



# Kennel Connection

See Page 3 For Adoptable Pets Available Now!

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Newsletter of Frederick County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center

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## Barn Home Sweet Home

What do you do with a homeless cat who is too scared to “show well” in a cage on the adoption floor? What about a kitty who’s a little feistier than the average lap cat? A few years ago, such cats arriving at Frederick County Animal Control (FCAC) would have had trouble finding a home.

Now, thanks largely to volunteer Arlene Atkins, FCAC has Barn Cat Buddies, a program through which cats who don’t fit the mold of the traditional indoor cat can find a loving home patrolling a barn, warehouse, or store, looking for mice and crickets in need of a predator ... or a human in need of some purr.

When Staci and Brad Speierman moved to a property with land and a barn, they knew they wanted barn cats. “We have both always been animal lovers,” says Staci. “We were looking forward to being able to give cats a non-traditional home.”

Staci reached out to Arlene, who brought her Jake and Elwood. Unlike most of the cats who go through Barn Cat Buddies, Jake and Elwood were from a feral colony that was not tolerated by neighbors. “We kept Jake and Elwood in a large dog crate in the barn for three

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## Sugar and SPICE



In March 2017, Bella Notte’s family surrendered her to Frederick County Animal Control (FCAC) due to her urinary incontinence. Her condition, unusual for such a young dog (age 4), apparently had become too “unsanitary” for a family with a newborn child.

Sugar arrived in August 2017 as an unclaimed stray. When she was spayed, the vet noticed what appeared to be severe arthritis in her right hip—surprising for a dog estimated to be only 3 years old.

Big, smart, high-energy dogs already face some difficulty finding their forever homes. With the addition of a serious or chronic medical condition, a county shelter like FCAC may sometimes consider euthanasia the only option. But for each of these two girls, a beautiful success story is in the making.

In the shelter, Bella Notte was miserable. In addition to her incontinence, she had sustained a minor injury to her knee, which meant that she spent at least 23 hours per day in her kennel while staff tried, without much hope, to come up with a plan for her. This was no life for a dog, especially one so young and full of energy. Frederick Friends of Our County Animal Shelter (FFOCAS) helped pay for an ultrasound, but this revealed that surgery was unlikely to correct

the incontinence.

FFOCAS turned to the community, searching for a foster care provider for Notte. It’s hard to find a foster for any large dog, especially a bully breed, and especially a bully breed dog who’s likely to leak urine on the floor. Unbelievably, seasoned fosters Bryon Kerchner and Susanne Brammerts stepped up. Something about Notte’s picture had spoken to them. One of their own dogs—a

*At right, Bella Notte*

senior Great Pyrenees—had urinary incontinence, so they weren’t scared off by Notte’s medical condition. And their other dogs, German shepherds, had given them plenty of experience with dogs who need mental and physical stimulation.

Notte has now been in her foster home for several months; in all that time, Bryon and Susanne have seen no sign of her incontinence. It turns out that daily medication and a midday walk are all Notte needed. What’s more, her personality shines in her foster home in a way that it never could in a kennel. Bryon and Susanne have taken to calling her “Naughty” because of her antics, such as finding “toys” wherever she goes and trying to bite the spray from the hose when they water their tomato



*Sugar behind her foster sister Betty Boo*

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# Director's Letter: Why So Cheap?

By Linda Shea

As an open-admission shelter, the Frederick County Division of Animal Control and Pet Adoption Center has a consistent stream of animal intakes. Regardless of the day of the week, the season, the weather, or the many other variables in play, animals arrive day after day.

In evaluating how to rehome animals appropriately yet quickly, the shelter management team routinely discusses reducing adoption fees to encourage potential adopters to leap from “thinking about it” to “doing it.” However, some animal lovers in the community worry that we are lessening the value of an animal by reducing the cost to adopt. We disagree, for several reasons.

**Some things don't change.** Our adoption protocol ensures that proper screening is done pre-adoption, regardless of the adoption fee. We check rabies and license status of existing pets, verify landlord permission to adopt, check our database of people who may not adopt from us, check with adjacent county animal control agencies for any history as needed, and reserve the right to do a home visit as warranted. Additionally, all services provided for the adoptable pet remain the same, such as spay/neuter, microchipping, and vaccines.

