

May 2020

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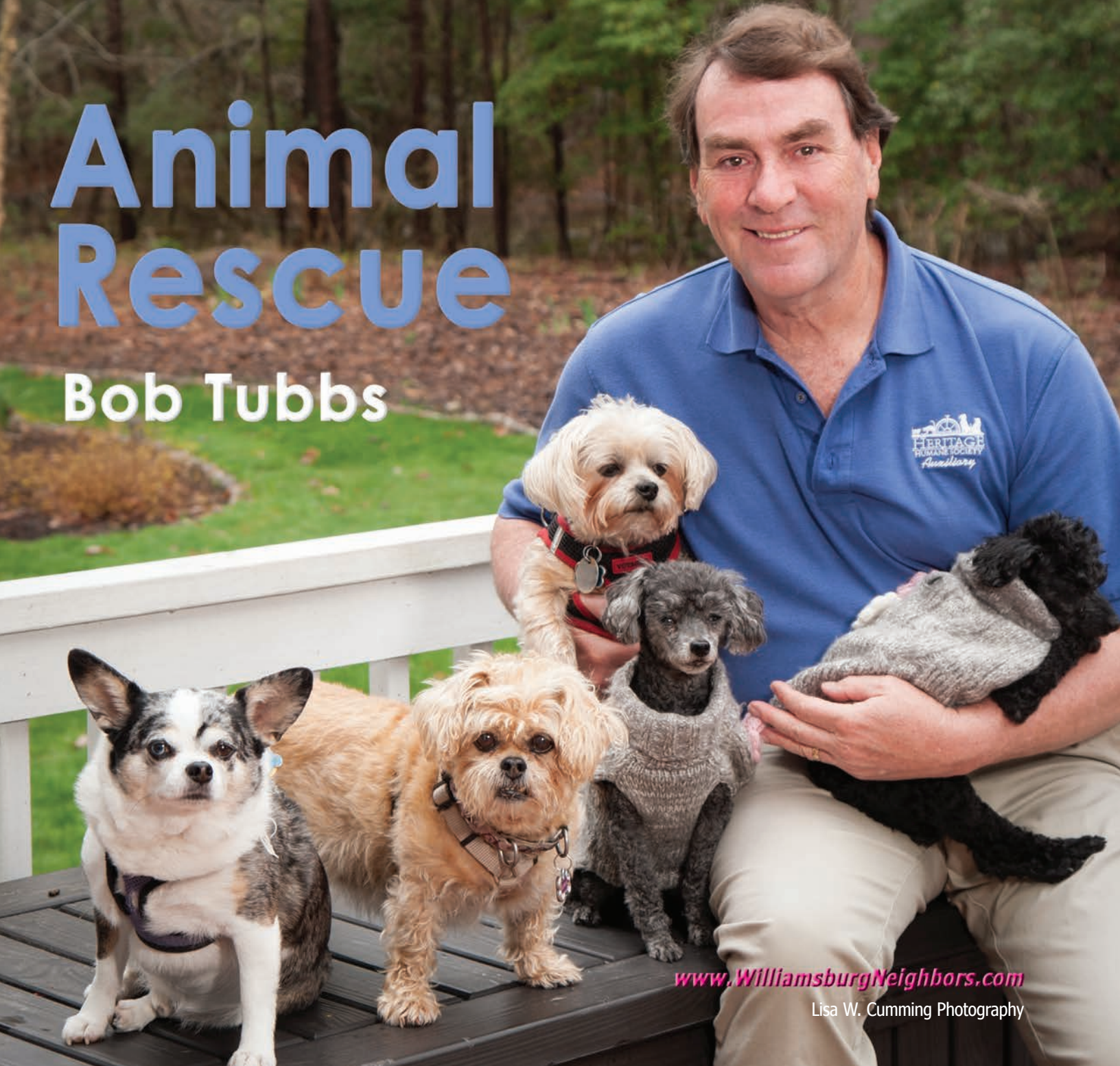
VOL. 14, ISSUE 5

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

Animal Rescue

Bob Tubbs



www.WilliamsburgNeighbors.com

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

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Meredith Collins, Publisher

We planned this issue on Animal Rescue months ago, before rescue and prevention became watchwords of our everyday lives, not just for animals, but for all of us. I am a dog lover. A cat lover. Really, an all-around animal lover, so I very much enjoyed the stories in this issue. Our writers do an exceptional job of bringing you well-written, informative and accurate articles. The stories highlight our compassion for animals, and our willingness to do what is necessary to improve the quality of their lives.

I want to point out that *Next Doors Neighbors* is not immune from the obvious impact Covid-19 is having on our economy. You will notice fewer pages in the May issue than normal and the omission of our department stories in the back: Business, Sports, Arts & Entertainment, Health and Home. Some of our advertisers have had to eliminate or scale back on their advertising temporarily, and we understand that. We have, however, included a second "In the Neighborhood" photo game as a small distraction for you during your safe time at home.

For those businesses who have chosen to advertise in this issue, we support them and ask that you do to. They need your business to continue to serve the needs of our community, and the needs of their families and yours. We salute our advertisers, both those in this issue and those we look forward to returning when circumstances improve. We wish them all the very best. And we salute our readers, our neighbors, who encourage us and support us and make publishing this magazine a true pleasure. Be safe. NDN

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BOB TUBBS



A Life's Purpose

By Narielle Living

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Bob Tubbs originally came to Williamsburg to run a Bed & Breakfast, but somewhere along the way he and his wife, Grace, found themselves taking on the extraordinary task of caring for and rescuing animals. Bob became involved in animal rescue in a variety of ways. Today, he has two cats and seven dogs, all of them rescue animals.

Years ago, both Bob and Grace worked for Xerox Corporation in Rochester, New York. An old friend of his in that area became the inspiration for their move. "She and her husband often talked about buying a house in the Finger Lakes area of upstate New York and doing the Bed & Breakfast thing," he says. Bob and Grace thought it was a great idea, but at that time were busy with their careers at Xerox. One night, Bob came home from work and Grace

told him she had found a way to do it. "She said she'd found a B&B in Williamsburg and wanted to talk to the owners. And I said, why are we interested in Brooklyn?"

When they visited the area, they liked what they saw. In addition, they knew people who lived here. "We decided to make the purchase and hired a person to manage the property for us. And then a few months later, Xerox had a reduction in force, and that affected both of us. So, we looked around Rochester and decided to go to plan B and B."

Bob and Grace owned The Cedars Bed and Breakfast from 2002 to 2016, and then retired from innkeeping. Bob says that transitioning from working at Xerox to being an innkeeper was an adjustment for him and Grace. "She had been a CEO, and I had done corporate

strategic alliances and acquisitions and mergers, so we went from 30 million dollar budgets to two and three thousand dollar budgets."

When a beloved pet died he found himself interested in animal rescue. "It was the passing of a cat," he says. "I loved all of our pets, but this one little girl was my baby. When her day came, it affected me more than I knew." Not long after, Grace visited Heritage Humane Society and spotted a little blond Affenpinscher, a wiry-haired terrier. That night, she asked Bob what he thought about getting a dog. "I wondered how that would work with the cats." But when he saw the dog, resistance was futile. "We went over [to the Humane Society] and that little blonde face came around the corner, and I've been smitten ever since."

Bob has worked with a number of animal


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rescue organizations, including Homes Fur Hounds and A Taste of Heaven. He has helped set up donations for them as well as for Heritage Humane Society, and he has transported a number of animals for each rescue. “I had 15,000 miles of transport last year. Probably at least 50 dogs and about 30 cats were in that bunch and they all end up going to a much better place than where they were. And so far, knock on wood, I’ve only had one transport failure.”

The failure he speaks of never made it to the shelter or rescue after Bob picked him up. “He’s a sweet little kind of Yorkie mix. As soon as he saw me, his tail was wagging. I picked him up in my arms, and he started kissing me on the cheek. We went out on the leash, and he did his business just like he was supposed to. And he was kind of rolling around and enjoying the day and the sun and stuff like that and then at Denny’s I had him on my lap. Every 10 miles he would pop up and start kissing me on the cheek again. I called my wife and told her he reminded me of our first dog, Georgia.” With that dog, their animal count at home became seven.

“I have a diabetic dog who’s blind, and I

have a foster hospice who has lymphoma. He doesn’t know he’s sick, and we’re not going to tell him.”

Bob’s advice to people is simple. Take care of the pets. And, “if you see something, say something. If there’s a situation that seems odd or awkward or uncomfortable, make the phone call. If you’re wrong and it’s a mistake, so be it. But if it’s something that needs attention, you’re helping an animal out of a potentially bad situation.”

There are many ways for people to become involved in animal rescue, and Bob stresses that not everyone has to adopt a pet in order to help. “You can volunteer at a shelter or with the Heritage Humane Society Auxiliary. You can foster, you can transport, you can donate.”

While many people assume the most difficult part of fostering an animal is giving them up, Bob says that this is not always the case. “By taking an animal out of a shelter, you’re freeing up space in the shelter for another animal. Even the best shelters have a limited staff. Animals get about five or 10 minutes of attention individually before the staff has to move on to the next animal. And it’s stressful. There’s barking and meowing and new scents

and people walking by.” He notes that animals in shelters might behave differently because of the stimuli, and they often become nervous or withdrawn. “By fostering, what you’re doing for the animal is akin to saving it.”

