PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

One day in March our lives changed radically. The news was filled with accounts of the spreading COVID-19 virus and resulting deaths. Government officials issued directives. Schools closed, non-essential businesses closed, and self-quarantining, safe distancing, and the wearing of face masks became the new normal. The HS/SPCA Board had some tough decisions to make. For the protection of our staff and the public, it was decided to close Almost Home Pet Adoption Center and the SPCA Thrift Shop. The shelter would be open by appointment only.

Our animals still needed daily care so our staff donned their face masks and carried on as usual. It was decided to limit the number of people in the building so we requested our dedicated volunteers to stay safe at home. Questions ran through our minds. Would anyone want to even think of adopting an animal at this critical time? Would it be more likely that people would need to give up their animals if they became ill or lost jobs and couldn’t afford to feed their pets? Our small, rural no-kill shelter depends on transports to other no-kill shelters in more populated areas to help us place our animals, but now these, too, were suspended indefinitely. Although we already had online pet adoption applications available on our website, we needed to figure out the logistics of following through on the adoption without applicants entering the building to meet pets or complete the adoption process. We designated two employees – Sigrid Mirabella, who would review adoption applications for dogs, and Bonnie Stevens, who would do the same for cat adoptions. If approved, appointments would be set for applicants to spend some time with the animal outside the building, and if a decision was made to adopt, they would fill out the adoption contract on the porch and staff would then assist them in getting the animal to their car. Then, miraculously, the unexpected started happening. All over, people were turning to animal shelters to offer foster care or to adopt dogs and cats. Shelters were emptying out as never before and Almost Home was no exception. In this issue, you can read about some AH animals adopted during this pandemic, including some who were at our shelter for years. These lucky animals are now enjoying life as much-loved members of the families that adopted them.

The benefits are certainly mutual as the new companionship brings happiness and wipes out the feelings of loneliness, boredom, and isolation. In the midst of all the gloom, animals are showing people how to live in the now, stop worrying about the future, take one day at a time, and be grateful. We hope you will rejoice with us as we share these happy stories.

Sincerely,

THE HUMANE SOCIETY/SPCA
OF NELSON COUNTY

Bette Grahame
Bette Grahame, President

Spring 2020

Please visit us at www.nelsonspca.org or at www.facebook.com/nelsonspca

Shopping at Amazon.com? Use smile.amazon.com and Amazon will donate .5% to the Humane Society-SPCA of Nelson County. We are also now participating in Kroger’s Community Rewards program. Go to www.kroger.com/communityrewards or visit our website at www.nelsonspca.org for instructions.
Timex, Now Winston

A sick and injured cat originally known to shelter staff as Timex (because he “takes a licking and keeps on ticking”) wandered into a neighbor’s yard on a bitter cold day in January. That neighbor took the “before” picture, at right, above. Animal Control convinced the cat’s owner to surrender him, and Almost Home took him into our system. You may have followed his progress on our website under the Help To Heal stories.

Timex was starving due to a displaced jaw and infected teeth. He had a double-ear infection that caused him to mutilate one of his ears and to scratch an awful wound in his neck. His fur was matted in dried plaster and fiberglass. He had an upper respiratory infection and a poorly healed broken pelvis and hind leg. Timex had several baths to free him from his plaster/fiberglass prison, surgery to remove all of his teeth, and daily wound care. He endured all with a sweet, gentle attitude. After several days at the vet, Timex was placed in a wonderful foster home. There, he received the new name of Winston, for Winston Churchill – “Never give up!” – and his new best friend, Peggy, eventually adopted him. Peggy says he is now a lap cat, that he loves to play like crazy, and that he is the best cat ever!

An Unexpected Gift for AH

It was time to say goodbye to our oldest van, with nearly 300,000 miles on it. Board member Heidi Freitag began the search and located a used van with only 20,000 miles at a dealership in Alexandria. The decision was then made much easier, when Flower and Ed Van Kan, longtime volunteer adoption counselors for Almost Home dogs, offered to cover the cost. With this extremely generous donation, the sale moved along quickly. The dealership delivered the van to AH and even added cruise control at no cost. The HS/SPCA Board is extremely grateful to Heidi for the time and effort she put into locating a suitable vehicle. THANK YOU Flower and Ed for your amazing gift!

