



VBSPCA

October 2024

Dedication

Going the Extra Miles

Second Chances

For Senior Dogs

A Day at the Zoo

Celebrating Team VBSPCA

CREATURE CHRONICLES

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Iggy, Cover Model

Photo Credit: Michelle Tugman

Iggy was returned to the Virginia Beach SPCA last November when her previous owner could no longer give her the care she needed. A gray-faced nine-year-old, Iggy was passed over multiple times in favor of younger dogs. Still, her loving and playful nature never faded. She was finally adopted in late January.



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Letter From Derby Brackett



Autumn is my favorite season. I love the cooler air and the end of our awful humidity! I also get to experience the joy of our fall events – Puttin’ for Paws Charity Golf Tournament and Howl-O-Ween Pub Crawl. It also is a time for change. Just as the leaves change colors and the time changes, so does the cadence of our days. We have so much to be grateful for, there is so much good being done throughout the organization.

We celebrated the official opening of our renovated clinic in early September. With the VBSPCA’s increased spaces for treatment, exams, surgeries, and dentals comes the ability to grow the capacity and the impact on the animals in Hampton Roads. Our talented veterinary staff is clearly focused on providing quality affordable care for pet owners and shelter animals. What began as a vision based on understanding the need over five years ago is today a reality – delivering services to those who need us most.

We welcomed our new Director of Shelter Operations, Jenn Fly, to our Executive Team this summer. Jenn brings many years of animal welfare experience and is both a voice and an advocate for the shelter at the leadership level. Combined with our seasoned shelter managers, our shelter is thriving, and the animals are getting the care and enrichment they need to move on to their forever homes. We continue to focus on collaboration with local shelters to help ease the burdens of overcrowding and improve adoption chances. In August, we also took in a

large transfer from National Mill Dog Rescue in partnership with the Bissell Pet Foundation. Now, more than ever, we are working hard to get healthy animals into loving homes.

Humane Education is back to school as well! Our Humane Ed manager, Michelle Schutz, is reaching out to schools for both our Listening Ears and Compassion Classroom programs. Popular programs for our younger students pre-Covid, we are excited to breathe new life and creativity into these lessons and activities. Humane Education is an important pillar of our mission of compassion as instilling the values of kindness and respect in our youth is critical to creating lifelong animal ambassadors.

As we enter this very busy end-of-year season, I want to thank all of our loyal supporters, volunteers, partners, and employees for your empathy, which is such a critical part of our work. It is empathy that propels us into compassionate action and our understanding that we can, and do, make a difference. Whether empathy creates a spark to donate funds, goods, or time; a greater purpose in your daily work; a reason to reach out to help; or a heart full of loving care, we all contribute to a more compassionate community. There are many examples of this in the pages that follow.

Thanks once again for allowing me the very real privilege of being your Chief Empathy Officer.

In continued service for the animals,

Derby D. Brackett
CEO

Celebrating **ADOPTIONS** of Long-Term Residents



Marlow



Maggie



Cooper



Nolla



Emily

Innovation

Back to School for Humane Education

Class is back in session for the Virginia Beach SPCA's Humane Education program. After a successful return to schools in the spring, the VBSPCA has expanded its in-person programming yet again to reach even more children in the community.