While he admits that people get attached to the animals they foster, he says the positive aspects outweigh the negatives. People who foster can provide essential information to adopters about the animal. “You know the animal and how it’s going to be in an environment or a house with young children or a house with cats and dogs. Yes, you become attached and they become attached to you, but you take solace in the fact that because of your efforts, they’re going to find the right home and be happy the rest of their lives.”

In his role as an animal advocate, Bob Tubbs has contributed an extraordinary amount to the animals in this area. He continues to do so through his tireless efforts in fundraising, transportation, fostering and legal advocacy. When he talks about all of this work, he quotes Mark Twain. “I’m reminded of what Mark Twain said about the two most important days in your life: the day you were born, and the day you find out why.” NDN

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Photo by Leah Kay Photography

Back Row (L to R): Sydney Freeman, Brielle Kelso, Sarah Lynch, Christine Weber, Jayla Bennett, Miya Jones, Hannah Barham, Morgan Jacobsen, Tatum Beatty. **Front row (L to R):** Exzana Williams, Ashley Kullberg, Cambell Ross, Adriana Lightfoot, Hailey Diggs, Skylar Montaque, Dshela Walker



Coach William Tose'



Assistant Coach Sarah Holland

The Season of All Seasons!!!! I have coached for over four decades. The coaching carousel spanned from recreational sports, junior high sports, AAU sports, EYBL sports and collegiate sports.

These sports experiences have allowed me to see my players excel at the collegiate level and professional levels. So why then was this season so great?

Well, this was my third season that started out with just filling in for Coach Edgar Randall who was the Head Girls Basketball Coach at Hornsby Middle School. Coach Randall was beloved by all of his players and



Coach Edgar Randall with his wife, Belinda

students. Coach Randall wanted to be a Health and Physical Education Teacher. After high school, he matriculated to West Virginia State University on a basketball scholarship where he was an outstanding student / athlete. He was later to be inducted into The Sports Hall of Fame at the university. He worked at the university where he held several titles. After his career at State was over, he came home and went right to work as a coach and became a game changer for so many students.

When Coach Randall made me

aware of his health condition, I was happy to help him in any way that I could. Coach Randall lost the fight against cancer in 2019, despite everyone pulling for him.

This year The Hornsby Girls Basketball Team, and our Assistant Coach Sarah Holland, wanted to do something to make sure that Coach Randall would be remembered for all time. The Girls Basketball Team had never won The Kiwanis Tournament or The Bay River District regular season, and they had never become The Bay River District Tournament Champs. So, they set the team goal to do just that.

They came to practice day after day with this as their focus. They won game after game. That in itself was great. The best thing of all

is that they did it as a true team. We had our core players but in every game someone different would do something extraordinary. Those extra efforts pushed us to victory. They went on to win every game with a record of 19-0. In reaching their team goal, they set some school records. First they won The Kiwanis Tournament, second they won The Bay River District regular season and third they became The Bay River District Champions.

"Nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream" Goal setting and hard work was their just reward.

Thanks for honoring my friend. Thanks for putting Coach Randall first. I am so proud to be your coach!!

Coach William Tose'

RYAN PHILLIPS



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Life with Pigs

By Brandy Centolanza

While most people share their homes and lives with dogs and/or cats as pets, Ryan Phillips has opened his house and heart to a number of farm animals including pigs, cows, turkeys and chickens.

Ryan, who operates the Life with Pigs Farm Animal Sanctuary out of his home, unofficially started the non-profit organization four years ago when he agreed to adopt a rescue white-spotted breeder pig named Pumpkin and her

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baby, Charlotte, after the breeder moved out of the state. Ryan and his family, who at the time lived in a two-bedroom condominium in Williamsburg, made the two pigs comfortable in their new home.

Soon after, they welcomed a third pig into the fold, a miniature pig named Millie, after Millie was booted from the farm where she had been living. Ryan's three pigs slept inside his family's condo wearing diapers, and Ryan would carry each of them down multiple flights of stairs daily for fresh air.

A long-time animal rights' activist, Ryan added yet two more animals to his growing brood after taking in a rabbit named Tesla and then a rescue Rhode Island Red hen named Beatrice, whom Ryan describes as a "feathered pig," because the hen developed such a close relationship with Ryan's three pigs.

"After we got Beatrice, it became clear that we could not maintain our condo lifestyle anymore," Ryan says.

In 2018, Ryan and his family relocated to Croaker, where he now has plenty of land for his animal friends to roam and play. Today, his

menagerie of pets includes three pigs, three dogs named Fiona, Polly, and Odin, three turkeys, eight chickens, two cows, and a rabbit. Pumpkin, Charlotte and Millie dominate the couch in the living room.

In addition to his three pigs, Ryan has also developed a strong bond with Jenna, a Holstein calf he rescued from a dairy farm in Durham, North Carolina in November 2018. Jenna was set to be killed since it was likely she wouldn't produce any milk until Ryan intervened after hearing about her plight from a friend who read her story.

"One day, I drove down there, put her in the back of my Subaru, and drove home," Ryan says. "She was three days old. That's when the idea of the farm animal sanctuary became real. That's when I felt I could really do this."

In addition to Jenna, Ryan also cares for a second cow, Maisie, and is involved in a battle to adopt a third cow, Sophie.

Most of Ryan's life is dedicated to tending to all of the animals. His daily routine begins before six a.m. when the pigs wake him to go outside. Then the dogs, chickens and turkeys all

want to be fed. In between caring for the animals, Ryan can be typically found outside building a barn, a greenhouse and fencing, brushing the cows, planting grass, and picking up waste and debris.

"I spend a lot of time cleaning up after everyone," he says. "There is a lot of clean up." There is also a lot of playtime.

"Jenna moos at the back door a lot to get my attention," Ryan says. "She likes to be chased and likes to play around the yard. Jenna also loves to cuddle. So does Charlotte. I spend a good part of my day loving on them all and making them happy."

Ryan also occasionally wanders with the cows and pigs down to Colonial Williamsburg, sharing their rescue stories with anyone he encounters.

"You can take a cow out on a leash just like a dog," Ryan says. "Colonial Williamsburg is a great place because I get to meet people from all over the world and share these animals' stories with them."

He also spends hours producing videos and social media posts about the animals as well as

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his objective through the Life with Pigs Farm Animal Sanctuary. Part of the sanctuary's mission is to educate people about animal injustices and the importance of treating them as equals.

"Life with Pigs has a dual focus," Ryan says. "We help find the happily-ever-after homes for the animals we are able to rescue and give them the best life possible. We are also taking their stories and sharing them with other people and helping make that personal connection with them."

Ryan, a former high school history teacher, first became an animal rights' activist nearly a decade ago. It started with giving up eating meat after his dad developed heart-related complications from his diet. Ryan became more convinced to fight for the lives of animals after a viewing of the documentary Food Inc. about the corporate farming process in the U.S. and is what some say is the unhealthy, harmful treatment of farm animals.

"After watching that, I pretty much became a vegan overnight," Ryan says.

Shortly after moving to Williamsburg in 2015, Ryan sat in on a presentation from a Wil-

liam & Mary professor about artwork as it relates to animal rights and decided to devote his life to animal rights' activism.

"Afterward, we talked, and she told me that I can make a difference and change the world," Ryan says. "It's hard to let it go after hearing so many horrific stories."

Ryan began making his own artwork and protesting on Richmond Road, and then the idea of the Life with Pigs Farm Animal Sanctuary came along.

"Pigs want to be loved and cuddled just like cats and dogs," Ryan says. "The difference between the animals who we choose to protect in our society like the cats and the dogs versus the cows and the pigs is only in our minds. My hope is for people to see that and to treat animals such as pigs the way they should be treated."

To that end, Ryan holds public visiting hours on his property twice a week and hosts special events over the holidays to allow people to come out and meet the animals.

"A lot of people did not grow up on a farm, so this allows them to have that experience of meeting a cow up close and see what they are

like," Ryan says.

Life with Pigs also has a gift shop with items such as shirts, ornaments and artwork as it relates to the sanctuary. Proceeds go toward animal care. Volunteers are also needed occasionally for cleanup.

In addition to his animal friends, Ryan, a history buff, shares his home with his two teen-aged children, Christian and Rousseau, who are named after two philosophers. The children help with caring for the animals and promoting Ryan's message. Ryan, who grew up in Indiana near Lake Michigan, first fell in love with Williamsburg as a student studying history at William & Mary and wanted to return to the area to raise his family.

"I just love the small-town feel and how everyone is so friendly," Ryan says. He appreciates the support the community shows for his message. "I want to continue to reach more and more people with the stories of our animals and want them to get to know each of these animals," Ryan says. "I just love all of these animals and living with them. I can't imagine my life without them." NDN

Financial Planning During a Pandemic

With so much uncertainty revolving around this pandemic, it's important to make an assessment of your current situation and make adjustments where you can. Here are our top 5 things you should consider during these uncertain times.

