Senior Pets

THE FUN’S JUST BEGINNING

From the looks of her Instagram page, the beige terrier mix dog named Macy is doing all right. Macy frolics in the yard, snoozes on the couch, cuddles with her people, listens to a little girl read her a story. No matter that she has only three legs and is a bit on the “senior” side.

“She’s just a peaceful dog, and she fits right in with our loud, busy family,” reports Julie DeFrain, who adopted Macy last March after meeting her at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), shortly after the dog was transferred in from a rescue group in Florida. Macy blended quickly with DeFrain’s household, made up of her husband, two children, ages 3 and 6, and DeFrain’s parents, ages 72 and 75. DeFrain says she does most of the walking with Macy, her 6-year-old daughter handles most of the feeding and her parents take care of a lot of the snuggling.

At age 8, Macy is considered a senior dog. “We were just looking for a dog that fit our family and we were excited to love and spoil,” DeFrain said. “It was less about age for us and more about personality. The kids are completely in love with her.”

DeFrain, a government attorney, says Macy has been her office mate while working at home during the pandemic. Macy’s favorite activity, though, is watching TV with the kids or DeFrain’s parents. “We weren’t looking for a dog to go camping and hiking with,” she said. “Macy’s more of a yoga dog than a hiking dog.”

The AWLA considers any animal aged 8 or older to be a senior, and seniors make up about 30 percent of the shelter’s usual population. Seniors aren’t just for seniors — they appeal to all adopter age brackets. “They are so much easier than puppies or younger animals and are generally well house trained,” said AWLA Executive Director Stella Hanly. “Most of them are very grateful that they have a soft, warm place to live — and be loved.”

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What a year 2021 has been!
With the arrival of our mobile veterinary surgical van this past spring, we have, for the first time in our 75-year history, had the ability to perform critical surgical procedures at our facility. By the end of 2021, our veterinary team performed approximately 30% of all the surgical procedures needed by our animals, focusing particularly on spay or neuter surgeries and dental procedures, both so important to the animals in our care. This allows us not only to exceed our already top-notch level of care for animals, but it also means animals can find their future families faster.

In the field of animal welfare, as so many others, the last two years have been incredibly difficult all across the United States, and there have been many times our partners have needed our help. Answering their call, we have transferred animals from Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas and West Virginia, as well as Virginia, Maryland and even one dog from Beirut.

In fact, in 2021 we exceeded the number of animals transferred from other locations over any previous year, helping nearly 850 animals find homes across our region.

This would not be possible without our animal-loving community, which welcomes these animals and gives us the support we need to provide them with the loving care they deserve.

And to our neighbors who have needed our help while times have been so tough, we have provided almost 1,000 free or low-cost vaccinations and microchips, distributed more than 50,000 pounds of pet food and supplies, and provided veterinary and transportation assistance to many more. Read more about these milestones and more on the next page.

None of this would have happened without the AWLA’s amazing team of staff, volunteers, donors, adopters and foster families — YOU! Without you, we would not be able to go above and beyond to help these pets. Without you, the thousands of animals we assisted this year could not have received the help they needed. Without you, our community would not be the sanctuary that it is for animals and the people who love them. We are so grateful to you! And we’re excited to look forward with you to learn what the next 75 years hold.
The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria presents

HOME FREE

A game of finding homes and keeping families together in 2021

START

1,461 adoptions
58.6% of appointments led to adoption
520 animals fostered by 231 fosters

837 animals transferred in

487 spay/neuter vouchers provided
852 vaccinations provided to pets in the community
51,564 pounds of pet supplies provided (That’s 48% of our intake.)

415 animals received major medical treatment

3,240 calls to Animal Services
28,048 hours volunteered
including more than 500 Youth Program attendees

Proud HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES member!

City of Alexandria NOW named BETTER CITY FOR PETS by Mars Petcare!

ACHIEVED!

Challenge: Achieve placement rate of more than 96% in 2021

Celebrating 75 years
Let’s say you’re a 60-pound dog who is finding the kennel at the AWLA friendly and nurturing but a bit confining. And let’s say that one day a kind person comes along and takes you to their house for a little vacation.

That’s what happens regularly to some dogs, cats and other animals at the AWLA when they need a break on their journey to adoption. The foster program assists animals who are especially in need of time and care in a home environment, including very young animals, pets with special medical needs, animals who’ve been in the shelter environment for a longer time and could use a change of scenery, and owned pets temporarily held in the AWLA’s Crisis Care program.

Prospective fosters start the process by signing up, then undergoing an orientation and evaluation of their specific interests and needs, followed by training and guidance from the AWLA staff. The AWLA provides all food and other supplies for the foster animals as well as a 24-hour hotline for fosters to call in emergencies.

