



Kennel Connection

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Newsletter of Frederick County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center

Fall/Winter 2021

Pulling for Baby

By Bette Stallman Brown

Thirty-three days. That's how long Baby was lost, wandering alone in the woods and trotting down the quiet streets of an unfamiliar town.

When she adopted Baby, then 8 years old, from Frederick County Animal Control in the fall of 2016, Jane Sutcliffe thought she was getting a quiet "senior" dog who would be as mellow as her existing pack. "My three dogs at that time were senior dogs and there wasn't a lot of activity," says Jane. "We went for walks on the Appalachian Trail, but mostly they were happy simply being home with me."

Baby surprised everyone! Though she had seemed mature at



the shelter, once in her new home, she fully embraced her inner puppy. Her playful energy livened up the whole house. On Facebook, FCAC shared a video of Baby in Jane's yard, playfully attacking a garden hose as it sprayed her.

In April 2021, Jane moved from Maryland to rural Iowa. By that time, the other dogs in Baby's original pack had passed away, so Jane was down to Baby, a cat, a snake, and two horses. The new home came with a farm dog (an Aussie) and three barn cats, and soon Jane added a new dog from her local shelter. Baby, now 13 years old, adjusted easily to her new sur-

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Lemmy Tell You About This Special Needs Cat...

By Bethany Davidson

Zooming this way and that, 1-year-old Lemmy is the designated bug catcher in her home. She stalks any crawling or flying insect that dares enter her territory until that perfect moment ... the pounce! While this behavior is instinctual for felines, for Lemmy it is something to celebrate because when her owner, Sergeant Maggie Hill, first met the young cat in August 2020, the question wasn't, will she rid the home of all those pesky stink-bugs? It was, will she live?

On August 18, 2020, Frederick County Animal Control received a call for service regarding an injured kitten. Sergeant Hill, an animal control officer with FCAC, responded. "An elderly couple reported that they had recently returned home and found the injured kitten in the driveway near their vehicle shortly afterwards," says Hill. The animal was suffering from extensive burns to multiple areas of her body. "The probable cause of the injury," says Hill, "was being trapped in their car engine



while it was driving." At first glance, the injuries seemed insurmountable, but FCAC's kennel supervisor agreed to try veterinary intervention, and the injured kitten was immediately taken to a local animal hospital for treatment.

Fortunately, FCAC only takes in 5 to 10 animals per year like Lemmy who have sustained and survived extensive trauma. Several criteria

are used to determine whether to treat such animals. "We don't want animals to suffer ... ever," says Linda Shea, FCAC's director. If the animal can be sustained without suffering, shelter staff then consider the animal's temperament and its prognosis.

By the 21st, hospital staff reported that Lemmy was very active and vocal with a great appetite, so the tiny patient was transferred to foster care with a veterinarian for continued treatment. Things were looking up for the lucky kitten, but after a few weeks it became apparent that the injuries to her front leg were not healing. The decision was made to amputate, and the surgery was scheduled.

"Knowing they could not adopt the kitten, the veterinarian asked for a different foster home to care for the kitten after surgery, and that's when Lemmy entered my life for the second time," recalls Hill. The ACO was asked to care for the recovering kitten since she had

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Director's Letter: 50 Years Ago

By Linda Shea

The March 13, 1971, edition of the *Frederick News-Post* described the dire situation of an overcrowded animal shelter, the anticipation of an “almost impossible” number of kittens, and the growing cat and dog population in Frederick County. In 1970, the shelter had taken in “4,510 dogs and 2,934 cats” for a total of 7,444 animals and was looking for a location on which to build a new shelter. In 1978, Rosemont Avenue became that location.

In 2006—15 years ago—the Frederick County Division of Animal Control took in 6,323 animals, a population comprised of dogs, cats, pocket pets, and 177 farm animals. During the 36 years from 1970 to 2006, animal intake declined 15%.

