



# Fairfax County Animal Shelter NEWSLETTER

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter)

December 2022

## Letter from the Director

During this season of gratitude, I'm incredibly thankful for all our staff. Our **animal care** staff tend to the daily needs of all our animals including walking dogs, cleaning kennels, filling food bowls, and administering medication. Our **customer care** staff and volunteers answer a multitude of questions from the community, reunite lost pets with their owners, and process adoptions. Our **communications and outreach** team keep our social media profiles updated with all our amazing animals, host public events, and support our network of fosters and volunteers. These three teams interface regularly with the community, and many of you know them well.

In this newsletter, we feature some of our staff whose work is more behind the scenes but is equally as important. Each team is a piece of a puzzle that completes FCAS, supporting and enhancing each other's work so we can serve the animals and people of our community with excellence.

- Reasa D. Currier, Director, Fairfax County Department of Animal Sheltering



## One House, 85 Cats & Many Helping Hands

By Nicole Jakstas, Animal Care Manager

On August 8th, 2022, Animal Protection Police (APP) responded to a call where it was estimated that 30 cats and five dogs were living in one home under questionable circumstances. Because of the conditions of the home, APP began the process of removing dozens of cats from the home and bringing them to the Shelter. After several days of rounding up cats, which involved using humane traps and attempts to remove cats who were

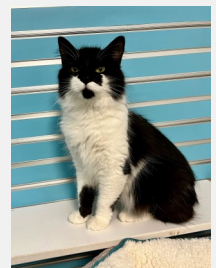


hiding in holes in the walls of the house, the Shelter received 85 cats and five dogs in total. The ages of the cats ranged from just days old to about four years old, and most of them were absolutely terrified.

The entire team of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter (FCAS) came together at a moment's notice to meet these animals' needs. The Animal Care Team worked to care for them and sort out who needed the most immediate medical attention. The rest of the shelter staff and the volunteers pitched in with what they could to support the Animal Care Team. Our wonderful Pender medical team worked tirelessly to get these cats healthy, and spayed and neutered. Partner shelters and rescues took a few small groups just to lighten the load a bit.

Once the dust settled and some cats were ready for adoption, they were made available for adoption just in time for the *Clear the Shelters* adoption event on August 27th. The response from the public and the interest in the cats was absolutely wonderful.

Slowly but surely over the course of the next weeks to months, most of these cats found new homes. Their adopters were prepared to welcome under-socialized kitties into their homes who were not yet used to human affection but had still shown the potential to be a pet with lots of time and patience. A few of the less social kitties were adopted as "working cats". One long-time FCAS supporter came up from Madison, VA, to adopt three working cats to live in her barn facing Old Rag Mountain.



Today, almost four months after the original intake, we have just ten cats from this home left at the Shelter. Most are available as working cats, but our staff and volunteers are still spending time with them every day to show them that people can be their friends. ●

To see the remaining adoptable cats, visit: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter)

## An Open Letter the FCAS Team on our 5th Gotcha Day

Five years ago, I was in a rut. I quit a job that I was supposed to love, but turned out hating and when I ran out of money, I had to move back home with my parents. It was a tough adjustment period and I struggled to find my place in the world.

'My dad sat quietly in the corner and waited for my Mom to leave the room. He then looked up at me, and said, "I'll go."'

At the time, my parents had been empty nesters through and through—no kids, no pets, no problems. Then their recent college grad shows back up on their doorstep and starts talking about adopting a cat. Truly, what I wanted was a dog, but I was never going to have any luck convincing my mom to agree.

After a lot of persistence, my mom agreed that a cat wouldn't be so bad.

We started perusing online and after lots of searching, I decided to look in-person at local shelters. On Friday, December 1st, 2017, my sister and I stopped into the Fairfax County Animal Shelter and instead of going to see any of the cats, I swung a right and headed straight to the dogs.

While speaking with a volunteer who was closing a kennel door, there was a notably loud vibrating sound. I looked around to see if I could place it in an already loud environment, when suddenly, I saw what—rather, *who*—was creating the sound.

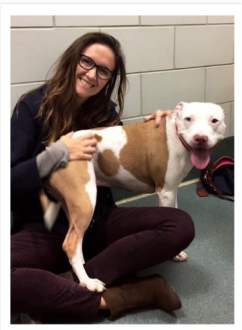
There, in the kennel next door, sat a small, white and tan mixed-breed dog with the saddest eyes you've ever seen. She was sitting up against the kennel door trembling so badly she was causing it to rattle loudly. Her kennel card told me her name was Twinkle. I turned to the volunteer and immediately asked if I could meet her. In the visitation room, I sat down on the floor with her and she sweetly came over and asked for butt scratches. We sat on the floor for as long as we could and I fell in love.

A member of the shelter staff let us know that they were closing for the evening but that if we came back early the next day, we could put in an application on Twinkle.

Now, I had to head home to my parents and plea for the dog they never agreed to. It went as well as you could have expected with my Mom who said, "absolutely not," and walked out of the room.

My dad sat quietly in the corner and waited for my Mom to leave the room. He then looked up at me and said, "I'll go."

We made a plan to be up at 7 a.m. the next morning to leave our house by 8 a.m. We were the first car in the parking lot. As other cars started to arrive we left our own toasty warm car and stood in front of the shelter doors until they opened. A line formed behind us, but we were first.



"Twinkle," in my lap at the Shelter.

When the doors opened, a volunteer asked if we were there to see anyone in particular and I erupted with excitement and almost shouted, "Twinkle!"

