

Issue Three:
January
2014

1,797: the number of animals adopted in 2013.

4,200: the total number of animals taken in by the shelter in 2013.

785: the number of outdoor cats spayed or neutered in 2013.



Homecoming

A newsletter from the **Fairfax County Animal Shelter**

Shelter Renovations Nearly Complete

The shelter reconstruction and renovation is nearly complete. So what will be different? First of all, there will be two lobbies. The existing lobby will be the adoption center and the receiving lobby will be used for other services, such as surrendering animals, purchasing dog licenses and picking up stray pets. This will mean prompt, efficient customer service and shorter wait times for adopters.



In addition to the new lobby, there will be two large community rooms. These rooms will be used for a variety of purposes, including meetings, classes, camps and special programs. Classes for adopters, volunteers and pet owners will begin this summer.

Upon completion, there will be 121 dog kennels, 80 cat enclosures and 50 small animal cages. A communal cat room will house our long-term feline residents and an outdoor cat enclosure, or "catio," will provide cats with additional enrichment and exercise.

Also, the dog play yards are being expanded to give dogs even more room to run and play. A canine agility course will bring color and excitement to the outdoor areas.



Want to see the newly renovated shelter for yourself? Contact us to set up a tour for your school, Scout or community group today by calling 703-324-0208 today! Tours last 30 minutes and can be scheduled on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 3 and 6 p.m. or Saturdays between 9 and 11 a.m.



Play Groups for Shelter Dogs

Imagine going to a dog park where none of the dogs have homes and you can pick out your favorite one and adopt it. Just a dream? No! Every Saturday morning from 10 a.m. to noon you can come to the shelter to watch all of the available dogs play in our outdoor dog yards. Play groups let you see the real personalities of dogs you are considering adopting. And while you watch, a shelter staff person or volunteer will be on hand to tell you more about the dogs who catch your eye. Bundle up, bring some hot cocoa, and get ready for a great time! Not in the market for a new dog but want to join the fun? No problem! Play groups are open to the public.

Four Great Starter Pets for Families!

While it's true that all pets need daily care and attention, some small animals make good first family pets because they are easier to care for than a cat or dog and can live in an enclosed space. People are often surprised to learn the shelter has many small pets available for adoption. Here are four starter pets that can regularly be found at the shelter.



Guinea pigs are social creatures who like to live in pairs or small groups. They make a cute squeaking noise whenever they see their favorite person, especially if that person has a treat for them! Guinea pigs, also called cavies, need fresh veggies and plenty of hay and guinea pig food. They live in a large enclosure and they like to hide in a guinea pig igloo, which can be found at your local pet store.

Rabbits can be quite strong and they are best owned by families with older kids. They are loving, affectionate and playful pets and they can even be trained to use a litter box and to walk (or hop) on a leash! Like guinea pigs, rabbits can live anywhere from five to 10 years. They have similar food and habitat needs to guinea pigs but in general, they require more frequent exercise and activity. They should be kept as indoor-only pets, due to the dangers of outdoor hutch living, which include mites, disease and predators.



The two most common types of **hamsters** are the Syrian, or teddy bear hamster, and the dwarf. Unlike rabbits and guinea pigs, hamsters prefer a solitary life and should be housed individually. These little "pocket pets," as they are sometimes called, enjoy burrowing in their bedding and running on a hamster wheel. Parents beware: hamsters are nocturnal, so they should not be kept in a child's bedroom, where they may keep your kids up at night.

Budgerigars, also known as budgies are actually small parrots, not parakeets as some people think. Budgies are relatively easier to care for than their larger cousins, and they can learn an extensive vocabulary. Budgies are native to Australia. At the shelter, you can find blue, green, and yellow varieties, but in the wild, they are all yellow and green. They prefer to live in pairs or groups and they need fresh seed and water every day.



Thinking of adding one of these pets to your family? Come to the shelter, where staff members will introduce you to available pets and tell you more about the needs and care requirements of each type of animal.

Photographers Make Shelter Animals Shine

Great photography plays a critical role in getting animals adopted. We have several volunteer photographers but Mary O'Malley and Deb Cobb deserve special mention.

Mary O'Malley has been volunteering at the shelter since March 2002. She photographs animals for adoption, works with small animals (especially rabbits), and with cats and dogs as well as helping out at special events. Mary is also the vice president of the Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter.



Deb Cobb, an award-winning, Northern Virginia-based photographer, is a member of the Shelter Art Foundation, a nonprofit organization that trains animal shelter staff and their volunteers to use professional portrait techniques and equipment and animal handling strategies to provide the best possible images of adoptable animals.



Interested in donating your artistic skills to help shelter pets? Contact Kristen.auerbach@fairfaxcounty.gov.

