



Paw Press

Newsletter of the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs



Fall 2017

HSPS Dogs Find Their Calling

By Mike Stoll

You may recall that an article in our last newsletter told the story of Oliver, a Humane Society of Pagosa Springs shelter dog that was recruited for American Humane's inaugural *Shelter to Service* class. The *Shelter to Service* program trains shelter dogs to become service animals for military veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) or Chronic Brain Injury (CBI). Out of hundreds of potential candidates from around the country, Oliver was one of five dogs chosen to launch the new training program. Inclusion in such a small, prestigious group was kind of a big deal for a small town shelter dog.

When we left Oliver last spring, he was in Baltimore with his trainer and classmates undergoing several months of rigorous service dog training with the hope of making the grade



and graduating in July. Well, Oliver not only made the grade, he turned out to be the **top-dog of his class!** His trainer characterized him as *one of the two or three smartest dogs he had worked with over the past two decades.* Oliver easily mastered the necessary skills he needed to qualify as a PTS/CBI service dog, and upon graduation he was matched with his adopter John. John is an honorably discharged Marine who served in Iraq and survived multiple IED explosions during the Second Battle of Fallujah. John has been diagnosed with both PTS and CBI.

Late in July our shelter staff received a post-graduation update from American Humane, and the email read, "Oliver is a star!" CBS News published an article entitled "Iraq War veteran and PTSD service dog form instant bond." The article described the new *Shelter to Service* program and focused exclusively on John and Oliver. John described how Oliver can be both a playful dog and a working dog, noting that "When he puts that [service dog] vest on, he's all business. He's hyper-vigilant. He looks around. He stays on my left side and he will not move unless I tell him." John called Oliver his new best friend and expressed how grateful he was to have a reliable companion to help him meet the continuing challenges he faces every day.



During the months since Oliver's recruitment to the *Shelter to Service* program, HSPS has transferred three additional dogs to American Humane for service dog training. Keeper, Lance and Ollie are all progressing through training and have either graduated from the program or will



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Panda in training



Georgie Girl going through her paces

be adopted soon. According to an email from Dr. Amy McCullough, the director of the program, "They're all doing great!" Lance, now known as Panda, was the first of the three to be adopted and is "a perfect fit for his veteran." In another recent email, Amy said that Keeper, now known as Georgie Girl, is a super-fast learner. She is doing really well in new environments, and will be matched with her veteran by mid-November. Ollie, the newest recruit, was initially placed in foster care to overcome a tendency for car sickness but started into service dog training in mid-September. Amy assured our shelter staff that if the trainer could not work him through his car sickness "sweet Ollie definitely has a home with me!" She concluded her email with a grateful, "Thanks for all your help in finding these wonderful dogs!"

Whether it's an adoption in our home town or an adoption through a program like *Shelter to Service*, our staff explores a variety of options to assure that

every adoptable shelter animal has an opportunity for a fresh start. Each and every successful adoption is meaningful for the HSPS staff and worthy of celebration, and for both the adoptee and the adopter it's a potentially life changing event. For staff, it can also be extra gratifying when one of their *kids* has an opportunity to become not only a possible life-changer but also a potential life-saver for someone like a deserving veteran through a program like *Shelter to Service*. That opportunity to change a life, and save a life, is a primary reason that a small town shelter like ours has made it a goal to continue our working relationship with a large national organization like American Humane.

Attitudes toward shelter animals continue to evolve. Even so, there's still a sentiment that shelter animals are either irreparably flawed or discarded pets that deserve pity. That's why a program like *Shelter to Service* is both heartening and eye-opening: rather than needing pity, many shelter animals simply need the right opportunity, and rather than being irreparably flawed, many shelter animals simply need a bit of polish to shine like a star. We're grateful that Oliver got his opportunity to lead the way and show his true inner awesome dog so that Georgie Girl, Panda and Ollie could follow in his paw steps. We're also confident that John and other veterans with PTS and CBI are equally grateful that shelter dogs from around the country are on the same rewarding path that leads from shelter to service.

Did you know?

