



Paw Press

Newsletter of the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs



Summer 2012

A Healing Journey

by Elizabeth Williams

What began with an invitation to join some friends for Spring Break became a healing journey: a journey to heal the broken hearts of a family who've loved and lost, a journey to heal the mind from the stress of everyday life and a journey to heal a companion who didn't know she needed to be healed.

Over the last 2½ years our family has experienced some of the major stressors of life, including job loss, loss of companion animals, an emptying nest, heart surgery and the financial stress of a declining economy. Vacations haven't been an option. As Spring Break approached, our friends invited us to join them at their family vacation home in Pagosa Springs for skiing, snow play, shopping and relaxation. We jumped at the opportunity thinking it would be a nice respite, hoping to recharge our batteries.

About 2 years ago we had to put down the last of our dog companions. Shadow, whom we'd had for ten years, was a black Lab diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma in his nose. The previous year we had lost our other black Lab, Bear, due to degenerative myelopathy. My husband adores chocolate Labs and his birthday was approaching in April. I had been looking in shelters in Austin for a chocolate-something to adopt but no luck.

When we got to Pagosa Springs, the men of the families went skiing and the gals went into town to shop. We stopped in at the Humane Society Thrift store and struck up a conversation with the man behind the counter. The store had a futon that my friend was interested in for the family home. When we got back to the cabin, she tried to find photos of the futon through the website to send to her mother-in-law for approval. On the website was a photo of the "Pet of the Week". She laughed and called me over to the computer. There was a beautiful chocolate Newfoundland/Lab puppy, approximately 6 months old, named Cason. I took one look and said, "Let's go!" We drove to the shelter and I fell in love.

Cason had another interested family that had applied for her before us. We had to wait to see if that other family would accept one of her littermates instead. They took the male which left Cason for us! As a family, we have always joked about going in twos. We have two sons, two dogs, two cats, two guinea pigs etc. I was

convinced that we should have taken Cason and her last litter mate but my husband was having none of it. I even said I would put my husband on a plane home to make room for another dog! No. We knew that the next female dog was going to be named Duchess. But royalty can't be royalty without land, right? So, Cason became The Duchess of Pagosa Springs.

Duchess was an easy fit into the family. She rode quietly in the backseat with Jacob, our 13-year-old son. They bonded over the 800 miles that we traveled home. We took lots of breaks and once we got home, she worked to earn favor with the cats and quickly became woven into the fabric of our family. Jacob had soccer practice on fields close to Lady Bird Lake in downtown Austin. Lady Bird is a destination for walkers, runners, dogs and bikers. We took Duchess with us to practice and let her run/walk on the trails around the lake. I noticed that after she rested from the runs, she was hesitant to get up with her back legs. I repeatedly watched her pull up with her forelegs and sometimes limp after these excursions. When we took her to meet her vet and get her rabies vaccine, I mentioned these episodes to the doc. He did an exam diagnosing her with moderate to severe hip dysplasia; a diagnosis confirmed by x-rays.

We were hugely disappointed. The degree of dysplasia was such that the vet said, "No more runs or long walks. Here are some pain and anti-inflammatory meds." We were referred to specialty veterinarians in Austin and San Antonio for surgical options. We elected to go with the TPO option, which is a Triple Pelvic Osteotomy, to be performed by the specialist in San Antonio; Dr. Fred Williams, the founding partner at South Texas Veterinary Specialists. Dr. Williams handled Duchess's case, performing the surgery bi-laterally on April 30th of this year.

Duchess is managing well. Without the surgery, the muscles in her hind end would have atrophied or never fully developed. Duchess has months of recovery ahead but with our patience and her determination, she will succeed.

We left Austin in March a broken, stressed-out family in search of rejuvenation and relaxation. We came back a week later with a new family member that was broken and in need of rejuvenation. I feel that Duchess was a God gift to us as we were to her. We are living examples of the enduring kindness and steadfast love and support between the spiritual and physical, human and canine.

