



October 2023

## Behind the Scenes

Large-Scale Transfer Efforts

## Humane Education

Reconnecting with Youth

Sadie

Happy Tails

# CREATURE CHRONICLES

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*Kaiser, Cover Model* Photo Credit: Mandi Kowaleski

Kaiser is one of 24 canines who was transferred to the VBSPCA from a shelter in rural Louisiana in August. He loves toys and is never one to turn down a treat. You'll learn more about the effort it takes to do large transfers like the one that brought Kaiser from the Deep South to Hampton Roads on page 11.



## 2023 VBSPCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Letter From Derby Brackett



At last, autumn is here! It has been a long, hot summer for all of us - especially our animals. We are grateful for the cooler crispness that the season brings. We are grateful for so many things.

*Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.*  
- Melody Beattie, Author

Such a true statement of gratitude as it explains the reasons behind our work done yesterday, the dedication to do things even better today, and the resilience to do this work again tomorrow. It seems that just when the workload seems unbearable, the amount of necessary animal care unending, and the need from our community keeps growing; the gratitude kicks in and reminds us once again why we are here. It can be seen in the smile of an adopter; the tears of joy from a clinic client; the generous hand of a donor; or the encouraging words from a colleague. Gratitude at the VBSPCA resonates with the simplest of thanks to all of you.

The past few months have been challenging - not just with the heat and humidity - but also the diseases and overcrowding shelters have experienced throughout the region. With the veterinary shortage crisis, we have struggled to meet the demands for quality care for our community. The economic challenges have put pet owners in the terrible position of having to make decisions on feeding, caring, and even keeping their beloved companions. With each obstacle, we have tried to provide solutions to keep happy, healthy pets in homes. This has not been easy. But with the gratitude that our actions bring, we are determined in serving the mission and delivering on our promise of compassion for thousands of deserving animals.

Our vision for tomorrow stays bright. This vision includes both expanded services and reimagined programs. We are revamping Humane Education programming, working to increase clinic services and surgeries, and accommodating even more animals as needed. We continue to look for ways to help our partners in sheltering and veterinary care. We connect with adopters and pet owners to make sure they have the means to properly care for their pets.

We also appeal to donors for funding, volunteering, or participating in events. As we embark on the last few months of 2023, I am filled with hope. Every year our supporters come through for the animals with generous holiday gifts. These donations are never taken for granted, and we feel especially grateful that people remember homeless animals as they do their holiday shopping and plan their end-of-year giving. Whether it's an online donation on Giving Tuesday; a drop-off of items for our Wish List; or a financial gift made at the front desk of the shelter, each act of generosity boosts the mission and our spirits.

Our tomorrows are fueled by the gratitude we receive from you and the gratitude we extend to you. Whether I see you out in the community, in the shelter lobby, or outside the clinic doors; please know that I extend my sincerest thanks - from me, my staff, our Board of Directors, and, most of all, our animals.

With gratitude always-

Derby D. Brackett  
CEO



*Tommy*  
Adopted July 2023



*February*  
Adopted September 2023



*Bama*  
Adopted September 2023

# NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP

Angie Lombardi  
Board Chair

Photo Credit: Don Monteaux Photography



For more than a decade, Angie Lombardi has been a fixture at the Virginia Beach SPCA. She fell in love with the organization when she became a volunteer. Just a year later, she jumped at the opportunity to join the Board of Directors. Now Lombardi is ready to enter a new chapter as she takes on the role of Board Chair in January 2024. Among her priorities is educating the public about the services offered at the VBSPCA as well as the benefits of adopting shelter animals.

“Many people may not realize that shelter animals are often well-behaved, healthy, and eager to find their forever homes,” explained Lombardi. “I cannot put into words the joy that comes from seeing a scared and lonely pet thrive in their new home.”

Thanks to her more than 20 years of experience in marketing and sales, Lombardi is well equipped to help drive awareness of the VBSPCA’s programs and services. She has worked for The Franklin Johnston Group since 2018 and is currently the Vice President of Marketing.