1. Review Your Plan: Are you still on track for your financial goals?
2. Adjust Your Budget: Where can you cut savings to build a buffer in your cash flow?
3. Assess Your Emergency Funds: Do you have enough set aside to maintain 3-6 months of income?
4. Consider a Roth Conversion Strategy: With asset prices depressed, could this fit into your plan?
5. Review your Estate Planning Documents: Have you updated your Will lately? How about your medical directive?

In addition to this, the CARES Act is now law, which is designed to provide much needed funding to support the economy during this time of duress. However, did you know that there is also provision that suspends required distributions from retirement accounts for 2020?

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ANIMAL ACUPUNCTURE

By Narielle Living

Jamie Blinn and her family, which includes her five children, ages four to 14, moved to Williamsburg from Munich, Germany. Her husband works as a diplomat, and when it came time for him to change posts, they had hoped to live here. “We love living overseas but we found that faith-based education for

our children is much harder there,” she says. “We ended up doing international schools in English, and they’ve been wonderful. But we didn’t really have the choice of the faith-based education, and that was important to us.”

In addition to raising a family, Jamie stays busy teaching theology at Walsingham Acad-

emy and running a veterinary acupuncture business. “I also have another job that most people don’t know about,” she says. “When we were in Munich, I picked up work as a background investigator. I do contract background investigations for the State Department.”

Jamie was introduced to animal acupuncture

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ture during her fourth year of veterinary school.

“One of our anesthesiologists was trained in acupuncture. She taught us about one point. It’s a resuscitation point, and she said that if we ever were losing an animal who was too deep in anesthesia to stimulate this point.”

Curious, Jamie asked her about the acupuncture business and learned a little about the work. “By the time I was in my fourth year, I had one baby and was pregnant with a second.” Jamie knew from the beginning of her veterinary journey that she was going to need to find a way to be flexible with her career and family balance. “I knew from the struggle of being with my first baby and finishing school that I probably wasn’t going to want to work full time. So, this acupuncture idea sort of took root, but stayed dormant for a while.”

During several moves to different locations for her husband’s work, Jamie loved being home with the kids. “I was happy to be home, and my husband’s career was able to support us but I always missed the chance to practice my

profession.” When they lived in California, Jamie had the opportunity to attend the Chi Institute of Veterinary Medicine. Jamie says that the founder, Dr. Xie, is incredible. “I got to sit with him at an advanced training session.”

The work that she studied for animal acupuncture at the Chi Institute is taught from the foundations of Chinese veterinary medicine. “There’s a bit of a difference in the veterinary world; there’s the western version of acupuncture where we’ve clinically tested these points and evidence-based medicine says that this point helps stifle pain or this point helps with GI disease. But then there’s the Chinese application which really backs things up and says we have to look at the constitution of the animal, the fundamental five element theory of Chinese medicine.” Her training consisted of about a six-month process combining on-line and on-site visits in order to become a certified veterinary acupuncturist.

When a person sees an acupuncturist for a remedy, a detailed health history is obtained and the acupuncturist talks extensively with

the patient. Acupuncturists are not able to communicate the same with an animal. But as Jamie points out, Western medicine often deals with patients who cannot speak for themselves. “A neonatologist or pediatrician has the same thing. It’s a little more of unraveling the story, but for Chinese medicine in particular we look at the tongue and pulse quality.”

In Western medicine, the doctor starts with temperature, pulse and respiration. Jamie starts by talking with the animal’s owner. “It’s very similar in Chinese medicine,” she says. “You start with the animal’s Shen, or their greeting and awareness of their surroundings. And then you move to a detailed history.” She notes that the history can be a bit odd in that she asks things like do they prefer the sun or the shade, which is a fundamental part of Chinese theory.

“My favorite thing is to ask questions to figure out if they’re a wood, fire, Earth or water personality. I usually plan on a 15 to 30 minute interview with the owner for a first appointment, because there’s so many questions to ask and history to take.”

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In Chinese medicine, there is an associated point for every organ system. For example, the bladder meridian runs parallel to the spine. When palpating these points, the acupuncturist can get clues to the health of the animal. “My dog, for example, was anemic,” she says. “He was sensitive on palpation to the blood association point on his back, so that can be helpful, too, but sometimes if there’s more than one thing going on, it’s like unraveling layers of an onion.” Certain points can also be helpful for animals with anxiety or behavioral disorders.

When Jamie uses needles to stimulate acupuncture points on an animal, she needs to be certain the animals are still. Her techniques for doing this were learned on the job. “I learned as I went, and my patients helped teach me. Some patients are really comfortable if I pop them up on a table. I’ve treated a dog on a kitchen table before, because that’s that dog’s safest place to sit still. And some of them lie on their pillows and sort of melt into treatment.”

Some of her cat patients are very good pa-

tients. “I have one cat I can put like 25 needles in. She just crouches in our carrier, and then I have others where if I get six needles in, I’m feeling really accomplished.” Each treatment is created and modified according to the needs of the patient, and mobility and patience often play an important role in what Jamie can accomplish.

One of the questions Jamie is faced with is being able to determine how an animal needs acupuncture. “Where I learned, all of our practice animals were adopted greyhounds. They came off the tracks in Florida, and all of them benefited from acupuncture because of the stress their joints had been under. As they aged out of their racing ability, they inevitably had some arthritis. I would say that arthritis, stiffness and a lack of mobility are the best indicators that your animal will benefit from acupuncture. I see the best results and the most repeatable results in arthritic patients. However, any animal could benefit from acupuncture.”

Jamie is clear in her praise of Western vet-

erinary medicine. “Indigestion, weight loss, respiratory issues like asthma, any of those things in theory could respond to acupuncture, but I would never advocate that a patient not see their regular Western veterinarian. All I do is acupuncture because I don’t have the capability nor the infrastructure to do Western medicine. I don’t ever want to step on the toes of my colleagues. In fact, they often refer me patients that they feel could benefit from acupuncture.”

Jamie Blinn and her family are glad they made the move to Williamsburg. “It has been a great home for us professionally, spiritually and socially,” she says. “It’s been wonderful.” She is also grateful for her acupuncture business, which has afforded her the opportunity to get to know so many area residents. “For the most part, I go to my client’s homes and I treat their animals in their homes. This affords me the opportunity to build relationships with the client, which has been an unexpected and wonderful part of my work, getting to build those relationships.” NDN

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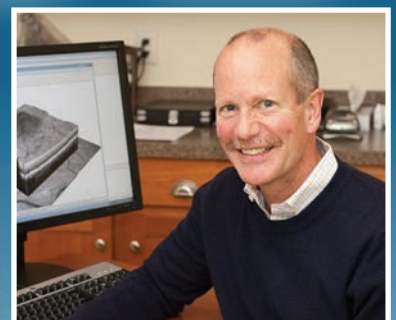
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Caring for Animals

By Lillian Stevens



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

As members of the veterinary community, Kelly O'Connor and the team at Godspeed Animal Care have been very busy lately. When this phone interview took place, Greater Williamsburg was just beginning to navigate its way through the emerging COVID-19 pandemic.

Kelly is the longtime hospital administrator at Godspeed Animal Care and its sister company, St. Francis Pet Resort & Rehabilitation

Center. She says there is no road map for this.

"We have canceled all but emergency and sick patient appointments to preserve the protective gear we have in stock and limit exposure," she says. "We had a plan in place early on. No one has been allowed into the building except employees since mid-March. We are retrieving sick pets from cars directly and talking to their owners by phone."

The St. Francis boarding facility, doggie

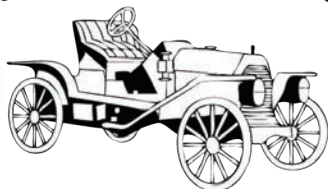
daycare and grooming remain open.

Animals, and the humans who own them, are near and dear to Kelly's heart.

"By its nature, the veterinary medical field attracts a lot of individuals who have a high level of empathy and compassion," she says. "We love animals, and our work overall is extremely rewarding. We help pets stay healthy, and we also educate families so they can properly care for their pet. It brings such a sense of

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well-being and joy.”

Kelly has been in her management role for the past 11 or so years, but has worked at Godspeed in progressive capacities since 2002.

“I do a little of everything,” she says. “I manage the business, staff and everything related to HR including payroll and benefits. I generally have my hands in everything.”

Kelly and her colleagues are appreciative of those steadfast patrons who have entrusted the care of their pets to Godspeed for so many years. “We’re in this field out of love for the animals. We love the members of our community and appreciate all that they do entrusting their pets to us.”

Try to imagine a young boy accompanying his parents and his new puppy to that first wellness check-up at the vet. This is a community that watches its young grow up, watches their pets grow up, all the while celebrating milestones and commiserating over loss.

Then imagine the agony when that dreaded day comes.

“It happens,” Kelly says. “Suddenly this boy is a young man, maybe home from freshman year in college. His puppy is now an elderly and sick dog. The family turns to us to help them with that final procedure.”

Those who have had to put a beloved pet down know the pain firsthand. Sometimes it doesn’t occur to them what it’s like for the veterinarians and technicians.