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Foster “mom” Sarah P. and her daughter, Destiney, now 17, began volunteering for the program three years ago. Despite Sarah’s petite size they “somehow always got the bigger dogs, 60- to 70-pounders,” she says. There was Ash, a Lab mix who, despite having behavioral issues in the past, behaved perfectly; Chocolate, a Lab mix who got so excited that he leapt toward other dogs until Sarah trained him to calm down with treats; Priscilla the anxious terrier mix who liked to nibble on blankets; Ben, a pit bull mix who chewed his leashes until the shelter provided a metal one for him, and many others. All were ultimately adopted.

“The larger, more active dogs need more space and more mental stimulation that they can better receive in a home environment,” said AWLA Senior Manager of Veterinary and Foster Care Arianne Killen. “After a while at the AWLA, they can get a bit frustrated, and it’s hard for us to get an idea of their true personalities.”

Fostering helps gather that information, especially by placing animals in situations not available at the shelter. Spending time in a home that has a staircase, for example, can help AWLA staff answer a potential adopter’s question: “Can he climb stairs?”

“If an animal has a track record in a home, it’s much easier for them to get adopted,” said AWLA Veterinary and Foster Care Coordinator Elena Carver. “If we can relay to potential adopters that an animal has turned out to be super-sweet, playful and did great with other animals in the home, they might take a chance they hadn’t considered before.”

More than 230 individuals and families fostered animals for the AWLA in 2021.

The need for foster volunteers has grown in the past year due to the harsh economic effects of the pandemic, leaving some people without stable housing and in need of temporary help with their pets.

Animals who are recovering from surgery or struggling with other medical challenges find the quiet and individual attention of foster homes critical to recovery. One of foster Inbal Katz’s favorite “patients” was a grayish pit bull — “with a face like a hippo” — called Baybee who was recovering from surgery after swallowing a foreign object. “She needed a lot of TLC,” Katz recalled. “She was lying down a lot at first, but then started playing.” Baybee began to shine in Katz’s care, and, upon returning to the AWLA, Baybee was soon adopted.

A black and white senior dog named Milk needed watching over after surgeries to remove masses in her mammary glands. “I tried to put bandages on her, but she wouldn’t have it,” Katz said. “So I got her a ‘onesie’ for dogs that covered the wound so she couldn’t scratch it.” Milk healed and soon found her family.

Foster homes open their doors to all kinds of animals. Foster Kerin Ord and her husband, Martin Parr, recently housed a mother chinchilla and her baby in a special area of their basement in Alexandria. They also patiently waited out a cat named Spot who was recovering from a traumatic injury and hid under a bed for more than a week, which is not uncommon with shy or unsocialized cats. The woman who adopted Spot lay on the floor next to the bed to view her.

A Shiba Inu dog who was scratching constantly from a severe case of mange would pose a challenge for any foster, but Ord and Parr were willing to take her on. With guidance from the AWLA’s veterinary team, they gave her a series of medicated baths and were able to help her look and feel healthier, eventually helping to find an enthusiastic adopter for her.

Ord, whose household includes two cats and two dogs, says she and Parr are accustomed to animals with special needs. More than once they, like some other AWLA foster caregivers, have come to the conclusion that the best home for some foster animals in their care is with them. In fact, both of the couple’s current canines, Josie and Stubby, started with them as fosters and went on to become full-time residents, now assisting with the parade of foster animals seeking a helping paw.
Supporting Alexandria’s Animals
MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR ANIMALS ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

When Nicole Parent started volunteering her time as a foster with the AWLA in 2018, she didn’t realize exactly how much time it might involve.

“I started fostering while my husband, who is an active-duty army officer, was stationed outside of the area, and I was here on my own for a few years. It was nice to have some company!” she said.

Every year, hundreds of individuals and families offer their time and their homes to be foster caregivers for the AWLA. They help to care for animals recovering from surgeries, for those who are too young for adoption and those who need a break from the shelter environment. Nicole focused her foster attention on shyer adult cats, giving them space to become comfortable and learn to live in a home environment. Since 2018, Parent has fostered nearly 20 animals.

“I really like that I can now make the connection between meeting a new cat, getting to know their personality and providing information and photos to help them get adopted.”

When the pandemic reached Alexandria, affecting staffing at the AWLA, Parent stepped up once again, providing additional support to the AWLA’s Animal Care team to ensure animals received as much attention as possible during their stay. She later expanded her in-shelter volunteering role, coming in weekly to socialize with adoptable cats. She even began taking her “work” back home with her, creating promotional materials, copy editing articles and aiding the AWLA’s Development team from her house — often while providing a foster home to even more cats and kittens. Since she began volunteering, she has donated more than 900 hours of her time to help animals at the AWLA and from home.

