



Paw Press

Newsletter of the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs



Fall 2019

Lucky Lexi and Her Lobster Paw

By Mike Stoll

Lexi was surrendered to the HSPS animal shelter in late July when she was just 11 weeks old. Her owner, who had only had Lexi for a very brief time, had just been diagnosed with a medical condition that would make raising and caring for a young – and soon to be large – dog difficult. Lexi was a fully-papered German Shepherd puppy, but the breeder who sold her had no interest in taking her back because, well, she had a bit of a flaw in her otherwise striking appearance. Lexi's front left foot more closely resembled a lobster claw than a puppy paw.

When I entered the shelter the day after Lexi's arrival, one of the staff asked if I had seen the lobster dog yet. I have to admit I was instantly curious. Was it a breed I'd never heard of or perhaps some sort of exotic new hybrid? When I met Lexi my first impression was of an adorable and beautiful German Shepherd pup. It wasn't until the staff person cuddling her extended her left foot toward me that I saw her lobster paw.

A normal dog paw has four toes (not counting any dewclaws). Lexi's left paw had the requisite number of toes, but her outer toe was virtually detached from the rest of her paw. Not only were there several inches of daylight between her outer and inner toes, that inner toe was also deformed. It was the sizeable gap between those two toes that created the



impression of a crustacean claw rather than a normal dog paw.

Thankfully, the deformity in her paw did not seem to seriously impeded her ability to walk, play and get from here to there. It certainly didn't seem to affect her personality because she was a sweet young pup that liked people and welcomed the attention she was getting. Knowing, however, that she was destined to become a fairly sizeable adult, shelter staff were concerned that her paw deformity might become more of a detriment to mobility when she was fully grown. We decided for Lexi's long-term benefit to pursue reconstructive surgery for her paw.

After x-rays and consultations, one of our local veterinarians performed the reconstructive surgery by removing her small, deformed inner toe and closed the large gap by combining her outer toe with the remainder of her paw. When the splint was removed a couple weeks later and replaced by a soft bandage, both surgeon and staff were very pleased with the results and pronounced the operation a great success. From all appearances, Lexi was quite pleased too!

After a requisite amount of time to heal and adjust to her new footing, Lexi moved into her new adopted home. Her left front paw may always look a bit unusual, but beauty, as the saying goes, is only skin deep. What matters most is that she has a fully functional front paw rather than a deformity that could have made her life more challenging as an adult. Thanks to our local veterinarian's skill, Lexi has a bit more positive traction for her life's journey ahead.



Continued on next page...

Lexi and Her Lobster Paw can't...

Lexi's story is not entirely unique. Over the course of each year a number of animals enter the HSPS shelter needing medical attention. Incoming medical needs can range from serious injuries and acute life-threatening diseases that require urgent care, to more stable conditions that need evaluation, developed treatment plans, and perhaps, in cases like Lexi's, future surgery to correct congenital or chronic conditions. Shelter staff is very good at conducting intake examinations and noting abnormalities or something that "just doesn't look right," but diagnosis and treatment ultimately falls into the domain of a veterinarian.

Unlike many larger animal shelters in Colorado, HSPS does not have on-staff veterinarians or vet clinic facilities at our shelter. Consequently, we work very closely with the local vet community to meet the medical needs of the shelter animals. We are fortunate to have a productive and mutually beneficial working relationships with all the veterinarians in our area.

With roughly 700 animals moving through the shelter each year, the need for veterinary care is frequent and extensive. And while urgent care for injuries and disease is always a high priority, our more common interactions with vets revolve around daily care and our spay/neuter programs. In an average year, between 500 and 600 spays and neuters associated with HSPS will be performed, including shelter animals preparing for adoption, community-owned pets in the Fix-It-Free and Spay-Aid voucher programs, and feral cats from our TNR trapping program. Our partnership with the veterinary community is essential to keeping pet overpopulation in check locally in addition to keeping the shelter population healthy.

The Pagosa area vets help us bring the best quality care possible to our shelter dogs and cats and help many of those animals prepare for successful adoptions. Our veterinarian community is an essential ingredient in our ability to create a safe haven for animals in need, and we sincerely thank them all!



Local Artists Beautify Shelter Grounds!

The June 22 combined shelter open house and storage container painting party was both fun and colorful. The event was a collaboration between the Pagosa Springs Arts Council (PSAC) and HSPS that brought together local artists, young and old, to turn the drab industrial storage container on the shelter grounds into an eye-catching work of art.