Another objective of Lombardi’s will be to engage new donors. In addition to her years of service to the VBSPCA, Lombardi and her husband, Damien, contribute financially throughout the year. She is also a familiar face at fundraising events, serving as co-chair at the 2022 and 2023 Wags and Whiskers Galas and chatting up golfers each year at the Puttin’ for Paws Charity Golf Tournament.

**“Doing philanthropic work has truly enriched my life,” said Lombardi. “I have discovered a deep sense of purpose learning that the smallest act of kindness can make a significant impact in someone’s life.”**



Photo Credit: Bonilla Pet Photography

As part of her strategy to reach potential supporters, Lombardi encourages anyone who hasn't visited the VBSPCA Shelter to stop by and learn more about the organization. “Until you see it for yourself, you can't understand everything the VBSPCA does and what it takes to run a shelter and clinic of this size. Whether it's the clinic team, shelter team, leadership team, or volunteers, everyone works tirelessly to ensure that these precious creatures are given a chance at a better life.”

Lombardi has enjoyed the company of pets since she was young. As an only child, she considered the animals in her home to be her siblings. Currently the Lombardis have three hounds and a German Shorthaired Pointer who keep her laughing daily. That lifelong love of animals is what drives her as she prepares to assume the Board Chair position.

“The animals cannot speak for themselves. Many of them come into the shelter from undesirable situations or soul-crushing events. These are pets who cannot be told what is happening. It is heartbreaking. And even if it sometimes takes longer than [the VBSPCA team] would like to find them a forever home, the animals will never be abandoned by them. This is why we support the VBSPCA.”

# Empathy



*Sampson and his adopter, Tiffany*

## A Leg Up for Senior Dogs

Few animals face longer stays at shelters than seniors. Older residents are routinely passed over for younger animals even though they still have so much love to offer. Seniors are also assumed to be more expensive to care for and some do in fact arrive at the shelter in need of medical attention. Shelters are often forced to pass those veterinary costs on to the would-be adopter, adding another obstacle between senior pets and their forever homes.

However, senior dogs at the Virginia Beach SPCA have reason to wag their tails, thanks to a \$10,000 grant from The Grey Muzzle Organization. The grant helps cover the cost of necessary medical care for seniors, leading to quicker adoptions and more time spent in loving homes.

Senior canines at the VBSPCA, like Sampson and Mya, are already benefiting from The Grey Muzzle Organization's gift. Sampson, a 16 year old Maltese, was surrendered because of a medical emergency with his previous family. After a dental cleaning and having a few teeth extracted, he was soon feeling well enough to participate in our Beach Buddies program.

Through the program, Sampson met his eventual adopter and won her over with his gentle demeanor. By the end of the week, Sampson was enjoying life in his new forever home.

Mya's family made the difficult choice to surrender her when they could not afford her medical care. The 12-year-old Silky Terrier needed mammary masses removed and dental surgery with extensive extractions. Thankfully the masses were benign, and after recovering from her surgeries, Mya was adopted and is now living with her new family.



# Community

## *A Peaceful Place for Pets and Their People*



**TowneBank employees pose for a photo after a day of volunteering**



**Volunteers from Sentara Health at work in the VBSPCA Memorial Garden**

Animal shelters and veterinary clinics are not often thought of as tranquil. However, a recently completed project has transformed part of the Virginia Beach SPCA's property into a peaceful place for pets and their people.

The VBSPCA Memorial Garden has officially reopened after a major revitalization effort. The area now includes a pathway for shelter dogs to enjoy a walk in the shade; a relaxing waiting area for clinic clients; and an expanded memorial garden to remember beloved pets and animal lovers.

The community rallied behind this project every step of the way, beginning with a fundraising initiative that raised more than \$18,000 in 2022. Last fall, a volunteer group from Sentara Health came out on the United Way Day of Caring to clean up the space so that new features could be installed. After custom memorial bricks, plants, and other elements were placed earlier this year, volunteers from TowneBank completed the transformation in September. The next time you stop by to visit shelter animals or bring your pet to a clinic appointment, we invite you to take a moment to enjoy this beautiful new space.