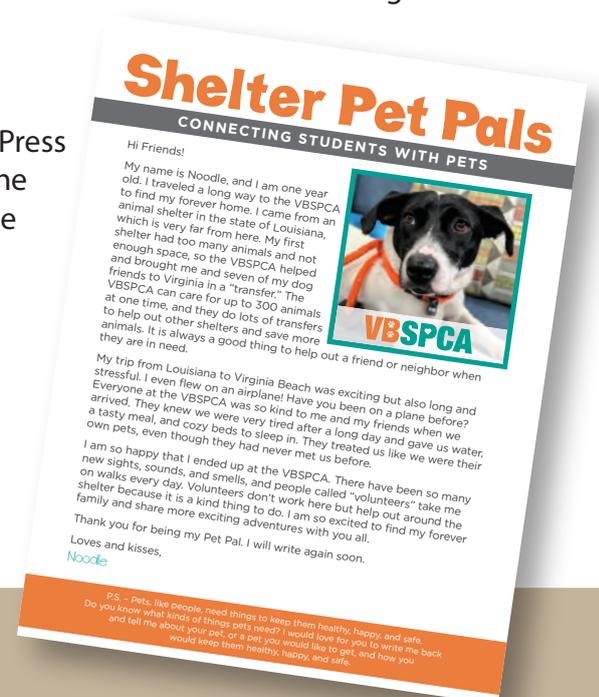
The VBSPCA made its long-awaited return to area classrooms during the 2023-24 academic year with its lauded Listening Ears program. Five schools participated in the reinstated program, which pairs a new or reluctant reader with a volunteer and a shelter or VBSPCA alumni animal for 15-minute sessions over six weeks. Building on the successful relaunch of Listening Ears, the VBSPCA added Shelter Pet Pals and Compassion Classroom for the current school year. Both were staples of Humane Education's pre-COVID programming and are returning with great anticipation.



Shelter Pet Pals provides first graders an opportunity to strengthen their reading and writing skills while also fostering a better understanding of animal sheltering and pet responsibility. Participating classrooms write and receive letters from a VBSPCA animal throughout the semester. These letters tell the animal's story before and during their stay at the shelter and conclude with an update from his or her forever home.

Compassion Classroom is a comprehensive, year-long curriculum offered to both second and fourth-grade classrooms. The program is divided into a series of four lessons intended to teach students the values of compassion, respect, and responsibility for animals and humans. Compassion Classroom lessons are aligned with character education standards and the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning.

Humane Education is maintaining its commitment to reaching children outside of the classroom as well. This includes staples like Tale for Two — the in-shelter reading program — and the kids newsletter Pawsitive Press as well as newer offerings like Kids Night In and Little Learners. End of the year favorites Halloween Tale for Two and Holiday Tale for Two are on the schedule in late October and December, respectively.



Empathy



A SECOND CHANCE For Senior Dogs



Of all the homeless animals in a shelter, none face longer stays and more difficult paths to adoption than seniors. Older residents are routinely passed over for younger animals, even though they still have so much love to give. The rising cost of veterinary care, combined with assumptions that senior animals are more expensive to care for, adds even more obstacles for them to overcome.

However, the senior dogs at the Virginia Beach SPCA have good reason to wag their tails in excitement, thanks to a \$15,000 grant from The Grey Muzzle Organization. The grant covers the cost of medical care for seniors, leading to quicker adoptions and more time spent with forever families.



Senior canines at the shelter, like Bella and Juggle, are already benefiting from The Grey Muzzle Organization's generosity. Juggle, a seven-year-old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, arrived at the VBSPCA through a transfer organized by National Mill Dog Rescue and the BISSELL Pet Foundation. While at the shelter, she received a dental with multiple extractions. Feeling better, and with a healthier mouth, Juggle went home to her forever family in August.

Bella, an 11-year-old Chihuahua, was surrendered to the VBSPCA in March, where she underwent a dental procedure that included seven extractions. All the while, she stole the heart of Krysty - a licensed veterinary technician at the VBSPCA Clinic, and Bella's foster mom. In late August, Krysty finalized Bella's adoption and officially welcomed her into the family, where she is currently thriving.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Evin & Kakki Thompson

Photo Credit: Matt Wurzbarger



Evin and Kakki Thompson are lifelong animal lovers passionate about giving voice to less fortunate pets. Evin's relationship with the Virginia Beach SPCA spans 35 years and includes multiple adoptions, generous donations, and sponsorship of the annual Wags & Whiskers Gala. It was at the 2023 Wags and Whiskers Gala that Kakki was first introduced to the VBSPCA, and she has been a steadfast supporter since. The two married in 2024, and their blended family remains committed to championing the VBSPCA.