“It’s the hardest thing we’re called upon to do. We are granted an enormous amount of responsibility when asked to take away an animal’s suffering and pain.”

It can take a bitter toll, resulting in something called “compassion fatigue.”

“Compassion fatigue has gone under the radar until recent years,” Kelly says. “I think people assume that euthanasia is just a part of the job. Many don’t stop to think about the mental toll that takes. In human medicine, no one is asked to take a life, and that is where we differ.”

It’s important to note that the decision to euthanize a pet is truly in the hands of the veterinarians. They have to feel it’s the correct decision for the animal or they will not do it.

“The vets, the licensed techs, all of us are involved in this. Euthanasia is a last resort, done only when diagnostic testing reveals a reason to do so. We are not going to take a life for a matter of convenience. Fortunately, it’s rare that a pet owner will ask that of us, but if they do, we will refuse. Instead, we will work within the community to rehome that animal.”

It can be a lot to deal with. Compassion fatigue is often described as the negative cost of caring, or even secondary traumatic stress. So, Kelly is committed to looking out for her team and makes sure they know she’s there for them.

“It’s so important to keep the lines of communication open,” she says. “There are resources out there to help staff maintain their mental and emotional wellbeing. There is also outside counseling for those who need it. The more we are able to talk about this among ourselves, the healthier we feel. We are able to share in each other’s grieving process.”

The veterinary profession is ranked among some of the highest when

it comes to suicide rates, something many would find absolutely astonishing. “A lot of it is because of repeated exposure to euthanasia and having to make those extremely difficult decisions. In our roles, we have a moral responsibility to the animals but also to each other.”

Kelly’s path to veterinary medicine started with a tragic event in her own life.

“I was in an automobile accident 20 years ago,” she says. “I was hit by a drunk driver and spent a month in the hospital, followed by a year in physical therapy. Growing up, I always loved animals, but while I was in the hospital, they would bring in therapy dogs. Those therapy dogs were the best medicine. Having them visit was a turning point for me.” So much so that Kelly started working with Canine Assistants, a non-profit service dog school which is based in Georgia.

“In the future, I’d love to do more with therapy dogs because I think that is great medicine, and it certainly played a part of getting me where I am now. I had been working at the Richmond SPCA and was doing a little work for Canine Assistants when the opportunity at Godspeed came up.”

Williamsburg residents know that Godspeed has a rich and storied past.

In the mid-1990s, its owner, Pamela Dumont, DVM, established what was then called Godspeed Mobile Veterinary Care. Dr. Dumont proceeded to run the business out of the basement of her home.

“Dr. Dumont and Brenda Seal, who has been with our company for 23 years now, would go out on local house calls,” Kelly says. “When Agape Animal Care went up for sale, Dr. Dumont looked at it as a good time to expand her business and settle into a freestanding clinic,” Kelly says.

“So that’s how it all started,” Kelly says. “Agape turned into Godspeed. And we still make house calls. We’ve been here for so long that we’ve built some really special relationships in this community.”

Kelly is proud of the work she does at Godspeed and loves living and working in this community she calls home.

“I’m a local gal,” she says. “I was born and raised here, although I did spend a number of years out in Summit County, Colorado so I have a great love of Colorado and Utah and traveling out west.”

After earning a degree in Computer Science, Kelly switched gears and was trained for canine rehabilitation at the University of Tennessee. She was certified by the Veterinary Management Institute at Colorado State University in 2014 and later became a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager (CVPM) through the Veterinary Hospital Management Association. She believes wholeheartedly that having a companion animal is the best therapy and wishes every household knew the comfort they can bring.

Kelly O’Connor is also the proud mother of a 12-year-old son and parent of three cats and two golden retrievers, one of which is certified as a canine therapy dog.

“You’ll find that most people working in the vet field tend to have a menagerie of pets,” she says with a laugh. “We love animals. We care for them all day at work, then we look forward to coming home to them. Caring for these animals is what fills our souls every day.” NDN



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CATHERINE WATTS

Answering a Calling

By Harmony Hunter



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Catherine Watts tried to be an accountant, she really did. But in the end, her life was always going to be about animals. As the Medical Team Manager for Williamsburg’s Heritage Humane Society, she spends her days caring for vulnerable animals and her nights in much the same way.

Catherine was drawn to animals from a young age, when she would eagerly shadow the large animal vets at horse shows. Remember-

ing, she says, “I loved hanging out with them when they came. I learned how to do blood draws and X-rays, and it was just so fascinating to me.” Those early experiences sealed the desire to work with animals in her heart, although her mind would try to pull her in another direction when she reached her early twenties.

The problem was, when the time for college came around, veterinary school seemed like an awfully big bite to chew. “I realized, wow, vet-

erinary school is a lot of work. I was more into not going to school that long. So, I decided to go into business management. In fact, I went to Christopher Newport for accounting.”

Fate would not be pushed aside so easily, however, and veterinary care knocked on her door again almost as soon as she had made her level-headed choice to pursue a perfectly good career in accounting. “The funny thing is, I went to Christopher Newport for accounting,

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and got my summer job here at Heritage Humane Society. I stepped back into the animal world. And, you know, I stopped wanting to be an accountant.”

At Heritage Humane Society, Catherine has since advanced from that early summer job to her position today as Medical Team Manager. A typical day finds her carrying out a vet’s recommendations for the animals under her care. This can range from vaccines and de-worming to more complex procedures like administering IV fluids and dosing antibiotics. With a veterinarian able to visit just once a week, the day-to-day medical care of the animals at Heritage Humane Society falls to Catherine and her team.

The animals Catherine cares for run the gamut. “We usually have anywhere from 20 to 40 dogs. We always have a lot of cats, particularly now in kitten season. We see rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters. We do get a pig or chicken now and then, and we find farms for those as well,” she says.

The animals at Heritage Humane Society often are the most defenseless, too. Strays, surren-

ders and unplanned litters are the stories behind most of the animals under her care. It’s hard to imagine how an animal who was once a part of a family must feel when it finds himself at a shelter.

Adoption is the most urgent mission at Heritage Humane Society. Animals who find their way to Catherine have had a tough break, and she believes deeply that they deserve to feel healthy and secure. “These animals need somebody who will speak up for them and advocate for them and do whatever is possible to make them safe and well again.” Every day, Catherine is that advocate.

Not every animal gets adopted, and that’s the sad reality of pet ownership that falls somewhat short of responsible. Catherine uses all of her personal resources to rescue whoever she can. “I have 26 heartbeats in my house. So, I run a small rescue. I’ve taken home the diabetic, the cancer, the kidney disease; I take on the unadoptable. Unfortunately, if I didn’t take them home, I’d have to euthanize them. I also am the only euthanasia tech, so when I have that cat or

dog who comes in, I’m like, ‘I can save this. I can do this.’”

Together with her 13-year-old son, Catherine nurses these very sick animals and gives them the comfort and love they were promised as puppies and kittens. Of her son, she says, “He is such a blessing in my life and really has a connection with my misfits at home. We, together, take care of the misfits. Saving these lives and giving them the chance they deserve, I think, really instills a sense of humanity and kindness in my son that few teens get to experience. He helps me with the sick neonates and rejoices when they thrive and grieves with me when they don’t make it.”

Heritage Humane Society’s foster program offers animals some homey comforts while they await adoption. Catherine heads up this effort, as well. It’s a place where community volunteers are indispensable. After a brief training session, fosters take animals into their households to give them a respite from life at the shelter. “It’s the senior cats that have been here for you know, a year, but they need to get out of the shelter and

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decompress. Older senior animals need a break, some movement, and some soft couches, some relief from the shelter. Also, it's the youngsters here that are in jeopardy of attracting disease. Those need to get out of here," she says.

Fostering an animal can help give a break to a cat or dog who really deserves good luck, but it also can advance their chances for adoption. Every dog foster knows to talk up their dog when they're out for walks or a play in the park. "We always encourage our fosters to promote them while they're in foster care. When they're walking Princess down the road and somebody comes up to look at her, they can say she's available for adoption through Heritage Humane Society. You can promote that animal. Then maybe it doesn't even have to come back to the shelter, it can get adopted straight from your foster home." Regardless of the outcome, Catherine likes to see animals get to stay in a foster home for at least two weeks so that they have a chance to acclimate and relax.

Volunteering to foster a pet can be profoundly beneficial for humans, as well, particularly

when circumstances leave people homebound and isolated. "Right now, I have two long-term dogs that are high energy and just want to play, play, play, and run, run, run. I need big dog lovers. I need somebody who wants to take these high-energy hounds and pit bulls and take them on a run and get them some relief from the shelter for a little while," she says. She adds that periods when family members can be home to help familiarize a new pet with household routines and training are an excellent time to foster or adopt.

Catherine encourages everyone to consider adopting an animal and points out that our region is particularly well-suited for it. "Williamsburg is a great town for pets. There are so many places you can just sit outside with your dog or take them on walks. And then all the parks; there's College Creek, there's Williamsburg, there's Freedom Park. You have these great houses with great backyards. I drive my son through my neighborhood, and I don't think I've ever seen a walker or a jogger without a dog. It's great to see these dogs being happy and

walking with their people."

