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the Scoop

Summer • 2013



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Mission Statement

Friends of the Animal Shelter is a nonprofit organization that supports the programs of the Jackson County Animal Shelter. Our mission is to increase pet adoption, to improve the quality of life for the Shelter's animals, to promote spay/neuter and participate in outreach and educational activities regarding responsible pet guardianship and animal welfare.

Learn about the Shelter's new **Pit Crew Program** on Page 3

ARIES: LIVING LARGE AND LEARNING WELL

By LESLIE HUNTINGTON When Aries, a one-year-old boxer and bulldog mix, was surrendered to the Shelter, he was larger than life, figuratively and physically. His exuberant and playful nature would be expected for his youth. However, his high-spirited behavior and puppy antics resided in a 67-pound body, compounded by a growth spurt of 15 pounds in his three months at the Shelter. Frolicking puppy behavior in a physical stature that would rival that of any small horse challenged even the most experienced dog handler.

His sweet, people-pleasing and goofy personality won the hearts of many volunteers. But, for nearly every volunteer at the Shelter, managing the lad's brawn, as well as his impatient, mouthy and jumpy behavior, was impossible. He just couldn't appreciate the raw strength and power of his own body, which resulted in two trips into quarantine during his first two months at the Shelter.

It was a difficult predicament indeed for FOTAS volunteers and Shelter staff. No one was able to foster him, the volunteers couldn't walk him without risking injury and all were concerned for the safety of a potential adopter. The odds were stacked against him.

At the end of February, a glimmer of hope had come for Aries at just the right time. During his stint in quarantine, a new group called **The Pit Crew** formed amongst the volunteers, calling themselves into action to alleviate the extreme levels of stress suffered by the larger- and bully-breed dogs due to their extended stays in the Shelter kennels. The Pit Crew's goals included enhancing the work of the regular dog walkers, spending extra time with the stressed and undisciplined dogs to provide additional exercise, and providing training that would help with the dogs' chances for a speedy and



Photo: Brooke Turner

Aries' good nature and goofy personality won the hearts of FOTAS volunteers and Shelter staff.

ARIES

Continued from page 1

successful adoption. Aries was the perfect candidate for The Pit Crew. His first sessions with The Pit Crew focused on loose leash walking. After only a few minutes of training, Aries was calmly walking next to the volunteer like he'd been performing such a task his entire life. Amazed and excited to continue on, The Pit Crew volunteers moved his training to the agility yard. Aries

was excited too, but for a very different reason: it was party time! He bolted into the yard like a rocket and circled the perimeter of the yard at speeds nearing Mach-3. Volunteers in the yard were a big bonus for him, providing opportunities to body-check and

jump up on them. For a dog that could stand as tall as a human on two legs and give a body-check at the force of an oncoming train, the volunteers learned quickly to stay outside the gate during this phase of his activity.

Aries' people-pleasing personality and love for food served to The Pit

"The early days of training were challenging for Aries and The Pit Crew alike. The physical work was hard for these volunteers, but watching Aries' constant struggle to conquer his impulsive nature was equally difficult for them."



Photo: Barbara Talbert

Aries settled in quickly when it was time to leave the Shelter. FOTAS volunteers and Shelter staff were thrilled with the news of his adoption after waiting three months for Aries to find the perfect home.

Crew's advantage. He proved to be a quick study with every new training activity, performing to near-perfection with only minimal correction within minutes. Unfortunately, Aries' impatience and old habits weren't going to die peacefully. He jumped up for attention, tugged at clothing to get a volunteer's attention and forcefully tugged on the leash whenever the training was more than he wanted. The early days of training were challenging for Aries and The Pit Crew alike. The physical work was hard for these volunteers, but watching Aries' constant struggle to conquer his impulsive nature was equally difficult for them.

For more than a month, The Pit Crew persisted in their efforts. Eventually Aries learned to control his impulsive tendencies and became more patient for attention and rewards. His good manners began to prevail and glimpses of his great potential emerged more consistently.

