

Friends of the Animal Shelter



the



Winter / Spring • 2014



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.

www.fotas.org

WAITING FOR THE PERFECT HOME

By LESLIE HUNTINGTON If the adage, "Good things come to those who wait," is true, then long-timer Shelter residents Bonnie and Tiger Lily hit the jackpot. More than six months of kennel life for each of them finally ended with perfectly-matched adoptions for them as well as their humans.

As Bella wandered the aisles of the dog kennels looking for a companion, Bonnie's sleek greyhound-like form and unique brindled coat stopped her adopter in her tracks. Bonnie's attentive and poignant gaze won over Bella's heart. "Her eyes just stared into my soul," Bella recalled. Salvation had come for Bonnie. She was adopted that day and renamed Korra.

For Jacqueline, Tiger Lily's adopter, the word "smitten" summarizes her first impressions of the brindled beauty. She came across Tiger Lily's photo as she perused the Petfinder website looking for a dog for her friend. She had no

intention of finding one for herself until Tiger Lily's name and photo called to her. "It was the ambience of her profile that drew me to her... from her photo, to her description, to her beautiful brindled coat... and to the video showing her fun personality. I had to meet her."

The Waiting Game

Tiger Lily and Bonnie resided only a few kennels away from each other, sharing space and also the burden of their extended Shelter residence. For every long-time canine resident, the signs of significant kennel stress typically emerge after a month of living in the kennels. The six-month experience of Tiger Lily and Bonnie became an

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Photo courtesy: Bella Szigeti

Bonnie spent six months at the Shelter before she was adopted. Bonnie now shares her life with Bella, her owner, as well as Bella's family and a canine playmate named Brutus.



Photo courtesy: Jacqueline Bressers

Tiger Lily, the "Party Girl," takes a break from her active day to nap with her brother, Sweet Pea.

PERFECT HOME
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all-hands-on-deck effort to maintain their well-being by the dog walkers and FOTAS Pit Crew.

Tiger Lily's Story

Tiger Lily first appeared in the kennels as a lanky pup in late January of 2013 but soon transformed into an athlete of sheer muscle. She aced the agility course and played training games with laser-like precision. Tiger Lily was also known as the Party Girl, approaching every new task with an overabundance of enthusiasm.

Like so many long-timers, though, the stress of kennel life got to Tiger Lily after only a month. The constant noise levels and regular exposure to other stressed dogs in the kennels began to wear on her. She

became anxious with loud noises, at times freezing in her steps or barking and lunging at loud vehicles. As the time lingered on, Tiger Lily's outings away from the Shelter proved to be very stressful. Shelter life had become the only living situation she knew as an adult dog. One Pit Crew member stated, "Unfortunately, our girl has become institutionalized. Life for her outside of the Shelter is strange and overwhelming." The Pit Crew worked diligently to help her conquer her fears.

In early July, hope came for Tiger Lily in the form of a foster home. With a large backyard, two active foster parents and a canine mentor, Tiger Lily quickly assimilated into family life and learned to enjoy her new world with zest and enthusiasm, once again.

Bonnie's Story

Bonnie's kennel experience was tough from the beginning. Her greyhound-terrier traits required physical and mental exercise that far exceeded the dedicated time and resources available to her at the Shelter. Her stress levels were so high that she struggled to connect with the people who worked with her.

The volunteers persisted in their efforts, providing as much time as possible to burn off her nervous energy. The Pit Crew worked on the basic skills of leash walking and recall. Signs of progress began to emerge in May, two months after her arrival to the Shelter. Bonnie started to connect with volunteers.

Getting out of the kennels was imperative for Bonnie, but foster care was not available. FOTAS volunteer Lorna initiated an R & R program, bringing dogs to her house for afternoons away from the kennels. Bonnie's first outing to "Shangri-Lorna" revealed a completely different side of her. Ada, a Pit Crew member who accompanied Bonnie, commented, "...It is amazing how different Bonnie is away from the Shelter. A great time was had by all!"