Evin and Kakki have always known the companionship of animals. Evin grew up with dogs, and Kakki rescued animals while living in rural North Carolina and instilled in her three children – Edward, Harry, and Caroline – a deep love for animals from an early age. Evin became acquainted with the VBSPCA in 1988 when he and his late first wife, Vickie, adopted “a little kitten with big ears” named Priscilla. The following year they added a stray cat named Shenna, and they traveled throughout North America with Evin, a U.S. Navy SEAL who served for 30 years. Next came felines Mattie, who was adopted from the VBSPCA in 2006; Zory in 2012, and Gracie in 2016. Priscilla, Shenna, and Mattie all lived to be 18 years old.

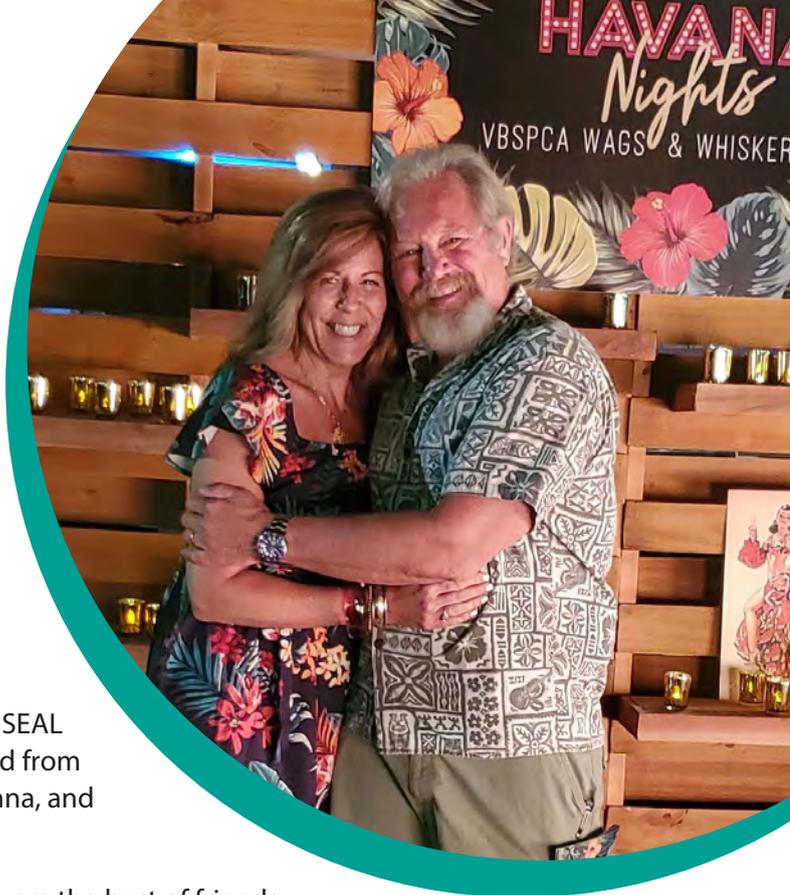
“I’m so grateful for the animals in my life,” Evin said. “Priscilla and I were the best of friends. She got me through a lot. I’ll never forget sitting on the edge of the Grand Canyon with Priscilla and thinking, does life get better than this?”

The lifelong companionship of animals has been foundational for Evin and Kakki. “The absolute unconditional love that is given by a pet is indescribable,” Kakki said. “I believe anyone’s life can be so greatly enriched by adopting a pet.” Evin echoed this saying, “they taught me to love unconditionally. No matter what I do, they still love me. They love people who love them back.”

It’s the dedication of the staff and volunteers of the VBSPCA to animals in need that is most inspiring to Evin. “During my time in the military, I saw a lot of places where animals were not treated nicely,” he said. “And I just love that we have a place in Virginia Beach where they are taken care of and loved until they find their ‘forever’ homes.”