His model behavior even impressed his new foster mom, Barbara Talbert, the Jackson County Animal Shelter Manager. She reported that he was "very observant, not difficult to walk on a leash; comes when he's called most of the time; not very mouthy and minds when you tell him no." The dog walkers were impressed as well,

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THE PIT CREW PROGRAM

Power breed dogs can reside at the Jackson County Animal Shelter up to four times longer than other dogs. The stress of confinement and constant noise, combined with an average stay of 2-3 months, is especially difficult for a power breed. **The Pit Crew is a group of FOTAS volunteers who provide extra training, exercise and enrichment to these dogs with the following goals in mind:**

- Ease the stress of kennel life for the power breeds through physical and mental exercise
- Train the power breeds to be good pets and ambassadors of their breed
- Educate the public regarding responsible ownership of a power breed
- Advocate the power breeds as adoptable pets

The Pit Crew is a financially-supported FOTAS program:

- Providing additional in-Shelter training on basic manners, leash walking, etc. with a professional dog trainer
- Reducing the adoption fee (FOTAS covers the \$25 discount) for selected "Top Dogs" trained by the Pit Crew
- Offering two in-home professional training sessions to assist with the transition of a "Top Dog" into their new home (FOTAS covers the trainer fee)

"Top Dogs" are several power breeds trained by the Pit Crew who have waited a long time to be adopted. The adoption fee is reduced by \$25 for each "Top Dog." In addition, the adopter can receive two personalized sessions with a professional dog trainer, paid by FOTAS, to provide the best opportunity for the dog to integrate into their new home.

The services of a professional dog trainer and the continuation of the "Top Dog" program are completely supported by donations to FOTAS. Please consider a donation to the **Pit Crew program** to continue the good work with the power breeds and making adoptions more successful for dogs like Aries. Aries' story is featured on the cover page of this edition. 🐾

ARIES

Continued from previous page

almost astonished by his behavioral transformation. Many volunteers exclaimed, "Is this the same Aries?" Renewed hope for Aries' adoption potential blossomed.

His adoption potential became reality in early April, when a woman from Crescent City traveled to the Shelter to meet Aries. Barbara Talbert shared Aries' story, his phenomenal progress, as well as his behavioral challenges. The woman owned a Rottweiler previously who had similar growing pains as Aries.

She expressed her commitment to Aries, stating, "We're in it for the long haul. He won't be coming back."

Aries' new life in California couldn't be better for him. He has a committed family, friends with a canine companion, and acres of property in which to run. Aries still has work and time ahead of him to become the ultimate family pet, but his future is bright. 🐾



Photo: Barbara Talbert

Aries has a little playtime with his new owner before taking the trip home to California.

OREGON CABARET THEATRE BENEFIT GOES TO THE DOGS

By MARILYN EDWARDS When it was discovered that the Oregon Cabaret Theatre (OCT) would be producing a show called DOGPARK: The Musical, the FOTAS Board decided to ask OCT artistic director Jim Giancarlo about the possibility of having a fundraiser for FOTAS at some point during the run of the show. Jim and OCT manager, Julie Gurwell, were not only enthusiastic about this idea, but overwhelmed the Board with their generosity, and their their creativity and work made this a truly wonderful event. Jim offered to present the opening night performance on April 5 as a benefit for FOTAS with benefit tickets sold for \$45 each, \$20 of which would be a tax deductible donation to FOTAS. With the help of FOTAS volunteers publicizing the event, opening night was sold out!

" On opening night after the curtain call, Jim Giancarlo presented FOTAS with a check for \$2,260, which will help a lot of homeless animals!"

Jim and Julie also arranged a post-show " bark-back " for attendees, where the show's writers, directors and actors introduced themselves, told the audience about how this show came into being and talked about the process of getting into character. They took questions from the audience as the patrons sipped champagne and feasted on delicious dog-boned shaped brownie " treats " provided by OCT. Because the event sold out on opening night, OCT extended selling FOTAS tickets for three more performances. Throughout DOGPARK'S highly successful run, photos of the Shelter's adoptable dogs were featured on table tents on each table, highlighting their sweet faces and information about them. There was also an ongoing poster board in the theatre lobby with photos of the dogs, including dogs that had been adopted.