If fostering isn't possible, the Heritage Humane Society remains open to all kinds of support. "We're a nonprofit. We run strictly on donations. We spay and neuter these animals and vaccinate them for leukemia, rabies and distemper. We treat them just like a pet that's going to go into a home; they get the same care and the same medicine. We don't get anything back, so monetary donations do help us continue." Small donations and even gift cards to big-box pet stores can go a long way to making sure an animal has food and a clean place to live while they await adoption.

Caring for these animals is a matter of principle, compassion, and service, but the truth is, Catherine Watts does what she does for love. "Unfortunately, I like to fix things, and that's my passion. It's not for the faint of heart, but it keeps me sane. I tried to be an accountant, I worked at a firm for a little bit, and it was so boring! These animals look into your soul and ask for help, and I know that if I don't do it, no one else will." NDN

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ANNETTE ROBERTS



A Sanctuary for Seniors

By Ashley Smith

Lisa W. Cumming Photography

Originally from Elmyra, New York, Annette Roberts has loved animals since she was young. When she was a child, she doted on the family cat, Smokey. She couldn't have predicted, however, that her life would become dedicated to rescuing cats and dogs. "I didn't plan on working with animals when I grew up. I didn't want to be a vet or anything," she says.

Approximately 40 years ago, Annette moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. It was here that she met and married her husband, John. At the time, Annette worked in an administrative office position for a construction company, and

John also worked in construction as a field supervisor. "I loved working in an office," Annette says cheerfully. Over the decades, she built an administrative career that spanned the construction, education, manufacturing and finance industries.

In 1990, John and Annette purchased 10 acres in Charles City, where they settled with their pets, including two dogs and two cats. "We seemed to add a new dog or cat every other year or so," she says. It was not until 2009 that foster animals came into their lives. During a shopping trip to Providence Forge, John met

a lady with two newborn kittens. He agreed to bring them home and foster them. Named Shannon and Riley, the cats never left the Roberts home and still live there today.

Their friend, Catherine, worked with feral cats through the trap, neuter, and release program. After their first kitten fosters, Annette and John began to foster kittens Catherine brought to them. Over the next two years, 80 percent of the kittens they fostered were adopted into loving homes.

Annette notes that there were not many cat rescue organizations in her area at that time.

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“We seemed to be filling a need.” Initially, the kittens were kept on the right side of the house but eventually they were able to build an enclosed structure to house newcomers. With the arrival of 12 cats from animal control, expansion became a priority. Thus, the Cat House and the newly built Cat Cottage became G. Faucett Kitty City. Kitty City consists of several dog kennels with roofing and connecting tunnels that allow the feline residents to move freely. Both Cat House and Cat Cottage are heated, providing comfort and shelter in all types of weather. Today, Annette and her husband house approximately 30 cats on their property. They no longer accept kittens or feral animals; instead, their efforts are focused on seniors. Senior pets are those seven years or older.

In 2014, Annette took on a new challenge. A local hunter could no longer handle the nine hound dog puppies in his care. She and John took them in and all but one, Cato, eventually found homes. Cato remains with them. Shortly afterwards, they discovered an abandoned kennel on a bordering property. The kennel housed nine malnourished, dehydrated adult hounds.

Over the summer, they cared for the animals, providing routine medical care, food and heaping doses of kindness. That fall, with generous donations from friends, they were able to build an outdoor kennel on their land and move the animals. At first, the dogs were not socialized and needed to be kept separated from Annette’s and John’s dogs. With the protection and care of their new owners, the dogs thrived. Annette named the new kennel MayGo Hound Haven. Some of the hounds were eventually able to re-acclimate to people and be adopted into loving homes. Those that could not socialize remain with Annette.

When the opportunity arose to purchase the abandoned property, John and Annette didn’t hesitate. Today, their property consists of 30 acres of fields and woods, perfect for their work rehabilitating and fostering senior animals. “Our closest neighbors are a mile away, which is great for housing so many hound dogs,” Annette says with a laugh. She ascribes the lack of other wildlife on the property to the presence of the dogs. “There are probably deer on the edge of the woods, avoiding the

hounds.” Yet, the hounds don’t seem to bother the cats. “They tend to be protective of our cats, keeping other wildlife away.”

Until 2016, the costs of rescuing all these animals were borne almost exclusively by Annette and her husband. Friends finally convinced Annette to become a 501(c)3 nonprofit to relieve the financial burden. Thus, A Taste of Heaven Sanctuary, Inc. launched with a mission to rescue and provide permanent homes for senior cats and dogs. To date, the Sanctuary has rescued more than 50 dogs and cats. The nonprofit status has allowed them to raise money to cover medical bills for the animals, food costs and repairs. They also raise funds to help with medical costs for animals at the Charles City Animal Shelter that the county is not able to provide. This helps to keep adoption fees low, especially for older animals. Most recently, the Subaru used to transport animals had broken down. Fundraising efforts are currently focused on finding a replacement for the vehicle.

In addition to their personal rescue efforts, Annette spends time volunteering at the Charles City Animal Shelter. Volunteers at the shelter

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help with adoption events and social media for A Taste of Heaven Sanctuary, Inc.

She's grateful for the lessons she has learned and the advice of friends, both from the shelter and the Colonial Veterinary Clinic in Williamsburg. "Colonial Veterinary has been so accommodating. We just love them!" According to Annette, senior pets often have more health issues than younger animals and it is important to have a strong relationship with a trusted veterinarian.

In addition to the shelter and the veterinarian, Annette and John rely on friends who volunteer at A Taste of Heaven. Two friends regularly help with cleaning the Cat Cottage, attending adoption events, and providing animal transport. They've also been generous with their donations, and Annette feels blessed by their generosity.

Due to the nature of their work with the animals, Annette and John have little free time. Their last vacation, a cruise, was five years ago. "John takes a yearly hunting trip, and I manage to visit my parents in New York annually." Her concern, however, lies with the dogs and cats

in their care. "They need food, attention and exercise every day."

In addition to working at PetSmart in Williamsburg, Annette can also be found there with animals who are available for adoption. Each year, the Sanctuary partners with the Charles City Animal Shelter and PetSmart to host four or five adoption events that include animals from both organizations. At these events people are able to meet the animals, ask questions and apply for adoption.

Annette has nothing but kind words for her neighbors. "The people of Williamsburg are wonderfully generous and kind to their animals," she says. She encourages people to adopt from rescue organizations and local organizations. She also hopes that potential pet owners will consider adopting an older pet. "Seniors still have so much life and love to give."

Annette plans to run A Taste of Heaven Sanctuary, Inc. with John for as long as she can and encourages others to volunteer their time at a rescue or shelter. "I love this," she says. Many Williamsburg families and animals have been blessed by her heart for animal rescue. NDN

Next Door Neighbors

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Next Door Neighbors is a monthly, direct-mailed magazine serving the residents of the Williamsburg area.

Circulation: 43,000



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TRACEY LEFTWICH



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

THE HEALING TOUCH

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Tracey Leftwich has been working with neglected and abused animals for the past 20 years. She's been a fosterer, a rescuer, and an adopter long enough to recognize the visual signs of physical and emotional abuse in any animal. The way a horse, dog, cow, or cat stands, the tightness of particular muscles, an ear flick, a flinch when she hits a tender spot.

These are all meaningful signals to the owner of N Touch Equine and Canine Massage Therapy. Tracey uses her sensitive hands like dowsing rods, but instead of locating water, they pinpoint trouble spots.

"There is no greater feeling than to see an animal that has come from a bad situation realize that the massages I perform are good

things rather than bad, a healing touch," Tracey says. "Massage benefits all ages and stages of life. It increases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. It also helps with fatigue, soreness and stiffness in muscles, tendons and joints. It speeds healing after surgery, too."

But it's not just abused animals that benefit from Tracey's healing touch. She's done work

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on many show horses considered top athletes in their field. “Increased circulation equals decreased inflammation, so regular massage helps them to perform at the top of their game, whether that’s racing, dressage or show jumping, and they recover much more quickly afterward,” she says.

Years ago, Tracey stumbled on the benefits of massage therapy when she started giving her own horses a good rubdown after a ride. She had no real knowledge of technique at the time. She just knew her horses were much happier when she loosened up their tight muscles. This discovery eventually led Tracey to pursue certification from Equissage, a top equine and canine massage therapy school founded in 1989 by Mary Schrieber. “Mary also became my mentor and friend,” Tracey says of that time in 2014. “My life was forever changed that first day in Mary’s classroom in the basement of her farm house in Round Hill, Virginia.”

She demonstrates some of the techniques she learned at Equissage on friend and neigh-

bor Nancy Williams’ dressage horse, Sancho, who has had numerous growth spurts. Horses and ponies are measured in units of four inches which is called a “hand.” A horse is anything over 14 hands, two inches. Sancho is one of Tracey’s regulars, a big gelding that now stands two inches over 17 hands (17.2), which means he is 5’8” at the base of his neck, or withers.