Bonnie's progress ebbed and flowed in the months that followed, which were heavily influenced by the noise and stress levels

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Photo: Leslie Huntington



Bridget Davies celebrates Tiger Lily's day of adoption with a high-five. Bridget is a professional dog trainer who works with the FOTAS Pit Crew to train the power breeds at the Shelter.

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of the dogs in nearby kennels. At times it seemed like she lost ground in her progress. For Bonnie, her hope came through one person's love of hiking. Lexi, FOTAS volunteer and Pit Crew member, spent multiple days with her on extended hikes in the hills surrounding the Rogue Valley.

By early August, the combination approach of training, problem-solving, and hikes began to pay off for Bonnie. "I remember the first few times I walked her to the agility yard," another Pit Crew member recalled. "She wore me out before we even entered the agility yard at the Shelter! Watching her today was a wonderful contrast to my first memories of her. Our persistence and dedication and willingness to adapt to Bonnie's needs are working. Ever so slowly, she is coming out of her shell and starting to trust and enjoy the company of humans. That's a big deal in her world!"

Happy endings

Tiger Lily's foster experience provided valuable information for Jacqueline and her husband, David, as they contemplated her adoption and living with their Mastiff-bull terrier mix, Sweet Pea. "At first I thought Tiger Lily would be like another Sweet Pea since they shared a similar breed," Jacqueline said. "But, I realized she, like Sweet Pea, had a very distinct personality. I learned so much from Barbara, Tiger Lily's foster mom, the professional trainer and Leslie, a member of the Pit Crew. Not only did I learn about the general attributes of Tiger Lily's breed, but about her individual characteristics. Both Barbara and Leslie had spent a lot of time with her and had insights about her that were invaluable." After several meetings and play sessions with Sweet Pea, Tiger Lily was adopted in late August.

Jacqueline and David find her to be a fun new member of the family. "My husband describes her as a firecracker with a short fuse," she jokes. "She is active, funny and smart. She wants to be a part of everything we do. A special morning routine involves lounge time between the dogs and me in bed. They snuggle with me as I drink coffee and read. It's a special time of our day together."



Photo: Brooke Turner

Bonnie's soulful gaze won over the heart of her adopter, Bella.

As Jacqueline reflected on Tiger Lily's adoption, she stated, "I wanted Tiger Lily to be well cared for, something she deserved, and I had to be a part of that somehow."

It didn't take long for Bonnie to settle into her new home on the day she was adopted in September. "She was a little nervous at first but after about an hour, Bonnie jumped on my bed and sat next to me like she had always done this," Bella recalled. Bonnie's kennel stress is far behind her now, evidenced by her close connection with the family. During the day while Bella takes online classes, Bonnie will patiently wait by her side. And when Bella isn't studying, she takes Bonnie on car rides, a favorite activity for them.

"Bonnie is the most active dog I've ever had. She can play with the other dogs all day and still have energy for more fun." The family

gives her plenty of play time and exercise. Bella takes her on runs. Bonnie also plays with a canine friend named Brutus. In the evenings, she engages Bella's father in a routine of tug of war. As soon as he settles into his chair, Bonnie presents him with a toy. He happily obliges her.

For Bella, it was love at first sight with Bonnie, and the bond between them continues to grow. Bella said, "Everyone tells me I saved her life, but she continues to save my life every day." 🐾

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The Board of Directors will hold the annual meeting of members of Friends of the Animal Shelter on Thursday, March 20, 2014 at 6:00pm at the Jackson County Animal Shelter, 5595 South Pacific Highway, Phoenix, Oregon.

The annual meeting is called for the purpose of electing officers and board members-at-large (directors), and the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the members.