In short, this was a wonderful way to attend an incredibly entertaining production (the story itself, the songs, the dancing, and the humor were all first rate), to showcase the Shelter dogs, and to raise funds for FOTAS. On opening night after the curtain call, Jim Giancarlo presented FOTAS with a check for \$2,260, which will help a lot of homeless animals!

Working with Jim, Julie and various members of the OCT team was a delight. You know you're living in the right community when your community theatre not only produces first-class entertainment, but is so generous in supporting a local non-profit by designing such a successful benefit. FOTAS, the Shelter, and the dogs awaiting adoption thank you, Oregon Cabaret Theatre. You are the best! 🐾



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*Mi Mi & Samson, rescue cats
(who refuse to be photographed together)*

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Submitted by Warren Merz



Warren Merz snuggles Fancy Pants, one of his indoor cats.

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PROFILE:
WARREN MERZ

By SHERYL FIERRO "Pets are really an extension of you," says Jacksonville rancher Warren Merz, as he holds his black cat, Fancy Pants, and a border collie, Robbie, relaxes nearby. "They're an extension of your family and your life. And every unit of love that you give an animal comes back to you many times over."

Warren was raised in the Bronx, the son of a German immigrant; his father worked for *The New York Times*. After high school, he saw military service during the Korean War, then went on to earn his bachelor's degree in accounting, a master's degree in economics, and an MBA in finance. On September 22, 1956, he married Audrey Young, who had also grown up in the Bronx, and Warren recalls going through some lean early years together: "We ate so much tuna casserole as undergraduates, it's a wonder we didn't grow gills!"

Despite having to keep an eye on the budget, the Merzes shared a great love of animals and considered them part of the family. "Even as college students, we always had pets, both dogs and cats," Warren says. "My true love at that time was a lab named Bear, and when he passed away, I said to Audrey, absolutely no more dogs." But, not surprisingly, that edict didn't last

long, as the Merzes soon came across a young spaniel who had been abandoned at the side of the road. Although they took her to the nearby animal shelter, Warren says, "Of course I knew what would happen. Audrey kept going in to visit her in the kennels, and would return home telling me to just go look at the dog." And in the end? "We named her Lily and she was with us for 17 years."

Warren had a 36-year career as an executive with the Ford Motor Company, work that took him and Audrey through nine domestic moves and two international ones. During these years, the Merzes also raised a daughter, Linda, and a son, Eric, who recalls now, "For as long as I can remember, Dad has loved animals. We have had them in all shapes and sizes over the years. Once their house was free of children, my parents were able to provide a rarely seen level of love, attention, and patience to their many animals. So much so, that comments such as, 'Did you see what he did with Angus?' or 'Can you believe what he lets Fancy Pants do?' were commonplace."

After considering a number of locales, the Merzes retired to Jacksonville in 1998, purchasing the 40-acre ranch formerly known as the Circle G, and now named the T Diamond Bar Ranch. Once settled there, the couple set about making improvements to the handsome stone-walled main house and extensive property. While Warren developed and implemented many new systems for the ranch's buildings and grounds, Audrey, a talented master gardener, brought her artistic eye and expertise to planting an array of beautiful gardens. Little Applegate runs through the property, and Warren notes that his ranch's water rights, which date back to 1857, are probably the oldest in the valley.

Several years ago, Audrey was stricken with multiple myeloma, and Warren cared for her at home, where their many pets joined him in surrounding her with love. "When Audrey was sick, our animals never left her side," Warren says. "At least one dog and one cat were always with her. She was never alone; not ever. Even the birds outside would show up for her."