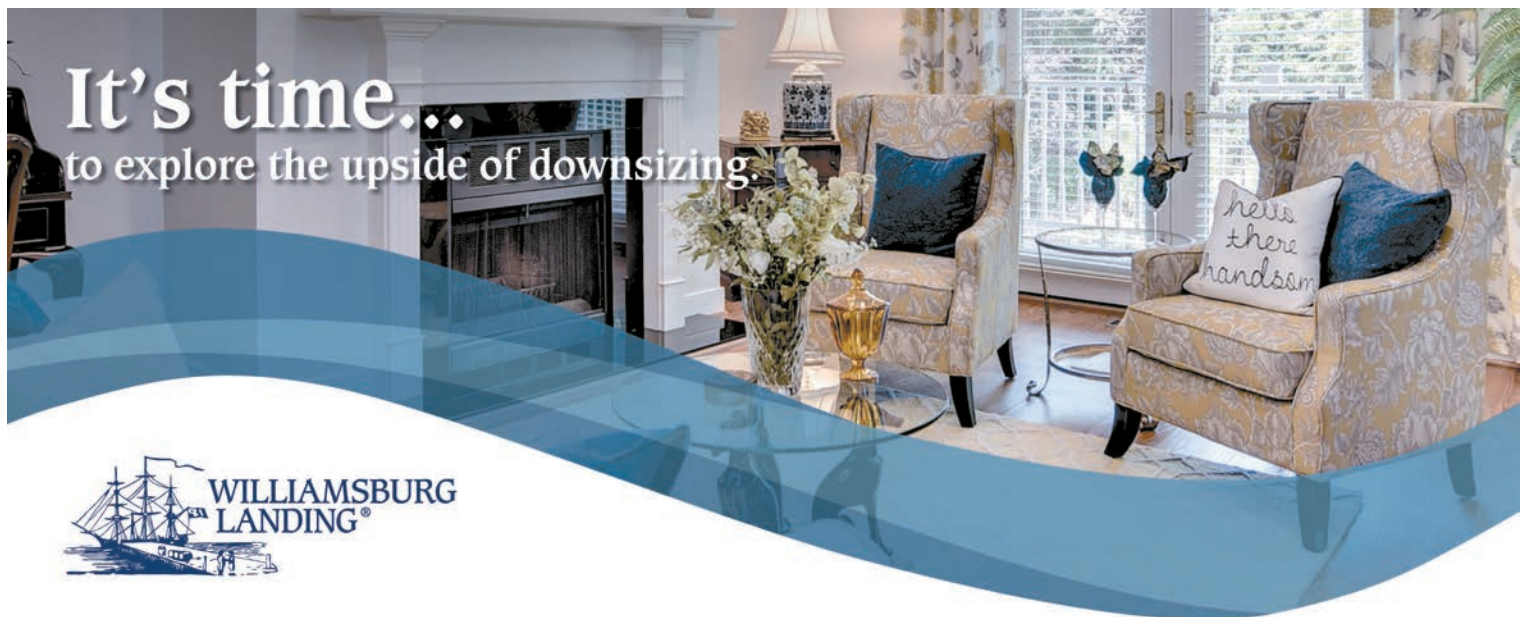
“Dressage horses, especially ones who are being worked at the upper levels, have a tendency to be really stiff through the shoulders,” Tracey says as she reaches high and works her strong hands into the horse’s neck muscles. “See that licking and chewing motion he’s doing? That’s a sign that endorphins are being released.” This brief demonstration is just a glimpse of a process that takes a full hour or more for a horse of this size, and perhaps 40 minutes for a pony.

Tracey has a regular roster of clients, but most of the time she is alone when she works. She arrives, does her thing, and leaves, sending an invoice later by email. It’s the perfect job

for social distancing protocol. “Sometimes a client will leave me a note asking me to please put the horse’s blanket on and turn them out when we’re finished,” she says with a laugh. “I’m happy to do it, because I find many of my clients become friends over time.”

Tracey tries to keep her prices fair but trends on the low side to encourage her clients to schedule more frequently. “Massage isn’t frivolous or a luxury for those who need it,” she says. All of her equine clients book in advance at four, six, 10 or 12 week intervals. A full massage can last more than an hour depending upon size and the issues she finds.

Starting at 30 dollars per treatment for a dog, clients feel they can also book therapy for them as needed without breaking the bank. Tracey sees many senior dogs in her practice, and when owners observe the difference in their pet’s behavior and comfort after a treatment, they’re amazed. For some seniors, it keeps them playful and active long into old age. “I see working Search and Rescue dogs as well as just your average pets,” Tracey says.



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“They can all benefit from regular massage.”

It takes tight scheduling to fit in everything she does in one day. Massage is just one of three jobs that for anyone else but Tracey would be considered full time. She’s an excellent time manager, but still rises as early as four a.m., and most days, bedtime doesn’t come before 11:00.

“I’m busy all the time but I love what I do, so I like it that way,” she says. “I’ve been a deputy sheriff with Williamsburg-James City County for 24 years, and my husband and I also own a farm in Lanexa, Fireman’s Run Farm, where we raise Traditionally Horned Irish Dexter cattle for breeding stock.” Tracey’s husband, Chip, a Captain with York County Fire and Life Safety, holds down the fort solo when she’s not there. “The only way I can do this is because I can schedule massages on his days off. I have traveled as far as Pennsylvania to see clients.”

Tracey and Chip started from scratch 20 years ago on a lovely piece of land near the banks of the Chickahominy River. Chip

comes from a handyman tradition, and he and his dad built most of the house and barn themselves. The view from the road as she approaches the property after a long day still lifts her heart in gladness, especially when the setting sun gilds the river. As she pulls in to Fireman’s Run Farm, numerous rescue dogs currently enjoying their freedom come running to greet their mistress. She passes several large pens full of fancy chickens that produce pastel-colored eggs off to her right, and the cattle pastures are visible beyond them. Tracey’s glamorous chickens, including Swedish Flower Hens and Silverudd’s Blues, are inspected regularly for health, and she ships fertile eggs all over the country. A self-deputized posse of Guinea fowl run raucous laps around the barn and patrol the farm’s bucolic acres, keeping them virtually tick-free. The young rescue barn cats, Sylvester and Jasper, take a break from mouser duty for some petting and purring. Tracey no longer rides due to a back injury, but several pasture ornament ponies provide bareback rides for grandchildren when they visit their

Granna and Papaw.

“We have three children, four grandchildren, and one on the way, and they all live nearby,” she says with a big smile. It’s a good, healthy way to live, and she enjoys it all.

Tracey finds that giving a massage holds health benefits for her as well as the animal. Her blood pressure, despite a stressful career in law enforcement, always runs abnormally low.

“It’s sort of like meditation for me. I have to be right mentally and physically,” she says, “because if I’m not, the horses won’t let me touch them.” Once she starts and gets into her peaceful zone, messages begin to flow freely to Tracey from the animal’s expressive body through her hands, and then feelings of comfort, safety, love and wellbeing are conveyed in return.

“Touch is healing for both the giver and the receiver,” Tracey says. “Massage is the ultimate hug, and it’s why I love what I do so passionately. No other tool gives an animal what that can provide. There’s just no substitute for human touch and kindness.” NDN

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The Legacy of Peaches

By Alison Johnson



Lisa W. Cumming Photography

As a child, Debbie Hammond was never allowed to have a dog. Her parents thought indoor pets were too messy and expensive. When a big, stray dog with curly orange and white fur showed up in Debbie's yard when she was about 12, Animal Control took her away.

"I had already named her Peaches, and I begged to adopt her," Debbie recalls. "She was really sweet, and I just wanted to take care of her."

Today, at age 65, Debbie is fulfilling her childhood dreams.

Since May 2018, she and her husband, Roger, have fostered 21 dogs as they await adoption, many of them beagles abandoned by hunters. She works with the nonprofit Homes Fur Hounds, Inc., a Williamsburg-based rescue organization.

As a canine foster parent, Debbie's job is to help nurse dogs back to health, work on

housebreaking and other behavioral issues, and carefully match them with the right owners in forever homes.

"We love to watch the dogs come into their own," she says. "We pet them, hold them, whisper to them, anything to assure them they're loved. We don't give up on any of them. We love sending them to new homes after treating them better than some were ever treated."

Debbie initially worried that giving up her

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fosters would be painful, but the greater challenge has been realizing how bad some dogs' lives were before she met them. Animals often arrive sick, skinny, missing fur or simply not knowing how to be happy pets, whether that's playing, accepting a treat or a belly rub, or walking on a leash.

Debbie's current foster dog, a young beagle named Coco, is afraid of most noises, from birds chirping to the sound of nearby highway traffic. Coco was found wandering through the woods in New Kent County and was so timid that she eluded capture for three weeks.

"These dogs are just thrown out like they're completely disposable," Debbie says. "No wonder Coco is scared. She is taking very small steps, but she is getting there."

Dogs have chewed on Debbie's furniture and had housebreaking accidents, but none of that fazes her. She just loads up on 100-pack puppy pads and cleaning supplies at Target, wipes off her laminate floors and focuses on the bigger picture: "The way I look at it, stuff can be replaced or repaired. An animal's life is much more valuable."

