special events during the year, through which we raise funds and increase awareness of homeless animals. The manpower required for some of the events is quite significant, but the League is very fortunate to have a great bunch of Special Events volunteers.

Thank you Susan and Fran!

Susan and Fran Mardula have been volunteers at the League for over 16 years. They first became aware of the League through their veterinarian, the late Dr. Richard Hawe. Dr. Hawe inspired Susan and Fran because he was such a special friend to the League and a friend to all animals.

Susan and Fran first began volunteering by walking our dogs while they awaited adoption. They soon wanted to do more and so became involved in Special Events. Susan and Fran have been so selfless with their time and ability to care for animals and for people. The Shelter animals, staff, volunteers, and people in our community have all benefited from their passion to make a difference. Susan is the ultimate morale booster for League. Working at the Shelter can be a difficult job and Susan never missed an opportunity to uplift staff spirits by remembering to celebrate a birthday, sincerely complimenting a job well done, and offering to lighten the work load when she could. Susan also writes the most beautiful thank you notes; an example of a little extra that means so much.

The Annual Canine Games is a signature event for the League - it's our version of "The Doggie Olympics". Each year, over 500 dogs have registered for the games. Susan and Fran have been involved with the Games since their inception over 14 years ago. Fran and Susan, along with Peg Mercer, Rosemary Pollard, John Thurman, and Tim Gainor, created the Canine Games Special Events Committee. Susan and Fran, along with the rest of the Committee, were responsible for developing, organizing, and executing the field activities. This included the preparation of instruction manuals, gathering the myriad of equipment and supplies necessary, and mapping out the sites. Last year's Canine Games, "Dogtoberfest" were cancelled (first time in 14 years!) due to flooding of the site on



Susan Mardula (2nd from left) and Fran Mardula (center back) with other members of the St Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show Special Events Committee, Peg Mercer, John Thurman, and Rosemary Pollard.

which the games were to be held. But even on the 2 days prior to the games, in heavy torrential rain, Susan and Fran didn't give up hope, and were out on the fields, still measuring and setting up props. With Susan's master organizational skills and Fran's "get the job done" ability, they helped to create an event that has not been matched by any animal welfare organization in the country (and many have tried!!).

Fran and Susan have integrated themselves as part of the League family – and have become ambassadors in the community. In addition to being a constant presence at League events, they will go out of their way to patronize businesses that support the League and let business owners know how much their support is appreciated. Words of appreciation are taken to new heights when they come from fellow residents of the community. And Fran wears his League pin on his lapel every day to work – the pin reflecting that he is a proud member of the League family.

Susan and Fran not only opened their hearts to the AWLA, but also to many animals along the way. The current members of the Mardula family are dogs Senator, Simon, Shoo B Doo, Shenanigans and kitty Spamoni - all of which have been adopted from the League.

It was with great sadness that the League recently learned that Susan and Fran will soon be moving on to new adventures. A wonderful new job opportunity presented itself to Fran, and so Fran and Susan will be leaving Alexandria. While their departure will leave a huge void in the League, they will always be part of the League family and have a special place in the heart of the AWLA. Thank you Susan and Fran for everything you have done to make the League what it is today!

helping animals

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your tax-deductible donation helps to care for thousands of animals each year as well as fund our education, outreach and adoption programs. Listed below are some of the ways you can give; for more information, please contact Sue Sands, Director of Development, at 703/838-4774 ext. 206.



Event Participation

Join us at one of our fun community events and help animals at the same time! See our listing of upcoming events on page 4.

Event Sponsorship

Event sponsorship is a great way to both help the animals and receive recognition for your business. We have a wide range of animal-loving supporters who attend our events who may be interested in your products or services! Please inquire about different levels of sponsorship for each event.

Memorial and Commemorative Gifts

Did you know you could make a gift to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria in memory or honor of a friend, relative, or pet? We will send a card to the recipient or recipient's family notifying them of your gift - a sure way to lift anyone's spirits! Another way to make a memorial/honorary gift is through our **Paws For A Great Cause** program. Engraved plaques are displayed both inside and outside the shelter, each bearing a special message about a cherished pet, relative or friend. Plaques range in price from \$1,000 - \$20,000 depending on their location.

Planned Giving

Remembering the League in your will is a wonderful and generous way to continue to care for animals in need when you are no longer able to. If you would like to include the League in your will, the designation should read "The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, located in the City of Alexandria, Virginia." Thank you for thinking of the animals - your gift means so much.

Sarah's Fund

Sarah's Fund was created in 2003 to help cover the cost of treating severe medical conditions and injuries in adoptable animals. Your designated gift to this fund will be reserved for animals with special medical needs including, but not limited to, heartworm treatment, bone fractures, surgery, and physical therapy.

Westies (continued from page 3)

take that one instead." It is difficult for them to understand that while one puppy might be a great match for their family, a different puppy could be a disaster in the same situation.

This is not to say that I believe that behaviors can't be modified. I think that some definitely can, however, I do think puppies are born with a personality that is deep rooted and there are inherent parts of their personalities that will not change.

Morgan ended up going home with a nice family, who had adopted a dog from us previously. She continues to be a sweet, low-key puppy who fits beautifully into their family which includes two young children and another dog.

We knew that Sarah was going to need a more experienced owner. We found that in a wonderful family who already owned a westie, and truly appreciated this high-maintenance, tenacious little terrier. She is already enrolled in puppy classes and they plan to do agility with her when she gets older.

The mama dog, Lexie, went to live with a great family; she is loveable and friendly with everyone she meets. The father dog also found a wonderful home with a woman who adores him.

It was definitely a rewarding experience to raise these puppies in my home. It was a lot of work, but I feel like I learned so much, and hopefully gave the puppies a great start in life.

— Kim Wilson, Adoption Counseling Manager

Stocks and Annuities

Gifts of appreciated stock or securities can help the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria care for more animals while reducing your taxable income. When you donate your appreciated stock to the League you may take a tax deduction equal to the appreciated value of the stock without paying capital gains taxes on the appreciated value. (Contact your financial advisor or tax attorney to discuss if this is the right giving vehicle for you.)

United Way / CFC Giving #8372

If you are able to give through your workplace to the United Way fund and or CFC, we thank you for designating your funds to help the animals in Alexandria.

Online Giving

Visit www.alexandrianimals.org to give a gift online.

happy tails

Four Fabulous Ferrets

Last summer we had three very charming ferrets come to the shelter. One was found as a stray, one was abandoned at the shelter door, and another was given up when his owner could no longer care for him. We often get small animals like these and sometimes they get to know one another while sharing a cage here at the shelter. It isn't often that they get to go home together though.

Wiggles, Phoebe, and Jigsaw were the exception. In October, Lafamia Tavares came to the shelter looking for a companion for her ferret. She was originally interested in two ferrets but eventually decided to take all three home to meet her pet. It was a great match and now you can see that they are all living happily together!



Save the date: Bring your dog to the 2nd Annual Black Tie & Tails Gala on May 6th! See inside for details.

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Animal Welfare League of Alexandria
4101 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304