The election will take place in accordance with the Bylaws of the corporation. The Board of Directors will present a slate of candidates for positions on the Board. Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting. The candidates with the most votes will be elected as directors. A meeting of the newly elected Board will take place immediately following the close of the annual meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting, please call Peggy Moore at (541) 821-8291.

YEAR END REPORT

By PEGGY MOORE, FOTAS BOARD PRESIDENT As we look back on 2013, I am amazed and humbled by all that we have accomplished. It is been a year of growth for the Shelter, for FOTAS and for our programs. And the most exciting thing about this growth is the increase in the positive things we do, such as the greatly improved live release rate of the animals in our care and the number of animals we have been able to find foster homes for while they wait for their perfect home. The overall effect of the work done by over 300 volunteers, the Shelter staff, the FOTAS staff and the support from the community (all of you) is that the animals in Jackson County who pass through the Shelter are better off than they've ever been.

Under the leadership of our FOTAS Board and some key, long term volunteers, the programs begun last year, such as Adoption Ambassadors and Train to Adopt, have borne fruit. We have more adoptions of better socialized dogs and cats. The work of our Foster Coordinator resulted in 100 more animals being placed in foster homes last year. We know that fostering provides the best start for kittens and puppies that should not be growing up in a Shelter. They receive love and socialization that only a home (even a temporary one) can provide.

The year in review:

- Puss 'n Boots (see article) was a huge success, grossing \$52,810.
- We had a very successful wine raffle (run by volunteers Nancy and JW Lyon) which grossed over \$15,000. Many thanks to our community friends who donated wine, and to the FOTAS volunteers who sold 1,560 tickets.
- We had three dog washes this year. We split the audience in Medford by having two in the summer. Next year we'll have one in Medford at Pet Country and one in Ashland at the Ashland Food Coop. However, we made \$2,756 this year and a lot of dirty dogs walked away clean and refreshed. Thanks to Land of Paws for donating their services so that every penny paid by dog owners for all three dog washes stayed with FOTAS. And kudos to our volunteers for braving the heat and working hard.
- Our donations from the community at large (in and out of state) totaled \$63,350. The annual appeal raised over \$16,000 (\$6,000 over last year) and donations in general were way up.
- Thanks to Board member and volunteer Leslie Huntington and a few enthusiastic volunteers, the Pit Crew Program was born. Since the Shelter is the only one in Southern Oregon (and even shelters to the north) that takes pit bulls on a regular basis, we have a lot of them. Other large breed dogs are also in abundance. Since we have so many of the power breeds, we needed to have a way to socialize and teach them good manners, which will result in easier-to-adopt dogs. The dedicated Pit Crew serves this function on a daily basis.
- The expansion of our social media presence has accounted for more adoptions. Our volunteers see adopters coming in with copies of our Facebook page. Thanks to the very dedicated volunteers who constantly update the Facebook page for dogs and cats. Our animals benefit.
- Our volunteer photographers snap endearing shots of cats and dogs as they come into adoption. A picture is definitely worth a thousand words in these cases, and these pictures show our animals in their best light.
- In the media area, thanks to FOTAS Vice President Tracy Gault, we have a new look on the "net." Our website is more up to date, has more bells and whistles, and provides even more information about us to the public.
- We continue to do community outreach — taking along the best ambassadors in the world — our dogs and cats. We can be found in the 4th of July parade in Ashland, the Talent Harvest Festival, the Customer Appreciation Day and Fashion Show at Pet Country, the Ash-minister dog show, the Pear Blossom Festival, the Multicultural Fair and many businesses in the community on Saturdays.

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We continue to investigate ways to provide outreach into our communities and to engage in fundraising activities. As the Shelter receives only about 10% of its funding from the County general fund, FOTAS and the Shelter must continue to seek ways to fund the Shelter programs. Two-Fur-One, low-cost or fee-waived cat adoption events, dog and cat enrichment efforts, the Pit Crew, and physical improvements at the Shelter are all done by FOTAS volunteers with support from the community. Volunteers provide more than 11,000 hours of "free" labor to the Shelter. We could not do this without the amazing commitment and dedication of our volunteers — they are the heart and soul of FOTAS. We also couldn't do it without the generosity of the community who support our activities and donate to our work.

