



June 2024

Max

Happy Tails

Long-Term Care

Adoption Rates Decline

Sunset Speakeasy

Wags & Whiskers Gala

CREATURE CHRONICLES

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Eldon, Cover Model

Photo Credit: Michelle Tugman

Eldon and his siblings were tiny kittens when they were transferred to the Virginia Beach SPCA from Suffolk Animal Control last December. After spending a month in our kitten nursery, they were placed in a foster home until they were ready for adoption. Eldon found his forever home in mid-February.



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Letter From Derby Brackett



Recently, I had the sorrowful yet joyous privilege of celebrating the life of two of our beloved longtime patrons and animal lovers, Judge Tom Ammons and Polly Watson. We also lost our dear friend and past Board Member Barbra Stehlik recently. And while the passing of such community treasures leaves a void for all of us in animal welfare, their legacies remind me of the depth and strength of the belief in our mission of compassion

and the commitment to the animals in our community that continues to live on - and thrive - because of those so dedicated to the Virginia Beach SPCA. That dedication to, empathy for, and pride in the work that we do for the animals resonates far beyond the walls of the shelter. The unconditional love is felt from so many directions in our community.

The clinic renovation, with a sense of controlled chaos while staying operational in innovative ways, has given us a purpose of greater importance to fill a critical need in the community for owners and their pets. The patience and flexibility of our long-term clients and the understanding from our newer friends has helped to buoy staff who are trying hard to provide the quality care the animals deserve in different - and tight - clinic spaces. The completion of the clinic will be a vision finally realized from a dream that began in early 2019. The power to love more comes with the space and staff to do more.

The gleeful celebration at this year's Wags & Whiskers Gala reinforced our community's love for the animals and their validation of our impact. Together in our Sunset Speakeasy, we danced, played, bid, and dined in honor of those who need us most - the deserving animals in our shelters. As I view the photos from that evening, I see the loving twinkle of a smile in every animal interaction, but also the ecstatic wag of the tail of the pup proudly on parade!

There is a certain magical quality to the animal-human bond - one that Tom, Polly, Barbra, and countless others experience first hand. We continue to revere that bond with today's donors, who we depend on for the sustainability of our mission; today's adopters, who we rely on to open their homes to new family members; today's clients, who we work closely with to keep healthy pets in their homes; today's shelter partners, with whom we collaborate to end animal homelessness; and today's staff and volunteers, who work tirelessly to bring our mission to fruition.

Yes there is magic, but there is also the reality of a job and a life well done. To those we honor in passing and those we work alongside daily, we cherish that reality. We will honor them with our dedication to the lives of all animals well loved.

Today, we celebrate.

Derby D. Brackett
CEO

Celebrating **ADOPTIONS** of Long-Term Residents



Aurora



Clarence



Rigby



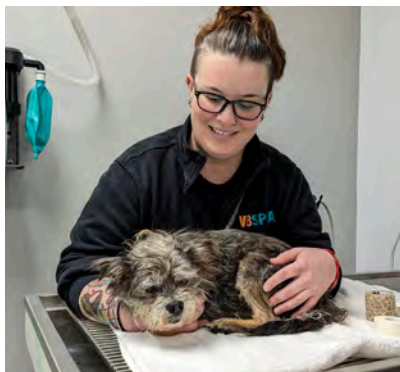
Oliver



Layla

Innovation

Quality Care in the Midst of Major Renovation



The first half of 2024 has been an exciting, yet challenging time for the Virginia Beach SPCA Clinic. A \$1.1 million grant from PetSmart Charities was awarded to expand the clinic in an effort to increase access to low-cost veterinary care, and construction broke ground in January. Now this major renovation is in its final phase and is expected to be completed in July.

As a critical resource to pet parents and shelter animals alike, the VBSPCA Clinic has remained open amidst the dust, noise, and general disruption typical of any construction project. This has been no small feat, with staff members making adjustments to accommodate both construction crews and the pets and people who need them.



