



Priscilla, Adopted August 2020  
Alison Lane Photography

A publication of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

# TAILS

from the

# AWLA

2020 Year End

## Drive-in Clinics Serve Community During Pandemic

### *JUST ONE OF THE WAYS WE REACH ANIMALS IN NEED*

Gergana Siteva has long volunteered at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), but in 2020 she found herself in a new role: greeter and “dog runner” at the non-profit’s newly launched drive-in vaccination clinics. Siteva was just one member of a critical team of volunteers who helped the clinics run smoothly, providing a much-needed service to animals across the community.

“The first thing was to introduce ourselves to the owner and make them feel comfortable entrusting us with their pet,” Siteva recalled. “Once we took the dogs from the car, we would try to make sure the animals were not scared or stressed. We walked them around while waiting to go in, pet and talked to them and if they were small, we’d carry them.”

*As the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped life in Alexandria in 2020, the AWLA stepped up to offer many of its services in new, more accessible ways.*



Volunteers ferry pets from cars into the AWLA shelter for their vaccinations at a drive-up clinic.

The monthly vaccination clinics, which began in September, have provided rabies and distemper vaccines to animals who need them.

“We have seen high demand for affordable vaccinations, particularly as the effects of the pandemic continue to strain pet owners’ financial resources in our area,” said AWLA Director of Community

### 75 Years and Counting

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“Looking to the future, I hope to sustain the spirit of innovation we cultivated this year and advance our mission to continue to help as many animals and people as possible.”

### Dedicated to Wildlife

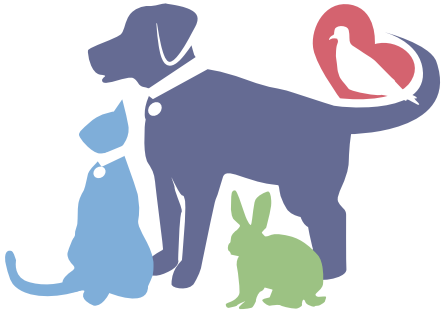
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Who do you call when a baby raccoon is stuck on top of a dump truck driving through the streets of Alexandria?

Programs Joanna Fortin. “But pet owners are still committed to providing the care that their pets need, and we’re proud to be able to support them in doing so.”

The two-hour clinics, held once a month on Wednesday evenings, saw 104 pets and administered 186 vaccinations through December 2020. Information is at [AlexandriaAnimals.org/VaccineClinics](https://www.AlexandriaAnimals.org/VaccineClinics).

*(continues on page 3)*



## Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

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Alexandria, Virginia 22304

703.746.4774

EIN 54-0796610

CFC 92767 | United Way 8372

[AlexandriaAnimals.org](http://AlexandriaAnimals.org)

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## Hours of Operation

To limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community, the AWLA is open **by appointment only** for community assistance and adoptions.

**View our current operating status, available services and adoptable animals at [AlexandriaAnimals.org](http://AlexandriaAnimals.org).**



Shnookums, Adopted October 2020

## From the Desk of Stella Hanly

With my first year as Executive Director coming to a close in November, I can't help but reflect on how different my expectations for this year were from the year we actually saw. I anticipated a year of learning; even though I had been with the AWLA for four years at that point, the role of Executive Director would be quite a different set of responsibilities from those I'd had before. I had expected the AWLA would continue to build upon already existing programs, and I would work with the Board to strategize an exciting future for the AWLA. But instead of this year of status quo and slow growth, the pandemic meant that we were thrust into a completely new environment, so we had to reimagine and reinvent our operations. I had expected this year to be a challenge, but it turned out our biggest challenge would be to continue to provide the best services to the animals and people of our community in these incredibly trying times.

*While the doors to our facility may have been locked, we opened new doors to adoption through a virtual adoption process allowing families to meet animals from the safety of their own home...even homes that are hundreds of miles away!*

We hosted virtual book clubs, happy hours, art classes and puppy parties, as well as low-cost, drive-up clinics to provide much-needed vaccines.