Working to Enrich the Lives of Shelter Animals

Mike Stoll, Executive Director

Part of the ongoing mission of the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs is “to provide a safe haven for animals in need.” We strive hard to meet that standard. In 2011, 98% of incoming animals were adopted to a new family, reclaimed by their owners, or transferred to a compatible shelter in a larger community where opportunities for adoption are better. This successful release rate far exceeds the 90% threshold used as a benchmark for designation as a no-kill shelter by most no-kill advocacy groups. This is a statistic our hard working shelter staff can feel very good about.

There is, however, a statistic we would like to improve. Dogs and cats often stay with us too long. In 2011, dogs left by their owners remained in our care for an average of 45 days before either being adopted or transferred; for cats the average was 86 days.

Our staff works diligently to create a safe environment for the animals in our care, but the demands of daily duties leave little time for sufficient one-on-one interaction with each animal. The ill effects of boredom and confinement and the potential bad habits associated with spending a long time in a shelter environment can lead to behaviors that may make an initial adoption more difficult or even undermine an adoption once the animal finds a home.

We are attacking the problem of long-term kenneling on two fronts. First, we are creating solutions to help reduce the length of shelter stays by increasing our number of transfer partners, growing our foster care network, and expanding our adoption options with more venues and more aggressive marketing.

We are also attacking the problem on a second front by implementing a shelter enrichment program. This program will help alleviate and even prevent some of the ill effects of long-term sheltering. Our original goal had been to develop and implement the enrichment program in 2013. But when local dog trainer Marnie George expressed her enthusiasm for the program earlier this spring and

made an immediate commitment to spearhead the endeavor and handle all training, we decided to push forward with implementing the program now.

The initial phase of the enrichment program is designed specifically for shelter dogs, with three primary objectives: to teach adoptable dogs basic manners by actively reinforcing positive behaviors (clicker training), to promote faster adoptions of well behaved dogs by making better first impressions with adopters, and to identify and correct problem behaviors before they multiply among the shelter population.

The enrichment program’s early success is due to Marnie’s unwavering enthusiasm for helping people and animals, the shelter staff’s support, and the dedication of our tireless volunteers, our real heroes in this story!

With new dogs constantly entering the shelter, training has to be an almost daily part of the shelter routine. This kind of program requires commitment from a lot of volunteers.

To keep the enrichment program moving forward we need help. **We need more volunteers** willing to commit time and energy to the program. Just two hours a week can make a difference. As a bonus, volunteers develop dog training skills working with Marnie, an acknowledged expert in the field, and those skills can be a valuable asset in their relationship with their own dogs.

We also need financial support.

Implementing the program ahead of schedule meant it was not in this year’s budget. The enrichment program is currently being run as a pilot-program that can be funded only until late summer. After that, we’ll have to put it on hold. Donations to the enrichment program could help keep this beneficial work going to the end of the year.

Does the enrichment program really make a difference? Brandon Smith, our senior kennel attendant, has been a shelter staff member for several years. He recently

shared this observation: “A little more than a month into the training and all I can say is WOW! I have already heard from several members of the public who said they never have seen the dogs so quiet and well behaved. This is a program that should be kept going. It would be a great shame to see it go away.”



Our Wish List



- Bleach and other cleaning supplies
- Dark colored blankets for camouflaging feral cat traps at night
- Dry cat food for the feral cat TNR program
- Foster Homes
- Funding for the shelter enrichment program
- Gently used water and food bowls for emergency sheltering
- High quality tasty dog treats for the shelter dog enrichment training program
- Kuranda dog beds (donate online at: kuranda.com/donate/3584)
- Large (used) dog crates for emergency sheltering
- New bank of cat kennels in the shelter
- Paper towels and toilet paper
- Pig's ears
- Puppy training pads
- Small to medium sized refrigerator (for animal shelter staff)
- Wet cat food and wet dog food