Exam room space has shifted. Work stations have popped up anywhere there is a bit of space. Client consultations take place on outdoor benches, in the lobby, or over the phone. The team's adaptability has been key to ensuring that animals in Hampton Roads continue to receive quality, affordable care.

"The clinic staff has been dedicated to minimizing the renovation's impact to our clients and the community as much as possible," said Kindra Haymaker, VBSPCA Director of Clinic Operations. "To do this, they have had to be creative,

flexible, quick-thinking, and work even harder to be sure that construction doesn't impact our patient and client care. I am extremely proud of our wonderful team."

The new lobby as well as the surgical and dental suites, which were completed in March, served as a sneak peek of the many improvements this renovation will bring. The larger and updated VBSPCA Clinic will expand access to urgent care services, case management of long-term health issues, and everyday wellness and illness visits - which is critical to keeping pets happy, healthy, and in homes, where they belong.

Empathy



Photo Credit: Michelle Tugman

SPECIALIZED CARE For Long-Term Residents



On any given day when you enter the kennel, you'll quickly garner the attention of Cooper. The senior hound mix is quite the optimist. He howls and wags his tail in hopes that you are there to take him for a walk. Cooper has had countless walks since he arrived at the shelter last October, which help keep his spirits up despite his extended stay. At the time of publication, he is still waiting for a home of his own.

It's no secret that animal adoption numbers across the nation are dropping, leaving animal shelters and rescues packed with homeless pets. The Virginia Beach SPCA is no exception. **Adoptions are down 36%** from January through April compared to the same time period in 2023.

Additionally, the average length of stay for adoptable animals has increased from 19 days to 30 days. Longer stays have especially impacted our adult dog and small animal populations, though there have been some long-term feline residents as well. Animals with extensive medical costs are particularly vulnerable to being looked over by potential adopters, making donations to the VBSPCA Miracle Medical Fund even more critical.

While the VBSPCA animal care teams work hard to tend to every animal's physical and emotional needs, they take special measures to help long-term residents cope with the stressful shelter environment. Canines like Cooper are prioritized to go on outings through the Beach Buddies, Listening Ears, and Visiting Paws programs. The kennel team also pairs dogs who enjoy having a canine companion for play and snuggle time. Cattery associates move felines and small animals to enclosures that are larger or more visible to potential adopters. This careful attention to long-term residents is no substitute for a loving home, but it can make all the difference to animals who have a longer road to adoption.

To help provide medical care to shelter animals, visit vbspca.com/miracle-medical-fund or contact the Development Team at donations@vbspca.com.

Leaving a Lasting Legacy

Since 1966, dedicated community members have been a critical resource in bringing the mission of the Virginia Beach SPCA to life. Sadly, this year we've had to say goodbye to three individuals who have helped to make the VBSPCA what it is today: Thomas Ammons III, Barbra Stehlik, and Polly Watson.



Thomas Ammons III

Ammons was a lover of all animals, but especially dogs and horses. Known for his volunteerism and advocacy, he was a voice for the animals even on the job. The former judge was a pioneer in the fight against animal cruelty, making national headlines for giving a jail sentence to a man who killed a kitten in 1989. Ammons' VBSPCA board service spanned 20 years. He regularly volunteered at the shelter and even traveled to the Gulf Coast to rescue animals in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.



Barbra Stehlik

Stehlik was described by her children as someone who was passionate about dogs of all kinds. She would greet any canine she met and even kept treats in her car, just in case she met a new friend. Stehlik served on the VBSPCA Board of Directors from 2005 to 2009; however, her support of the organization stretched for many years.

"From fundraising to donating... to shredding papers for the [kennels], she would do anything she could to help support the VBSPCA," said Matt Stehlik, her son.



Polly Watson

As a longtime board member, Watson never missed a meeting. While she enjoyed all aspects of serving the VBSPCA, she was particularly energized when she helped with fundraising events, including the Wags & Whiskers Gala. In 2015, she was honored at the gala with that year's Lifesaver Award. Watson and her beloved dachshund, Roxy, were featured in the VBSPCA's annual calendar - a photo she treasured and showed off to anyone she could.