HSPS displays our adoptable shelter animals on several different websites to reach an expanded audience of prospective adopters. Over the last year, nearly one-fourth of all our adoptions went to homes outside our county and nearly one-third of those adoptions went to homes out of state. More potential adopters typically mean faster adoptions, which ultimately translates to shorter shelter stays for the animals in our care.

the role of foster dad, cleaning and playing with the foster kittens. Even Scout the dog believes he's a surrogate foster dad. Scout cleans and cuddles the kittens and stimulates them to go potty. Clearly, the entire Cole household has fully committed to the responsibilities of fostering.

The Cole family relocated from Pagosa Springs to the Denver area a while back, but they still continue to foster kittens for HSPS. When the kittens are old enough to adopt, the litters either come back to our shelter, or Ann and the boys find individual adopters in Denver or hold an adoption event at an area pet store. If the kittens do not return to Pagosa for adoption, she makes sure they are spayed or neutered, completes all the HSPS adoption paperwork, and insures all the accounting is properly done. In the world of foster care, what Anne and her sons do is above and beyond the call and deserves a platinum star!

Ann is a busy work-from-home mom, and Brian and Kevin are high school juniors. In addition to their regular school work the boys are taking college level classes and are also members of the junior ski patrol at Loveland Ski Area. Oh, and the three of them are restoring a '67 Mustang, too. Busy household? Sure, but they still find time for lots of kittens that need care and affection. When asked how they do it all, Ann's reply was, "No clue. You do what you have to do." It helps, too, if you do what you're passionate about, and the Coles are clearly passionate about helping young homeless animals.

So, to our fantastic feline fosters Ann, Brian and Kevin Cole – and helpers Scout and BeBe – a special thank you for all you do for HSPS and all the kittens you have helped get a paw up and a jump start on a better life!

HSPS is always looking for more good foster homes to help the animals in our care. Be advised that fostering 150 or more kittens is *not* a requirement. You may foster as little or as much as your time and lifestyle allow. For more information please contact Liz or Kim at the HSPS animal shelter at 970-731-4771, sheltermanager@humanesociety.biz or hsfoster@humanesociety.biz.

Fantastic Feline Foster

Here's a simple statement of fact: the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs (HSPS) could not effectively accomplish its mission of creating a safe haven for animals in need without the help of the many volunteers who give freely of their time and work tirelessly on behalf of the dogs and cats in our care. There is no "maybe" in that statement. Without our volunteers, our entire operation, from the shelter to the thrift store, to our fundraising events, would be functionally and visibly diminished. We say it often, but perhaps not often enough: we are sincerely grateful to each and every person who has been – and will be – a HSPS volunteer. We literally could not do it without you.

Volunteering for HSPS comes in many forms. Some folks regularly visit the shelter to walk and groom dogs, pet and socialize cats, or wield a broom and run the washer. Other folks prefer to volunteer at the thrift store sorting, tagging and shelving donated items or ringing up sales to help keep the organization's economic engine running at top speed. Still others donate their time and expertise putting their shoulders behind the wheel and pushing our fundraising events to great success.

Visibility is a common thread to most of those volunteer activities: volunteers at the shelter, thrift store or fundraising events are often highly visible and easily recognizable to staff and, in many cases, the public as well. However, there is one volunteer job that happens mostly out of sight and behind the scenes: being a foster caregiver. Sure, foster caregivers can be seen coming and going from the shelter, interacting with staff while picking up animals and supplies or delivering their well-cared-for wards. Yet the vast majority of their volunteer time occurs in the privacy of their homes and is not bound by regular hours on the clock.

Good foster care is fundamental to achieving a high rate of live outcomes for shelter animals. When the kitten tsunami floods in the spring or when puppies seem to be raining from the sky, the shelter can become a crowded, busy place. A good network of foster homes allows staff to lessen the burden by temporarily placing animals in home environments



Ann Cole with sons Kevin and Brian



Scout does his part to help the kittens



Brian cuddles foster kittens



Kevin with one of the foster kittens

where they get more essential one-on-one human interaction than can be achieved in a busy shelter. In addition to relieving shelter crowding, good early foster care experiences can also enhance a young animal's chance for a successful adoption by teaching the social skills and human orientation needed to become a well-socialized family member.

