



# PAW Shakes

The Newsletter of the Partnership for Animal Welfare | Fall 2020

PO Box 1074, Greenbelt, MD 20768 | [www.paw-rescue.org](http://www.paw-rescue.org)

## Every Russell deserves a forever home

By Vicky Caponiti

In the summer of 2013, I took a rescue dog out of a local kennel so he could spend time running and playing with my dogs in our yard. He was a happy boy and would come up to me and lean on my legs—not so amazing really, because this is what we expect from “friendly” dogs. However, in this particular case, the dog lost his home because he was a victim of breed specific legislation (BSL) passed in the county where he lived. This law declares certain breeds of dog to be “dangerous,” including the Staffordshire terrier, one of the 20-plus breeds (and even more mixed breeds) that get categorized under the term “pit bull.” There was nothing dangerous about this sweet dog.

One day, after a few trips to my house, Russell simply refused to get in the car and go back to the kennel. I had three dogs of my own and a foster, but on that day, Russell became my foster too. Over the next six years, he welcomed every new foster dog into our home and showed no aggression toward any person, dog, toy, or food. I don’t remember one growl from this wonderful dog. His only vice is that he likes to bark, and it is a really *big* bark. We worked on basic training and the barking. The training went well, but he still has the bark even while he play-bows and crawls on his belly when approaching other dogs.



Russell in 2013



Many foster dogs came and went, but Russell stayed even though he received his share of adoption applications. Often landlords or HOAs would not allow this breed of dog. I remember explaining to the potential adopters the extra care required to protect Russell from any situation that would place him in harm’s way because of his breed’s erroneous, preconceived reputation. In any incident, regardless of the

facts, he would immediately be blamed because he is a “pit bull.” In my heart, I knew that his special person would find him. In the interim, I just continued to love him.

As rescues lobbied against BSL, the general public became more aware that dogs are not born dangerous. These innocents are made dangerous by the people who mistreat and misuse them. Each dog must be evaluated and given a

chance regardless of breed. Some states and local jurisdictions have repealed this law, but some remain in effect.

In May 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 panic, I received an application, and the first time Russell and I met this wonderful couple, we both knew his fortune had changed. They

loved him immediately, and he responded to them with equal affection. Fortunately, his new place of residence does not have any restrictions against his breed. He was adopted and became a very pampered pup. I had the privilege of dog sitting for a few days after his adoption and it was wonderful to

have him, but the moment his people came to pick him up, he jumped in their car and was ready to go home. No matter how much we love our fosters, we are thrilled to see them leave for their forever homes. Be happy, have fun, and live your best life, Russell. We love you.

## Every home should have a Russell

By Ajia Minnis

**K**yle and I lost our 13-year-old pitmastiff to cancer in September 2019 and needed time to heal. After a few months, job changes, and a cross-country move, we finally settled in DC



Russell in 2020 with Kyle and Ajia

in May 2020. We really liked our new home, but it felt . . . empty. It was perfect, but we didn't love it—and realized we didn't love it because it was missing the most critical piece to a complete home: a wet nose to come home to every single day. The search for a furry friend began on PetFinder.com, with thousands of dogs, all deserving, putting themselves out there, each for one lucky family. We knew what we wanted—another pittie, the affection they give, the loyalty, the kisses, the cuteness overload! But *which* pittie? Well, we saw this chunky little guy named Russell who had amber eyes, a huge smile,

and whose profile we couldn't ignore. We reached out, we got a response, and the meeting was set.

From the moment we saw Russell in the park, we knew. We truly knew and the rest is history. We applied, crossed our fingers that no one else would snatch him from us, and waited. **AND WE GOT HIM!**

He is *perfect*—eight, almost nine years old and perfect. Russell is calm enough for our couch days but energetic enough to go running every day at 6:30 am. In truth, we call it

“trotting” because Kyle and I run so slowly, not because Russell does! We go canoeing (he still tries to jump out and chase birds), and we go row-boating. He is learning to run next to a bike. He meets friends in the dog park, and he cuddles with our nieces and nephews (some are newborns). We share carrots as snacks, and we laugh when Russell steals pizza from guests.

He mimics his human daddy's sleeping positions. He patiently waits for snacks when Dad cooks in the kitchen, and he somehow knows that



Russell livin' the dream



when Mom is in the kitchen, the snacks won't be as good. He dances when he gets ground meat in his dinner. He does a muscle-up to get on the couch because his back legs don't work so well. He climbs into our open car door and waits for 30 minutes on

the seat—even when the car isn't moving and the garage door is closed—for a phantom car ride because he *loves* car rides.