Debbie and Roger, an Air Force veteran,

have lived in Williamsburg since 1996. A Petersburg native, Debbie earned a business degree from Arizona State University and worked a variety of jobs as her military family moved between assignments.

Not long after she got married, Debbie took in two cats, Sam and Kitty, from a friend. She next rescued a poodle, April, and a dachshund, Dach, from shelters in Georgia, and later added a yellow Labrador, Krystal, from a breeder.

Debbie was determined that her two sons, Chris and Jeff, would grow up surrounded by pets. When her boys were little, Dach often rode in their wagon during walks. "I tried to help every stray, collared or not, that came into our yard," Debbie says. "At one point, we had two dogs and six cats of our own, plus one dog and two ferrets of our son's. It was a zoo."

When Dach grew elderly, Debbie went to a shelter in Tucson, Arizona and found Willie, a ragged-looking terrier mix, to be Krystal's friend. The 10-month-old puppy had lost much of his hair other than wild strands on his face, likely due to stress, and was on his last day at the shelter.

"He looked like Gizmo from the Grem-

lins," Debbie says with a laugh. "My husband walked in the house and just said, 'What the hell is that?' He turned out to be a great little dog. He was close to 17 when he passed away."

Debbie and Roger supported Homes Fur Hounds for several years before mutually deciding to become a foster home, not long after they finally fenced in their large backyard. "Roger takes as much care of them as I do," Debbie stresses. "Some need a little more help than others, and I couldn't do this work without him."

Home Fur Hounds relies on foster volunteers to save more shelter dogs. The nonprofit generally covers bills for vaccinations, spay or neuter surgery, dental work, and serious pre-existing health conditions, collaborating with the Williamsburg Veterinary Clinic.

"These animals always go out healthy," Debbie says. "We're taking dogs that no one wants and turning them into amazing pets."

The Hammonds' first foster was June, a beagle who had tested positive for heartworm and had mammary tumors. Debbie didn't hesitate to take her. In fact, she fell in love. After June's first new owners returned her, Debbie and

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Roger jumped to adopt her.

Now 6 or 7, June has taken on a mentorship role for other animals in the Hammond home. “She has been helping us calm the nervous ones, teaching some dogs how to play, and showing them what to do with a treat,” Debbie says. “She has gotten along with every dog she’s ever met.”

Fosters might stay a few weeks or a few months, depending on their condition. Debbie says none are too loud or disruptive, usually only barking as they chase each other outside.

Potential adopters must go through a rigorous screening process. Homes Fur Hounds requires all members of a household, both humans and other canines, to meet a rescue animal in person. Debbie frequently hosts those introductions in her home.

The nonprofit also does some home visits and requires references and, if an applicant has other animals, a veterinarian’s contact. Adopters also know they can return an animal if the match doesn’t work well for any reason.

“We are very picky,” Debbie says. “We make

sure they know every idiosyncrasy a dog has shown, and if they don’t want that, then this dog isn’t for them.”

And idiosyncrasies are common. Misty, a “counter surfer” scarfed down any unattended food in seconds. Suzy, a puppy found chained to a pole at a Richmond truck stop, climbed into the dishwasher as soon as the door opened, whether or not plates were there.

Libby, who had a bad hip injury, didn’t seem to know how to run until June wanted to play with her; then she figured out how to move with her body pointed sideways. Coco still won’t accept treats unless she’s inside her crate, her safe space.

Along with June and Coco, Debbie currently owns Buffy, an approximately 10-year-old Shih Tzu and former foster, and 16-year-old rescue cats Gretchen and Louie. As Louie is battling lymphoma, Debbie only fosters one dog at a time to keep his stress levels to a minimum. She has space for another dog, though, and hasn’t ruled out fostering cats in the future.

On the human side, Debbie is a proud

grandmother of two, owns a small business called Queens Creek Quilting and does sewing and embroidery work. Despite being a self-described introvert, she has forged close bonds with people who have adopted her foster animals, often staying in touch to hear regular updates.

Not surprisingly, Debbie is a passionate advocate for pet adoption, noting that even expensive purebred breeds have rescue groups.

“Rescue animals are wonderful pets,” she says. “They have personalities and feelings and needs just like we do. It may take time for them to adapt to their surroundings and learn new behaviors to make up for being scared or food-obsessive, or whatever their situation has caused them to be, but it is definitely worth the time and effort to help them.”

Debbie Hammond has never stopped thinking about Peaches, but she is proud of how that stray dog has permanently touched her life. “My dogs give me back just as much as I give them,” she says. “As they say, there are no bad pets, just bad owners. I have loved every animal I’ve ever had.” NDN

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JULIE WALLACE



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Wildlife RESCUE

By Susan Williamson

Julie Wallace's earliest memories are of roaming the woods and waters around Queens Lake and rescuing injured wildlife. Her passion for helping the creatures who share our beautiful waters, fields and forests never left, but now, as her children have grown older, she has more time to devote to the cause as a volunteer with Tidewater Wildlife Rescue, where she monitors the dispatch helpline and serves as a rescue vol-

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unteer. Her love of the outdoors and knowledge of wildlife species, especially birds, is obvious. She selected College Landing Park as the site for her interview. She alerted maintenance workers to a piece of plastic on a bridge before pointing out a kingfisher in a tree and a gull diving for fish.

Seven days a week, Julie works at her day job of mobile dog groomer, something she has been doing for almost thirty years. But her white panel van holds more than grooming supplies. Waders, nets, stacks of towels, gloves and crates stand at the ready for a rescue.

Tidewater Wildlife Rescue has streamlined rescue attempts with a helpline which is monitored from eight a.m. to eight p.m. Back-up volunteers monitor the phone so that callers almost always get an answer during those hours. The dispatch volunteers are cognizant of a network of wildlife rehabbers, transporters and rescue volunteers, and when a volunteer goes out, he or she knows where the injured animal will be taken and by whom. Training classes are offered for the various duties.

For rescues, location is everything. The asso-

ciated group, Wildlife Response, Inc., are in the Virginia Beach area and serve mostly the south-side. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries also has information on their website along with lists of licensed wildlife rehabbers. There was nothing in the Williamsburg area, however, until the Tidewater group was formed. Members of their group answer calls from as far away as the North Carolina border or the center of the Virginia. Last Christmas Eve, Julie drove to Orange, two-and-a-half hours each way, to rescue a screech owl.

Once a caller contacts a group, they will be asked for their name, location, and a picture of the injured or trapped animal. Then callers may be encouraged to contain a small animal in a box, using gloves and towels, or a crate and transport it to a rehabber, since the number of volunteers available at any one time is limited. If the animal is a rabies vector, which is a species capable of carrying rabies, only volunteers with rabies protection can handle that animal. Julie says, "Rabies shots cost close to \$1,000, so many volunteers can't afford that." Each county or city jurisdiction has different policies for lo-

cal animal control. "In Williamsburg, any injured rabies vector is put down, but in Virginia Beach, we were able to rescue a fox." Adult deer which are injured or trapped are put down, but fawns which still have spots can be treated, rehomed and released.

The biggest danger to waterfowl and other birds is fishing line. "Someone has a bad cast," Julie says, "and the line and hook end up in a tree, ready to snag an unsuspecting bird."

Not only is the bird caught in the line, the barb may penetrate a beak or body of the bird. Most people don't realize the danger and simply cut their line when it becomes tangled in a branch.

"Fishing spots are everywhere in the Tidewater, so this is a huge problem." Using pictures of snared birds, she tries to educate fishermen to the danger and encourage them to remove snagged lines from brush and trees. She talked with a group of teenagers who were fishing and showed them the consequences of leaving their line in a tree. They were horrified and, like most people, they didn't know. Many parks have containers for fishing line disposal, but Julie thinks

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they also need signage explaining the danger to wildlife when line is left in a tree.

Another danger to wildlife is lead poisoning. During hunting season, a deer carcass may be left to rot, either in its entirety or with a few choice cuts removed. Scavengers feast on the carcass and the lead shot and are doomed to death from lead poisoning. A careful hunter will pack out his kill and remove the shot from any remains he leaves behind. She says, "Birds of prey, including vultures and bald eagles, along with fox and possums, are all endangered by lead shot."

Not all bird rescues involve fishing line. Once Julie was called to rescue a baby osprey which had fallen out of the nest when a car came too close and frightened it. The osprey was too young to fly and landed in the water. It swam across the water and was clearly exhausted. Using a boat, and stretching out her six foot-one inch frame, Julie was able to net the baby and wrap it in a towel. They sped back to the nest and as she was trying to get the baby bird out of the towel, the other fledgling fell into the water. She scooped it up and set it back in the nest, telling the boat operator to "Go, go," as soon as

the fledgling hit the nest. They watched from a distance to see the fledglings calmly grooming their feathers like nothing had happened. Their father flew in with a fish and all was well in the osprey household.

Rescuing waterfowl often involves getting in the water and swamp mud. Julie says, "My biggest fear is swamp mud. If you aren't afraid of swamp mud, you haven't been in it." Julie has stepped into it and sunk to her chin.