Audrey passed away in 2010 after 54 years of marriage, but Warren continues to carry on their tradition of strong commitment to their pets and to their family, which has grown to include four grandchildren and a great-grandson. The current Merz menagerie consists of two indoor cats, Fancy Pants and Target; a cat named Willie, "who

lives under the house, and I've been trying to catch;" several barn cats, some with names like Pretty Face and Mister Grey; and Robbie, the border collie. Not long ago, Warren suffered the loss of another, much-loved border collie named Angus. "I will never forget the level of sadness and pain I heard in his voice when he notified me of Angus's passing," says Eric, "just as I will never forget the level of pride in his voice when he would go on about Angus's herding accomplishments. Those who say that soccer moms are over the top haven't met this border collie dad!"

Continued on Page 11



Warren gives some loving attention to Robbie, his border collie.

Submitted by Warren Merz

**SHELTER BUDDIES
MAKE A HOME
TOGETHER**

By MARILYN EDWARDS An adoption at the Jackson County Animal Shelter is always a cause for joy. Sometimes it's that kind of joy that is

Submitted by Marilyn Edwards



Oscar soaks in some undivided attention during the ride home from the Shelter.

accompanied with a tear or two as we bid farewell to kitties and dogs that we have grown to love. We never know if we'll hear anything about them again, so each farewell includes a silent blessing as we wish them a long and happy life.

In mid-May, the sweet kitten Oscar found his forever home — and when his new mom, who describes him as “ the PERFECT addition to our family,” wrote about his new life, we knew that our baby blue-eyed charmer was indeed, blessed. Oscar, who was fostered along with his brothers and sisters for the first few weeks of his life by one of our wonderful FOTAS foster moms, Sue Thompson, now lives on a mini-farm in the country.

His new family includes a mom, dad, a thirteen year-old girl and an eleven year-old boy who are all head-over-heels in love with him. The family also includes a five year-old Rottweiler, two kitties and a circle of chicks and ducklings. Luna, a Rottweiler-mix pup rounds out the family as a recent alumnus of the Shelter, where she was known as Tessa. All of Oscar's new animal family members have accepted the little guy, but Luna, and one of the kitties named Jasper think that Christmas came early this year. His mom says, “ Jasper snuggles with him, provides a tail toy for him to

try to catch and play with, cleans his ears and is showing him the ropes about being a kitty in our house.”

Last year this close-knit family lost a much-loved dog, Hera, and an equally loved kitty, Alex. Luna helped to heal everyone's heart — particularly the dad who had been especially close to Hera. Oscar, who could be the poster-child for loving kitties everywhere, has filled that remaining void. We forward many blessings to Oscar and to the family that has opened their hearts and home to let him in. 🐾



Photo: Brooke Turner

Luna is Oscar's new best friend, and another Shelter alumnus.

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Submitted by Rabbit Babbitt



Wanda (left) became the perfect kennel mate for shy and Winnie (right).

WINNIE AND WANDA FIND THEIR HOME: A STORY OF PATIENCE AND ITS REWARDS

By RABBIT BABBITT Wanda and Winnie first came to my attention back in the treatment room where they were receiving medication for an upper respiratory infection. Claudia Sadler, a Jackson County Animal Shelter Technician, felt that with enough gentle attention we could get Winnie to come out of her shell. Wanda, her kennel mate, set a good example by being outgoing and trusting.

Every day, for a couple weeks, I would go spend time with them. The first step was getting Winnie to come forward in the kennel to eat wet food. Eventually, while doing that, I would stroke her and speak to her quietly (of course Wanda was trying constantly to get in on the action). As the days went on, she would allow petting when she wasn't eating and eventually she let me hold her.

Finally they were moved to adoption. Winnie's shyness set her back

a bit and she spent her time in the back of her kennel in a little soft cube. She would allow pats, but didn't want to come out. One Tuesday a woman named Darlene came in with an interest in adopting Wanda. I told her their story, and we put Winnie in with Wanda. Wanda relaxed. The woman was an experienced cat owner and seemed up for the challenge of taking both of them. The little cube went with them and I promised a follow-up call. A couple days later, Darlene called me to say there was a problem. She had them both in a small bathroom as suggested, but Winnie somehow found her way into the subflooring under that room. The space was 4 inches by 10 feet and there was no way to get her out. She asked if I could come over and when I did, I saw the impossibility of the situation. Not very hopeful, I called Winnie by name, and amazingly (she must have recognized my voice) she emerged! I almost felt guilty to scruff her and pull her out, but once in my arms, Darlene's husband went to work patching up the space. A few days later Darlene called me to say our little Houdini had somehow found a way to get back under there, but this time, after a few hours, she came out for Darlene. More repairs were made and no more escapes occurred.