**To order a stone to be placed in the VBSPCA Memorial Garden, visit [vbspca.com/honors-and-memorials](https://vbspca.com/honors-and-memorials).**





*Joy*  
At the Heart of  
Every Adoption



# Collaboration



## Shelter Animals Step into the Spotlight

The community came out in a big way to support the Virginia Beach SPCA and kick off the BEACH IT! Country Music Festival in late June. The VBSPCA was invited to The Shack at the Oceanfront for an impactful day of donations, adoptable animals, and lasting connections.

The donation drive was made possible by Miranda Lambert's MuttNation Foundation, which organizes Fill the Little Red Wagon donation drives at her concerts to benefit shelters across the country. US106.1 Real Country partnered with Lawyer Garage to create a larger-than-life red wagon for the drive to boost awareness and welcome pet-loving country music fans to the event. Once inside, concert goers met adoptable dogs and puppies, dropped off donations, and learned more about the mission of the VBSPCA. In total, we raised \$1,066 through the donation drive.



A litter of 12-week-old terrier mix puppies stole the show with their cute faces and wiggling antics. One of those pups, Spud, was lucky enough to join other VBSPCA canines backstage at the festival to greet event staff and musical artists - even joining musician Lily Rose for a television interview. Several of the dogs met their future adopters at the event, making the day all the more memorable.

# Innovation

## *Building a Compassionate Future*

Schools are back in session and the Virginia Beach SPCA is ready for class. Following a few years of mostly virtual activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the VBSPCA is expanding its Humane Education program to better connect with children in the community. Planning is underway to bring humane education back into schools in early 2024 in an effort to build respect, empathy, and compassion among area youth.

"I am excited to not only bring back previous program offerings but also look forward to increasing our reach to older youth," said Michelle Schutz, VBSPCA Humane Education Manager. "It is important to teach them that they can make a difference by developing a lifelong respect for themselves, each other, for animals, and for the planet."

The VBSPCA is now recruiting adult volunteers to help with Humane Education initiatives. Interested individuals can send an email to [humaneeducation@vbspca.com](mailto:humaneeducation@vbspca.com) to get involved.

### Current offerings include:

**Youth Shelter Tours:** Children can now get a behind-the-scenes look at the VBSPCA Shelter complete with a hands-on interaction with an adoptable animal. Tours can be scheduled online.

**VBCPS Service Learning Program:** The VBSPCA is one of five organizations participating in an effort to teach high school students the importance of being connected to their community. Students will research specific problems nonprofits face and create a project that provides solutions to address those issues.

**Tale for Two:** Tale for Two is offered at the VBSPCA Shelter on Mondays. Parents can register to have their child read to a shelter pet.

Additionally, the VBSPCA will continue to offer the VBSPCA Animal Heroes online arcade, Pawsitive Press newsletter, and online seasonal youth activities.



To learn more about the VBSPCA's Humane Education programs, visit [vbspca.com/education](https://vbspca.com/education).

# Dedication



## Going the Distance to Help Animals

Not a week goes by that the Virginia Beach SPCA doesn't work with its local shelter partners. In fact, as of September 1st, 89% of animals that have been transferred to the shelter this year have come from organizations right here in our region. However, the struggles of animal welfare are shared across the nation and even around the world. There is no shortage of pleas for help, and the VBSPCA assists when it can.

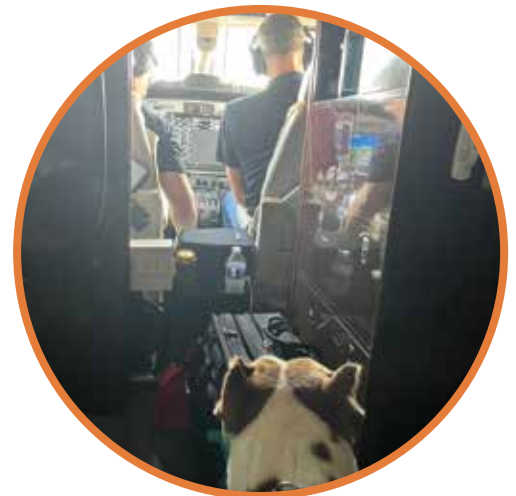
### *Forming a Plan*

As oppressive heat gripped the Deep South this summer, St. Landry Parish Animal Control was packed with animals. The shelter was facing not only overcrowding but a health problem as well. A staggering 85% of their adult canine population was heartworm positive, a statistic that is sadly common in the region. With no access to medical care and low probability of adoption, the dogs were in need of a second chance.