When it came time to pay the adoption fee, my dad pulled me aside and asked if I had enough money to cover it. Being an unemployed recent college grad, I can't imagine that I actually did, but I told him "yes" anyway. Without a word, he walked up to the counter ahead of me and paid the first half of her adoption fee.

On this Friday, December 2nd, 2022, we are celebrating our 5th *Gotcha Day* together, but it's the first one without my Dad. He passed away in February of this year and I've struggled a lot. At his service, I told the story of how I got Twinkle; it's because of him that I have her and there's not a day that goes by that I don't remember that.

My dad had gone to bat for me, because he just knew. Shortly after adopting her, I was forced to get up and get it together. I went out and got a job, then I got two, then I bought a car, and eventually stood firmly on my own feet enough to move out.

Having a dog to care for forced me to get it together, and she was exactly what I needed. I needed a reason to get up in the mornings, something to keep me going, and someone who would love me in return.

We decided on the name Val for her, short for *Valentine*, because she has the perfect shape of a heart on her side. From that day on, Val has become the center of our entire extended family. She is the sweetest, most gentle, goofy, cuddly, happy, house-hippo. When we came home, she was

*perfectly* trained. Over the years, she might have become a little bad...and spoiled...but she deserves it. My world revolves around this dog, and I have needed her more than I ever realized. She has gotten me through the toughest year of my life and I can't stand to go more than a few days without her.

In case you're wondering, my mom and Val turned out just fine. A little too fine, actually. We have a running joke that I adopted Val, but Val adopted my Mom; she is hands-down Val's favorite person.

There are not enough *thank you's* that would be enough to express how grateful I am to the dedicated shelter staff and volunteers at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. The work you do is tremendous. I am grateful for you for caring for my little girl and helping her get the second chance that she so greatly deserved. Forever and always, *rescued* will always be my favorite breed.

Wishing your team and community that follows a lovely and warm holiday season.

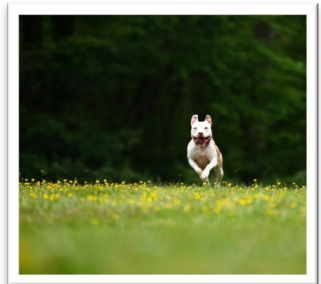
With lots of gratitude,

*Paula O'Rourke*



Dad and Val, together.

'She has gotten me through the toughest year of my life'



Val, living her best life!

## Introducing, The FCAS Admin Team!

Administrative staff plays a significant role in many businesses, but are frequently left the unrecognized heroes within the organization. The Fairfax County Animals Shelter's administrative team is vital to our shelter operations — from ordering supplies, paying bills, ensuring staff get paid — they do it all and then some! We felt like it was time that we introduce you to the team that supports all the other teams.

First, is the fabulous Admin II, **Leesa Hanagan**. Leesa primarily takes care of financial tasks, such as reconciling the daily cash reporting and dog licenses; updating spreadsheets for our veterinary bills; importing the costs into our animal database; and managing other reports such as custody records, bite quarantines, and appliance usage. She also maintains the adoptable pet kiosk so visitors can see what animals are available but not on the adoption floor, such as ones in foster care, in an office, or in a quieter area of the Shelter. Sometimes, when Leesa needs a break from all the numbers, she enjoys visiting and socializing with the animals that aren't quite ready for adoption, and documents information about their behavior and temperament. You'll see some of that information in the pet bios on our website.



Anna, assisting at a PAWS Program event

Next is our newest member of the team, Admin III, **Anna Wilson**. Anna is the primary contact for supply purchasing, food orders, and inventory, and she manages many other administrative tasks including mail distribution, injury reporting, gift card management, and time entry, just to name a few! On Mondays, Anna assists the front desk with their duties and she even devotes part of her time to the People and Animal Wellness (PAWS) program. She even helps with data reporting, analysis, and organization so we can track how we're doing as a Shelter!

We can't possibly forget our amazing Admin IV, **Chrissy Mead**. She manages the Shelter's credit card — yes, she's the one we go to when we need to make an emergency run to buy chicken feed or decorations for a special event. Chrissy has to track all balances, expenditures, and troubleshoots if there are card issues. She performs weekly reconciliation of purchases for the Shelter as well as invoices from our contract vet. Chrissy also completes restitutions for custody and cruelty cases, which involves coordinating with our contract vet and Animal Protection Police. On top of all that, Chrissy is part of the creative team who writes those catchy adoptable pet bios.

Last but certainly not least is their fearless leader, Business Manager, **Jen Ungar**! Jen handles all business, financial operations, and human relations functions for the animal shelter. Sound like a lot? It totally is, but she makes it look easy! Jen oversees the financial team staff, monitors budget procurement and account procedures, and ensures compliance with internal audit financial controls. She also manages the Shelter's gift funds and grant funds, as well as reviews and processes cash sheets, bill paying, and payroll!

Jen's dog **Annie**, a Shelter alum, accompanies Jen to work, where her sole responsibilities are the procurement and obliteration of squeaky toys. Annie takes her role very seriously!



Annie, on the job!

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you to Leesa, Anna, Chrissy, Jen  
—and okay, you too, Annie—  
for all your hard work.  
We couldn't do it without you!

## Wishing Everyone a Happy Holiday Season!

From the Fairfax County Animal Shelter



### WHAT'S HAPPENING @ FCAS?

**Low-Cost Rabies Vaccination & Microchip Clinic**  
Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>  
Fairfax County Animal Shelter

**Holiday Online Auction—Benefitting FCAS**  
December 7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>  
Hosted by Friends of the  
Fairfax County Animal Shelter  
[www.fcas.org](http://www.fcas.org)

**Small Mammal Pet Services Event**  
Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>  
Fairfax County Animal Shelter