Over time, Winnie was introduced to the adjoining bedroom and now feels much more comfortable in the house. Wanda still sets the

example, but Darlene is pleased with Winnie's progress. A month ago she said I could come back to pick up the cube because our big girl now sleeps on the bed and no longer needs it!

We give a nod of appreciation to this very patient cat owner, and a good reminder that it will come back to us a hundred fold, if we allow our cats the time they need to adjust. Go Winnie! 🐾



Photo: June Symens

Winnie is now comfortable and confident in her new home.

" He lies there purring and dreaming shifting his limbs now and then in an ecstasy of cushioned comfort. He seems the incarnation of everything soft and silky and velvety, without a sharp edge in his composition, a dreamer whose philosophy is sleep and let sleep... "

— Saki

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**TRAIN-TO-ADOPT PROGRAM
INCREASING
ADOPTIONS**

By ART LIPSKI AND SUE MEYEROTT

Imagine a potential adopter walking into the Jackson County Animal Shelter and visiting with a dog that can sit, show self-control and calm himself, even when excited. That's exactly what FOTAS volunteer Art Lipski brought to the Shelter when he implemented the "Train-to-Adopt" program that uses simple and effective techniques for training dogs in a shelter environment.

The "Train-to-Adopt" program was developed by

Sue Sternberg, a national expert in dog training and innovator in the field of shelter dog adoptability. It is a complete, step-by-step, non-

command-based training program for teaching shelter dogs simple behaviors to maintain their health and enhance their adoptability, utilizing quiet and calm positive reinforcement training techniques.

Through these calming exercises, the dogs get mental stimulation as they figure out what to do to get high-value treats while the FOTAS volunteers learn simple 'I-can-do-that!' exercises for successful dog training. Like the physical stimulation of walking, the mental stimulation provided by the training creates calmer, more adoptable dogs and reduces their stress.

Art incorporates the program into the Shelter's dog Adoption Ambassador training classes, along with techniques and hands-on practice that teaches the Ambassadors to work with the public to ease the path to adoption. Training also includes good doorway manners with the dogs as well as safe dog-to-dog introductions. To date, 53 volunteers have graduated from the four-week training.

Sit with Attention

At the very minimum, the Adoption Ambassadors learn and implement 'Sit with Attention', where treats are used to teach the dogs to sit and calmly watch a potential adopter as they walk up to their kennel.

"It's always a joy to see the expressions on volunteers faces and hear their comments when they first try the 'Sit with Attention' command," says Art, "they use words like 'magic' and 'a miracle.' It's fun to see the dogs catch on quickly and watch volunteers smile as they experience the thrill of successfully working with the dogs." The Adoption Ambassadors promote the "Train-to-Adopt" program and encourage both visitors and volunteers to help reinforce the behavior with treats whenever they stop at a dog's kennel.

Volunteers Helping Volunteers

Art also teaches the 'Sit and Do Nothing' exercise from the "Train-to-Adopt" program, but rarely do you find Art sitting and doing

Continued on Page 11

Submitted by Art Lipski



Art Lipski demonstrates the 'Sit with Attention' command with Spud.

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— Anonymous



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NEW FACES



Rebecca Long,
Shelter Supervisor

Rebecca grew up in Ft. Worth, Texas, and then lived for 10 years in the Houston area. In 1986 she moved to Wenatchee, Washington and worked as a kennel technician for the Wenatchee Valley Humane Society. She transferred into an animal control officer position and later became a sergeant in the animal control division. In 1997, she became the Director of Animal Control.