In November, Parent began fostering two special kittens, Alex and Texas. Both kittens were found in Alexandria at 3 weeks old, alone and in desperate need of care. When they were brought to the AWLA in need of a foster who could help keep them healthy and teach them socialization while they grew, Parent once again offered her time.

“There are so many different ways that people can contribute to the AWLA’s mission,” Parent said. “Earlier this year, I had to take a step back from volunteering in-person while I underwent surgeries for breast cancer, but I was able to still help from home. It gave me something to do while I was out of work, and the sense of fulfillment knowing that I’m helping animals in need was the best medicine!”

HAPPY TAILS

Best friends Cookie and Chispin, both hound mixes, quickly became staff and volunteer favorites at the AWLA. The duo spent several months in the home of one of the AWLA’s dedicated caregivers while Cookie recovered from surgeries to remove a mammary tumor. In the spring, they returned to the AWLA, ready to meet their new family together.

Finding a home for a bonded pair can often take a bit longer than for individual animals, and when the two are seniors and larger-breed animals, it can be even more challenging. At 10 and 12 years of age, Chispin and Cookie were on the lookout for a very special person to see how wonderful these girls really were.

Kara and Jeff Ryan had recently lost their senior pup, Riley, and told themselves they would wait a while before adopting. But Kara did know that she wanted to give another senior dog a home — and was open to more than one. She saw Cookie and Chispin on the AWLA adoption page and, after seeing

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It took a few weeks for Cookie and Chispin to warm up in their new home, but Kara saw that they felt safer having each other. Little by little, their goofy personalities and antics began to show. Chispin is like a shadow and can usually be found right next to her favorite people, while Cookie is independent and loves to explore on her own. In the yard, Chispin enjoys chasing squirrels as Cookie finds a sunny spot to snooze. However, both pups are happiest when the whole family is in the room together, showering them with belly rubs.

Kara would encourage everyone to consider a bonded pair and all the benefits of adopting a set of ready-made best friends. They keep each other company while you’re away and help each other feel comfortable in new situations. But most of all, with a pair of pets, you get twice the love and affection in one adorable package.
Companions
Christopher Aluotto
Beyer Subaru
Karen Leigh Blunk
Cindy Broome
Joe Burbach
Carol Bursik
Carrie Capuco
Shelley Castle Photography
Megan Christensen
Kay Culver
Terye Dame
Janet D’Angelo
Mike Daniels
Don Davis
Jonathan Edwards-Opperman
Rose Ellen Farmer
Julie Foster
Barbara George
Kenneth Goldberg
Suzanne & Trey Goulden
Susan Hammons
Eileen Hanrahan
Jeffrey Harris
Ruth Heilizer
Jodi Horton
Linda & Ty Hosler
Drew & Anne Kahle
Damon Labrie
Alison Lane Photography
Cathee Lee
Edward Lenz
Pete Lundgren
Sherri Mahlik
Bonny McMahon
Linda Michael & Raymond
Michael Jr.
Lesley Morrison
Sara Naison-Tarajano
Jennifer O’Byrne
Lindy Paull
Sarah Pham
Mallery-Jade Pierce
Heather Pigman
Aaron & Tory Poe
Marti Roper & William Roper Jr.
Erica Rossi
Jennifer Salan
Marie Harte Sanchez & Ruben
Sanchez
Ilona Savage
Melissa Schweitzer
Tactical Land Care
Gergana Siteva
Karín Stock
Tonja Stocks
The Estate of Donald & Rosemary
Werner
WOOF! Dog Training Center
Cynthia Young
Erica Zilioli