Spay/Neuter Continues

Despite a few obstacles created by COVID-19, the TNR (Trap/Neuter/Release) Spay/Neuter Program for Community /Feral/Outdoor kitties has continued, thanks to Krista Wabel, who heads the program. Over 40 outdoor kittens in the last 3 months have been “fixed.” Because of COVID-19, Lynchburg Humane Society’s Spay/Neuter Clinic in Evington was closed and local veterinarians were unable to perform operations that weren’t deemed emergencies. Luckily for Almost Home, the Charlottesville SPCA was able to help us get cats spayed/neutered at its vet clinic. In the process of trapping, Almost Home took in 3 sets of weaned kittens and 2 moms still nursing newborns. One mom even started the birth process in her trap. She was transferred into a larger crate, where she was able to give birth to 3 healthy babies. Krista is in desperate need of more volunteers to help with the TNR program. Prior to the pandemic, another volunteer Shirley Allen was sometimes able to help Krista with the trapping, but the TNR program needs additional volunteers willing to learn how to do the trapping and be able to transport the trapped cats to and from veterinarians. There is also a great need for outdoor barns/farms for the feral moms. If you have mice, rats or snakes, please let us know and we can provide an eco-friendly solution. Thank you, Krista for carrying on during these challenging times!

Before: At the time of his rescue.

After: This is a happy Winston now.

Kittens born to mother in trap.

SPCA Thrift Shop

At the time this newsletter is being compiled, the HS/SPCA Board has not made a decision as to when or if it will re-open the SPCA Thrift Shop. We understand that some other Thrift Shops are considering opening up again, so we hope to be able to learn from their experience and let that help us make our decision. Our SPCA eBay has been ongoing and continues to raise funds for operation of Almost Home. If you, or anyone you know, has an item to donate that would be suitable for sale on eBay, please email Kathy Miller at thriftpets@gmail.com.
Appreciating Our Staff

They may not be in agreement on all things, but one thing all of our staff have in common is their love for animals. Though fear of the COVID-19 virus was uppermost in so many minds at this time, our dedicated staff at Almost Home made it their business to get to work to ensure that the animals they love received the care and attention they needed and deserved. Most all of the staff typically shy away from picture-taking and recognition, but we managed to get a few of them to allow us to spotlight them in this newsletter, probably only because we said they could leave their masks on. Although some were shy to express their feelings, or be pictured, they all are deserving of our praise and thanks for carrying on so well through this difficult period.

I’ve never seen so many adoptions. It’s the best thing ever. We are low on dogs, so they get extra attention. Other than that, my job has been almost the exact same. I’m just overwhelmed by the adoptions. I miss my volunteers, who make great co-workers. They love being with the animals.

When the quarantine started, I tried not to panic. I feared that all transports would stop for an unknown length of time. We rely so heavily on transports to other no-kill shelters to be able to save all the animals we take in each year. Luckily after about 4 weeks, they started up again. Intake has basically stayed the same. We practice social distancing when taking animals from Animal Control or facilitating owner surrenders. Two bright spots during this quarantine:
1. We have been blessed with a huge increase in adoptions.
2. Due to increased adoptions, we have more empty rooms than we have ever had!
We decided to pay it forward and take some dogs from neighboring county shelters that were crowded. One has already found his forever home.

I offer thanks to all who help us be safe by wearing face masks. While it’s difficult to have something covering my nose and mouth all day, and my hands are dried and raw from sanitizers and washings, it has been worth the discomfort to have been witness to and been involved with so many of my furred friends finding homes. I am amazed at how well our dogs have accepted, without worry, our masked faces as a new normal. And though it is difficult not to be able to see my coworkers’ facial expressions, I know what is in their hearts—caring and love. A special thanks goes out from me to the entire AH staff who help me and who work so hard.

I remember those first feelings of uncertainty and concern. Would we run out of food for the animals? Would we be able to get more? Would staff members get sick? So many unknowns. Then, the miracle happened. People began calling to ask about fostering a dog or cat. Others realized staying at home meant they had the time they had been waiting for to adopt. The shelter began to empty. Even when the tsunami of kitten season began, fosters and adopters were available. The staff has been incredible—staggering work times to keep social distancing within the shelter, devising new ways to continue adoptions. Almost Home, even in the midst of a pandemic, remains the Little Shelter That Can.

The corona virus has affected me in many ways. I have worked at Almost Home three years, and I’ve never seen so many animals get adopted or fostered. It is amazing. The world will never be the same again.