As longtime donors, Ammons, Stehlik, and Watson made significant financial contributions to the organization throughout their lives. Fittingly, the impact of their legacy will be felt for years to come through the VBSPCA's Legacy Society.

Leave love behind

Compassionate, dedicated people built our mission and brought us to where we are today. Now it is our turn to make sure compassion is waiting for the people and pets of tomorrow.

To discuss a planned gift or to learn more, please contact Derby Brackett at 757-427-0070. ext.123.



Collaboration



TEAMING UP

To Help Young Animals In Need

Spring begins an especially busy time for animal shelters like the Virginia Beach SPCA due to a surge in the number of young kittens and puppies in need. These are the most vulnerable of the animals that we care for, and it would be an impossible task without the support of our fosters. Fosters extend the reach of the VBSPCA, allowing us to take in more animals from our local shelter partners as they also cope with an influx of kittens and puppies.

Fosters are the unsung heroes of any shelter. They give their time to care for homeless animals who are not yet old enough or strong enough to be adopted. Most are kittens or puppies – some so young that they require round-the-clock care. Fosters work closely with our isolation and nursery team to ensure a healthy start to life for the animals.

This includes checkups at the shelter every two weeks. Fosters typically keep their houseguests until they are old enough to be vaccinated and undergo spay/neuter surgery. From there, the animals head to the adoption floor, and many fosters choose to pick up their next batch of kittens or puppies.



When local shelters have too many young animals to care for they often turn to the VBSPCA for assistance. Recent examples of local transfers include Miss Mac, a heartworm positive shepherd mix, and her litter of seven puppies as well as an orphaned litter of nine kittens.

Interested in joining our team of fosters?
Visit vbspca.com/foster to learn more.

Celebrating The Mission



VBSPCA WAGS & WHISKERS GALA

This year's Wags and Whiskers Gala was a smashing success! On April 27, 2024, nearly 450 guests gathered at New Realm Brewing Company to celebrate the mission of the Virginia Beach SPCA. The gala is the organization's biggest fundraising event of the year, and more than \$300,000 was raised for the animals.

With a Sunset Speakeasy theme, guests enjoyed fabulous food and drinks, tried their hand at casino games and a liquor ring toss, and danced the night away to live music. Additionally, we honored those who have made an incredible impact on the VBSPCA and the community. TowneBank was the recipient of this year's Compassion Award while Barbara Taylor Creech and Mary Donnan Harrison were honored with the Lifesaver Award.

Guests enjoyed meeting adoptable animals and VBSPCA alumni. Three families even fell in love at the gala and ended up adopting a new family member soon after!



With Our Annual Gala

Thank you to the following sponsors, donors,
and volunteers who helped make the gala a success



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Leila Bradley

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Board Members: Angie Lombardi, Mario Lorello, Amy Mallett, Brandon Pavlacka, Amanda Wells

Staff: Derby Brackett, Ashley Cooney, Amber Dexter, Mandi Kowaleski, Danielle Nance

Volunteers: Brittany Nunnally, Whitney Prentiss, Donna Silberholz, Joy Towler, Paul Towler

Volunteers

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Marlene Cohen
Courtney DeLuca
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Wagging With Charlie.

Don't settle for a walk – take your four-legged friend for a drive and go Riding With Charlie. Every day, we aspire to make sure you have the buying and driving experience that allows you to live your best life. As proud sponsors of Virginia Beach SPCA's Wags and Whiskers, we hope that when you're in the market for your next vehicle to get you and your fur family around town, you'll visit Charles Barker Automotive.