[Drop off items at Thrift Store or shelter or make a donation online by credit card at: humanesociety.biz/new_wishlistdon.htm]

T-Shirts & More

If you're looking to compliment your tee-shirt collection or just need to broaden your selection, HSPS has a cool-looking 100% pre-shrunk cotton tee that is just right for puttin' on the dog (and cat!) during the sunny summer months. Our \$12 tee-shirts feature the HSPS logo on front, come in a wide variety of colors and are available at either our thrift store or online at humanesociety.biz. Proceeds from the sale of the tee-shirts support the animal shelter.

We now have sturdy reusable, recyclable tote bags with the HSPS logo emblazoned on the front. The large-capacity bags are available at the thrift store for \$2.50. Buy a few bags for your regular grocery shopping trips, or stock up on some great deals at the thrift store and fill a bag with your new-found treasures. Either way you'll be supporting the animal shelter through your purchase.

iGive.com

Turn your online shopping into donations for the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs (at no cost to you).

Like most people who buy online, you now have an opportunity to turn your online shopping into much needed donations. When you link to your favorite merchant via iGive.com you pay the same price that you would by linking to a merchant directly, but a percentage of your purchase comes back as a donation to the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs.

Why join? It's free and you have access to shop at 800+ top notch online stores. Some of the stores iGive.com has in its mall are Amazon.com, Crate and Barrel, Old Navy, Marriott Resorts, Best Buy, Office Depot and many more. You also save money with exclusive coupons and free shipping deals.

This is how it works. Log into iGive.com, sign up and register the charity that you would like to benefit from your purchase (Humane Society of Pagosa Springs). Once that is done you can start shopping. It's that easy, its automatic and it benefits HSPS. Thanks in advance!



IN LOVING MEMORY OF...

A cat named Shadow from Becky Hermon
A dog and a cat from Samantha Aldabbagh
Amber from Barbara and Don Rosner
Bandito from Elaine Newton
Biscuit from Robert & Michele Becker.
Bob Hill from Rick & Karen Bartholomew
Bobby a cat from Barry and Sharon Sutherland
Boudreaux dog to Nicole DeMarco from Bonnie and John DeMarco
Candle, Panther and Friskers from Eda Cook
Carole Shewbridge and Scooby from Tim Dippel
Chester Miller we miss you at cowboy church from Donna and Terry Michael
Chico-San from Joanne Canales
Chuck from Christine Benson
Coaty Dog Foor from Jackie Sissenstein
Cody dog to Debbie & Danny Smith from Nita Niece
Daisy May dog to Gloria McCartney
Diesel from Donna and Tom Pugh
Dogs Bogey, Rio, Dewey and Hunden from Roland and Martha Carlson
Fritz from Nancy Esterbrook
Ginger, 1995-2010, a faithful friend and loyal companion for 15 years. She will always be remembered in my heart. Marilyn Morehead.
Goldie Howard Redican from Deborah & Greg Schultz
Harry Campbell Gunn from Jesse Porter
Honey dog to Steve & Lois Dacus from Terry & Lauren Traver
Jackie McGuire from Ron and Judith Taufen
Jane "Koka" Ellsworth from PZ's Board Regina Losche, Carol Kaplan, Jacque Brusker, David Bayer, Jim Quon, Hannelle Allen, Joyce Alenskis, Judy Means, Fran Siebengartner, Barbara Yob, Mara Adams and Pat Wilson.
Jasmine from Larry White and Mary Chavez
Jaspurr our beloved Siamese from Mary Lou Hudson
Jazz Rothweiler beloved dog of Sally Ann Rothweiler from Miles and Connie Davidson
Lexy from Jean Woods
Mac from Rod and Lou Ann Marler
Moe & Curley from Joe Cirincione
Molly from Tom and Karen Starritt
Niko from Brenda McCoey
Norma Johnson and Phyllis Gibson from Eldon and Rosina Johnson
Our beloved Tosca, Barbara Edidin and Michael Lubin
Our cat Lily from Cher Logsdon and Wayne Logan
Our dog Joker from Roger & Donna Hagengruber
Polo dog to Jeff and Nancy Grovhoug from Bill and Violet Hampton
Pooter, Bart and Beardog, who were adopted from the shelter from Barbara McNichols-Carter.
Prisilla from Brenda Rion
Saki from Linda Collyer
Sam from Anita Gardner.
Sammy beloved dog of Ron Lamm from Nancy Gilbert
Shade cat to Rebecca Smith from Lucretia Darden
Sprig owner Mr. and Mrs. Sean Teare from William and Elaine Blaylock
Tessa, beloved dog of Patsy and Jim Harvey from Nita Niece.
Vera from Victoria Diana
Zipper from William Taylor