The generosity of people like the Thompsons supports the VBSPCA’s mission to find forever homes for adoptable animals and provides sustainability and continued growth. This commitment to growth and the resources of our donors who champion the organization have both Evin and Kakki excited about the future.

“I’ve been given a very blessed life,” Evin said. “I’ve had great opportunities and great people in my life. This is just one way to give something back.”



Collaboration

Loki



PARTNERING To Help Local At-Risk Animals

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Go forty miles west from the Virginia Beach SPCA, and you will find Suffolk Animal Care Center – the City of Suffolk’s public animal shelter. It has a relatively low capacity and no shelter vet on staff. These problems are not unique to Suffolk Animal Care Center, but are issues plaguing organizations around the country and are why the VBSPCA prioritizes helping local and regional shelters whenever possible. This year, the VBSPCA’s impact is being amplified through a unique partnership with Suffolk Animal Care Center and the ASPCA aimed at helping at-risk animals.

The partnership centers on a \$13,000 grant from the ASPCA. Grant funding covers any associated medical costs for animals transferred from Suffolk Animal Care Center to the VBSPCA. As of September 1, the VBSPCA has accepted 116 animals from Suffolk – 80 cats and 36 dogs. Funding has been used for wide-ranging procedures from senior blood work to specialty surgeries, but the majority of funds have gone towards dentals and the treatment of heartworm-positive dogs. For pets like Loki and Dylan, the results have been lifesaving.

Loki – a one-year-old hound mix – was in rough shape when he arrived at the VBSPCA. He had a fractured forelimb that required amputation and was heartworm-positive. He recovered from surgery in a foster home, where he bonded with other dogs, brushed up on his manners and potty training, and received loads of love and support. Loki returned from foster as a more confident dog and found his forever home in July.

Dylan was an eight-month-old kitten when he arrived. During his stay, VBSPCA veterinarians diagnosed him with juvenile gingivitis and completed a dental procedure that included three extractions. With a healthy mouth and the cost of his dental covered, Dylan’s friendly nature shined, and the outgoing gray and white tabby cat was adopted in less than a month.



Dylan

Joy



THE VBSPCA GOES WILD

If any group deserved a day off, it was the the Virginia Beach SPCA team. Life at an animal shelter is always a whirlwind, and the first half of 2024 was no exception. In addition to the normal challenges of caring for hundreds of shelter and public animals, VBSPCA employees navigated a months-long clinic renovation project that interrupted normal operations and placed a premium on flexibility and improvisation.

It was only fitting that the VBSPCA chose the Norfolk Zoo for an all-staff outing in early August. The day was both an acknowledgment of challenges overcome and a celebration of the people responsible for the everyday success of the organization. Employees were encouraged to share the day with those closest to them, and many brought their friends, spouses, children, and parents – giving the day a truly festive feel. Staff had ample free time to explore the zoo's exhibits and were treated to lunch. There was also a raffle with gift baskets put together by the VBSPCA Leadership Team.

The showstopper was a live encounter with animal ambassadors Dimitri, the prehensile-tailed porcupine, and Dora, the screaming hairy armadillo. Dimitri dazzled with his acrobatics, and Dora overwhelmed many in attendance with her sheer cuteness. They were an exciting change from the cats, dogs, and small animals cared for by the VBSPCA on a daily basis.

VBSPCA day at the zoo was an important reminder that all members of the team play a vital role in the organization's mission and all the hard work put forth is seen and appreciated. Employees left that day recharged and recommitted to the part they play in creating a more humane and responsible community.



Meet Jenn

In July, the Virginia Beach SPCA announced the hiring of Jenn Fly as Director of Shelter Operations. Fly has over a decade of experience in animal welfare and joined the VBSPCA from nearby Chesapeake Animal Services. She serves on the VBSPCA Executive Team and advocates for all things shelter-related. Fly enjoys being out in nature and has been fostering kittens for over 20 years. She and her husband have been married for 30 years and have two daughters, one dog, five cats, and a flock of chickens.