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RECONNECTING WITH YOUTH

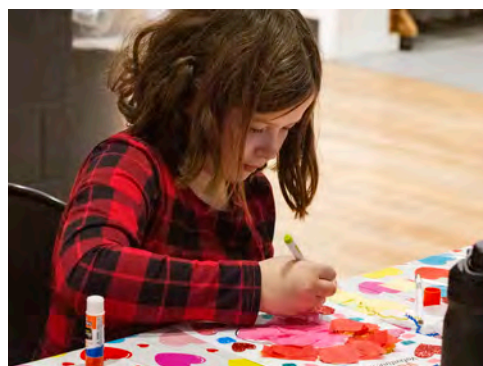
The Virginia Beach SPCA's Humane Education Program is offering new and exciting ways to teach the values of compassion and empathy in the community while also bringing back award-winning favorites. At the heart of the program's expansion is a recommitment to in-person programming.

After a long hiatus brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VBSPCA has once again returned to area schools with the lauded Listening Ears program. New or reluctant readers are paired with a volunteer and VBSPCA alumni or shelter animal for regular visits over the course of six weeks in the hopes of building confidence and strengthening their reading abilities. Five schools participated in Listening Ears during the 2023-2024 school year.

Additionally, two new educational experiences were launched this year. Kids Night In is offered quarterly and gives children ages 6-11 the opportunity to have a fun-filled and educational evening at the shelter complete with dinner, adoptable animals, games, and crafts. The first two editions of Kids Night In proved to be very popular, with the May event selling out. Two more dates are planned for August and November.

Not wanting to leave out the youngest of animal lovers, Little Learners invites preschoolers and their caregivers to learn about kindness, compassion, and empathy through stories and activities while also meeting an adoptable small animal. Little Learners is offered monthly at the TCC/Joint Use Library.

Together with our children's newsletter, virtual activities, and established programming like Tale for Two, the VBSPCA Humane Education Program reaches thousands of local children each year.



To learn more about the VBSPCA's current Humane Education offerings, visit vbspca.com/education.

Dedication

From VBSPCA Volunteer to Aspiring Veterinarian

Will Jensen

At animal shelters like the Virginia Beach SPCA, change occurs daily. Each year, thousands of homeless animals enter our care, and even more prospective adopters come and go, searching for their next furry companion. Amid this always changing stream of faces has been a rare constant – Will Jensen. Over the last 10 years, Jensen has been ever present at the VBSPCA. But this May, Jensen said goodbye to the shelter that served as his second home to begin his next chapter at Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, pursuing a dream formed in no small part by his time at the VBSPCA.

“Will’s dedication to the animals in our care, diligent work ethic, and compassion for humane treatment at all times have been tremendous assets to the VBSPCA,” CEO Derby Brackett said. “A true VBSPCA ambassador and advocate for all animals, he will be missed, but we are so very proud of his next adventure and his personal successes.”



Becoming a veterinarian was not a lifelong goal of Jensen’s. An ace at math and science, he entertained notions of teaching or engineering, but neither ultimately appealed to him. Facing life-shaping questions about colleges and career paths, an introspective Jensen realized the answers were right in front of him the entire time.

“I really started to think about it and asked myself ‘what do I like to do,’” Jensen explained. “I’m coming in [to work in the kennel] every day. It’s one thing that I really like to do. Maybe I could do this for the rest of my life, but why not build on it? And that’s when I decided to pursue veterinary medicine.”

By the time Jensen enrolled at Old Dominion University in 2020, he had been involved with the VBSPCA for seven years. He started out volunteering through what is now the School Community Service Program at the age of 11. Once he turned 13, he served as a junior volunteer and quickly gravitated towards work in the kennel. A self-described dog person, Jensen felt right at home amongst the commotion and occasional chaos of the kennel. The VBSPCA hired him in the summer of 2018, and he was later promoted to the kennel’s lead animal care technician.

Jensen started college as the COVID-19 pandemic was near its peak. With most classes moved to online formats, he loaded up on credit hours while maintaining his full-time schedule at the shelter. This balancing act continued into his junior year when it finally became untenable.

“I had to take classes on campus, and I was still working full-time in the kennel,” Jensen said. “Looking back, I don’t know how I did that, but then I went to part-time because [my class schedule] just got worse and worse.”

Dropping down to part-time hours at the shelter was not Jensen's preferred solution, but he does admit it has made his departure from the shelter easier to accept.

