



Kennel Connection

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By Bette Stallman Brown

He was three weeks old. A tiny kitten living under a porch. Having caught a glimpse of him, the homeowner put out food and water. "They actually thought to sprinkle flour on the porch around the food and water to see if other kittens came, or the momma cat," says Arlene Atkins, volunteer coordinator of the Frederick shelter's Barn Cat Buddies program. When the family confirmed that this little boy truly was all alone, they reached out for help.



Grizz

The kitten, later named Grizz, found his way to Barn Cat Buddies, which placed him with me as his foster care provider. (Though Barn Cat Buddies does place adult cats in barn homes, most kittens coming through this program are placed as indoor cats.) A few days later, at a checkup with shelter vet

staff, Grizz was found to have a fungal skin infection called ringworm.

Ringworm, caused by the same types of fungi that cause athlete's foot, is common, mild, and treatable yet easily transmissible to other animals, including humans. Treatment for a kitten as young as Grizz involves three

Meant To Be



Grizz in foster care

or more weeks of twice weekly "dips" in a lime-sulfur solution. Grizz was an amazingly good sport: he'd be dripping wet, yellow, and smelling distinctly of rotten eggs, but would immediately cuddle into our arms after each dip.

With Grizz as our foster kitten, we learned all we could about ringworm. This infection is ridiculously mild. It's actually self-limiting, meaning that, left untreated, it would "run its course." Viable spores are hardy and may persist in the environment for more than a year. Realistically, though, one would almost never catch ringworm from the home of a formerly infected animal. One nearly always catches ringworm from a currently infected animal (if precautions, such as wearing gloves and a gown, are not taken), from the immedi-

Continued on Page 2

As they began their search for a dog, Tonya Hays-Norris and her husband Steve visited Frederick County Animal Control (FCAC). They met and applied for a lab mix, but were disappointed when another applicant was deemed the best fit for that dog.

It turns out that losing out on that first dog was the best thing that could have happened.

They first saw Murphy on Facebook, where he was described as a "caramel cupcake." Murphy had previously been adopted from BARCS, the Baltimore City shelter. But he was anxious when left alone in his adopter's apartment, busting out of his crate, having accidents, and causing damage. His adopter was not able to help Murphy with what appeared to be separation anxiety. When BARCS could not accept Murphy back into their care, he found his way to FCAC.

While at BARCS, staff had included Murphy in off-leash play sessions with other dogs, noting that he had done well. But at FCAC, Canine Enrichment Team volunteers found Murphy to be anxious around other dogs, at least while on leash. He would bark defensively and some-

Transformation



Bones with Steve and Tonya

times become mouthy with volunteers until they reached an adequate distance from other dogs. This "leash reactivity," coupled with possible separation anxiety, may be why potential adopters tended to overlook him. So Murphy waited at FCAC for 4 months until Steve and Tonya came in again to have a look at the available dogs.

"We met him for the first time in the yard at the shelter and Steve took to him immediately," says Tonya. If anyone could help a dog with separation anxiety, Tonya figured she could because, for the time being, she was home most of the day. "We went through the application process and counseling for his issues soon thereafter and brought him home."

In his new home, Murphy, now renamed Bones, "was unsure at first, but very willing to learn," recalls Tonya. "We had some potty issues, but I took it that was residual effects from being in a shelter. We eventually made an outdoor schedule for every hour to teach Bones where he should go to the bathroom and when. He learned very quickly. Treats were his incentive."

Janet Flanagan, one of the Canine Enrichment Team members who had worked with Bones at the shelter, is a professional dog trainer. Knowing that Bones' adopters might need help, Janet offered her assistance in addressing Bones' behavior toward other dogs. "Steve and

Continued on Page 3

Director's Letter: Love It or List It?

By Linda Shea

In just the past year, the shelter completed some significant renovations. Those projects included the conversion of our puppy room into a small animal room, swapping out a portion of our education room for much-needed office space, the addition of a second "kitty kabana" (free-roam cat room), and replacing old epoxy flooring with a more durable product.