Snakes are another source of calls. They can become tangled in protective netting, as can birds. A link of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries website shows pictures of the species of snakes common to Virginia and compares and contrasts venomous snakes to their harmless look-a-likes. A snake in a swimming pool is more likely to be one of Virginia's many harmless water snakes than a venomous cottonmouth.

As cities and towns develop out into the countryside, interactions with wildlife become more common. None of the organizations mentioned above are in the business of removing wildlife from yards and homes. And, it is illegal to trap and relocate wildlife in the state

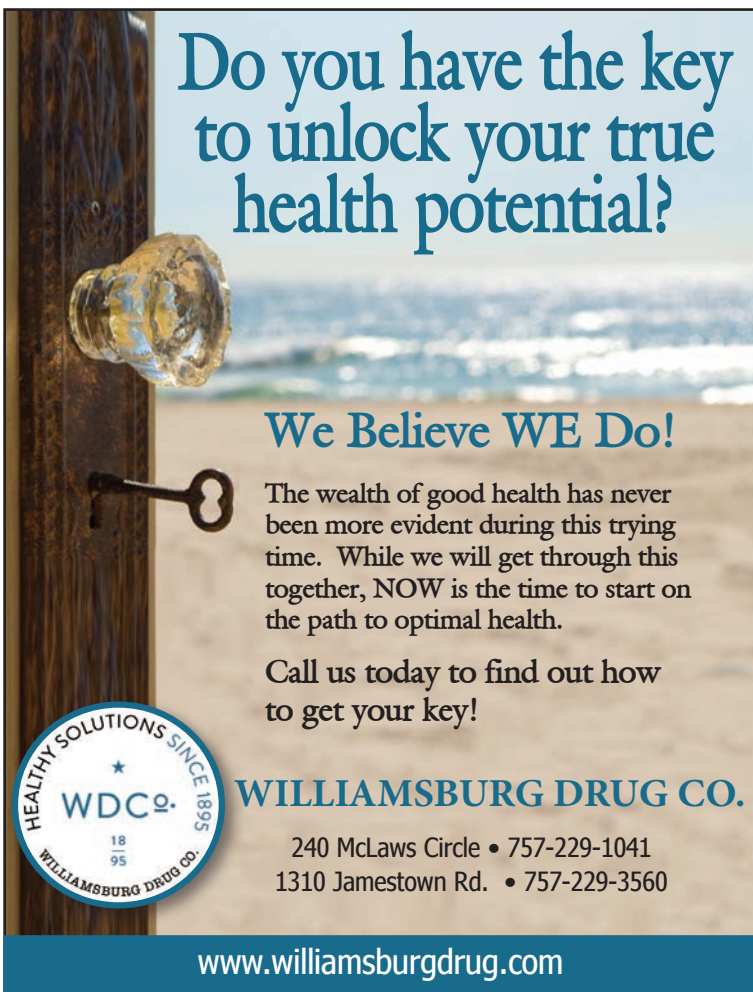
of Virginia. Only a licensed rehabber may keep and care for wildlife, and the goal is always to return the animal to its original habitat. There are companies who will, for a fee, remove wildlife from a property.

Often people come across wildlife which they believe to be orphaned or abandoned. But many species leave their young while they go off to find food. Observation over a period of time and analysis of the condition of the animal is crucial to determining if it has been truly left on its own.

Julie grows indignant over complaints about goose poop. "Look at the garbage and litter that humans leave," she says. "Humans are the ones who despoil the environment, not animals."

When Julie Wallace is not grooming dogs or rescuing wildlife, she enjoys nature photography. Since she is so knowledgeable about the various species and their habitat, photography outings often lead to sightings of injured wildlife or wildlife hazards. Julie has an appreciation for all of our local wildlife and cares deeply about their welfare. Talking about an attempt to rescue of a bird tangled in fishing line brings tears to her eyes. NDN


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Enriching the Lives of Countless Dogs

By Caroline Johnson

Though Emily Glickman has always been an animal lover, she remembers the exact time when her “crazy rescuer self” began. She was at a boarding school in Costa Rica at the time and saw stray dogs everywhere she went. Having grown up loving animals, it was only natural that she took to these stray dogs. As a kid, she remembers always trying to find the home of a lost dog or being the one to pick up baby



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birds that fell out of their nest. “I was attempting to start a program to vaccinate and spay/neuter dogs on the property, and I ended up falling in love with one of the dogs,” Emily says. “His name was Jackson, and when it was time to come home, I brought him with me.” Jackson joined her family and kickstarted her love of animal rescue. Though Jackson sadly passed away last year, his mark on Emily has lasted.

Raised in Hampton Roads, mostly living in Virginia Beach and Norfolk, Emily worked at a horse boarding facility, a training and day-care facility for dogs and as a vet assistant at a vet clinic prior to finding her current position. She had a job at a shelter in Isle of Wight before coming to Williamsburg two-and-a-half years ago. Though she tried to make the commute to Isle of Wight from Williamsburg for about a year, she eventually decided she needed something closer.

Naturally, Heritage Humane Society was her first choice. When the rescue she still fosters for, Pit Road Rescue, contacted her about

fostering a dog from Heritage who wasn’t adjusting to the shelter well, she stopped by to take a tour and meet the staff. “I ended up taking the dog as a foster, and about six months later, I applied for my position and got the job.”

At Heritage Humane Society, Emily works as an Animal Caretaker Technician and is also a member of the Behavior team. “It’s not glorious,” Emily says. “It’s a lot of cleaning, making sure the dogs are being properly fed and taking care of the animals at the shelter.” Though her daily tasks are standard care, she has a heart for enrichment. “The dogs are in kennels for a significant amount of time, and it’s important that they’re getting something more than a daily walk,” Emily says. “Though the shelter is amazing, it’s still a shelter.” She loves that any little extra bit of attention and love can make a world of difference.

Along with her fellow team members, Emily helps process donations from community members, walks the dogs and gets to know the animals that call the shelter home. She finds

joy in working on providing enrichment activities for the dogs, giving them some variety in their day. “We like to find good mental and emotional activities for them to do,” Emily says. These activities include Kong toys with peanut butter for the strong chewers and homemade treat toys to get the dogs’ minds working.

Emily is in tune with the dogs she works with, keeping an eye on their behavior and helping them be the best they can be. “If we have a dog that might have bad kennel presence but are great outside of their kennel, we try to do behavior modification.” Though each dog gets two walks a day, staff rely on volunteers to help them get the dogs out for longer periods of time and in more focused ways. “We could always use more volunteers,” Emily says. “It helps us to be able to take the dogs out more, especially those that are struggling in their kennels.”

Her hopes for her future at Heritage Humane Society include starting a program focused on enrichment and helping the foster

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program expand. Though she has many great memories, some that stand out to her the most involve dogs going to a new home after being at the shelter for a long time. “My favorite dog we’ve had got adopted recently after I worked long and hard with him and his new owner,” Emily says. “He was a misfit, and I love the misfits, the dogs that aren’t completely easy to handle but I know have the perfect person out there.”

She gets excited whenever she receives an update from the new owner, showing the dog’s true personality outside the shelter. “We love seeing how they change when they’re in a home,” Emily says. “No dog is going to be the same outside as they are in a shelter.”

One of Emily’s favorite parts about working in the animal shelter world is finding the right match for the right animal. “We get to know the animals as much as we can, which is helpful when we’re introducing the animal to a potential adopter,” Emily says. Though sometimes matches happen automatically, other times they don’t. The staff is there to

make sure matches are fruitful and to work with those who come in to help them be open to the possibilities of a certain animal, even if they had their sights set on another one.

“We make sure the animals here are evaluated for who they are and put the extra effort into making sure they’re getting into the right homes,” Emily says. The staff works together to do what they can to make good matches happen. “There’s nothing better than finding the right person for an animal.”

Though her days at work revolve around dogs, this passion follows her home. An experienced dog foster, Emily got her start as a foster with K9 Justice League, even serving as a board member previously. She still fosters for them in case of an emergency and fosters regularly for Pit Road Rescue, though she is currently slowing down to focus on her own dogs. At any given time, Emily has multiple dogs calling her house their home, whether temporarily or permanently. “I’ve had old dogs, young dogs and sick dogs,” Emily says. “I have the dogs that shelters wouldn’t be able

to get adopted.”

If there’s one thing in particular her love of animals has taught her, it’s patience. “I’ve learned to never judge a book by its cover,” she says. “When a dog that was once thought to never be able to get adopted is out of the shelter, they’re a different dog. It’s amazing to see.” As her work seeps into her life at home, Emily’s life revolves around shelter work and dogs. Though it’s technically a job out of the house and at times feels like a job at home, she wouldn’t have it any other way.

When she does have a break, she enjoys dabbling in photography, especially when shelter dogs get to be her subject. She uses photos to capture the dog’s personalities and show them in a new light, whether it’s in the shelter or running on Jamestown beach. When it comes to Williamsburg, she’s glad she lives somewhere as pet-friendly as here. From the water bowls out at restaurants to the dog-friendly park areas and beaches, Emily Glickman is happy to call Williamsburg, and Heritage Humane Society her home. NDN

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