"Because I went from full-time to part-time, it kind of acclimated me to not being here," Jensen said. "Two years ago, it would have been a complete culture shock because I lived [at the shelter]."

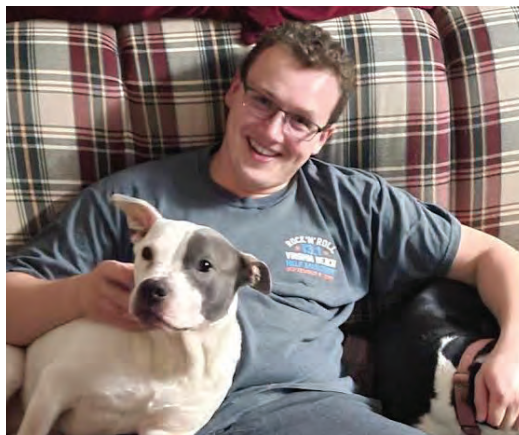
The hours Jensen spent at the VBSPCA waned, but the support he received from the organization did not. Brackett wrote him a letter of recommendation for his vet school applications as did VBSPCA Medical Director Dr. Ann Marie Woyma and Veterinarian Dr. Lindsey Miller. A graduate of Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Miller also helped Jensen prepare for admissions interviews and his move to Blacksburg.

"I adore them all," Jensen said of the VBSPCA veterinarians.

One might assume a future in shelter medicine lies in store for Jensen, but he insists he's going into vet school with an open mind. He likes the idea of performing specialty surgery and is eager to expand his horizons beyond companion animals and into horses and other large animals. But no matter where the next four years take him, Jensen cannot imagine a future where he is not involved with an animal shelter in some meaningful way.

"Shelter medicine is always where my heart's gonna be," he said. "I find it very hard to believe that I won't contribute at least 40 percent of my work week to some kind of shelter."

What is given in support of a worthy cause is often repaid in full, and then some. Jensen gave 10 years of exemplary service to the VBSPCA, touching an untold number of lives. Along the way, Jensen found his purpose in life and an ambitious goal to pursue. The VBSPCA will remain one of his biggest supporters, even from 300 miles away.



HAPPY TAILS

Photo Credit: Patricia Gee



Max

Adopted August 2023

Max's skin was in rough shape when he returned to the shelter. His previous adopter had encountered a medical hardship and could no longer care for Max and his severe allergies. As a result, Max was nearly hairless, and his skin was painfully inflamed. With the help of medicated baths and other treatments, Max's skin began to heal, and his beautiful black coat and warm personality slowly returned. His skin issues struck a chord with Patty - a volunteer who walks dogs every Sunday. She adopted a puggle mix with similar skin allergies named Bronsen from the VBSPCA in 2022. Patty brought her husband in to meet Max, and Max immediately nuzzled up to his hand. His adoption was finalized soon after.

"Max had been there for a while, and I felt sorry for him," Patty said. "We had helped Bronsen get his hair back, and it was so worth it."

Max quickly settled into his new home and has been, in Patty's words "such a gentleman." He now enjoys running through the house with his favorite stuffies, squirrel watching, and tap dancing at mealtime.

"It is such a great gift to have a companion to share your love with," Patty said. "Max makes that really easy. You can always tell when you enter the room and Max is there because he starts thumping his tail. What a gift!"



Puttin' For Paws

Charity Golf Tournament

Red Wing Lake Golf Course
Virginia Beach



VBSPCA

FRIDAY October 4th, 2024

12PM SHOTGUN START

Our annual golf tournament is back!

We invite you to join us for 18 holes of golf, games, and fun, all in support of the homeless animals of the Virginia Beach SPCA.

As valued supporters of our community, your participation helps us care for over 2,600 animals who will come to us this year in desperate need of a second chance.

- **Adoptable Animals**
- **Sponsorship Opportunities**
- **Lunch, Dinner & Beverages**
- **Prizes & Awards**

VISIT [VBSPCA.COM/GOLF](https://vbspca.com/golf) FOR MORE INFORMATION



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