That's when the BISSELL Pet Foundation stepped in and reached out to animal shelters across the country for assistance. The VBSPCA was one of several organizations that answered the call in August, taking in 24 dogs and puppies.

"It's always a fine balance of helping all of our local partners and being able to do something like this that's very close to my heart," said VBSPCA Kennel Manager Lacey Lopez. "I'm originally from Texas, so I know and understand the struggles of the situation."

The VBSPCA kennel team and front desk staff worked together to expedite adoptions to create space for their new arrivals. Staff members also paired the current canine residents when possible, a process that takes time and careful attention to ensure dogs get along before becoming roommates.



## *Up and At 'Em*

Once all of the logistics were in place, Lopez flew to Louisiana to assist in loading all of the dogs on a plane manned by Race for Life Rescue pilots. It was an early start: the team was on the tarmac by 5:00 a.m. to make sure each animal was in a crate specifically labeled for transport.

"We had to 'Tetris' everyone in because it wasn't just the VBSPCA, there were organizations in New Jersey that took quite a few dogs as well," recalled Lopez. "They have one seat right behind the pilots, and Harper the bully mix and I sat there on the three hour flight to Norfolk."

As soon as the plane landed, members of the kennel team were on the ground to greet the two dozen canines. All of the dogs were quickly loaded into two vans, the air conditioning on high to keep them as cool as possible.

## *All Hands on Deck*

When the vans arrived back at the shelter, members of the kennel and isolation teams jumped into action to get everyone inside and settled. The adult dogs were made at home in a separate section of the kennel. The 12 puppies, along with their mothers, were set up in an isolation area. Within 30 minutes, the dogs were all in their kennels enjoying water, soft bedding, and some down time.

"Seeing the scared, weary faces getting out of the transfer vehicles, and then soon seeing those same faces looking so relieved, so carefree, and off to live their lives is such a great feeling and completely unmatched," said Hope Rote, Lead Technician for the VBSPCA's Isolation and Nursery Department.

## *The Newest Virginia Residents*

At the time of publication, many of the 24 dogs and puppies had already been adopted. Since the adults all have heartworm disease, they face months of recovery in their forever homes but are lucky to receive the lifesaving treatment so many canines in the South need. The VBSPCA Clinic will oversee their treatment, and the BISSELL Pet Foundation donated \$500 to each dog's care.

"This transfer in particular was amazing! We took in so many new faces, old and young, all of the adults needing treatment for heartworm disease," said Rote. "Being able to take in such a variety and help out partnering facilities is my favorite part about this organization and sheltering in general."



# HAPPY TAILS

Photo Credit: Patricia Gee



## Sadie

Adopted February 2023

Sadie arrived at the Virginia Beach SPCA in December 2022 when her previous family was moving and could not take her with them. The two-year-old cat was missing a lot of fur due to a flea allergy but was immediately friendly with staff and volunteers. One of those volunteers, Margaret, noticed that Sadie had similarities to her cat who had passed away last November. Since Sadie had reportedly gotten along with other cats in the past, Margaret thought she might fit in well with their resident cat, Nicky.

**“When I took Sadie into the visiting room, she climbed on my lap for attention and became playful,” said Margaret. “My husband came with me to meet her, and the decision was made.”**

Just two days after moving into her new home, Sadie was already settling in and getting acquainted with her feline sibling. Now the pair is known to play together and sit side-by-side.

“Sadie has become part of our family,” Margaret explained. “She has rejuvenated Nicky and added to our lives with her playfulness and curiosity.”



# *This Holiday Season*

Remember The Animals Without A Home

Give the gift of compassion and make a donation in honor of your loved one.

**[vbspca.com/donate](https://vbspca.com/donate)**



VIRGINIA BEACH SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

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