



## Letter from the Director: The Truth About Breed

Every dog that comes into Fairfax County Animal Shelter is treated as an individual and there's good reason for that. Advances in canine DNA testing have demonstrated that **visually identifying a dog's breed is unreliable**. Researchers also find that characteristics we attach to certain dog breeds are often based more on stereotypes than on a dog's DNA.

Katherine Wu's recent Atlantic article, *Humans Can't Quit a Basic Myth About Dog Breeds*, tackles the notion of breed. She writes, "Experts agree that dog behavior is the product of a multitude of factors—



among them genes, development, socialization, and environment; they disagree on the ratios, the measurements, how they swirl together. The key ingredient in every recipe, though, is always us: the people who fancy themselves the arbiters of what makes a dog a dog."

Furthermore, there are several published studies that consistently show that **breed has no effect on a dog's propensity to bite**. Instead, these studies conclude that the predictive factors of whether a dog is dangerous or potentially dangerous include whether the dog is socialized, spayed or neutered, and receiving veterinary care. Experts like the American Veterinary Medical Association and the National Animal Control Association agree that no breed of dog is inherently dangerous and reject policies based solely on breed.

At FCAS, our highly skilled staff evaluates every dog—as an individual—and then we work to place them with a loving, adoptive family that matches their needs.

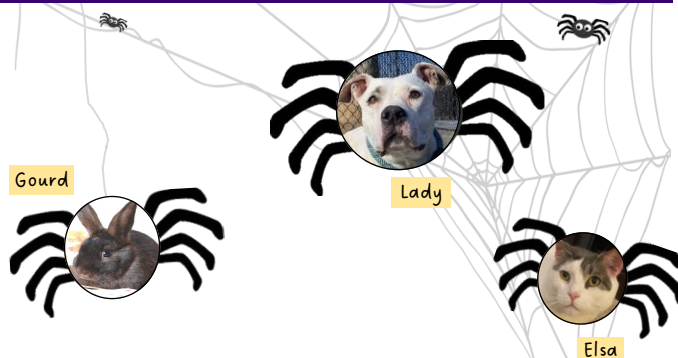
- Reasa D. Currier, Director,  
Fairfax County Department of Animal Sheltering

## The Beagles at Home

Last month in our newsletter, we told you about the beagles transferred into our care; they were part of a massive **rescue effort** of over **4,000 dogs** who were originally destined for life in a testing laboratory. Here they are now — Ziggy, Otis, and Vermont — just a few of the beagles **adopted** out from FCAS, now living the lives they truly deserve.



They might **crawl**,  
but there's nothing **creepy** about our adorable longest-term residents.  
Together, let's find them a home by Halloween!



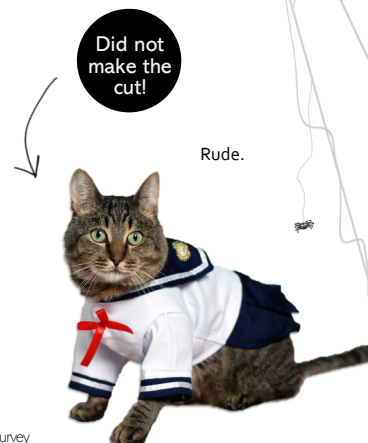
## FAVORITE PET COSTUMES

### The Rankings

1. Pumpkin
2. Hot dog
3. Bat
4. Bumblebee
5. Witch
6. Lion
7. Spider
8. Ghost / Cat\*
9. Superdog / Supercat\*
10. Devil / Dog\*

\*Tied

Source: NRF and Prosper Insights & Analytics 2022 Halloween Survey



## Adopting Out Black Cats in October?— Heck, yes!

The stories and myths about the danger of adopting out black cats during the month of October are a thing of the past. **There is no supporting data or evidence that adopting out black cats around Halloween poses any greater risk to the pets than adopting them out any other time of the year.** Plus, our standard adoption process applies year-round.

In our experience, black cats get adopted out just as quickly as any other cat. There's really no science to it—cat people just love cats. If anything, looks don't matter and rude behavior is a bonus! Cat knocks stuff off the counter? Owner loves them more and takes video of it. Cat puts their face in owner's food? Owner lets them eat it all and praises them! Cat drinks out of the sink/toilet/shower? AWESOME! Take another video and share it everywhere!

Many cat adopters want a loving lap cat, but just as many want the more grumpy ones. A cat of any color is fine.



Elsa

In our shelter, we find that the kind of cat an adopter had growing up is the type they gravitate to still. I write this tongue-in-cheek article as I have Elsa, the cat decked out in a beagle outfit, snoring behind me in my office. Do I find that ridiculous or annoying? Heck no! She even occasionally swats at me. LOVE IT. Posting to TikTok right now.

Cindy E. Sbrocco is the Daily Operations Manager at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. She oversees Adoptions, Intake, the PetHaven program, and yes, she currently shares an office with Elsa.



## Program Feature: PetHaven

When Julia\*, a Fairfax County resident, was tracked down and badly beaten by an ex-boyfriend, her immediate concern was about her 6-year-old Chihuahua mix, Lola\*. Lola was transported to the Fairfax County Animal Shelter by police while Julia received emergency medical attention for her injuries.

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter offers several short-term pet housing programs to assist community members during times of crisis. Our PetHaven Program is available to Fairfax County pet owners experiencing or affected by domestic violence.

Programs like PetHaven exist, in part, based on research on co-occurring animal abuse and interpersonal violence, often referred to as “the link”—the connection between animal abuse and domestic violence. Between 50% and 75% of female domestic violence survivors with pets report that their animals were either threatened, harmed, or killed by their abusers.<sup>1</sup>

Julia's concern was that her abuser would go the Shelter and try to claim Lola as his own dog. But she didn't need to worry, because the PetHaven Program and its policies were created with discretion and confidentiality in mind. Pets like Lola are brought in with few questions asked and no advanced notice required. They are given safe housing, food, veterinary care, and spay/neuter services (if needed).



Julia could finally be reunited with Lola and found a safe place for both of them. “I am now housed as you know,” she wrote to Shelter staff, “and [Lola] is thriving and loves her new home, both of us are [sic].”

If you or someone you know needs to use the PetHaven Program, you can email us at [animalshelter@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:animalshelter@fairfaxcounty.gov), or call us at 703-830-1100, or just come in with the pets who you'd like the Shelter to care for while you get to a safe place. ●

\*Based on true account with permission from pet owner. Real names have been changed to protect anonymity. Photo is stock image.  
<sup>1</sup> Article: Examining the links between animal abuse and human violence

## What's Happening in October?

Come learn!

**All About Roosters**  
Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Fairfax County  
Animal Shelter  
Training Room

Come see us!

**FCPD K9 Krawl 5k**  
Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>  
Fairfax County  
Government Center



## National Vet Tech Appreciation Week!

October 16<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>

Meet Jamie & Kevin!

In every vet clinic on the planet, vet techs and assistants are an essential part of a veterinary team. Jamie and Kevin, who work for our contracted vet, Pender Veterinary Centre (but spend hours upon hours here at the Shelter), play critical roles in maintaining our shelter animals' health and welfare.

Thank you Jamie and Kevin, for your care and compassion towards all pets!