However, since 2006, we have implemented some amazing, life-saving programs to reduce the overpopulation of unwanted animals even further and embraced some internal philosophies to save more lives. We have applied for, and received, eight grants totaling over \$115,000 that have allowed us to help more than 1,000 pet owners get their pets spayed, neutered, and/or rabies vaccinated at low cost or even no cost. While the dollar amount is impressive, it is a major accomplishment for a government entity to earn private funding at all.

In 2008, we were evaluated by Cornell University and, since then, have implemented improved housing, medical, and enrichment protocols. We've reevaluated staffing over the past several years, aiming to boost our capacity to provide compassionate care to homeless pets, and have regained or added positions such as an additional full-time kennel technician, a second veterinary technician, and additional animal control officers. To better serve our growing County, we recently added a deputy director position.

In 2016, we began working with volunteer-based Barn Cat Buddies, a program designed to place felines described as “spicy”—those best suited for a working life—in farm environments as well as shops, breweries, and distilleries. In 2017, we implemented a program to socialize “fraidy cats.” In 2018, a group of volunteers established our Canine Enrichment Team to improve shelter life for dogs. In 2019, we partnered with K.A.T. Café in New Market to showcase shelter cats in a more natural, free-roaming environment rather than traditional shelter cages. In 2020, we began a program to socialize and reduce the anxiety of fearful shelter dogs. We have embraced social media but continued our long-standing presence in traditional media, with featured pets and animal welfare-related pieces published in the *Frederick News-Post* and our Pet of the Week showcased on radio stations Key 103 (103.1), WFRE (99.9), and WFMD (930 AM). Despite COVID-19 closures, we developed a virtual adoption process that we will continue to utilize.

During 2020, we took in 2,431 animals: a 67% decrease from 1970. Like our predecessors of 1971, we anticipate an improved infrastructure, with the design phase for our renovated and expanded shelter beginning in 2022.

As we approach the end of 2021, it is more than rewarding to look back and see how our vision has expanded and our momentum has continued to make things better for shelter animals and the people who love them. There is still more to be done, but we are confident that 2071 will reflect significant achievements in lifesaving thanks to the progress we've made thus far and the steps we're taking today.

■ Linda Shea is Director, Frederick County Division of Animal Control

BABY

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roundings and seemed content to stay near Jane while outside, whether on leash or off.

Jane did notice that Baby would sometimes lift her head and scent the wind, clearly a little curious about the world beyond the property line. Maybe this, Jane says, “should have been a warning to me.”

It was Sunday, June 27th, in the evening. Jane was feeding the horses, and initially, Baby was in the barn with her. Later, Jane noticed the senior pit bull mix “happily prancing” along the horse fence, moving away from the barn and the house. Jane called to Baby. Baby stopped, looked back, and turned, moving toward the back of the barn. A few minutes later though, Jane realized that Baby hadn't come through the other side of the barn. She was gone, her getaway hidden by the 3-foot-high soybeans growing around the property.

Jane called and visited the two nearest shelters. She posted Baby on lost/found pet and community pages on Facebook and taped up flyers at every intersection. She found someone experienced with finding lost pets who came out and helped her search near the property. Jane, her husband David, friends, neighbors, and complete strangers searched on foot and by car. Jane put her dirty clothes—and barbecue sauce—around her property in hopes of helping Baby smell her way back home. She went door to door and all around the campground at the nearby state park, showing everyone Baby's picture and leaving them with her lost dog flyer.

“Baby had a Tile on her collar,” says Jane, “so I asked everyone to down-

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Baby with Sampson,
Chubbs, and Sammie

Frederick County Animal Control & Pet Adoption Center

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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.



Baby with Bowie and Tippiie in Iowa

BABY

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load the app to help find her.” The tile pinged on Tuesday from about 4 miles away, so Jane asked businesses in that area to review their security camera footage, hoping to see which way Baby was headed. The searchers set up trail cams near the location of the Tile ping. A sighting came in, spurring a hopeful search in which 10 people walked the streets of a tiny town, but it turned out to be the wrong dog.