2013 has been a banner year financially for FOTAS, allowing us to finance several needed physical improvements as well as increasing our support for the medical fund, food and enrichment programs to keep the cats and dogs social, and in the area of increasing and retaining more volunteers.

Our volunteers work directly with the Shelter animals, feeding, cleaning up, socializing them, walking dogs, interacting with cats, working at fundraising events, transporting animals to the vet for spay/neuter, transporting animals to other shelters to expose them to a different audience, working outreach events, helping with clerical tasks at the Shelter, serving as adoption ambassadors with the public, maintaining a social media presence, taking animals on TV, and stepping up whenever new ideas or programs are offered.

Friends of the Animal Shelter continues to grow to meet the needs of those special beings that come through the Shelter on their journey to their fur-ever homes. In 2013, we earned an "A." 🐾

2013 SHELTER STATS

Great strides of progress continue to be made through the combined efforts of FOTAS and the Jackson County Animal Shelter.

Since 2011

The live release rate for cats has more than tripled.

The live release rate for dogs increased by nearly 30%.

Since 2012

Less stringent adoption standards were implemented based upon the recommendation of the Oregon Humane Society. The return rate of adoptable animals since the change has not significantly increased.

In 2013

241 more cats were adopted, compared to 2012 — an increase of nearly 150%.

For the first time in the Shelter's history, more cats than dogs were adopted in 2013.



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Photos: Brooke Turner



PUSS 'N BOOTS - AN EVENING TO REMEMBER

By PEGGY MOORE On October 26th, 254 revelers gathered at the Historic Ashland Armory for the 22nd annual Puss 'n Boots Ball.

As costumed dogs, cats, witches, gypsies, characters from popular TV shows, monsters and others entered the festive Ball room (decorated by Linda Sickie, Judy Jordon, Lorna Bolton and their crew), the guests were greeted with ghosts and pumpkins and lots and lots of balloons, which were arranged and donated by Connie Rainwater. Looking up at monitors, the sold-out crowd was treated to slide show of past and present Shelter animals, lovingly put together by

our talented photographers Brooke Turner and Nancy Freeland. Our partners at SNYP hosted the bar, with all proceeds going towards their spay/neuter efforts this year.

The Silent Auction tables called to patrons, thanks to Marnie Norvell, Jeane Lind, Diane Novak and David Berger. Over a hundred items were available for bidding, thanks to the wonderful merchants throughout the Valley and their generosity. Our live auction provided unique, quality items and winners took away incredible gifts, such as a hand-crafted mirror by volunteer Beth Dolos and a beautiful quilt. Other prizes included stays at Ashland

Creek Inn, Arcadia Vacation Homes and a guided rafting trip and lunch with the Talberts.

A delicious dinner, catered by Quality Catering at Café Dejunner, fortified guests for the evening and a fashion show of creative, frightening, beautiful and outrageous costumed revelers competed for the best in a variety of categories. Judges Rabbitt Babbitt and Cindy Harper had a tough time deciding on winners but the parade of costumes did not disappoint. FOTAS photographer Brooke Turner snapped candid shots of dozens of revelers throughout the evening.

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Photos: Brooke Turner



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Long time volunteer Matt Warshawsky worked his computer magic to quickly tally up winning bidders in the silent and live auctions while the popular band, The Lincoln Project, tuned up and brought people up to the dance floor to finish out the evening. Our long time emcee, Julia Roupp, costumed as a hippie from the '60's, kept the evening flowing beautifully.

Barbara Talbert and her dedicated crew cleaned up and closed down another successful event. The event is the collaboration of dozens of volunteers who work with the steering committee, comprised of Jeane Lind, Marnie Norvell and Peggy Moore, to make this event happen.