Helping young animals get a good start in life as a foster caregiver requires dedication, a commitment to nurturing, and the ability to send the little ones on their way to homes of their own when the time is right. It's rewarding, but not always easy. We'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all our foster caregivers and sincerely thank them for all they do for so many shelter animals. We'd also like to recognize the ongoing dedication of one special caregiver and her sons.

Ann Cole has been fostering kittens for HSPS for almost nine years now. In that time she has fostered 149 kittens, although since work started on this article she has taken another litter into her home so the count keeps rising. Eleven of those litters have been bottle-fed babies, which is the epitome of nurturing and a lot of work. Along with all the kittens, Ann has also fostered five puppies for HSPS.

Ann's sons Brian and Kevin are also active members of the Cole foster crew. As Ann puts it, "I started fostering because I wanted the boys to be involved with something bigger than themselves. To show them they could make a difference." The boys play with the kittens, feed and love them, and of course clean litter boxes too. The other reason Ann likes to foster? "I love the babies, and by fostering I don't end up the cat lady with 40 kittens!" In all those years of fostering all those kittens and puppies Ann has been a "foster failure" only three times, adopting a pup named Scout and two kittens, BeBe and Jack.

BeBe was a bottle-fed baby that Ann was afraid might not survive, so she and the boys started carrying him around in their robe pocket to keep him close and warm. Eventually BeBe started sleeping with Brian, and the two have been together ever since. Now that BeBe is grown he has assumed

Pagosa Turns Out in Force to Support the Auction for the Animals

After months of preparation and hard work by numerous volunteers and HSPS staff, the 23rd annual Auction for the Animals on August 25th proved to be a fun, festive evening and a rousing fundraising success. Auction attendees in the sold-out venue enjoyed a delicious meal catered by Alley House Grille as well as delectable desserts from KD Cakes, all served capably and with a smile by the local high school boys' soccer team. Both the silent and live auction portions of the evening were packed with a variety of awesome items thanks to the generosity of our many individual and business donors. There were bids aplenty on fabulous jewelry, original works of art, sporting equipment and a wide array of gift baskets. Unique items in this year's live auction included a Yamaha grand piano and a guitar autographed by Jimmy Page and Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin fame.

In addition to all our volunteers and donors who made the auction possible, special thanks go out to our financial sponsors who helped underwrite the auction: Platinum sponsors included Pagosa Springs Medical Center, Mike and Evelyn Tennyson, Joan Ward, Linda and Duncan Lawrie and the Lawrie Dogs, and Arlene and Jim Payne, while our Gold sponsor was Belvedere Arts (Susan Martin). Bid Cards were sponsored by Pagosa Medical Group (Doctors David Shaeffer and Amber Reiss-Holt) and the Bar (the "Crow Bar") was sponsored by Two Old Crows Gallery. Table sponsors included Ponderosa Lumber Company, Spectrum Construction, Summer Phillips Goldsmith and Richard and Lauren Zak.

Pull out the 2018 calendar, dog-ear the page for August and put a big circle around Friday the 24th for the 24th annual Auction for the Animals. It's never too early to plan ahead for a fun evening in support of a great cause!



Top Auction Business Sponsors

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IN MEMORY OF...

My dear Toby (Caesar) from Eva Manbeck
Buffy Muffy (cat) from Barbara J. Dickson
Nikolai (cat) from Doug Kimbrough
Mylan & Addison (cats) from Donald and Alice Stidham

Beau (dog) from Thomas and Elizabeth Griffin

Beaumont (dog) from Ann Graves

Blaze (dog) from Michael Nesbitt

Max (dog) from M'Liss Arnold

Toby (dog) from Joe and Mary Wells

Carol Ball from Bruce Davies

Winky, beloved dog of Steve & Carol Blechschmidt from Richard and Cathy Roberts

Eliza, beloved cat of Jo Bridges from Cheryl Logsdon

Theodore, beloved cat of Karen & Harris Bynum from Nita Niece

Ralph, the Maine Coon Cat from Tom and Kelly Musselman

Sophie, beloved dog of Jaye & DC Duncan from Marilyn M. Smith

LeRoy Ellison from Kate Ellison

Eliza, the most perfect kitty ever! from Joanne Bridges

Jack, beloved dog of Dana & Dennis Ford from Nita Niece

My beloved husband, Michael Jaworskyj from Diana Von Der Muhll Jaworskyj

Norm Karn, beloved husband of Jan Karn from Annette and Stephen Bowman

For all that we have loved and lost from Ann Shurtleff

Marilyn Breckenridge McCann from Gail Breckenridge, Adair M. Buckner, Mark Morey and Susan Burnette, W.L. Vierling and Maureen McCann