**Less is more.** If a reduced adoption fee encourages people to adopt shelter pets and lessen the population of animals in-house, that leaves more time for staff and volunteers to focus on those remaining at the shelter. Think of it like the student:teacher ratio touted in educational settings. The lower the animal:staff ratio in our shelter, the more personalized attention each animal receives.

**Did someone say staff morale?** Taking care of live beings is labor-intensive and brings with it an emotional component unlike any other occupation. If reducing adoption fees encourages people to adopt and reduces our in-house population of animals, that can also reduce staff stress associated with providing quality care for a large number of animals within a limited number of hours in the day.

**Cause we can.** Our shelter is blessed to have community support. Even folks who don't necessarily have, or want, an animal in their home recognize the services we provide. Our services span from basic animal care to humane education and public outreach to humane law enforcement. And while we work within a budget that we are given for basic needs, we have the ability to use some donations to offset components of our regular adoption fees when fees are discounted. The generosity of donors often helps indirectly with the placement of animals into loving homes.

Through December, our cat adoption fee is \$22—not because they are worth less, but because priceless doesn't come with a pricetag.

■ Linda Shea is Director, Frederick County Animal Control.

# SUGAR AND SPICE

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plants. After a long journey, Notte is ready to find her forever home.

Sugar needed femoral head osteotomy surgery on her right hip followed by several weeks of physical therapy. The post-operative care was not something that could be done in a shelter environment.

FFOCAS raised enough funds to cover the surgery and the follow-up vet visits. After exhaustive outreach to the community, FFOCAS also found a committed foster care provider, Renee Deibert, and a rescue organization called Pitties and Purrs, which agreed to take responsibility for Sugar.

Today, a few weeks after her surgery, Sugar is recovering beautifully. It turns out that it wasn't arthritis after all, but rather damage due to trauma, such as being hit by a car. Renee, who is new to fostering, worked through some housetraining issues and a brief period of conflict between Sugar

and her dog Betty Boo. Now the dogs are best buddies, Sugar is reliably housetrained, and Renee and her husband (and Betty Boo) are falling in love with this sweet girl.

The stories of Sugar and Notte, though still unfolding, are already successes because they demonstrate what we as a community can achieve by working together. In particular, these stories demonstrate the life-saving importance of foster care providers.

For those thinking about fostering, Renee says this: “The first time you see that look on the dog's face, when she gazes longingly into your eyes, covers you with kisses, lays her head on your chest, or [gives you] that goofy smile ..., I guarantee you'll ask yourself, ‘why have I waited so long?’”

Interested in fostering for FCAC? The first step is to fill out an application: <https://frederickcountymd.gov/116/Volunteer> (at the top left of the page). Interested in adopting Notte? Contact FCAC volunteer Bette for more info (estallmanbrown@verizon.net).



Sugar relaxing on her first night in a foster home

## Upcoming Events



**Cocktails for Claws and Paws**  
(FFOCAS fundraiser)—December 12th, 2017,  
5–8 pm, at La Paz Mexican Restaurant

**Our Mission:** To prevent cruelty, abuse, and neglect of animals in Frederick County by enforcing all state, county, and city ordinances to the fullest extent possible. We will shelter homeless animals and attempt to place them in safe and loving home environments. We will educate the public on all animal issues to foster a more aware and caring community.

## Work with Us!

Interested in a job helping the county's neediest pets? Keep an eye out for job openings at Animal Control, posted here: [www.frederickcountymd.gov/jobs](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov/jobs).

### Frederick County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center

1832 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, MD 21702 • 301-600-1546  
[frederickcountymd.gov/15/Animal-Control](http://frederickcountymd.gov/15/Animal-Control)

#### Frederick County Animal Control Supervisory Team

- Linda Shea, *Director*
- SGT Dave Luckenbaugh, *Animal Control Officer Supervisor*
- Shawn Snyder, *Volunteer Coordinator*
- Bethany Davidson, *Humane Educator*
- Brandy Odin, *Kennel Manager*
- Sharon Dobson, *Office Manager*
- Dr. Sharon Thomas, *Shelter Veterinarian*

#### Newsletter Volunteers

- Bette Stallman Brown, *Editor*
- Mina Forsythe Rempe, *Graphic Designer*



# HOMES WANTED

View all of our adoptable pets on Petfinder  
 (www.frederick.petfinder.com) or Petango (www.petango.com/fcac).  
 Or stop by for a visit—you never know, you might just find true love!



