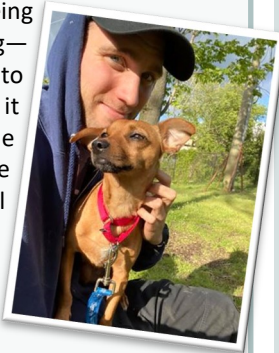




ALL HANDS ON DECK

An Interview With Animal Care Specialist, Adam Barstow

"It's hard when all the dogs love you." Our colleague was referring to Animal Care Specialist, Adam Barstow, and the inherent way shelter dogs are drawn to him. She wasn't being sarcastic or teasing—Adam wasn't there to hear it — she said it because it was true and to acknowledge that his special touch with all dogs could be an emotional burden at times.



Animal Care Specialists like Adam have the most hands-on time with Shelter animals and arguably have the most physically and emotionally demanding job at the shelter. Therefore, it made sense that when we wanted to learn more about the job—the highs, the lows, and the in-betweens—that we go direct to the source. We sat down, talked to Adam, and pulled some highlights from our conversation:

Interviewer: *What do you think is the best part of your job?*

Adam: My favorite part about working here is when we have a very fearful, scared, shutdown dog; working with them, gaining their trust and seeing them come out of their shell and they show their true personality.

Interviewer: *Can you think of a specific dog that evolved in that way? One that you worked with?*

Adam: Do you remember Rocco? [A volunteer] adopted him. So yeah, I really liked him because he was so scared. If you went slow with him, he was the sweetest,

(Cont'd. page 3)



Letter from the Director

Buttercup the puppy came into our care after he was found abandoned on the side of a busy road. His finder alerted us that he was injured and after an examination by our medical team, we discovered Buttercup was paralyzed in his hind legs. We also discovered that, despite his severe condition, Buttercup was a happy, playful dog who enjoyed soaking up all the attention he was receiving.

Our volunteers, staff, and medical team all pitched in to make sure Buttercup was getting exercise to heal and strengthen his body. At the beginning, we had to use a sling to support his back legs so he could walk, but he quickly progressed to standing and later walking independently. We placed Buttercup with an experienced foster family so he could continue his healing journey in a home. We also were able to arrange for Buttercup to attend donated hydrotherapy sessions with our community partner, Aquatic Paws. The warm water and jets accelerated Buttercup's recovery and then he did something we never thought possible....he ran!

For Buttercup and so many pets that come into our care, it is truly a team effort to prepare them for the second chance they deserve.

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



Knock, Knock. Who's There?

Tracking the Animals Who Come Through Our Doors

There seems to be a natural ebb and flow to the number of pets passing through our Shelter doors. Sometimes our intake of pets is higher than the number of pets who are getting adopted or returned to their owners, and the Shelter can feel really full. **When we're handling higher intakes, staff and volunteers are pushed to the limit to meet the demands of the higher population, until once again the population stabilizes,** intakes slow down, pets are adopted or go to foster, and we can breathe a sigh of relief until the next time.

Sometimes it's a little of everything—rabbits, dogs, parakeets, hamsters, cats—that pushes the total population higher. And sometimes it seems to be by species, with dogs or guinea pigs or kittens coming in more than anything else. At times, these patterns are more predictable, such as the 'Kitten Season' of the spring and summer months. **We just know that every spring, we'll get orphaned kittens, kitten-napped kittens, and very pregnant mom cats!** That's when our foster volunteers step up, to scoop these most vulnerable pets up and take them into their homes until they're ready for adoption. Sometimes, we get many pets of the same species all at once, like when a pair of mice or guinea pigs turns out to be of the opposite sex. Two can quickly turn into twenty!

Recently, our in-shelter population has been consistently high. We have the expected increase of kittens for Kitten Season, and yes, they are all as incredibly cute as you're imagining!

(Cont'd. page 4)

To Crate or Not to Crate? It Depends on Your Dog!



You may have heard that a crate is essentially like a dog's "natural den" and that they feel naturally safe in that type of enclosure. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. There are certainly dogs who love their crate and will go in there just because, or when they feel tired or stressed. But if a dog becomes

stressed when they go into their crate, the dog is much better off *not* being crated.

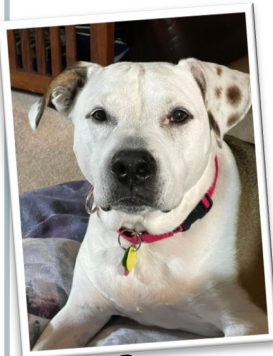
If your dog is bending metal bars or biting through plastic, the crate is doing more harm than good and you should consider other confinement options like an exercise pen, or confining the dog to one room with a baby gate.

The point is, going into a crate is not a natural instinctual behavior for most dogs and crate-training should be done using positive reinforcement and with patience!

An exercise pen might be a better option for some dogs as it's less confining than a crate. Plus, it's portable and can be positioned to fit any space.



All Hands On Deck (cont'd.)