We followed CDC guidelines to create a safe, fun and physically distant in-person summer camp.

Our brand new Community Programs department, less than a year old, accelerated stratospherically to assist families who were facing economic hardship due to the pandemic. *[Read more about what they have accomplished on page 1.]*

So while 2020 was an incredibly difficult year, presenting us with unprecedented challenges, we accepted these challenges and pushed our boundaries. It was a year where our community answered our every plea for help and, despite all the trials we faced, we are on track to adopt more animals than in 2019! And many of the changes COVID forced us to implement have proved so successful that we will continue them even when life returns to pre-COVID norms.

2020 has been one of our most momentous years, and in 2021, we will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the AWLA. Looking to the future, I hope to sustain the spirit of innovation we cultivated this year and advance our mission to continue to help as many animals and people as possible. We hope to celebrate what we have achieved this year and every year since 1946. 2020 has proven we are a strong, resilient organization, ready to rise to any challenge we face; in 2021, I can't wait to see what we accomplish next!



Stella Hanly with pup Betty Spaghetti, adopted December 2020

DeSilva Studios, LLC



# TAILS FROM THE AWLA

(continued from page 1)

Shelter veterinarian Dr. Erica Caldwell says these core vaccines are recommended for all healthy pets, with few exceptions. “Rabies is a fatal disease in people and animals, and it can be found in our area,” she said. “The vaccine is required by law for dogs and cats [over four months of age], primarily to protect the entire community — people and animals — from this horrible disease.” The feline and canine distemper shots provided in the clinics target several other serious viruses present in the community and the environment, Dr. Caldwell said. She points out that it’s important for pet owners to speak with their veterinarians every year about any other needed vaccinations and for regular check-ups.

The AWLA has come to the rescue of Alexandria’s Animals in another critical way — providing food and other supplies for owned pets in the community. Since the beginning of 2020, the AWLA’s Pet Pantry has given out nearly 14,000 pounds of pet food and supplies to the community, most of it donated to the shelter by community members.

A pop-up pantry held in October during a winter coat give-away hosted by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority provided more than 635 pounds of pet food and supplies to community members. The AWLA also continued its commitment to under-resourced shelters throughout the region.

Residents interested in donating items can drop them off at the shelter or refer to the AWLA’s Amazon wish list at [AlexandriaAnimals.org/PetPantry](https://www.AlexandriaAnimals.org/PetPantry). “We’re very lucky that the community wants to help out so much,” Community Programs Coordinator Demetrius Jackson said. “When we have a specific need, we’ll ask for help on social media, and within days, we have what we requested and more.” Information about the Pet Pantry program is at [AlexandriaAnimals.org/CommunityPetPantry](https://www.AlexandriaAnimals.org/CommunityPetPantry).

The Pet Pantry and vaccination clinics are just part of the AWLA’s programs to assist pet owners in the community. The shelter’s “Crisis Care” program provides temporary boarding at the shelter for pet owners experiencing emergencies such as homelessness, hospitalization or domestic violence. A partnership with Alexandria’s Senior Services gives “AniMeals” of food and pet supplies to seniors on fixed incomes and housebound community members.

AniMeals has made all the difference for Estela Herrera and her bulldog mix, Snoopy, who live in Old Town. Snoopy, now 14, has been a calm, soothing presence

in Herrera’s life, but medical bills and other financial challenges have strained her budget. Now, once a month, AniMeals delivers meals, supplies and more to Herrera’s apartment building. “Without AniMeals, I don’t know who I’d turn to,” Herrera said. “Snoopy’s so important to me.”

Relationships with nine area veterinary groups offer vouchers to help pet owners afford spay and neuter surgery, and demand for this important service is up significantly, Fortin said. A Trap-Neuter-Return Program arranges the surgery for homeless cats in order to humanely reduce the city’s outdoor cat population. Several grooming businesses have generously donated their services so the AWLA could launch a grooming program for pet owners in need of assistance. For more information about these programs, please contact [community@AlexandriaAnimals.org](mailto:community@AlexandriaAnimals.org) or call 703.746.5579.