Our sponsors donated more than \$14,800 (\$4,000 more this year than last). We hope to cover all our expenses (\$7,500) with the sponsor donations, leaving all other revenue generated (tickets, live and silent auctions and Fund a Need) as profit for the event. Obviously, this year we were also able to use \$7,300 of our sponsor's generous donations as profit as well.

We replaced our previous Paddle Call event with a Fund a Need, focusing on two important programs that help us with adoptions, the Foster Program and the Pit Crew Program. The magnetic charm of OSF Actor Barret O'Brien led the new Fund a Need effort, which raised \$10,395, of which \$6,000 will be used to continue the Pit

Crew Program for training of volunteers and large dogs (with an experienced, professional trainer) and the development of factual promotional material to make the program more successful. The remaining \$4,395 will fund the Foster Program and pay for food, litter and medical expenses incurred by the dedicated foster families who work to save puppies, kittens and the Shelter shocked.

The amazing generosity of the attendees, especially in the auction and Fund a Need portion of the event, made this the most successful Puss 'n Boots in history. Please help us in one more way — thank the local merchants who give generously to FOTAS. Their support is essential to our success.

Next year, we'll do it all again. Since this year the Ball was sold out 10 days before the event, get your tickets early. We are limited by legal constraints to a seating capacity of 250 people. Tickets will go on sale in late September. Please save the date: Saturday, October 25th at the Historic Armory. We'll open the doors at 6 to save the animals. 🐾



ALL ABOUT CATS

The weekend of November 9 was all about the cats. Catstravaganza, a fee-waived cat adoption event was held at several venues: Jackson County Animal Shelter, CATS, Sanctuary One and Southern Oregon Humane Society. A total of 114 cats and kittens were adopted!

At the Shelter, 34 cats and 15 kittens were adopted: only five cats were left in the kennels! The event brought many people to the Shelter, filling the halls with lines of adopters with their applications.

FOTAS cat room volunteers also assisted SNYP with their annual feral cat clinic the next day, resulting in 65 cat spays and 42 cat neuters. Rabbitt Babbitt, FOTAS volunteer, described both events as efficient, organized and highly successful.



Walter spent over two months at the Shelter before he found his forever home.

LOVING A LONG-TIMER

By MARILYN EDWARDS We call the kitties whose stay at the Shelter has stretched out to weeks or even months, our long-timers. They are the cats who, for one reason or another, have to wait more patiently for the forever homes they so

deserve. Sometimes there are obvious reasons why the long-timers haven't been adopted as quickly. For instance, very shy kitties that quietly hover near the back of their kennels are generally passed by. Often people forgo an older kitty (which long-timers frequently are) in favor of the cuteness factor exhibited by kittens. Black

kitties are probably the most overlooked cats at almost any shelter and can languish in their kennels for quite awhile. Cats that are perceived as a little too feisty or too depressed might seem undesirable. And finally, there are kitties who have had hard lives (remember, almost all of our cats arrive at the shelter as strays) and look a little rough around the edges. They tend to be overlooked as well.

This past year another factor contributed to the amount of time some of our cats stayed in the Shelter: From the time kitten season began in late spring until it

wound down in the fall, we rarely had less than fifty cats, and frequently as many as seventy in the cat rooms, waiting to be adopted. There were also as many as fifty kittens at a time in foster homes waiting for a space to open up at the Shelter. Eventually all of these cats and kittens were adopted, but for some of the less noticeable ones, it took a while.

The truth is this: the length of time a kitty spends in the Shelter, for whatever reason, is not a reflection of what kind of family member that kitty will be. The FOTAS volunteers spend hours loving and caring for each and every cat and kitten in the cat rooms, and we can tell you first hand that all of these kitties are remarkable little beings who often just need to know they are safe in order to blossom.