IN HONOR OF...

Jean and Jim Carson from Vee St. John
Jean Carson's Birthday from The Dog Walkers
Merry Christmas to Donnie Gooch from Ziggy and all his friends
Our faithful pet Guen from Patricia and Buddy Porter.
Our Grandson, Cameron Olson, who loves the animals from Grandpa and Grandma Reese
Sandi and Bob Tomlinson celebrating their marriage from Mary Ann and Bill Sayre
Saving animal lives from Samantha Aldabaugh
Shorty from Nadine and David Barber
Susan Martin from Doug & Donnie Gooch

CLICKER TRAINING 101: A Volunteer's Perspective

By Kathleen Steventon

Let me tell you what it's like to volunteer at the Humane Society of Pagosa Springs animal shelter under the newly launched canine Clicker Training program. It began a couple months ago at the Humane Society when they hired talented dog behaviorist, Marnie George. Marnie's mission: to bring in human volunteers and train them to improve the behavior of the shelter dogs (and benefit our own dogs at home).

Of course, when I heard about the program I leapt at the chance to learn more about dog training. Did I feel that I had time to add one more obligation to my day and week? No. Did I want to join in the effort to improve the life of the shelter dogs? Yes! On a Saturday afternoon I headed over to the shelter for the first two hours of training.

Walking into the crowded front office, I looked around and happily knew quite a few faces. These were people willing to spend two hours every Saturday afternoon to learn Clicker Training. Marnie is an extremely fun, professional, and animated speaker. I immediately sensed that this program would ultimately be training for ME, on how we humans can do better to teach and live with our dogs.

Clicker Training focuses on two things: Learning to reward each dog when they do the right thing and learning to read canine body language quickly and accurately. A woman after my own heart! Rewarding good behaviors instead of punishing the bad.

Soon we were all laughing and handling the simple training equipment before we headed out to the kennels. With tasty dog treats in tow and an inexpensive metal clicker, the group walked eagerly to the back dog area. As we approached the fenced kennels, we heard the very loud cacophony of dog barks, as well as the loud thumps of some dogs throwing themselves against their kennel walls. Marnie said that within ten minutes this audio chaos would disappear with our help. "Hmmm. I'll believe it when I see it," I thought to myself at the time.

With an ear-piercing whistle by Marnie outside the fenced area, our trainer let us and the dogs know that something special was about to happen. Marnie had us newbie volunteers walk calmly past the individual dog kennels. If a dog sat quietly, we learned to click and toss in a treat for their good behavior. As we walked down the alley of kennels, the loud and rowdy barking dogs began to notice that their quiet dog friends were getting all the attention and rewards. Within a matter of minutes noisy dogs began to quiet down, and they too, were rewarded for their good manners. Within ten minutes of stepping into the outdoor kennel area, ALL the dogs were sitting quietly in their spaces, waiting for us to notice just how good they were and be rewarded for it. And we trainees were so happy to oblige them!