“Our biggest goal in all of this is to keep pets in their homes with the families they are a part of,” Fortin said. “Pets are providing such important emotional support for people, and for many of our clients, their pet might be the only company they have at home. If the only obstacle is a lack of resources, we are happy to help so that pets can stay with the people they love.”



AWLA staff prepare a dog for important vaccinations as volunteers stand by.

## Resources for Pet Owners

Pet Pantry  
[AlexandriaAnimals.org/CommunityPetPantry](https://www.AlexandriaAnimals.org/CommunityPetPantry)

Vaccine Clinic  
[AlexandriaAnimals.org/VaccineClinic](https://www.AlexandriaAnimals.org/VaccineClinic)

Contact  
[community@alexandriaanimals.org](mailto:community@alexandriaanimals.org)  
703.746.5579



## Wildlife in Trouble?

### EXPERIENCED TEAM TO THE RESCUE

The call from distraught Alexandria city employees was urgent. They needed the AWLA to help with a tiny, furry problem: A baby raccoon was stuck on top of a city dump truck that the workers had been driving around town. AWLA Animal Services Officers Howard Stanback and Megan Lawrence were dispatched to the scene, where Officer Stanback climbed atop the large truck and secured the raccoon with a humane catch pole. Handing the pole — and the raccoon — off to Officer Lawrence, he made his way down and then checked the young raccoon for any injuries. Confident that the animal was healthy, Stanback released it back into the wild where it could flourish.

It was all in a day's work for the AWLA's Animal Services team, whose mission is to promote humane and kind treatment of all of the city's animals — including wildlife — while protecting the public. "We rescue sick, injured or orphaned wildlife within the city limits of Alexandria, working closely with wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians to provide the most humane treatment possible," says AWLA Animal Services Chief Tony Rankin. "We also provide a 24-hour emergency service to residents of Alexandria to assist in the removal of wild animals from within the living areas of their homes."

People who have concerns about a wild animal in the community should call Animal Services; however, Animal Services will only capture or relocate wild animals that appear to be ill or injured or are considered dangerous. In the state of Virginia, it can be illegal to interfere with wildlife in its natural habitat. Doing so can lead to the transmission of disease and cause the animal injury or even death.

Alexandria is home to a diverse array of wildlife, and the most common subjects of calls received by Animal Services are squirrels, raccoons, opossums, foxes and birds. Spring, summer and early fall are particularly busy times, as new animals are born and may appear vulnerable to citizens. Other calls relate to adult animals that people encounter during the day.

Officer Lawrence points out that wildlife that are active during the day might be on a mission to find food for their young — and not in trouble. And baby animals who appear abandoned might be just waiting for their mother to return. "It's important to remember that while we do have absolutely amazing wildlife rehabilitators in Virginia, there is nothing better for a baby animal than its own mother," Lawrence says. "People who find orphaned wildlife should call us so we can consult with them about ways to get mom and baby reunited."

Earlier this year Lawrence was called out to South Van Dorn Street with a report of a squirrel chasing people who were passing by. An unusual black squirrel, she quickly attained the moniker "Milkdud," inspired by the candy. "When I arrived, Milkdud appeared from a bush and crawled right up my leg," Lawrence recalled. "She was underweight for her age and dehydrated." Lawrence delivered Milkdud to a wildlife rehabilitator, who raised the animal with other squirrels until they could all be safely released together to the wild.

Lawrence suspects that someone had attempted to domesticate the young squirrel, which led to this predicament. *(continues on page 5)*



Milkdud the squirrel was rescued by the AWLA and taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for help.



A baby raccoon, ready to return to the wild after a wild ride on top of a city dump truck.



# SUPPORTING ALEXANDRIA'S ANIMALS

## Supporting Animals and the People Who Help Them

Animals have always been important to **Stan Jones** and **Rosemary Hayes Jones**. Over the years, the married couple has had a variety of cats, many of whom were adopted from rescues or shelters.