Community



The Virginia Beach SPCA celebrated a milestone years in the making on September 4th. Under blue skies and with a group of loyal supporters on hand, the VBSPCA cut the ribbon on its newly renovated and expanded Clinic.

The vision for the expansion of clinic services and increased capacity began in late 2019. We quickly realized that the most limiting factor to increasing the accessibility to affordable veterinary care for our community was our space.

Members of local government joined with VBSPCA Board members, committed donors, leaders of the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from local sheltering partners to mark the occasion. VBSPCA CEO Derby Brackett, VBSPCA Medical Director Dr. Ann Marie Woyma, Board Member Scott Taylor, and Virginia Beach Mayor Bobby Dyer all gave remarks. Together, they presented a unified message of the tremendous need in the community for affordable, high-quality veterinary care – a need the expanded VBSPCA Clinic will address.

The renovated Clinic is already demonstrating its value to the community. No procedure is more emblematic of this than the dental. It is one of the most requested services from public clients, but the space constraints of the former Clinic made it difficult to meet demand. Now boasting a suite solely for dental procedures, the VBSPCA is making greater strides toward meeting the needs of its clients.

“We are proud to provide accessible and affordable veterinary care to the pet owners of our community and even greater care for the animals in our shelter.” - Derby Brackett

Made possible by a \$1.1 million grant from PetSmart Charities and the expertise of annual partner Taylor Construction, the renovation lasted six months and included new surgery suites, additional examination and treatment rooms, and separate lobbies for checking in and checking out. The larger and updated VBSPCA Clinic boasts expanded urgent care services, case management of long-term health issues, and everyday wellness and illness visits.





We believe that the animal-human bond is critical to the health and happiness of our community.

As a trusted resource, we provide affordable quality veterinary care and inspire compassionate action through education and awareness.



Every single animal at the VBSPCA receives care in our clinic, and shelter animal care reaches more than \$400,000 annually. Your support of the Miracle Medical Fund ensures that every VBSPCA adoptable animal receives the medical treatment they need. Visit vbspca.com/miracle-medical-fund to make a life-changing gift.

Dedication



THOUSANDS OF MILES To Save Hundreds of Dogs

A thousand miles traveled both ways, three days of non-stop work, and nearly 200 dogs surrendered by commercial breeding facilities. It may sound daunting to most, but for Virginia Beach SPCA Kennel Manager Lacey Lopez, it was an opportunity she could not pass up, nor one she will soon forget.

The VBSPCA has a long history of offering support to other animal welfare organizations and routinely takes in transfers from shelters at a local, regional, and national level. To this end, the VBSPCA has fostered a close relationship with the Bissell Pet Foundation – a national nonprofit that aims to reduce the number of animals in shelters. This partnership continues to expand, and in May 2024 the VBSPCA received seven cats from a shelter in Florida – the first ever feline transfer in collaboration with a national organization in VBSPCA history.

While the Florida felines were still settling into the cattery, the Bissell Pet Foundation and the VBSPCA were already in contact about the next transfer. This one was in conjunction with National Mill Dog Rescue – another national organization the VBSPCA routinely works with. The VBSPCA would take in 29 canines surrendered by commercial breeding facilities throughout the Midwest. Moreover, Kim Alboum, the Bissell Pet Foundation's Director of Field Operations, invited Lopez to visit the NMDR facility in Missouri and assist with the transfer.

Lopez had never worked on a transfer from start to finish and knew the experience would be invaluable. She jumped immediately.

"I knew it was an amazing opportunity and I did not want to miss it," Lopez said. "I was grateful for the support from [VBSPCA CEO Derby Brackett]. I am incredibly thankful to work for a shelter that encourages collaborative efforts with other organizations and sees the value in that. It was a true honor and privilege to represent the VBSPCA."