It is rewarding to walk through the shelter and see the improvements that have spruced up a building that had its groundbreaking in the 1970s. And, while our government status does not allow us to fundraise, the recent renovations were funded almost entirely by unsolicited public support. In addition to the financial support, a local artist has donated her time and skill to provide us with beautiful, colorful murals. We think that speaks volumes for our reputation and fuels our desire to continue the public service we provide.

However, as with any infrastructure, the value of continued updates, repairs, and ongoing repurposing of space must be weighed against simply replacing the facility entirely.

Animal sheltering has changed significantly in the past forty-plus years. We now know so much more about how shelter design can benefit the physical and mental health of sheltered animals. These days, animal shelters are designed to minimize stress and disease transmission by housing all cats in free-roam rooms rather than cages, housing dogs in spaces that reduce auditory and visual stimulation, and through more advanced quarantine spaces for sick animals. In April 2018, the Department of Agriculture made effective Standards of Care for Animal Shelters that clearly outline expectations, from floor surface material in animal areas to isolation requirements. Failure to comply with those standards can result in hefty penalties.

Capital improvement projects take time—often many years—to become a reality. That's why we are beginning to evaluate what we have, where we want to be, and how best to get there. What we know now about sheltering best practices, alongside the new standards we are obligated to meet, guides our goals for the future of sheltering Frederick County's homeless pets. Though we are grateful to have been able to make all of our recent renovations, we know that further improvements in our ability to provide best practices in animal sheltering will require a new facility.

■ Linda Shea is Director, Frederick County Animal Control.

Frederick County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center

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GRIZZ

Cont'd from page 1

ate environment of an infected animal (e.g., its cage or crate), or the moist environments these fungi love, such as gym equipment and locker rooms.

The biggest challenge to fostering Grizz wasn't treating his ringworm, it was mitigating the effects of social isolation. We had to keep him isolated from our own pets throughout his treatment, so he was all alone in his room. After a few weeks, I noticed that he was jumping at the slightest sound and playing too roughly with my hands. Worried for his mental wellbeing, I made a homemade "containment unit" for Grizz out of a clear plastic wardrobe (with lots of air holes added) and moved him to the den, with a small fan for circulation. The transparent enclosure allowed him limited interaction with all humans and pets in our home. Our male cat Charlie especially loved to sit nearby, watching Grizz while Grizz watched him. Turns out, this was all Grizz needed: just to see another cat being a cat.

Over the next couple of weeks, as Grizz' posttreatment fungal cultures came back negative, we gradually integrated him with our own pets for more socializing. He was 9–10 weeks old at this point, and big enough to be neutered and adopted.

It so happens that Ysela Bravo-Schwetje was, right then, looking for a kitten for her teenager Lee. Their attempt to adopt another kitten had fallen through, so, Ysela says, "we figured getting Grizz was meant to be." Ysela brought her kids to a yappy hour where Grizz was making his pub-

lic debut. "We met him and wanted him immediately," recalls Ysela. "That face!"

Ysela and her family brought Grizz home and set him up in Lee's room so he could slowly adjust to the home and his two new canine siblings. "We started

to introduce him to the dogs after he was with us a while," says Ysela. "I'd say a month." Even then, they took things slowly, ensuring that Grizz was always able to get away from the dogs if he was afraid. "After a week or two of that," continues

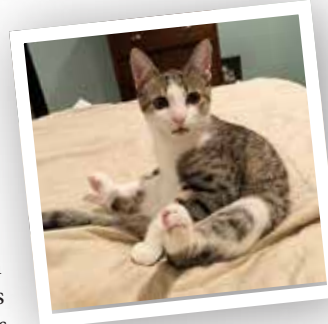
Ysela, "he was downstairs full time and has even taken over the dog beds."

Grizz' family has taken the time to understand why he expresses himself as he does—vocalizing to ask for something or biting a bit if petting is offered at the wrong time, for example. Now they allow Grizz to come to them for petting—and he is a big snuggler—rather than trying to impose affection on him when he's more interested in exploring.

And they're doing their best to keep him inside. "We are terrified he'll get out of the house," says Ysela. "We have a huge hawk that lives in our backyard and I don't want to lose him." After Grizz managed to get out a few times, Ysela taught him to come to a certain call by always giving him treats for coming to her.