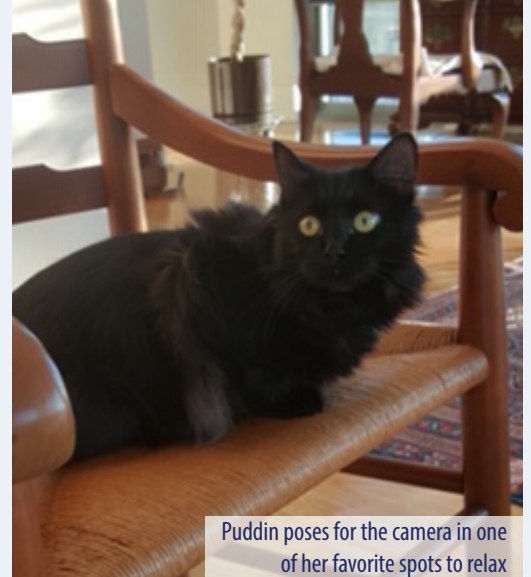
But the Jones support of animals extends beyond their own pets. Since 2018, they've offered the AWLA the opportunity to match donations from the community — up to \$25,000 each year, throughout the busy November and December fundraising season — in memory of their beloved cat Pippin.

As a non-profit organization, the AWLA receives nearly two-thirds of its revenue from community support. Generous donations like those of the Joneses not only help the AWLA reach that amount but also spur on the generosity of others, increasing the funding available to help animals in need across the community.

Rosemary Hayes Jones doesn't stop there, though. In her free time, this gardening enthusiast volunteers at the AWLA with her friend Anne Augusterfer, assisting with the landscaped areas and overall floriculture of the facility. In the fall of 2020, they were both part of a team that planted more than 1,000 begonias, generously donated by Greenstreet Gardens, in front of the building. It was a warm, if messy, day, but the group didn't stop until each and every begonia was in the ground.

While the couple is dedicated to helping animals across the community, they made a special commitment to a long-haired black cat known at the AWLA as Edna. After meeting this sweet but shy two-year-old feline in a staff office, they knew she was the girl for them. Now known as Puddin, this lovely girl is enjoying the best life has to offer with her new family.

"Rosemary and Stan play such a huge role at the AWLA," says Executive Director Stella Hanly. "Not only have they given such a wonderful home to Puddin' and so many other cats, but their generosity ensures that thousands of animals in the community have the same opportunity."



Puddin poses for the camera in one of her favorite spots to relax

*(continued from page 4)* "Trying to tame wild animals can often lead to a bad outcome," she says. "On her own, Milkdud likely would not have been able to live in the wild."

Last spring Lawrence and her colleagues discovered a deceased opossum, but because opossums are marsupials, Lawrence knew she might not be alone. She checked the animal's pouch, and sure enough, there were live babies attempting to suckle from their mother. Lawrence transported the young opossums to a wildlife rehabilitator, who nursed them to health and eventually released them in an appropriate habitat. "I could talk about opossums all day because they are so cool and so important to the environment," Lawrence says. "Not only are they North America's only native marsupial, but one single opossum can eat up to 3,000 ticks in the spring and summer months. They're helping us all out!"

Chief Rankin says wildlife species are crucial to Alexandria's ecosystem. "Animals who share our environment all have jobs just like most of us," he says. "Foxes, for example, eat large numbers of rodents as a mainstay of their diet. Without these animals, the ecosystem would become unbalanced and result in an unhealthy environment for all of the animals, including people."

Acadia, Adopted October 2020  
Dirty Paw Photography



## Paper Pushing for Paws

One thing that people may not know about animal welfare is that it involves a lot of paperwork. From informational packets given to new adopters to forms used by the Animal Services team to the "Thank You" cards sent to generous donors, running an animal shelter can be very paper-intensive. Luckily, the AWLA has the support of **Tyler Business Services**, whose dedicated team helps us not only with our printing and paper needs but also with other items such as uniforms, newsletters (like the one you're now reading) and even masks!