Lopez landed in Springfield, Missouri on August 1st, joined the rest of the Bissell team, and trekked nearly an hour to the NMDR facility. After a tour of the operation, Lopez immediately went to work weighing and tagging the surrendered dogs and assigning them to participating shelters, including the VBSPCA. There were 198 total dogs to process, and it took eight hours to complete. The next day Lopez and the Bissell team finalized manifests, assembled crates, and tagged late-arriving dogs.

Day three, the day of the transfer, started early – well before sunrise. Dogs were crated, placed in vans, and sent to the airport, where they were subsequently loaded onto a plane. By 9:45 a.m., the dogs were in the air and headed to stops in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Richmond, Virginia. Lopez facilitated the offloading process, managed the copious paperwork, and ensured the

correct dogs were going to each rescue organization. "To say it was a whirlwind of a day is an understatement, but it all went smooth for what it was," Lopez said.

However, the day was far from finished for Lopez. Her responsibilities with the Bissell Pet Foundation were over, but she still had 29 dogs bound for the VBSPCA. She hopped on the VBSPCA's transport van with Director of Shelter Operations Jenn Fly, and the two made their way back to the VBSPCA. The dogs reached their new homes at the shelter around 5 p.m. and were quickly placed in kennels where food, water, and bedding awaited them. By this point it was hard to say who was more exhausted – the VBSPCA's newest resident canines or Lopez.

Responsibilities in the kennel did not halt while Lopez was in Missouri. There were still the usual daily tasks to tend to in addition to preparing for the 29 new arrivals. Lopez trusted her team would succeed in her absence – a luxury not lost on her.

"I am thankful for the support from my team," Lopez said. "Having a team that maintained everything at the shelter made the experience even better because it allowed me to really focus and appreciate what I was doing."

What Lopez was able to appreciate most was the commonality of all involved. She met Theresa Strader and Cathy Bissell – the founders of NMDR and the Bissell Pet Foundation, respectively – and witnessed their passion for the animals firsthand. Her talks with members of the Animal Protective Association of Missouri – a nonprofit animal welfare organization based near St. Louis – revealed they dealt with the same challenges and celebrated the same successes as the VBSPCA.

"This was an incredible experience and amazing to see so many people from all walks of life coming together to help these dogs, Lopez said. "It really takes a team effort to make a transfer like this happen, and it was amazing getting to see it from start to finish. It's not for everyone, but if given the chance I would absolutely do it again."

"She is incredible and it was an honor to have her on the team," Alboum said. "She has that priceless attitude of making it work, no matter what. These operations are riddled with surprises and that environment sends most people running, but Lacey critically thinks her way right through it. [The VBSPCA] is very lucky to have her."



HAPPY TAILS

Photo Credit: Patricia Gee



Fiadh Adopted January 2024

As an older, FIV-positive kitten, Fiadh (pronounced FEE-uh) was routinely passed over by visitors to the VBSPCA Cattery. Then came Darcy, an interested adopter who was familiar with FIV-positive cats. Darcy knew Fiadh could still lead a mostly normal life and was determined to give this overlooked girl a forever home. After hiding her first night home, Fiadh emerged the next day ready to take over her new domain. She can often be found sitting on Darcy's shoulders or on a nearby windowsill chirping at the birds outside.

Fiadh's mischievous side keeps Darcy and her friends entertained at all times. The young cat enjoys chasing Darcy throughout the house or lying in wait to ambush her feet as she walks by. Fiadh also likes taking off with anything left unattended. She even plays a game of one-cat fetch with herself – throwing her toys in the air before batting them across the room and giving chase.

“Everyone thinks she is so silly and loves her personality,” Darcy said.

One act of compassion has changed Fiadh and Darcy's lives for the better. No matter what else may change, Darcy knows Fiadh will be waiting at the front door for her.

“I love coming home and knowing that she is right there waiting for her hug,” Darcy said. “I have a cuddle buddy now to curl up and watch movies with and I can always count on her for a good laugh!”



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