Grizz' journey has taken him from tiny and vulnerable, alone under a porch, to the newest member of his very own family—healthy, safe, and loved for exactly who he is.

■ Bette Brown is president, Frederick Friends of Our County Animal Shelter (www.ffocas.org).



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.

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!



Lily

Lily absolutely loves to be brushed! She will roll over in clear enjoyment, purring the entire time. Described as having “the cutest little meow ever,” Lily also loves to be petted and appreciates a good nap in a soft bed.



Alvin

Handsome **Alvin** will come to you for affection and play once he feels comfortable. This 2-year-old shy guy previously lived with another cat and has gotten along quite well with Wompas and Martini in the shelter's kitty kabana. His two roomies have been adopted; now it's Alvin's turn!



Sammy

Quiet **Sammy** is easily overlooked by adopters. After being adopted a few years ago, this independent girl was recently returned to the shelter. As a result, she may be confused, wondering what will happen next. This time around, Sammy's looking for someone who's ready to commit to her for the rest of her life.



Squiggle

Found outside on her own, beautiful **Squiggle** is now safe at the shelter. This sweet rex mix is looking for a human who will keep her indoors, handle her gently, and give her plenty of playtime. She would prefer not to be picked up and carried around unnecessarily, but she loves affection and petting.



Wiggle

How did **Wiggle** get her name? You may wonder this when you approach her kennel as she sometimes behaves defensively out of fear. This causes most people to walk right on by. In reality, Wiggle is a total wiggle butt! Once she realizes you're one of the good guys, she melts into an incredibly affectionate, playful pup. So please, give this mohawk-sporting girl a chance to show you how she got her name!



Buddy

An affectionate guy with humans and a huge fan of social time with his dog friends, **Buddy** also lives up to his name. Buddy thrives on structure and is eager to learn. Thanks to this generous community, he spent a few weeks with a trainer and is now in a foster home, polishing up his manners. To arrange a meeting, please call the shelter at 301-600-1546.

BONES

Cont'd from page 1

Tonya were committed to Bones from the beginning,” says Janet. “It's nice that they took things slowly; especially his introduction to other dogs.”

Using a combination of counterconditioning—which can help improve a dog's emotional response to something the dog finds upsetting—and, later, mild punishment (“ah-ah” or a spray bottle), Steve and Tonya got Bones to the

point where he could approach the outside fence of the local dog park. Steve then introduced Bones to the inside of the dog park—initially while no other dogs were present.

One day, Steve was preparing to leave the dog park with Bones because another dog was approaching. That dog turned out to be a lab mix named Bella, whose guardian, Jules, urged Steve to let Bones stay and play. “They'll be fine,” she said,” recalls Tonya. And they were. Bella is the kind of dog who reads other dogs expertly: if the other dog wants to play, she'll play gently; if the other dog is uncertain, she

will mind her own business. This was the perfect introduction to the dog park for Bones.

Now, says Tonya, “he loves the dog park! We go almost every day. He wrestles with other dogs, runs, plays fetch with dog owners. He's just more than I could've ever dreamed he'd be.... He's even good with other dogs at restaurants, music events, etc., on leash,” continues Tonya. “Bones took his first trip to DC for the cherry blossoms this year and it was awesome.”

Tonya describes Bones as a big ham, a music

Continued on Page 4

Dog Training: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

by Bette Stallman Brown

In some circles, mentioning dog training is about as ill-advised as talking politics. But your choice of trainer, method, and tools is vitally important to your dog's wellbeing and to your relationship with your dog.

Force-Free vs. Balanced vs. Unbalanced

Trainers are typically categorized as force-free or balanced. Whether force-free or balanced, the best trainers have a solid understanding of both *operant conditioning* (essentially, using reward and/or punishment to change the frequency or strength of a behavior) and *classical (or Pavlovian) conditioning* (basically, changing the dog's apparent emotional response to a stimulus).

Force-free trainers avoid any method that might cause a dog to feel fear, pain, or intimidation. They rely almost exclusively on positive reinforcement—in other words, rewarding the dog for good behavior using praise, food, toys/playtime, freedom, or whatever the dog finds rewarding. Undesirable behaviors are replaced with desirable behaviors (e.g., jumping on guests is replaced by going to a “place” mat until calm). Your dog learns to do the right thing because she wants to, rather than because she has to.