During her 20-year career, Rebecca was elected to serve on the Washington State Animal Control Association Board and served as the board president for the last four years of her tenure. She also coordinated the Pacific Northwest Animal Care and Control Conference, and taught at the Washington State Animal Control Academy from 1999 to 2006.

Rebecca has two sons and five grandchildren. She and her partner, Cindy, have two German Shepherds, a cat and two horses. She loves all her pets but admits to being partial to the kitties.

Rebecca enjoys movies, hiking in the woods, and hunting for edible mushrooms. Her other passion is playing poker and in 2008, she won a seat to the World Series of Poker, one of the most fun trips of her life!

Rebecca says, "Come see me and all our great pets at Jackson County Animal Shelter. I look forward to meeting each of you!"



Sara Ullrich,
Dispatcher for Animal Control

Sarah recently moved to Jackson County from Southern California where she worked for an equine veterinarian for 15 years. Her horse, Harold, made the trip with her. He has been Sarah's companion since he was four months old. He is now retired and loves the pasture life.

Sarah likes to trail run and has had fun discovering the southern Oregon countryside. She hopes to participate in many trail races offered in southern Oregon. She is also a distance runner and completed 50 marathons. Sarah is looking forward to meeting new people and exploring all the area has to offer as she starts this new chapter in her life.



Andy Swanson,
Animal Control Officer

Andy was born and raised in Grants Pass. His early career focused on firefighting, working five seasons with the Oregon Department of Forestry. He also served as a reserve firefighter with Rural Metro Fire Department in Josephine County.

He has two boys: Owen, who is one, and Jack, who is four. His four-legged child, Mila, is a German Shepherd that he adopted from the Jackson County Animal Shelter.

SHELTER RECEIVES \$10,000 ASPCA GRANT

By **BARBARA TALBERT,**

SHELTER MANAGER The Shelter was recently awarded a \$10,000 capacity-building grant from the ASPCA, which is being used to improve the well-being of sheltered animals and increase the number of lost animals returned to their owners. Three new universal microchip scanners will be used by Animal Control officers working in the field to more quickly locate owners of lost animals. A new identification tag engraver will soon be installed to make it easy for adopters and members of the public to purchase customized ID tags for their pets, which will help keep lost pets out of the Shelter. The grant also bought 50 new Kuranda dog beds, in four different sizes, which have become the new standard for shelters across the country. I am happy to report that the dogs quickly settled into their new, more comfortable beds, which keep them off of the cement floor. Finally, a Woods lamp is helping us more accurately identify ringworm in animals that are brought to us.

We are very grateful to the ASPCA for providing this grant to the Shelter in recognition of the many positive changes staff and volunteers have already made at the Shelter to enhance the quality of life for homeless animals while they are in our care. 🐾



The Animal Control staff enjoy returning lost pets to their owners.

Photo: Leslie Huntington

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Anonymous, in memory of Sister Dear, our traveling dog
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Anonymous, in memory of Carol Bennett

Maryann Aruti, in memory of Abby

Betty and Don Barss, in memory of Peg Riegel

Cynthia Dale, in memory of Coconut

Stuart and Dahna Dow Osmus, in honor of our pets who
have kept us safe and loved.

Patricia and Richard Gilstrap, from Charles (formerly Eros),
hoping that all his friends in the cat room find their
fur-ever homes

Claudia Harrington, in memory of Savannah

Jill and Larry Henderson, in honor of Chin

Joan Kalveage, in memory of Sophia

Jenny Kirkland, in memory of Utah

Ada Kirkman, in memory of Elvie

John Morris, in memory of Peggy Riegel

Dianne Quarg, from her students for the Medical Fund

Steven Shapiro, to help Dallas get adopted

Mary Jo and Scott Smith, in memory of Aunt Peggy Riegel

Marianne Strong, in honor of Marnie Norvell

Donna and Michael Woolsey, in memory of Gary and Daisy

FOTAS DONOR PROFILE

Continued from page 5

Warren also devotes his time and resources to assisting the homeless cats and dogs of Jackson County, and is a generous supporter of both the Southern Oregon Humane Society and the Friends of the Animal Shelter. "We are very grateful for his compassion and support," says Peggy Moore, FOTAS board president. "Through donations such as Warren's, we're able not only to address ongoing needs for food and medical care at the Shelter, but also to develop special enrichment programs for the cats and dogs in our care while they await their forever families."