Not pictured:
Scott Campbell, at AH since 9-5-2008.
Kristin Carlson (KC), at AH since 6-8-2012.
Jerline Simpson (Gerri), at AH since 8-18-2010.
Spanky, a solid little Staffordshire Terrier, first came to Almost Home in 2014, and – except for a brief time he spent in a no-kill shelter in New Jersey where he had been transported but returned shortly after – he has been with us ever since. Spanky was affectionate with those that he knew but with all others who approached his room, he appeared to be a dog not to mess with. Needless to say, that posed a big challenge to finding him his forever home. The staff conferred and decided that Brutus, who had been at the shelter for 10 years, would likely be their first choice for this couple to adopt. Brutus is kind of a grumpy cat; you could pet him twice and then you got swiped. He had an affliction commonly called pillow paws and digestive problems requiring him to be on a special diet. To make a short story short, Carole and Karl Santone, who retired from the pet rescue they ran from their farm in Orange County for many years, came to Almost Home and adopted Brutus. They tell us Brutus is now living the life with Poppy, a spayed female cat that looks exactly like him. The two have the run of the house and a screened-in porch to share, providing them lots of opportunity for watching the birds, squirrels and chipmunks. Lucky boy – home at last!

Scarlet, an extremely shy Foxhound who lived at Almost Home for two years, was adopted on May 24 by Cindy, an incredibly special adopter who lives in Northern Virginia. Over many years, Cindy has adopted several of our special needs’ dogs. Laura, Virginia, and Henry (three very shy dogs); Joey (disfigured by years of abuse); Lloyd (blind with glaucoma); and Dewey (diabetes and Cushing’s Disease) are already helping Scarlet relax and come out of her shell (like they have all done). On her second evening there, Scarlet was running and playing and dancing for joy in her big new yard with her dog friends. Finally, she is home!
Here Are Some of the Animals Adopted in the Pandemic

Almost Home is a small no-kill shelter in rural Nelson County. The majority of dogs that come to us are hounds and hound mixes. We have never had a lot of foot traffic into our shelter. In the 16 years since our shelter opened, we have largely depended on transports to other no-kill shelters with larger populations in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Northern Virginia to help find homes for our animals. During this pandemic, the unheard of has happened. While our doors to the building remain closed, people are filling out adoption applications online and over the phone with help of staff. Without people even entering the building between March 15 and May 31, 24 dogs and 27 cats were adopted. (Not all are pictured here.) No one ever expected anything like this and we are still reeling with excitement and overjoyed to see our animal residents settled in their forever homes. (Cats designated with * were placed in foster-to-adopt homes.)

And more:
See Page 4 for separate stories on 4 others who found homes.
2019 Donations in Memory of Pets, Continued...

Olive, little dog of Kay Platz, by: Susan Ordway Platz
Ollie, dog of our friend Scarlet, by: Mary Ann & Steve Valluto
Oscar, pug of Chris Baer, by: Carol A. Baer
Pansey & Fritz, by: Dan & Ouida Ingraham
Peanut, by: Andrea Cerqua
Pepper, by: Deborah & John J. Markham
Peter, by: Martin Cary Burtno
Pooh, dog of Berne Rucker taken in by Caroline Ellis, by: Sue G. Rucker
Princess, dog of Charles & Helen Gowen, by: Kathleen G. Fortune
Puff, Harley, and Bruiser, by: Robert G. Leffler
Rocky, by: Beverly B. Scheel
Rocky Dunworth, by: Marlan & Robert Dunworth
Russell, by: T. Garrett
Sadie, by: Judy S. & Mike R. Smythers
Sami & Max Stein, by: Debra M. Stein
Sammy Dog, by: Linda Lee Wilkes
Sandy, our Golden Retriever, by: Elizabeth S. & David W. Pritchard
Schuyler, by: Jonathan Lord
Seamus & Sammy of the O'Rourke Family, by: Eileen O'Rourke
Shadow, by: John B. & Susan E. Carpenter
Awesome dog Sid, aka Pilbury, by: Judy Herndon (2x)
Snoops, beloved companion of Sherry Wenner, by: Kathryn Jannin
Snowy, dog of Rita Reynolds, by: Kay Platz
Our sweet girl Sophie Ferrelli, by: William & Enoka Ferrelli Ill
Sophie, by: Ann F. & George W. Krier
Squirrel, Scoter, Shadow, Emma, Smoosh, Peyton, and Molly, by: Barbara J. G. G. Leffler
Stella & Hobbit, by: James G. & Marcia L. Crowell
Susie, by: Amy Huffman McTyeire
Sweet Wade, by: Diana D. & Larry Tyler
The Sailer Caines, by: Anna C. & Walter L. Sailer
Toby & Mischu, by: Sigrud Block
Trinity & Kelko, by: Paul & Angelica Breaud
Ursa Major, by: Maryann Dupes
Wag, by: Martin Cary Burtno
White Kitty, by: Sandra M. Bryson
White Kitty, by: Deborah A. Trant
Winnie, aka Juno, by: Donald W. Glasser
Wyncie, by: Anne Auker
Zed, pet of Blaire French, by: Margaret F. Haney