Rocco

most loving dog and I felt bad because the first time I started working with him, whenever I'd go to pet him, he would yelp and cry. Yeah, he was so scared. And the fact that [a volunteer] adopted him, even though they only had him for maybe just a couple months, not even a year...Yeah, they gave him a really good end of life.

[At this point, we asked Adam about the burden of having a special touch with all the dogs — if it was even a burden at all.]

Adam: It is. It is because there are dogs that I have no issues with that I think are really great, sweet, affectionate dogs, but other people do not get the same interaction with the dog when working with them.

I do spend a lot of time with some of these dogs. I've always tried to give off a friendly, chill vibe and hope they reciprocate towards me. Even working with defensive, [fearful] dogs I try not to give off any fear, and if I do, I don't work with them that day. I will come back on a later date because if I go in feeling scared, nervous or anything, that's not going to go well. I'll just take baby steps. I'll just give them treats so it would be something positive and the next time if I'm feeling more comfortable then I'll go a step further and take them out, walk them. Then, if I feel comfortable the next day, I'll try petting them. But when I do pet them, it's very short, brief pets until they show me they're okay with it. I never try to push any dog. I always just try to make sure they're comfortable.

“Pretty much my entire life I’ve been working with animals.”

— A. Barstow

Interviewer: *It sounds like you’ve always been good with animals. Any stories from your youth about animals?*

Adam: My parents got a Beagle as a puppy, when I turned one. My siblings were six and eight years older than me, so that was like my little sister—the Beagle. She was fun. But yeah, I kind of grew up with her. She grew up to be 16 years old and passed away of old age. And once my older brother and sister moved out, she was like my sibling.

Interviewer: *In previous conversations, you’ve mentioned how this job has changed your attitude towards cats. Can you talk a little about that?*

Adam: So yeah, until I started working in veterinary medicine and here I didn't realize how funny and interesting cats are. I mean, there's like, the really chill kind [of cat], there's a really playful kind, there's the really affectionate

“I don't really care what a dog does, what a cat does before it comes here or while it's here, I will give that animal a good quality of life. — A. Barstow

kind...Yeah, I mean, after working with cats for a little while, like, wow, they're actually pretty interesting.

Sometimes it's the same as like working with a fearful, shutdown dog. We had a hoarding case of cats; they were all scared, they only came out to eat. So I'd spray Feliway® on their towels, give them toys, try to feed them tuna off a tongue depressor. And slowly over time they would start to realize like, “oh, these people are good.” But yeah, seeing them come out of their shells and start being affectionate or more engaging and not just hiding from you or running away — that was rewarding as well.



Interviewer: *What are you most proud of?*

Adam: I actually got a message from one of my friends. He said to me, that we were, “some of the most noble and courageous people out here” and he told me to “savor the fact [that it is] all hands on deck...you’re helping animals as much as possible. The world's better with y'all in it.” It felt good hearing that.

Because, sometimes, my coworkers mention to me, “you did a great job today, you really helped out today.” So just knowing the fact that me being here definitely makes a big impact on not just the animals, but also my coworkers; if I can make their shifts easier by helping them out in any type of way or making an animal's day better by being here. It's nice to know that me being here makes a difference.

Interviewer: *That sounds like a good friend.*

Later that day, Adam was kind enough to text us and thank us for the interview. He said, “It was nice to think about everything I do and why I enjoy doing it.”

Thank you, Adam. •

— Interview by K. Zenzano

Knock, Knock. Who's There? (cont'd)

Generally, though, our cats, kittens, and small pets like rabbits and guinea pigs are getting adopted into new loving homes fairly quickly. What's left then? Dogs! Our Shelter, like many in this area and across the nation, has a higher population of dogs who are staying in our care longer than usual while they wait for adopters. And as much as our staff and volunteers love getting to know each individual dog, what makes us all happiest is when we wave goodbye as they walk out the doors with their new families, wagging tails on the dogs, and happy smiles on everyone's faces.

So how can our community help? The number one way is to adopt your next dog, cat, mouse, guinea pig, rabbit, or other pet from our Shelter! And to spread the word with your friends, neighbors, and family that adoption is the way to go. Information about our adoption process, including a list with photos, videos, and bios on all our pets, is easily viewed online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter. We also welcome walk-in visitors during our open hours, to adopt or just to look around! ●



BEFORE *and After*

Every now and then, we get a cat whose coat is so matted that a clipper intervention is necessary. Fourteen-year-old Ethel was not doing a very good job grooming herself so FCAS Volunteer Kristi and Caretaker Teo helped her out!

Before



During!



After



CLASS:

Intro to Backyard Chicken Care

Have you thought about adding chickens to your home? Do you already have chickens and want to learn how to better care for them? Join us at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter on Saturday, June 3rd at 11 a.m. where local expert Kelly Rutkowski from Adopt-a-Bird Network will teach the basics of chicken care including types of housing, nutrition, predator-proofing, flock management, and other essentials. We'll also discuss:

- Disease/injury prevention
- Chicken behavior and enrichment
- Local laws regarding backyard chickens
- Post-adoption procedures (quarantine, common health issues, taming, and introducing to existing flock)
- The benefits of adopting roosters

and more!



Scan QR code to register!