Having been a volunteer at the Humane Society for five years now, I have NEVER seen anything like this and my heart filled with joy at seeing our homeless dogs look and behave so well. As we worked through that first afternoon with the dogs, we, the human volunteers, worked on more good behaviors and were just as quickly rewarded by the shelter canines. Training followed for another five Saturday afternoons which proved to be a great experience for all.



So, to sum up this ongoing Clicker Training program: Yes, you can do it, it's easy. Yes, you can probably find two hours each week to learn this program. Yes, it is making a huge difference to the shelter dogs and their happiness and adoptability. And yes, our own crazy dogs at home are benefitting from what I've learned in this program. Finally, I give a big "yes" to working with behaviorist Marnie George. She's a hoot to learn from. Laughter is a big part of the training. Most importantly Marnie George's passion and commitment towards improving the life of all dogs is a huge inspiration for an animal lover like me. We can all help make a difference with the Humane Society's homeless dogs and, in turn, help our own dogs learn good manners as well!

Learn More

If you are eager to learn and help enrich the lives of dogs in our animal shelter, we're eager to have you help! To learn more or to volunteer, contact one of the following:

Mike Stoll, Executive Director (970-264-5549)

Marnie George, Dog Trainer (970-903-9957)

Kathleen Steventon, Volunteer (970-731-3029)

Come Play, Train and Learn With Us

Marnie George, Dog Trainer

We need you! Our long term success in the enrichment program is dependent on volunteers. If you can spare just two hours a week you can make a huge difference in the lives of shelter animals. We provide attentive training so you'll be confident working with the shelter dogs. Choose your own level of training and advance when you feel comfortable. Following is a brief description of each training level in the enrichment program.

Level One: Called *Click to Calm*, and it uses clicker training to reward dogs for being calm and quiet. Level One also has a lot of one-on-one time with dogs: brushing, petting, giving them toys and taking them for a walk to help them practice loose leash manners. You learn how to walk any dog on a loose leash. Level One is the foundation of everything we do so, whether you move on to other levels or stay here, we ask our volunteers to use *Click to Calm* when they come to the shelter. You will learn to spend a couple of minutes walking up and down the kennels rewarding quiet, attentive dogs with a click and a yummy treat!

Level Two: More advanced *Click to Calm* techniques, which involve learning tips and lessons for your own dog, too. You'll learn advanced leash walking skills so you'll be comfortable walking more difficult dogs. We use three dog walking categories: easy to walk, medium/difficult, and "this dog pulls like a freight train!" Anyone proficient in Level Two can walk and teach any of these dogs so that even the freight trains will learn to walk-easily for their new owners. Level Two starts working on CLASS (Canine Life and Social Skills) to help dogs learn good manners that will help them be successful in a new home. Level Two might include going out with our shelter dogs in public to help demonstrate their skills (accompanied by advanced trainers or me).

Level Three: We identify dogs who work well together in play groups. In Level Three you can take a play group into the fenced play yard for fun and exercise and alternately work on leash skills with



each dog in a group setting. We work a lot on recall in these play group settings – getting a dog to respond and come to you with other dogs present. These are life altering skills for dogs to have, some of whom ended up in the shelter because they wandered away from their original home. Level Three also works on more advanced skills for CLASS and more advanced community education – helping the public understand how to raise a well mannered dog and how to *really* raise a puppy. These are the skills that will help keep dogs in homes and out of the shelter!

Level Four: Working on more CLASS skills and advancing your experience and knowledge. Many dogs end up in the shelter because they have no idea how to live successfully in a human household. Learning key skills means that the family who adopts a dog from our enrichment program will have an easier time connecting with the dog and a greater chance for adoption success. Level Four volunteers also gain a better understanding of how dogs learn, the reasons for positive training and how to train without using food as a reward. We teach each dog as many of the following skills as we can before they leave the shelter: Wait at the Door, Sit, Come, Down, Loose Leash Manners, Leave It, Fetch, Off, and Quiet.