Certainly the Shelter hopes to find for each pet a forever home as caring and secure as the one that Warren provides for his cats and dogs. "If his animals feel even half as fortunate as I have felt having him love and provide for me," Eric says, "they will agree that they are the luckiest critters on earth. All of them should consider themselves powerball lottery winners, as they have hit life's jackpot, being loved and cared for by a man who would do anything for them." 🐾


TRAIN-TO-ADOPT

Continued from page 8

nothing himself. He loves helping his fellow volunteers increase their competency in using calming techniques to help dogs become more adoptable. His vision is to have more volunteers step forward to facilitate classes and share in the fun. He especially loves to see the results of the training ... dogs showing off their good manners and finding a new loving home.

Helping our animals get adopted is one of the highest callings at the Shelter. "The visitors that come to look at the animals are the most important people at the Shelter," says Art. "Without them no adoptions can happen. It is vitally important for us to create a welcoming environment for potential adopters by providing excellent customer service, which is the other important element of Adoption Ambassador classes."

FOTAS and Shelter staff, and his fellow volunteers, are grateful to Art for his dedication and seemingly endless energy that has resulted in an amazing transformation of the dog adoption and training experience at the Shelter. 🐾



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VOLUNTEER PROFILE / JOANNE AND GARY HAMBLIN

How did you learn about volunteering at the Shelter? I learned about the Shelter and volunteering with Friends of the Animal Shelter from Tim Church, who works at the Ashland Recycle Center. Whenever I dropped off our recycling, Tim would encourage me to volunteer at the Jackson County Animal Shelter. I kept replying that I couldn't do it or I would end up with ten dogs because it's too hard to see the animals in kennels and leave them there! And, I already had four dogs, five cats and six horses! After two years, I finally thought it might be a good idea – that was 17 years ago, and Gary and I have been volunteering at the Shelter ever since! At first, I thought I would help at off-site events and not go down in the kennels. Of course it didn't happen that way. For the off-site events, I had to go into the kennels to pick out dogs and return them...and cats, too. Then, I started walking dogs, putting up adoptable animal picture flyers around town (Gary and I were the first to do that), placing classified ads in the newspapers, fostering, meeting people to show dogs, helping with adoptions, walking dogs on Sundays, and calling adopters to follow up on neuter/spay vouchers. I loved it and I hated it. The Shelter seemed to always be full and, sadly, adoptable dogs and cats were put down for lack of room (this is no longer the case at the Shelter). But it was very rewarding helping the animals get adopted and also getting them out of their kennels for a day at off-sites or going for walks.



Submitted by JoAnne Hamblin

JoAnne and Gary Hamblin, pictured with Gracie, have faithfully served as FOTAS volunteers for 17 years.

In what ways, and why do you volunteer at the Shelter? Currently, walking dogs and getting them out of their kennels each week is my passion. Gary walks dogs on occasion, and he continues to make up pictures for our small board in the kennels. We volunteer because we love the dogs and love helping them in whatever way we can. From the beginning, Gary helped with walking the dogs on Sundays, fostering, walking dogs during the week, etc. He loves dogs like I do (I love the cats too, but dogs are my first love). We are down to one dog at home now. I can't believe that we have only one animal after having so many, but it just feels right for now, since Gracie is not good with all other dogs and she seems to prefer keeping us to herself!

What are the rewards? What are the challenges? The rewards include spending time with the dogs. I love them. I also enjoy meeting like-minded volunteers who feel as passionate as I do. I have met a few of my best friends volunteering at the Shelter. I still find it challenging whenever we lose any of the dogs, but I know we cannot save them all. Another challenge is not being able to do everything physically that I could do when I was younger! 🐾