Morey Myers from Milton and Patricia Deason, Donna Lukken, Richard Marsellos, John Morey, William and Judith Myers, Natalie Nelson and Angie Buck, Cindy Tate

Dan Pickett (in lieu of flowers) from Tammy and John Brooks

Honey, beloved dog of Todd and Jann Pitcher from Ray and Jo Ann Laird

Beloved dog, Rocky from Miles and Connie Davidson

Sharon Shegiekawa from Julia and Paul McCormick

our long-time friend, Rex Shurtleff from Dave and Sandy Filleman

William "Rex" Shurtleff from Susan Wilson Bridger, beloved pet of Chris & Chrissie Stacey from Krista and James Miner

Rex Starks from Terry and Andrea Wyatt Tilly, beloved cat of Bill and Sherry Thornell from Pagosa Dental

Beloved dogs, Poco and Toby from Miles and Connie Davidson

Black Bart, a terrific cat of Carolyn Ullrich from John and Joyce Webb

Domino, beloved cat of Pat & Carolyn Ullrich from Nita Niece

Humphrey, beloved dog of Lauren and Richard Zak from Nita Niece

IN HONOR OF...

Holly Berry (cat) from Barbara J. Dickson

Louise Bailey from Donna Brombacher

Noah Wilger's 14th Birthday from Tom and Gayle Broadbent

Maisie Casias from Irvin and Andrea Casias Gracie, our Border Collie from Robert and Linda Burke

Heidi & Gracie from Linda Sue King and Susan Mercer

John Graves from Ann Graves

Maya Wyman, Birthday Wishes from J Dooling Koschalk

Kenneth Youker from Patricia and Jerry Roads

MEMORIAL GARDEN BRICKS

In Loving Memory of Morey Myers from Richard Marsellos

For All That We Have Loved And Lost from Ann Shurtleff

In Memory of ELIZA – The Most Perfect Kitty Ever! from Jo Bridges

Did you know?

Many states have adopted a specific breed of pet as a state symbol. Alaska has the Alaskan Malamute, Maine the Maine Coon Cat, Maryland the Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Massachusetts the Boston Terrier and so on. Colorado is the only state that has adopted shelter dogs and cats as its official state pet.



Humane Society of Pagosa Springs

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Collaborating on a National Level

Did you know that HSPS works in collaboration with other organizations beyond our state's borders to promote animal welfare and help save lives?

For the past three years we have been an active member in the **Best Friends Network**, a coalition of animal shelters and rescue organizations sponsored by the well-respected Best Friends Animal Society. The network is committed to actively saving lives and reducing shelter deaths. Being a network member gives us

opportunities to work with other network partners from across the country and also provides assistance at the local level. As a benefit of being a network partner, Best Friends has donated large quantities of top quality dog and cat food to HSPS on three separate occasions over the past two years. Thanks to Best Friends, the money saved on food has gone into our programs for spay/neuter and emergency medical assistance to benefit more pet dogs and cats in our community.

HSPS is also one of 4,371 animal shelters from around the country that participate in the **Shelter Animals Count** initiative, a project aimed at compiling the essential information needed to give an accurate picture of animal sheltering in the US. Despite significant progress over the past two decades, far too many shelter animals around the country still perish each year. Shelter Animals Count is a collaborative effort to create and share a national database of sheltered animal statistics with the goal of "...enabling data-driven decisions to promote saving companion animals' lives and preventing homelessness." Each month HSPS and the other participating shelters contribute information on shelter intakes and outcomes. The data compiled by Shelter Animals Count helps create an accurate picture of current shelter practices and significantly enhances the dialog toward establishing a best-practices model for humane sheltering. Both the Best Friends Network and the Shelter Animals Count initiative are prime examples of *working together to save more lives*, and HSPS is pleased to be an active participant.