Walter's Tale

A great example is Walter, a beautiful black and white long-haired stray that arrived at the Shelter in early August. No one could figure out his age, but he was clearly not a young cat. He was big, but so far from bold that he remained in his litter box at the back of his kennel for the first few days of his stay with us. A FOTAS volunteer finally coaxed him into another box that had a soft blanket, but Walter still wouldn't leave the back of his kennel. As the days and weeks went by, the volunteers did everything they could to assure Walter that no matter what had happened

to him in his previous life, he was safe at the Shelter and no one would ever harm him. We figured this very large kitty also had a very large heart and would eventually respond to all the love that was showered upon him.

Walter had been at the Shelter for about two months before he slowly began to relax and respond to the affection coming his way. Tentative "baby steps" brought him close to the kennel door where volunteers could more easily pat him, scratch his head and gently hug him. Next he was held on the laps of volunteers. One volunteer in particular, Debbie, spent hours with Walter on her lap, just letting him get used to this new, out-of-kennel-experience. By the time he was approaching three months of shelter life, Walter had graduated from baby steps to leaps. These weren't giant leaps, but they were definitely leaps of faith. He decided that people were okay, and that occasionally strolling around on the cat room floor, checking out his fellow kennel kitty pals, was alright as well.

At the end of October, a wonderful couple came to the Shelter looking for an older kitty and spent several hours over a two-day period meeting almost every kitty there. They fell in love with Walter! Wanting companionship for him, they then spent time with Walter and two other kitties, young Sheba and kitten Pekoe, in a quiet room where

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Continued from previous page

the kitties could get to know each other and their new mom and dad. Long story short, all three kitties went home together, and our long-timer, Walter, who has since been renamed Percival, became king of the castle. Sheba, now Meera, is the family princess, and Pekoe is the charmer. We are, of course, delighted to hear about how well all of them, including their dog Faivan, adopted from our Shelter in 2005, are getting along. But what delights us most is to see Percival, who his mom Sarah describes as "Quite the cat — a big boy with a big personality," looking so regal and contented in his forever home. 🐾



Photo: Sarah Elvington

Pekoe, one of the kittens adopted with Walter, shares space with Faivan, a dog that was adopted from the Shelter in 2005.



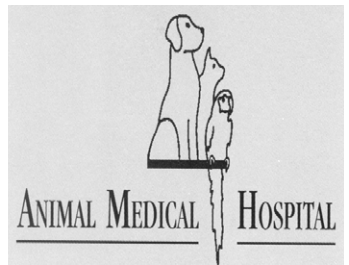
Photo: WR Young

PET COUNTRY FASHION SHOW

FOTAS volunteers joined Grange Co-op/Pet Country staff for the annual Pet Country Fashion Show and Customer Appreciation Day on November 9th. Pet owners registered their dogs (and one cat) for the Best Dressed and several dogs (and the cat) modeled pet clothes for the enjoyment of the audience attending. A marvelous silent auction, featuring a variety of things from pet items to wine to short trips to dinners out, raised money for FOTAS and our programs.

FOSTER A SHELTER ANIMAL — SAVE A LIFE!

Fostering a Shelter animal truly saves their life. The stressful kennel experience for long-timers like Bonnie (see article on page 1) and Walter (see article on page 8) often dampens their spirit and obscures an adopter's view of their true personality. Foster care provides a much-needed break for these animals and allows them to thrive in a home environment. Foster families also provide socialization for timid cats and dogs; care for puppies and kittens that are too young for adoption; and also care for animals in need of recovery from medical issues. Please consider the opportunity to serve as a foster parent to our precious Shelter animals. To learn more about the foster program, go to the FOTAS website at www.fotas.org and click on the "Foster" tab.