**Wynonna:** a wag for all—human and dog. Toy junky. Survivor twice—loss of love, then touching death. Certain you'll come, she waits, eyes laughing.



Wise teacher of dogs—with one glance, worries ebb. Calm in chaos, **Mika** hides her smile, quiet. Outside, a romp in cool grass—essence of puppy.



Upside-down sleeper, warmer of laps, just enough sass to survive street life. Now safe inside, **Gwen** purrs, learns to snuggle, to dream of family.



Her family lost, **Bean** searches—can she deduce that it was her skin, not her sweet nature, not their love, that was to blame? Are you searching too?



Mom of three, former stray, **Dixie** learned to watch and wait for safety. Still wary, still waiting—now for love, kittenhood lost, a chance to learn trust.

## BARN CATS

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weeks and let them out of the crate on Christmas Day 2015," recalls Staci. "After we let them out, we didn't see them for almost three months—including the blizzard of 2016! They were apparently hiding in the barn."

Despite their nearly wild beginnings, "Jake and Elwood have come a very long way from the feral cats who didn't even let themselves be seen," explains Staci. Now these boys enjoy being petted by their humans, though they still hide when visitors come into the barn.

In March 2016, Staci and Brad adopted two more barn cats—Cricket and Diego, who were from a hoarding case. Both Diego and Cricket are friendlier than Jake and Elwood. "Diego likes to be petted and is very vocal," says Staci. Cricket, in particular, is very special to Staci. "When we had a baby donkey born, Cricket would sleep in the stall with mom and baby," says Staci. "She did the same when we had an ill goat. She loves to ride around on our shoulders and is just very loving and affectionate."

Although the cats help keep rodent populations down, it's clearly their companionship that Staci values most. "Of the many animals on our farm, the cats are some of the most enjoyable," says Staci. "I also feel like we are giving our barn cats a wonderful life," adds Staci, noting the cozy barn with wooden, straw-filled cat houses, and the companionship of their human caretakers and fellow farm animals. We couldn't agree more and are so grateful to Arlene and to barn cat adopters like Staci and Brad for making Barn Cat Buddies the success that it is.

Are you on the prowl for a barn cat? Contact Barn Cat Buddies: barncatbuds@gmail.com.



Barn cat buddies Cricket, Elwood and Diego

# Is *Kill* the Opposite of *No-Kill*?

by Bette Stallman Brown

Animal shelters and rescue organizations are often described as *no-kill* or *kill* (as in a *kill shelter*). The implication is that an organization is one or the other—no-kill or kill—and that those in charge have simply made a choice based on whether they are compassionate or heartless.

The terms *no-kill* and *kill* are applied to two very different types of entities: foster-based animal rescue organizations and animal shelters. Foster-based rescues play a crucial, lifesaving role, but because they are limited by the availability of foster homes, rescues can accept very few animals. Many county-run shelters, like Frederick County Animal Control (FCAC), are *open-admission*, meaning that they accept every animal brought through their doors, from unsocialized lab mixes to emaciated Persians to unwanted Easter bunnies.

What does *no-kill* mean? Some define no-kill as consistently saving a certain percentage (e.g., 90%) of the animals taken in. The animals euthanized by no-kill organizations are typically the human-aggressive dogs who don't respond to rehabilitation and animals who arrive gravely ill or injured with little hope of a successful medical intervention. Of course, what matters in improving the outlook for homeless pets isn't the exact percentage saved, but rather the use of *best practices in sheltering*.

Best practices are approaches that have proven successful, in a variety of open-admission shelters, at saving as many lives as possible while protecting public safety and animal welfare. For an open-admission shelter to achieve this goal, some combination of staffing levels, space, volunteer support, and financial resources must be adequate; shelter policies must encourage families to take responsibility for their pets; and local regulations must enable progressive, lifesaving programs at the shelter. Some of these components may be absent in an underfunded county shelter like FCAC; nevertheless, many best practices can be achieved with creative thinking, better use of volunteers, and through partnerships with local nonprofits and businesses.