Jane was amazed at the many caring people she met in her search for Baby—largely thanks to social media—who did everything they could to help. People walked and paddled their canoes along different routes, hoping for a sighting; a golf course loaned Jane a golf cart to help her search around their property; and many people used the Tile app or helped search in person. “There was a *pull* for her to be found,” recalls Jane.

Finally, on July 30th, a ranger driving through the state park saw a dog peak out at him and then turn to walk back into the woods. The ranger found one of Jane’s flyers and knew the dog he’d seen was Baby. Jane and David were there within minutes of the ranger’s call. The sighting was in an area of dense woods near the Des Moines River with no cell service, so it was immediately clear why the Tile had not pinged for most of the time Baby was lost.

“David and the ranger walked a little ways into the woods and found her asleep under a tree,” recalls Jane. “David scooped her up and carried her out.” Baby may have been in a somewhat dazed state of mind. She didn’t resist, but she didn’t seem especially excited or surprised either. “She acted like it was the most natural thing to be picked up and carried to the car,” says Jane.

During her great adventure, Baby lost weight and developed minor, treatable health issues related to dehydration.

Now, safe at home, she’s back to herself. Still a puppy at heart but wiser and, we hope, more appreciative of the comforts of home.

■ *Bette Stallman Brown is the president of Frederick Friends of Our County Animal Shelter*



FEATURED PETS



Want to visit our residents? Call 301-600-1546 (option 0) to schedule an appointment.

Q&A With Adoptable Pets at FCAC



CORA

What are some of your favorite destinations?

Laps, beds, and windows with birds on the outsides of them.

Any goals for the next year? Yes. Finally catching that bright red dot!

Languages spoken? Cat. Just cat. So I’m really hoping to find a bilingual human.



HORIZON

It’s Friday night, what are your plans? Cuddling with my human on the couch while we binge Umbrella Academy.

How do you feel about belly rubs? I don’t know, how would you feel about my claws sinking into your flesh? Wait—this is off the record, right?

What superpower would you choose? Mind control. You will pet me now. Did that work?



LANTANA

When I say “belly rubs,” how does that make you feel? Melty and wonderful. Yes, please!

What’s your favorite Avengers movie? *Thor Ragnarok*. It’s the perfect balance of athletic awesomeness and derp humor—like me!

Favorite hiking spot? Anywhere! Really, any trail. And we can run it if you’d like.



IZZY

If you won a contest, what would it be? Everyone says I have the best smile. Is there a contest for that? Does the winner get peanut butter?

What’s your idea of the perfect evening? A nice walk with my very own person, followed by a little play time and lots and lots of cuddles.

Favorite holiday? That’s easy. Valentine’s Day. With you!

How Not to Start a K.A.T. Fight

By Kelly Myers

Have you been to the K.A.T. café in New Market yet? K.A.T. (kitties, adoptions, treats) houses up to 15 adoptable adult cats from Frederick County Animal Control. I was honored and impressed that K.A.T. reached out to me for behavior advice before getting any kitties. The big question was: How do you introduce 15 cats to each other in an approximately 1600-square-foot café?

Cat guardians know the stress of bringing one cat home to introduce them to the resident cat. They put the new cat in a prepared sanctuary room, scent swap, site swap, build gates, take down gates, and finally have two cats who can tolerate each other. Now magnify that by 15!

Thankfully, many of the cats making up the first cohort at K.A.T. had already cohabitated with one or two other cats, having spent time in the Kitty Kabanais, FCAC's two free-roam cat rooms. But life at K.A.T. would require them to be able to tolerate the presence of many more of their fellow felines.

To facilitate the transition, we separated the café into three "stages": the back storage room, the hallway, and the front café. Each stage offered a little more freedom and exposure to the café than the last. Each cat could move along at her own pace. Cats were brought in



groups of five to graduate through the stages.