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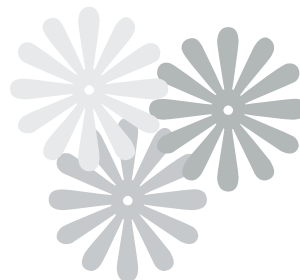
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Trudy and Bob Downing, in honor of Kody, Sunny and Tigger
Katrina Ford, in honor of our Rottie mix Gus's 4th birthday
Anita Garbor Bartal, in memory of Bob Bangs
Patti and Rick Gilstrap, in loving memory of Leo
Joanne and Gary Hamblin, in memory of Athena and Nova
Diane Hamilton, in honor of the cat I adopted on the Shelter's fee-waived weekend
Connie and Jeff Lynn, in memory of our buddy, Casper
Lynne and David McDermott, in memory of Mary E. Babbitt
Nancy Miller, in memory of Laurie Jones, and enjoying our great dog, Suzy, adopted in January 2013
Carole and Donell Nobles, in honor of Al Beatty
Marla Otiker, in honor of Dianne Quarg
Mona Rausch, in memory of Carol Cooker and Alice King
Constance and Victoria Robertson, in honor of adopting "Mr. Tibbs"
Amy Shuman, in memory of Irv Shuman
Celeste Stevens, in memory of Helen Montague
Frank Wigand, in memory of my daughter, Michelle
Mary Ann Wyatt, in memory of Junior
Nancy Zufich, in memory of my cat, Carl Oscar

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FOTAS VOLUNTEER MARILYN EDWARDS

How long have you volunteered with FOTAS? I have been a FOTAS volunteer in the cat room since fall of 2006. My good friend Jan Gregory and I worked together at Bloomsbury Books and decided to expand our horizons and become involved with another mutual passion besides books: cats — and everything to do with them. We began volunteering in the Jackson County Animal Shelter cat room on Thursdays, and have been doing so ever since.



Marilyn shares her life with her partner Pam, their two tabby kitties, Luna and Kobe, and their Flat-Coated Retriever, Taliea.

What does your typical day look like as a volunteer in the cat room? Mornings begin with making sure that all the kitties have their physical needs attended to: breakfast is served, litter boxes are cleaned, beds are fluffed and toys are offered. Then comes what I most love: spending quality time with our cats. We socialize the kitties by getting to know them and giving them the kind of quiet, loving attention which helps them feel safe in the Shelter environment — preparing them to trust new people as they wait for a home.

What I have learned is that these remarkable beings, unlike their human counterparts, aren't fretting over what life has handed them and aren't worrying about what lies ahead. They are totally present when I'm talking with them, holding them, stroking them or playing with them. I might be sad, knowing that in a few minutes I will have to put a kitty back in her kennel, but that kitty is living in the moment and I'm learning to be right there with her.

It is also rewarding to work with the dedicated FOTAS volunteers because, quite simply, they love cats and dogs and want to make a positive difference in these animals' lives.

It is also gratifying to meet members of the community who are not only longing for kitty companionship but are committed to giving a cat (or two) a loving forever home. Seeing people fall in love with one of our kitties and watching that cat respond so whole-heartedly is one of the many ways I define "joy."

You have such talent as the cat contributor to the FOTAS Facebook page. What experience do you have as a writer that brings a wonderful voice to the cats at the Shelter? Giving our shelter kitties a voice on the FOTAS Facebook page has been a delightful experience for me. I have loved writing since I was a young girl. My mom wrote a book for our family titled *"Five is Hardly Any Cats"* based on the antics of our own kitties, and maybe I'm trying to follow in her footsteps. My Shelter-experience book title would have to be more like *"Seventy is a Lot of Cats — but Let Me Tell You About Them."* And, really, that's all I'm doing on Facebook, briefly telling about our cats, their endearing personalities, and the people who adopt them into their hearts and homes. Each story is accompanied by a photograph taken by our amazing FOTAS photographers. The response has been incredibly gratifying. Loving kitties and loving to write come together for me on Facebook, and if this encourages more people to visit the Shelter and meet our exceptional kitties, well nothing could make me happier. 🐾