Local artist Kathleen Steventon's vibrant 40-ft mural promoting adoption covers the entire north side of the container and greets visitors as they approach the shelter. Her mural is nearly complete and should be finished this fall. Other local artists

participated in creating a collage of animal portrayals on the remainder of the container, and their work will continue next spring and summer as long as space is available. Numerous younger artists also applied their talents to adding color and creative brush works to a half-dozen wooden dog houses on the shelter grounds.

A huge thank-you to PSAC and all the artists who participated in a truly wonderful display of public art at the shelter by adding their unique visual expressions of the joy and beauty that companion animals bring to the lives of so many of us. Huzzah!



An Unforgettable 25th Auction for the Animals

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of all our volunteers and staff and the generosity of our sponsors, donors and auction attendees, the 25th annual Silver Anniversary Auction for the Animals was a huge success. Auction attendees enjoyed a delicious meal catered by The Buck Stops Here and delectable dessert from AD Cakes. The sweet sounds of the Tim Sullivan Band with surprise guest vocals from Johanna Laverty had folks up, dancing and kicking their heels! The Pagosa Springs high school boys' soccer team and cheerleaders served up food with a smile. It was indeed a fun evening!

The silent and live auction portions of the evening were packed with an array of awesome items generously donated from businesses and individuals. The bidding was buzzing, and more than enough funds were raised to keep our shelter dogs and cats well fed and healthy for the coming months! During the dedicated-give at the end of the live auction, the amount of money pledged sent us well on our way to realizing the goal of replacing all the aging cat kennels in the shelter. Entirely new housing for the shelter cats should be in place in the very near future!

Two very dedicated and tireless volunteers, auction chair Evelyn Tennyson and her able assistant Ann Sanders, were recognized during the event. Without their efforts and those of all the other behind-the-scenes volunteers, the auction would never have gotten off the ground.

Special thanks also go out to all our financial sponsors who helped underwrite the auction. Platinum sponsors included Evelyn Tennyson, Joan Ward, and Fort Lawrie and the Lawrie dogs; Two Old Crows sponsored the wine glasses and the bar (the "Crow Bar") and Pagosa Springs Medical Center was our bid card sponsor.

Additional financial sponsors at the Gold level included Spectrum Construction, Belvedere Arts LTD, and Drs. Rhonda and Bill Webb; our Silver sponsor was Jim and Arlene Payne; Table Sponsors included Home Again/Lazy One, Jody Brown/Farmers Insurance, Summer Phillips Goldsmith, the Zak Zoo, the Wednesday Dog Walkers, and the Shelter Dogs and Cats. Also contributing were Josie Stern and Vic Middlekauf, Delaney and Associates, Alpine Inn of Pagosa Springs, King Campbell, DDS, OK Nails, Buck Frisbee Landscaping and Professional Insurance Resources.

Twenty-five consecutive years of the Auction for the Animals have made a significant contribution to sustaining our mission of creating a safe haven for homeless animals, and it would not have been possible without all our supporters, past and present. Paws-up, high-five and a big round of applause to everyone, everywhere who helped make this and so many other auctions a big success for the shelter animals!



FORT LAWRIE
Technical Services



Less Stress for Shelter Dogs

By Mike Stoll

We recently returned from the Colorado Federation of Animal Welfare Agencies (CFAWA) annual conference in Denver. HSPS has regularly attended the conference since its inception ten years ago. We spent three days learning about advancements in best-practices for sheltering, discovering new and innovative programs, and networking with colleagues from respected animal welfare organizations in the state and from around the globe.

In the past decade we have taken many new concepts learned at CFAWA and modified them to fit our capabilities, in terms of staff size, skills and our financial resources. These new programs have benefited the lives of the shelter animals in our care as well as the community at large.

This most recent CFAWA conference produced some good food for thought and potential future action. In a keynote conference presentation, Dr. Lisa Gunther highlighted recent research into measuring stress in shelter dogs and identifying ways to effectively combat that stress. As animal shelters have moved away from the outmoded model of short holding periods and high euthanasia rates to the more humane model of creating live-outcomes for the greatest number of animals in their care, the length of shelter stay between intake and release has invariably gotten longer. As Dr. Gunther put it, "Shelters are becoming more like orphanages than temporary ports-in-the-storm due to longer stays." For residents that don't find a new home quickly, identifying ways to effectively address the inevitable stress associated with shelter living is essential to the pets' well-being.