All of the cats graduated to the café by the grand opening, but one tortie had a particularly hard time adjusting. We came up with a special plan for her and her tortitude. She got the powder room to herself and graduated from there to stages two and three. It worked perfectly!

Environmental enrichment is a second major component of ensuring a smooth transition and ongoing peaceful cohabitation. If your own cats are struggling to get along, read on: some of these enrichment strategies can be adapted to a home environment as well. At K.A.T., enrichment includes—but is not limited to—the following.

- **Gates galore!** Prioritizing safety first, the café has an entrance gate just inside the front door to prevent cats from bolting onto

Main Street. Two more gates were added to separate the cats into their three-stage introduction spaces.

- **Vertical space.** The café space already had multiple shelves along the walls, perfect for vertical space! This allows the cats much more territory to claim. Brilliantly, the café added little "exit ramps" to each shelf to prevent cat run-ins and pile-ups: if two cats are heading toward each other, one can safely exit the shelf for higher or lower ground.
- **Aromatherapy.** Multiple pheromone plug-ins are used in the café. While the research on these devices is inconclusive, they certainly don't hurt. I recommended a good enzymatic cleaner to help remove lingering scents of cats who have moved on to adoption. There is an essential oil diffuser in the powder room (when not occupied by a tortie). The café owner did her homework and made sure the fragrance was safe for both people and cats.
- **Hiding spots.** While the cats love having company over to their café, they sometimes need a little space, too. From dome beds to a repurposed chest of drawers, the café provides many hiding places for introverted kitties.
- **Play time.** Cats have a plethora

of toys to choose from at K.A.T. When I trained the staff, I emphasized the importance of hunting simulation play with wand toys. We even had a crafting class on making your own wand toy with naturally fallen feathers.

- **Petting consent.** Yes, you can ask a cat to consent to petting! This prevents many interspecies misunderstandings. Everyone who visits the café gets a quick tutorial on how to present your hand to a cat and ask them if they want that hand to come closer.
- **Comfort facilities.** There was no way we could use the usual litter box equation of # of cats (15) + 1 = # of litter boxes (16). There are, however, multiple litter boxes hidden in plain sight that get scooped every hour.

The K.A.T. Café is so beautiful and calming that you hardly notice all the little enhancements that have been added for kitty comfort. The staff put an amazing amount of effort into making the café a peaceful kitty oasis. Be sure to book your visit online at www.kat-cafe.net and meet the wonderful kitties available for adoption through FCAC.

■ *Kelly C. Myers, MS, UW-AAB, FFCP (trainer), is a cat behavior consultant with Best Behavior.*

LEMMY

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previous experience with three-legged cats. "I was hesitant," says Hill, "knowing that a front leg amputation can be much more difficult for an animal to adjust to, and I wanted to make sure that the kitten could move around the house with comfort and ease."

On day one, however, Lemmy proved that her new foster mom's fears were unfounded. With a long row of staples where her leg once was and wearing the dreaded cone of shame, the resilient youngster quickly settled in. She

confidently learned the layout of the house, made new friends, and snuggled with people and animals alike. Her recovery was swift and complete and by the end of October, Sergeant Hill and her family had adopted the kitten.

Now 1 year old, Lemmy has no idea she is disabled. "Lemmy can run, jump, crawl, and climb just like any four-legged counterpart," says Hill. The family has made some accommodations for their special needs kitty, such as moving furniture around to make it easier for Lemmy to climb. According to Hill, though, all of these adjustments have been well worth the minimal effort.

It can take more time to find adoptive fami-

lies for pets with special needs. "Caring for a special needs animal is very rewarding, but it can be financially and emotionally exhausting," says Director Shea. She advises all those considering adopting such a pet to give thoughtful consideration to the level of commitment and resources that may be needed. "My best advice," adds Hill, "is to manage realistic expectations and be open to change to provide the best environment for your animal. After all, they have no idea that they have special needs and are just looking for love."

■ *Bethany Davidson is the humane educator at Frederick County Animal Control.*