2019 Donations in Honor of Pets

All Fur Babies!, by: Rhonda M. & John U. Glass
Brent Snapp, dog of Derek Snapp & Patty Popolo, by: Olicea & Steve Lorenz

Remembering Our Friends

The HS/SPCA lost some good friends recently who will be missed but not forgotten.

Ralph Turpin, a Lovingston attorney and pillar of the community, not only provided us with legal assistance from time to time, but was instrumental in encouraging a number of his clients to remember the Humane Society/SPCA of Nelson County in their wills. He cared deeply about Almost Home and would always inquire how things were going. We were saddened to learn of Ralph’s passing and extend our sympathy to his wife, Patty, and their family.

Van Preddy, who also passed on recently, was a devoted longtime dog walker along with his partner, Maura Singleton. For many years, the couple came on weekends to take long walks with the AH dogs. Van, who was handy at fixing things, was among a team of volunteers

recruited by Krista Waibel, TNR coordinator, to build a shed to house feral cats that were transported to the DelFosse Vineyards to help control mice and snakes. Van and Maura opened their home and hearts to care for “Obie,” a senior dog in need of a home when his owner (who had adopted him from AH) passed on suddenly. Shortly after Van’s passing, “Obie” passed. Our hearts go out in sympathy to Maura, who is carrying on the tradition of taking long walks with the AH dogs.

We also extended our sympathy to Judy Meineck, another longtime volunteer who helped care for the kittens at AH until she and her husband, Hank, moved to Indiana to be closer to family. Judy lost Hank not long ago and now has just lost her daughter. Judy is now raising her 12-year-old grandson. We send them our love.

Brutus, Mickey, Tippy & Rocky, by: Sayoko & James K. MacDougal
Calle, by: Lisa D. Lang; and, Lois C. Ault
Cats Bella, Earl Grey & Pippa, by: David C. (Clark) & Barbara L. Norton
Cameo & Chicony, by: Stacy W. & Robert P. Jones IV
Clay, by: Joyce & Andrew Brown
Comet, aly Ryan, by: Virginia & James Clemenkno
Daisy, by: Margaret P. & Gregory R. Cusack
Dandy (now Logan) & Veronika, by: Jane Juusola & Frank Fitzpatrick
Eirya, by: Michael D. & Martha B. Hill
Eveready, by: Linda S. Fink
Fritz aly Ryan, by: Patricia P. & Stephen Fished
Gordon, aka Fargo, by: David J. & Victoria J. T. Richardson
Honey Bunch & Dolly, by: Mary C. (Cathy) Stevens Parrish
Jackpot" Barney, Agnes, & Charles Flickinger
Janeway, by: Robert Thorpe II
Juju, by: Anne C. Hedelt & Lynn R. Noland
Kate & Honeybunchy, by: Mary C. (Cathy) Parrish
KG Sims, cal of Salle Sims, by: Elizabeth Fitz-Hugh Morgan
LaVerne, aka Molly, & Mindy, by: Jane Juusola & Frank Fitzpatrick
Little Orphan Annie & Family, and Huggles, by: Nancy S. & William J. Loft
Macy Lorenz, by: Olicea & Steve Lorenz
Maybe Hunt-Finerman, by: William C. Keene, Jr.
Mika & Tolsity, by: Paula C. Nolin
Mr. Fluffkins, by: Joan & Jeffrey Sweyrs
My Cats, by: Alice E. Dunaney
Neddy & Blair, by: Anonymous
Niko, Mama Cass & 7 Kittens, & Pooch Bear, by: Patricia Jane Sleen
Peteys & Milo, by: Suzanne V. & Daniel W. Klett
Quinny & Maggos, by: Deborah L. Eriksson & Kathleen Ladika
Ranger Ritter, by: Kyril Ritter & Timothy Higgins
The Redheads, by: Thomas & Katherine W. Kelsey
Rico, a Clementine, by: Marinda L. & Brett A. Beach
Rocky, for his birthday, by: Sayoko & James K. MacDougal
Sadie, by: Anne C. Hedelt & Lynn R. Noland
Sammy, Quimby, & Rudy Capps, by: Cheryl A. Ehrenfried & Michael D. Capps
My Cat Samson, by: Mary C. Cumbie
Smooks, my sweet yellow cat, by: Mary C. Cumbie
Sid, our black cat adopted via the Connors, by: Peter G. & Jo-Anne P. Templest
Sassy, dog of Charles & Helen Gowen, by: Kathleen G. Fortune
Shadow, by: Jon D. & Mary V. Mikalson
Tippy, for his birthday, by: Sayoko & James K. MacDougal
Tire & Lovey, by: Kathy & Scott Mills
Trinity & Kelko, by: Paul & Angela Breaud
Zada Kampmeier, by: Carolyn S. Frahm