Though widely used, the term *no-kill shelter* is unfair and inaccurate. A more accurate, less polarizing term might be *best practices shelter*. Whatever we call it, I think it's time for our community—residents, elected officials, and FCAC staff—to support best practices in animal sheltering. We've all been moving in that direction, but a few barriers increase the risk of euthanasia for some categories of at-risk animals.

## Contagious Kitties

FCAC has no way to adequately isolate the many cats and kittens who arrive with highly contagious but very treatable conditions, like ringworm. Ringworm is a fungal infection that's about as harmful as athlete's foot. But, in part because it's transmissible to humans, an outbreak would be poorly received by the public. Currently, kittens with ringworm are usually euthanized.

Frederick Friends of Our County Animal Shelter (FFOCAS) is researching how to provide FCAC with an on-site isolation unit for such kitties. We will seek grant funding, but will probably also need corporate sponsors to help. And to make it sustainable, the shelter will need additional staff positions allocated to the isolation unit. This solution is probably a few years off. In the meantime, at least some felines with highly contagious infections could be treated by foster care providers willing to follow extra precautions to prevent transmission to themselves and their pets.

## Community Cats

Many shelters nationwide are saving cats who may not be suitable as indoor pets using two approaches: a barn cat adoption program and trap-neuter-return (TNR). Thanks to one dedicated volunteer, FCAC recently started Barn Cat Buddies. This program finds forever homes for friendly kitties who generally aren't lap cat material—many become barn cats or store mascots; some turn out to be happy as indoor or indoor/outdoor cats. However, until Barn Cat Buddies gains additional staff or volunteer help, it won't have the capacity to place the many cats who need more help adjusting to even a barn home.

FCAC cannot participate in, or promote, TNR because of a county ordinance prohibiting pets from running "at large." A change in the county ordinance may be in order, but it would have to be done carefully to avoid unintended negative effects on animal welfare. In the meantime, community cat caretakers can work closely with the shelter to ensure that cats in their care are spayed/neutered, rabies vaccinated, and not causing problems for neighbors. We can ask residents to be more tolerant of outdoor cats as we work together to reduce their populations humanely. For its part, FCAC has received grant funding to provide free spay/neuter for pet cats in certain zip codes; this should also help reduce outdoor cat populations.

## Good Dogs in a Stressful Place

Some dogs don't adjust well to life in a kennel. Stress in a dog can manifest as extreme fear and timidity or as fear-based aggression—this

can be scary in a big dog. Many kennel-stressed dogs do wonderfully in a home environment. They are adoptable, but they need a little extra help finding their forever homes. Through creative thinking, staff and volunteers could make the shelter a little less stressful. In some cases, stressed dogs could be sent to a foster home or could be made available to meet potential adopters away from the kennel.

## Keeping Pets in Their Homes

When pet owners arrive at the shelter to surrender a pet, they've typically run out of time to resolve whatever difficulties are causing them to say goodbye to their best friend. FCAC staff offer suggestions for how they might keep their pets (e.g., solutions to common behavior problems), but it's too late. The decision has been made, the owner is at the intake desk, pet in hand, wanting to get it over with.

How can we provide pet parents with helpful suggestions before it's too late? One approach is a combination of *managed intake* and *alternatives to intake*. The shelter remains open-admission, accepting every animal in need, but asks surrendering pet owners to make an appointment in advance (with exceptions made for emergencies). When the appointment is made, staff provide suggestions and resources that could allow the owner to keep the pet, and the owner then has a few days to consider those suggestions. It also allows staff to prepare for animals with special needs. In other communities, this approach has reduced shelter intake, freeing up resources for the pets who do arrive at the shelter, without increasing the risk of pet abandonment. However, full implementation of this practice will probably require additional staff to counsel pet owners on the alternatives to intake.

## Achieving Best Practices in Frederick County

Our community can do more to save the lives of the county's most vulnerable pets. Embracing the use of best practices at FCAC will require the participation of FCAC staff and volunteers, Frederick County residents, and the county's elected officials. If we all play our parts, I think we can overcome barriers and help FCAC become a best practices shelter within the next five years.

Are you ready? What can *you* do to help?

■ Bette is the president of FFOCAS and a volunteer with FCAC.