Level Five: Optional components of Level Five include helping me in public classes and helping train new volunteers.

Come play, train and learn with us – you'll gain new skills, have a lot of fun and enrich the lives of some shelter animals along the way!

What's Bugging You?

by Linda Lawrie

Due in part to our low humidity and higher altitude, Pagosa Springs



residents have not typically worried about fleas or mosquitoes, even though they can be carriers of various diseases. At the Humane Society animal shelter we rarely think about fleas or flea prevention unless a dog or cat happens to arrive at the shelter with them. A simple flea bath usually serves to eradicate the fleas and keep the existing shelter population free from harm.

Even ticks, which are known to be in our area, have not caused particular problems. The common tick diseases – Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Rocky Mountain Fever, Ehrlichiosis, and Lyme – may not become a problem for our companion animals due to several factors: owners are keen to watch out for ticks and may use flea/tick prevention; the diseases themselves may manifest symptoms that warrant an early visit to the vet; Lyme disease is simply not in our area yet.

On the other hand, mosquitoes may present more of a problem. To our companion animals, mosquitoes are best known for carrying heartworm infestations from one animal to another. Heartworm is transmitted by a mosquito biting an infected animal and then biting another animal. Heartworm disease is most prevalent in the hot, humid area of the southeast. Local veterinarians report that heartworm cases in Pagosa Springs are not very common. Unlike the tick-borne diseases, the symptoms of heartworm disease are not readily apparent in the early stages – only later, when the animal is quite infested, will there be obvious symptoms.

The Humane Society now performs a heartworm test on all animals known to have come from outside our area and on local animals that have been in the shelter for a prolonged period of time. We believe it is a proactive way to screen for any possible increase in the incidence of heartworm in our animal shelter and our local animal population without testing every animal.



Humane Society of Pagosa Springs

Administration Office: 269 Pagosa Street
P.O. Box 2230 • Pagosa Springs, CO 81147
(970) 264-5549 • Fax (970) 264-5593
www.humanesociety.biz

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sheltermanager@humanesociety.biz

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(970) 264-6424
hsthriftstore@humanesociety.biz

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Let It Fly Lands a Big One for HSPS

by Mike Stoll

The Humane Society of Pagosa Springs (HSPS) depends on the financial generosity of the local community and our broader community of supporters to help fund the programs that are essential to our organization’s mission. Sometimes that support comes from out-of-the-blue and takes us completely by surprise, which was the case earlier this spring.

In April we received a call from Mark “Pops” Miller, owner of Let It Fly, a local fly fishing specialty shop. Pops has been in business for 15 years in Pagosa Springs and was planning to mark that milestone with an extended celebration over the Memorial Day weekend. And he wanted HSPS to play a part.

In January 2011 Pops adopted a dog we called Darlin’ from the HSPS animal shelter. She had come to the shelter as a stray and no owner was ever found. She had already been returned from one unsuccessful adoption when Pops decided to take her home. Now known as Shéma, she is one of those win-win

adoption stories that make us happy to be a part of what we do. She finally found a great home and Pops found a great and inseparable companion.

As part of his anticipated celebration of business success, Pops wanted to do something special to benefit HSPS. He decided to raffle \$1,000 worth of fly fishing gear and give all the proceeds to HSPS.

[A very happy Glenn Unrath won the raffle.] Pops also held a silent auction during the weekend-long celebration and donated those proceeds too. In all, Pops generated over \$4,000 for HSPS. In these tough times, the generosity of supporters like Pops is more than appreciated – it has become essential to our continued success.

Whether you’re a fly fisherman, know someone who is a fly fisherman, or never even thought about fishing, the next time you’re driving up Put Hill west of town stop by Let It Fly at 1501 West Highway 160 and take the time to visit Pops and his shop. Say hello to Shéma and give a double thank-you to Pops for giving a home to a deserving dog and for his generous support when it is needed most.



Pops & Shéma