Headed by Kay Tyler, this team of animal lovers is glad for the opportunity to help the AWLA. Tyler's own dog, Crandon, is a regular fixture at their headquarters, greeting guests and earning the occasional biscuit for good behavior. He even received the most votes from the community to be named Alexandria's Animal of 2019, and his handsome smile graced the cover of that year's AWLA photo calendar...which was printed by Tyler Business Services! Tyler also adopted both of her cats from the AWLA.

"Whenever I have a question about a new item we're thinking of ordering, I reach out to Kay and Laurie and John and Bill," says Gina Hardter, Director of Marketing & Communications. "Half the time, I'm not even quite sure what I'm asking, but they always help me find the right solution for whatever project we're working on."



# HAPPY TAILS

Animals come to the AWLA in a variety of ways, but when a three-year-old white Persian cat came through our doors in July, staff couldn't help but be shocked. Partially obscured by his fluffy, white — and in some places, matted — fur was a gaping wound circumscribing most of his neck.

"I'd never seen anything like it," said Animal Care Manager Shayla Donnelly. "It looked like something had gotten caught around his neck and been stuck there who knows how long."

The AWLA's veterinary team inspected further and found remnants of a material like a rubber band or shoelace in the wound. While they bandaged much of his neck, there were also parts that showed scabbing and fur loss, evidence that whatever had caused such damage had probably been wrapped around him for quite a while.

Staff named the cat **Frosty**, in honor of his fur, and while he was clearly uncomfortable and anxious, he was still friendly, purring and headbutting every new person he met. He allowed himself to be brushed out, the matting so severe that his fur needed shaving in places, and he quickly found himself in a staff office where he could receive some extra attention.

"Frosty was such an adventurous cat," recalls his office mate, Executive Director Stella Hanly. "One morning I came in and he'd managed to hide himself behind the fridge. Another time he was in a storage box. But once I came in, he would jump up on my lap and start purring up a storm. After everything he'd been through, I couldn't believe he could be so friendly."

Along with the injury to his neck and lack of grooming, Frosty was also suffering from periodontal disease, so once his neck healed further, he underwent surgery to remove several of his teeth that were badly infected. He continued to recuperate in Hanly's office, and only three weeks after being brought in, Frosty was ready to find his new family.

His new mom says "**Jonesy**" is loving life in his new home. He has a ton of toys but prefers to pounce on her feet or at the birds through the windows he loves to lounge in front of. He's put on some much needed weight, and the fur around his neck has almost grown out to match the rest of his coat. "He may not have had the best life in his last home," she said, "but he is completely spoiled now."



Frosty arrived at the AWLA with a neck injury but was still always ready to cuddle.



Frosty, now Jonesy, feels right at home with his family.

# VOLA LAWSON GIVING SOCIETY

**JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2020**

The AWLA commends our Vola Lawson Giving Society members for contributions made from January 1 through December 31, 2020. Thank you to the City of Alexandria, which allows us to continue to provide care, control and sheltering services to Alexandria's Animals.

Giving Society members 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 in financial support or 100 volunteer hours.

For more information about becoming a member of the Vola Lawson Giving Society, contact [development@alexandrianimals.org](mailto:development@alexandrianimals.org).

## Friends

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**\$25,000+ financial/in-kind donations or 5,000 volunteer hours:** *The Anne Cabaniss Trust, H.N. (Jay) Hoffman III & Arline Hoffman, Rosemary Hayes Jones & Stan Jones, The Dr. Maurice Lapierre Trust and the Estates of Mary Jean Crowley, Gail Davidson, Miriam Enders, Carlene Garrigus and Charlotte Rynerson, along with*



## ANIMAL CHAMPIONS

**\$10,000+ financial/in-kind donations or 1,000 volunteer hours:** *Kirk Fedder, Rosemary Harris, Robert & Maureen Rehg, Ann Reid, and the Estates of Daniel T. Chapman and Vincent & Constance Travaglini, along with*





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Bentley, Adopted November 2020

## In Honor of

**Eileen Hanrahan** by Dignity Northern Virginia  
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