Russell takes grandpa for walks, and he gives all of us kisses. We are very lucky. We wanted a dog to follow

us around, give us kisses, and make our house a home. We got all that and more with this lovebug. Thank you PAW, and thank you Vicky Caponiti, for keeping Russell safe until we could be his fur-ever family.

## Letter from an anxious but hopeful foster dog . . .

*By Ziggy*

**H**i folks! My name is Ziggy, and I've been with PAW for more than two years waiting for my furever home. I have some anxiety issues, and it has taken me a while to start liking people. I was even afraid of my human foster brother when I first came to stay with my PAW mom, but now we are best buds—I like to follow him everywhere. I also love my two canine foster brothers. However, people and dogs I don't know are scary to me, so I tend to bark at them to scare them away. I especially do this when I am walking on a leash. And—please don't send little kids my way. They are the scariest!

My foster mom and I were getting help from an awesome trainer who has offered to continue working with me after I find my furever family. We attended classes with other dogs like me who get nervous and barky. The special ladies helping us said I was doing really great, but then all of a sudden, we had to stop going to class. My foster mom said it is because of COVID, but I don't really know what COVID is. I am just looking forward to going back to see those awesome ladies with the treats!

We believe in being honest about my anxiety so that we can find the best home ever! Despite not putting my best paw forward when meeting



*"Wanna Play?"*

new people, my foster mom says she is surprised I have not found my furever family yet. I am housetrained, very smart, and quite cute and adorable (if I do say so myself!). I need an active family because I have lots of energy. It would be pawsome if I could have a big fenced-in yard to run in, but Mom says it's not a deal breaker as long as I get lots of exercise. I do need to be in a quieter home. City and apartment living are not for me. My foster mom also wants me to go to a home that has experience with anxious doggies like me, and my person or family must promise to continue with my training.



*Giggling Ziggy*

She says my new family will be incredibly lucky to have me. I will be scared when I go to my new home, so I need someone who understands that and is patient with me, but I promise you I will end up being your best, most loyal friend . . . and I give the most awesome kisses!

If you think you might be my furever person, I would sure like to meet you. Please contact PAW and they will have my foster mom tell you more about me. Hopefully by the time the next *PAW Shakes* comes out, I will be in my new home!

*Wags and kisses,  
Ziggy*

# The healing effect of rescue felines and friends

By Natalie Cummings

Even before the COVID-19 crisis that suddenly changed the world we live in, I found an incredible sense of reward in the fostering and volunteer work I have been able to do for PAW. I have been lucky enough to have formed several genuine friendships with fellow volunteers and even quite a few of our adopters!

As the pandemic began to take hold of our daily lives this past spring, we quickly realized there was a sizeable influx of potential adopters seeking companionship. Almost instantly, I felt a strong pull to assist those who were most vulnerable to the loneliness

that would inevitably set in during the uncertain days to come. By using virtual platforms, we were able to connect these often-desperate adopters with the many cats who also craved a lasting, consistent bond in their lives. I have gained such a sincere sense of purpose in the cat-human matches I have helped with during these difficult times.

As fate would have it, I was recently thrust into my own personal struggle of a different kind. In mid-June, I was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer and am now in the throes of an often tough, physical and emotional battle.

The outpouring of support I have received from fellow PAW volunteers and the amazing adopters who have become friends is a gift I could only have dreamed of. I am certain the precious animals we take the time and energy to care for are not just victims of circumstance who randomly enter our lives. I honestly believe our paths are meant to cross. It has become quite clear to me: these disadvantaged animals often enter our lives for reasons we may not yet comprehend. However, one day we will clearly see just how much they give to us in return.

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## Fostering dogs in the time of COVID-19

By Jodi Koehn-Pike

One positive effect of COVID-19 and the resulting shutdown is that rescue organizations and animal shelters across the country are being flooded with applications to adopt companion animals. People are stuck at home and figure now is a great time to get that dog or cat that they'd been talking about getting, but "didn't have the time."



**The irresistible Mokey**

I have fostered three dogs since the stay-at-home order began. The first one, Mokey, got to attend one adoption show and we were even able to do the house check before the world shut down. The placement was done in a park. My second foster, a cute Yorkie named Minnie, received more than 50 applications. I foster the cute little non-shedding dogs and am used to them getting a lot of interest, but not this much.

I selected the applications that I thought were good and did the vet checks. I arranged to meet the five families with good vet checks in the parking lot of a local elementary school—spread out over three days. Home visits are now conducted virtually over Facetime with the applicant giving a tour of the house and yard—and walking the fence line if they have one. The family I selected met me in



**Minnie waits to be adopted**

the parking lot of College Park Animal Hospital to sign the paperwork and take their new fur-kid home.