In shelter environments there are multiple potential stressors: excessive noise, spatial restrictions, social isolations (from people and other dogs), and a lack of control and lack of accustomed predictability. Stress in shelter dogs has been confirmed not only by observing increases in stress-related behaviors but also through measuring physiological indicators associated with increased stress, such as cortisol levels, known as the *stress hormone*.



Enrichment activities have proven to be one way to combat stress in shelter animals and have become standard operating procedure in many shelters over the past decade, including the HSPS shelter. The global aim of enrichment is to improve the quality of life of shelter animals by providing the mental and physical stimulation needed to keep them actively engaged and healthy. Enrichment activities include nose-work, agility skills, toys, and modifying the auditory and sensory environments. Enrichment also includes social interactions with other dogs and people.

With all of these enrichment interventions how do you determine what helps the most? By comparing changes in cortisol levels before, during, and after different kinds of enrichment activities, researchers found the *most effective enrichment activity for shelter dogs clearly seems to be human interaction*.

Why is knowing that helpful? Animal shelters are busy, and sometimes hectic, places with daily cleaning, feeding and animal care occupying a sizeable chunk of time. Knowing what kinds of enrichment have the most benefit can help prioritize how the time available is used. As little as fifteen minutes of one-to-one human interaction has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, and increasing that interaction to thirty minutes or more has even greater benefit. This means that all the volunteers who come to the HSPS shelter to walk and socialize dogs (and cats) have been making pets' lives

measurably less stressful and better!

This year's CFAWA Conference introduced us to some innovative and exciting new programs to reduce stress in shelter dogs: ***field-trips and sleepovers!***

Field-trips involve pairing a shelter dog with an appropriate person for a morning, afternoon, or entire day out of the shelter. Pre and post field-trip measurements have shown greater and longer lasting reductions in shelter dog cortisol levels from these brief holidays.

Sleepovers are another innovative idea that's now finding its way into the enrichment toolbox. While a program like foster care – temporarily moving animals out of the shelter and into a home for treatment and/or socialization – has been part of HSPS procedures for quite some time, the sleepover concept is something very different. The duration of sleepovers is only one or two nights, much shorter than typical foster care. Sleepover participants come from the general shelter population without necessarily having any of the special needs or requirements that are more typical of foster care animals. Research has shown that dogs get less quality rest while in the shelter. Sleepover research indicates that dogs get a chance to catch up on much-needed rest during their brief respite.

A typical sleepover often goes something like this. Once the dog enters the home and explores the new environment to its satisfaction, it often settles down and conks out for a prolonged, deep sleep. Sleepover dogs aren't just cat-napping, they're actually catching up on sleep. Cortisol measurements before, during and after the sleepover show a greater reduction in stress than what occurs from short human interactions or half-day field-trips, and stress levels stay lower for longer once the dogs return to the shelter.

We need to work out the logistics before we can introduce field-trips or a pilot sleepover program at HSPS, but consider it very likely that we'll be stocking day-packs and doggy pajamas in the future!

If you or someone you know would like to find out more about enrichment or would like to become a volunteer in either current or future shelter programs, please contact the HSPS animal shelter (970-731-4771) or administration office (970-264-5549).

Thanks for the purrrfect new digs!

Thanks to the generosity of our Auction for the Animals attendees and additional post-auction donations, the shelter cats and kittens will soon have brand new, custom kennels to call home.

The existing cat kennels have been in place since the “new” shelter opened in 2007, and they are definitely showing their age. Years of wear and tear can take a toll on kennel surfaces. Nicks, dings and rougher-than-normal edges make cleaning and sanitizing kennel surfaces more difficult, and a thorough regular cleaning is paramount to keeping the shelter cat population healthy.



New housing for our shelter cats had been on the wish-list the past few years, but the estimated cost of over \$40,000 to replace all the existing kennels had seemed too big a stretch. Yet even a long journey starts with the first step, so during the dedicated-give portion of this year’s live auction we asked attendees to give whatever they could with the hope of raising enough funds to at least get the project started.