Carrying On, As Always

Almost Home has risen to the occasion during challenging circumstances before—snow storms, power outages, tree damage, economic recession—but we’ve never encountered a time quite like this one. Yet once again, Board members and shelter staff have spent time and energy developing procedures for carrying on while the shelter is closed to the public. On their own, the staff decided to follow government recommendations and wear face masks. The importance of using extra disinfectants and hand sanitizers was recognized not only by the staff but by people everywhere, so due to the high demand, these became hard to come by. Much appreciated was a gift from The Virginia Distillery, our neighbors just down the road, who delivered a 5-gallon pump bucket hand sanitizer that they are now producing instead of their normal production of whisky. Their gift continues to be put to very good use and we are grateful. As an added bonus, it smells like whisky.

One of the important services that AH provides, a low-cost spay/neuter program in connection with the Lynchburg Humane Society’s Spay/Neuter Clinic in Evington, has been curtailed due to the pandemic. HS/SPCA Board Member Heidi Freitag heads this program. We have been told it should be open before this newsletter is mailed out.

Almost Home also is fortunate to have Krista Waibel heading up the Trap/Neuter/Return Program for feral cats, which has continued to operate in the pandemic with help from the Charlottesville/Albemarle SPCA. (See Page 2 for details.) Many years ago, our SPCA Board all wore a blue ribbon with a key dangling from it so that people would ask what it meant. We would reply: “Spaying and neutering is the key to ending the overpopulation of animals.” Krista is certainly doing her part! Also, the Nelson County Times has continued to run the Pets of the Week pictures that Sybil Martino, our webmaster, sends them. We appreciate the free publicity to help us find homes for AH animals.
Almost Home Pet Adoption Center

Holiday Matching Fund Sets a Record in 2019

There was great cause for rejoicing as the Treasurer reported the results of the 2019 Holiday Matching Fund Campaign to the HS/SPCA Board. Thanks to the generosity of the people who agreed to be “Matchers” with donations starting at $1,000, and the many supporters who sent in December donations that were matched, more than $116,000 was added to our operating budget. Our deepest gratitude to the 2019 “Matchers”:

Carol and Peyton Coyner
James Everhart in memory of his son, John
Carol Janus and Alan Diamond
Arthur Klingerman
Marcus Mutts
Diane and Steve Robbins
Bill Trainer
Elaine and Henri Weems
3 anonymous donors

Loving Cup Unveils New Dog Label

"Snowy" is the showy Almost Home alum on the 2019 vintage of Loving Cup Vineyard and Winery's Dudley Nose Rosé, just released. Each year the vineyard, Virginia's only organic vineyard and winery, features an Almost Home resident or alum on its Rosé label. This year's label dog is Snowy, a beautiful lab/pit bull mix. Snowy was adopted from AH in December 2015 by Orquida and Dan Ingraham of Afton Mountain Bed and Breakfast. Loving Cup donates $2 dollars to AH for each bottle of Dudley Nose sold. Deena Hambsch, a member of the AH Board of Directors and whose family runs Loving Cup, said that in addition to raising funds for the shelter, the vineyard aims to raise awareness about the shelter and its good works. The HS/SPCA is grateful for the support from the Loving Cup Vineyard and Winery.