Advocates
Reid G. Adler & Jacqueline Arnold
Donald Alexander
Janet Allen
Jonathan & Anna Altmann
Kathleen Alvarna
Jordan Alvey
Phyllis Andes
Suzanne Arden
Marcia Argust
Diann Austin
Gary Avakian
Sarah Ax
Mona Badgett
Susan Badura
Emily Barnes
Marcus Barnett
Vinoda Basnyake
Parthapratim & Kasturi Basu
Rachel Beer
Matthew Bennett
Anje Berger
Dan Bernstein
Bissell Pet Foundation
Arienne Bodnist
Evan Blunk, Jr.
Sandra Bodner
Robert Borger
Bryan & Marla Bosta
Kathleen Bowe
Krystal Bowers
Michelle Branch
Beverly Bronder
Richard Burnum
Julia Butter
Carolyn R. Campbell
Keren Campbell
Sylvia Campbell
Elizabeth Cardosi
Susan Carter
Duane Chilton
Lisa Chirhart
Kate Cinelli
Kenneth Cohen
Mark Coin
Mark Colley & Deborah Harsch
Tammy Conforti
Julie Conway
Mary Cook
Cotton & Company LLP
Jacqueline Cottrell
James Cottrell
Stella Covre
Virginia Cox
Duane Crier
Amy Crytzer
Brian Cummings
Brooke Davis
Mark Davis
Michael & Janelle A. Day
Deepika Dayal
Del Ray Community Partnerships
Mary Dent
Katie Dobrinska
Susan Doherty
Colleen Dougherty
Don & Cindy Drechsler
Kristina Dunphy
Felipe Duran
James Durham
Anna Dvorchik
Mitchell Edwards
Marla El Alouai
Jennifer Ellett
Richard Faircloth
Fairlington Presbyterian Church
Karin Fangman & Connie McCabe
Anne Farmakidou
Andrew Fehredtino
Flachs Family Fund
Harriett Forster
Barbara Francis & Robert Musser
Cara Fratta
Andrew Fried
Maile Fries
Jen Froetscher
Yolande Frommer
Jonathan Futrell
Sharon Gardiner
Cheryl Gaskill
Michael German
Dugald Gillies
Laura Giza & Harley Thronson
Natascha Goldug
Linda Greenway
Tracy Gregg
Gina Harder
Michael Hardy
Kathy Harrington
Andrea Haslinger
Carolyn Healy
Lisa Heidemann
Sheila Henderson
Nishita Henry
Jerry & Georgia Hinn
Edward Hovis
Nancy & Steve Howard
Dawn Jakutowicz
Jennie Johnson
Chris, Kim & Connor Jones
Julianne Jones
Mary Jones
Inbal Katz
Rachel Kazan
Julie Keegan
John Keyser
James Kim
Priscia Kim
Jeremy Kinsell
Benjamin Klein
Laura Laemmle-Weidenfeld
Timothy Lakoly
John Langford
Kathleen Leach
Anthony Lee
Alison Leithner
Isaac Levey
Diligent Light
Maida Lepscher
Tres Lorton
Adrienne Lucas
Charlotte Luedke
Laura MacLean & Geoffrey Wolfe
MacRae Family Foundation Fund
Janice Magnuson
Fatima Mangera
Mary Mann
Carlos Mateos
Gary Matz
Chris May
Judy McConville
Joan McCormack Ferrill
Shronda McElveen
Amanda McGraw
Robert McKinney
Carlos & Sandy Mejias
Erich Meier
Jacob Miller
Jennifer Moore
The Bob Moran Charitable
Family Fund
Jackie Moran
Shane Morrisey
Grethchen Moss
Daniel Murrin
Suraj Naik
Nothing Bundt Cakes
Leonard & Marilyn Nowak
Katherine Nucci
James & Evelyn Nugent
Katherine Hope Oakley
Oldies But Goodies
Orling Family Fund
Nicole Parent
Lisa Parkinson
Janet Peckarsky
Miriam Perlberg
Barbara Perry
Norcali Phisuthikul
Neil Pinney
Nancy Pisano
Jasmina Pozderac
Diane Prokop
Candace Quinlan & Walter J.
Quinlan
Raimondi & Son, LLC
Peter Ramsberger
Aimee Rand
Loren Reese
Kristen Remers
John Reseska
Kathryn Riley
Barbara Roberts
Nancy Lee Roberts
Tyler Robinson
Dave Rosenbaum
Salon deZen
SAMBDA Employees
John Sanders
Deidre Schexnayder
Stacy Schlags
Bruce Schroeder
Gary Schroen
Carolyn Schroll
Catherine Sedar
Charles Shephardson
Erin Short
Anna Skoug
Lana R. Slack
Elisabeth Smeda
Bill & Joyce Smith
Jennifer Smith
Patricia Sottile
Kenneth Springer
Keith Stalder
Ann Stat
Elizabeth Storley
Hugh Stuart
Susie’s Senior Dogs
Roland Sweet & Theordora Tilton
Tech Painting Company Inc.
Michael Thimblin
Annalou Tirol
Irene Toporovskaya
Wendy Tuthill
Wayne Van Nostrand
Sharon Vannucci
Sheila Vaughan
Barbara Veloz
Patricia Vinail
Michael Vitancovic
Philip & Amanda Wait
Patricia Wangeman
Ta-Sha Watkins
Whole Dogz
Jeff & Denise Wilburn
Stephanie Wiles
L. S., Williams Fund
Andrew Wise & Karen Baragona
Malgorzata Wright
Anna Wyant
Sandy Yamamoto
Merrill Yee
Eve Young
Jason Zaragosa
Brian Joseph Zwit

Dirty Paw Photography
Dory, Adopted October 2021

Diligent Light