The response from the auction audience was overwhelmingly positive, and when the kitty litter finally settled and the pledges were added the amount raised was nearly *three-fourths of the total kennel replacement cost!* The effort to raise some serious scratch for the cats’ new digs was definitely a success. Additional dedicated donations during the two weeks following the auction *raised the rest of the estimated amount for the entire project!*

The support HSPS receives locally and from afar is something that is sincerely appreciated and never taken for granted.

Thanks to the many generous gifts, new cat kennels are currently being designed and custom-made to replace all the old existing ones. The goal is to have the shelter cats celebrating the holidays in some brand-new cat cottages! A huge and heartfelt thank-you to everyone who made this much-needed upgrade possible and to all our supporters who do whatever they can to make life better for the shelter dogs and cats. Happy holidays to everyone from all the hands and paws at HSPS!



IN HONOR OF...

Sandy Cepen who is retiring after 5 years of dedicated service as the HSPS Administrative Assistant. Wishing her a most happy retirement from all of us at HSPS. Sandy, you will be missed!

- Thanks to HSPS for my Sunshine “Kokomo” from Noreita Kempe
- Apple Butter (Chihuahua) from Cynda Green
- Hemmingway (Hemi) and Thumbelina (Emma) from Betty Clouse
- Ellen Seylar’s birthday from Kenneth and Dinah Rogers
- Geraldine Crouch’s birthday from Scott and Rhonda Young
- Maise Casias from Irvin and Andrea Casias
- Jack Crouch on Father’s Day from Scott and Rhonda Young
- Shadow (our perfect cat adopted from HSPS) from Joyce and Još Webb
- Rusty & Berry, adopted from HSPS from Coye and Priscilla Jones
- Maurine Marshall from Phyllis Smallwood
- Sara Rumley from Rick and Janet Santopietro
- Thank you for keeping the shelter animals safe from Rocio Scott
- HSPS volunteers from Alan Marzloff
- All of the Kempe Pets through the years from Noreita Kempe



IN LOVING MEMORY OF...

- Cheyenne (dog) from Ventura and Sharon Armenta
- Lacey (dog) from Lisa Burnson and Kevin Brown
- Lola (dog) from William Lovil
- Lulu (dog) from Betty Clouse
- Tessa (dog) from Deborah Hutchinson
- Tucker (dog) from Martha Harris
- My husband from Maurine P. Marshall
- Matthew Langseth from Melissa Zimmerman
- Susan Weiland’s mother, Barbara Larsen from Debbie Blackshear
- Karma, beloved dog of Nita Niece from Linda and Duncan Lawrie; Nita Niece
- Carole Shewbridge from Tim Dippel
- Dusty, beloved dog of Kathy & Anthony Steventon from Linda and Duncan Lawrie
- Abby Ann, precious cat of Joyce & Još Webb from the Wednesday Dog Walkers
- Carma, our girlie friend, “See You Little Whites” from Sandra Smith
- Mojo, beloved bird of David Forbes & Kelly Wyatt from Terry and Andrea Wyatt

MEMORIAL BRICKS

- “Honoring Joan Arnold, a dedicated Volunteer at HSPS. Our shelter animals really thank you!” from ALL of HSPS
- “Honoring Carole Young, a dedicated Volunteer at HSPS. Our shelter animals really thank you!” from ALL of HSPS
- “In gratitude for all the Kempe Pets through the years” from Noreita Kempe
- “Thanks to HSPS for my Sunshine “Kokomo”” from Noreita Kempe
- “Rocky, Karma, Kaya, Lady, Tikaani, Scooter, Shelter Staff Pets” from HSPS Shelter Staff
- “Carma, our girlie friend: See You Little Whites” from Sandra Smith



Humane Society of Pagosa Springs

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Humane Society Thrift Store

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Art for the Animals: Save the Date!

Join HSPS and the Pagosa Springs Arts Council on November 30 at the PLPOA clubhouse for the ever-popular, fun and festive holiday shopping experience– the 4th annual *Art for the Animals*. This event has grown in size and scope each year since its inception, and 2019 should be the biggest and best yet! Twenty local artists and artisans will display their wares, with a portion of the event's proceeds going to support the HSPS animal shelter.

Kick off the holiday season with a superb combination of great gift-buying options, scrumptious food, live entertainment and an array of tasty beverages that make this event highly anticipated. Be sure to stop and shop on **Saturday, November 30 from 10 am to 3 pm at 230 Port Avenue.**