A skilled force-free trainer will help you teach your dog obedience and can help resolve serious behavior issues like aggression, often by using classical conditioning to change the dog's emotional response. An unskilled force-free trainer may not have the knowledge to help you address serious behavior issues, which may lead you to believe that the force-free approach is not effective.

Balanced trainers use a combination of rewards and punishment. As with force-free trainers, balanced trainers have a wide range of skill; however, trainers in the balanced camp also vary quite widely in their application of

punishment.

Some balanced trainers rely primarily on the same methods and tools as force-free trainers and may be virtually indistinguishable from force-free trainers in many cases. However, these trainers may—to a greater or lesser extent—incorporate mild punishment (e.g., limited use of a spray bottle or gentle pressure on a prong collar) if the dog's undesirable behavior is persistent (or the owner's patience thin) and, importantly, if the dog's behavior is not obviously rooted in fear or anxiety.

Other trainers—also, confusingly, referred to as “balanced”—regularly use harsh physical punishment and/or techniques that are based on a misunderstanding of dominance and wolf behavior. Such trainers—who I will call **unbalanced** here for clarity—generally have a well-developed sales pitch that they use to convince you that their inhumane methods are what your dog wants and needs. They are also more likely than other trainers to promise immediate results.

Unbalanced trainers can effectively suppress a behavior using punishment and by preventing the animal from having any choice in how to behave; this is how they achieve quick results. The problem is that learning is complicated, and punishment can have unintended effects. The trainer may yank on the dog's prong collar when she gets upset at seeing another dog. She stops reacting, for now, but behind the scenes, classical conditioning has also happened: the dog has paired the sight of another dog with pain. Now you have a dog who is trying hard to suppress her behavior, despite a worsening emotional state. If this dog suddenly and unexpectedly comes face to face with another dog, she may explode with aggression. If a dog subjected to such punishment happens to associate her owner or other people with pain or fear, you may find yourself with a dog who will bite people to defend herself.

Training Tools

Although any tool, when misused, can cause a dog to experience pain or fear, some tools are much easier to misuse, even accidentally or in a moment of frustration. In my opinion, the tools easiest to misuse include, unfortunately, those that offer the most control right off the bat for someone struggling with a strong and insufficiently trained dog: prong collars, e-collars (shock collars), and head halters. Choke collars, slip leads, martingale collars, and even basic flat/buckle collars can also be misused, though usually not unintentionally.

For each of these tools, one can find trainers capable of using it humanely. The main problem is that, in the hands of the typical dog owner (we mere mortals), there is great potential to harm a dog with certain tools, especially if we come to rely on the tool for control over the long term, rather than training the dog and phasing out the tool.

The tool that is most difficult to misuse is almost definitely a harness. The no-pull type of harness (with leash connection at the chest) can be an excellent choice for many dogs. What is simultaneously the pro and the con is that, for some dogs, little control (and improvement in leash walking) is gained simply by putting on the harness; one must train the dog for the harness to become most useful.

Bottom Line

Be careful in your choice of trainer and tools. If your dog reacts with signs of fear or pain—anything from stiffening or lip licking to yelping or cowering—then you are risking, at the least, damaging your relationship with your dog and, at worst, causing your dog to develop fear aggression. Trust me: a dog who attacks her owner or other humans is a much bigger problem than a dog who pulls on leash or barks at other dogs.

BONES

Cont'd from page 3

lover, and the smartest dog she's ever met. “Basically, we've grown to love Bones as one of our own children. He sleeps with us every night at the end of the bed. He eats with us.... Bones is my emotional support guy and he's so compassionate and loving. I do not believe we could've found a better dog to live with us, and we feel fortunate to have him in our lives.”



Note: Not all dogs are able to be social with other dogs, nor should we expect this of them. If you choose to bring your dog to a dog park, keep a close watch on the dogs' body language. Consider entering the dog park only when no more than a few dogs (all with loose, relaxed body language) are present.