My current foster dog, a cute Lhasapoo has received 18 applications in less than 24 hours. And so the madness begins all over again.

# Letter from a therapy dog missing his friends. . .

By Mickey

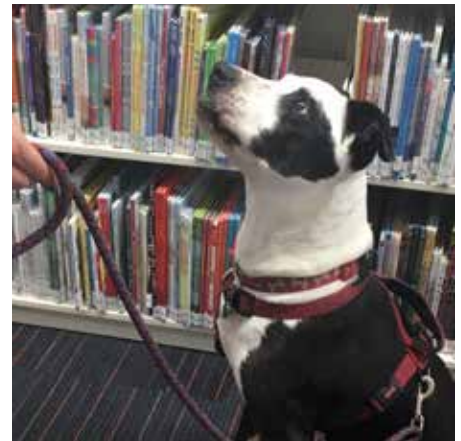
**H**i, I'm Mickey. I am super-friendly and gentle, and I love people, so my mama thought I would be a great therapy dog. She signed me up with Pets on Wheels, and my career as a therapy dog began. For the past two years, I have made monthly visits to a local library for their "Kids Read to Dogs" program and to the memory care unit of Brightview, an assisted-living facility. I love my visits. I like listening to stories—many kids will choose books about dogs, which

I love. Some people will bring in their babies or toddlers. They can't read to me, but I get to say hi, get some pets, and sometimes even give some kisses. I love, love babies!

At the assisted-living facility, I have a group of residents who wait for me in the common area on the day of my visit. I'm even on the schedule of events for that day! When I visit, my friends are always happy to see me. There is one woman who loves dogs and was having a bad day the first time I met her. One of the nurses

brought me into her room to try to cheer her up. That nice lady loves me! She never remembers my name, but always remembers the day she met me and always has a big smile when she sees me.

Since the pandemic, I haven't been able to make my visits and that makes me sad. With the help of my mom, I made a card for the residents of the assisted-



Mickey poses at the Aspen Hill Library

living facility so they would know that I missed them. I also sent them a video—so they wouldn't forget about me.

The libraries are doing virtual visits through Zoom. We get to hear some nice stories and kids get to practice their reading, but it's not the same as being face to muzzle.

I can't wait until the pandemic is over and I can make my in-dog visits again. Hopefully, my friends won't forget about me and we can have fun like we used to!



Above: Mickey's card to his friends at Brightview

Right: Look, Mickey's on the daily schedule!



## Paws up for WOOFIE!

PAW thanks Michael Weiss for his continued generosity through Woofie's Fund, which he established in memory of his beloved companion.

Woofie's graduation day, 2005



## PAW NEEDS PIT BULL FOSTERS!

**DID YOU KNOW** that about 40% of the dogs euthanized annually in US shelters are pit bulls, even though there is no such breed as a "pit bull"?

Avon Barksdale says, "If you want to foster a pit bull in need, please go to [bit.ly/PAWdog-fosterapp](https://bit.ly/PAWdog-fosterapp) to submit an application. Thank you from the very bottom of my little pittie heart!"







# Happy Endings

One of our favorite parts of being a PAW volunteer is helping the animals find their forever homes. We love hearing happy stories from adopters and wanted to share some here.

## Catching up with quarantine cats

By Bonnie Wilson, Karen Berriss, and Natalie Cummings

**D**uring these trying times, we all need good news to help salve our ragged souls. As mentioned in the COVID-19 article in this issue, a rare positive result of the tragic pandemic is a soaring public interest in finding companion animals. Here are a few stories of lucky PAW cats and the even luckier people who adopted them.

**Bonnie:** “I adopted mother cat Athena and her kitten Zeus, now Cyd and Leo, in May 2020. They have been God’s gift. I am a widow and to have two beautiful cats to care for, cuddle, and talk to has been a great comfort during



Athena and Zeus

COVID. They are full of life and their antics keep me laughing. Leo is nicknamed the Destroyer, but his mom Cyd is cool and regal. Lucky me.”

**Karen:** “I adopted Eddie (and kept his name) in March 2020 just before Maryland was issued stay-at-home quarantine orders. Eddie is a character who keeps me sane. He is a hilarious, demanding cat and I adore him! Eddie has made himself at home and everyone should rescue an Eddie.”



Zany little Eddie

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**Please make checks payable to the Partnership for Animal Welfare and mail to the address on this form. The animals thank you.**

The Partnership for Animal Welfare is an officially recognized non-profit organization which is funded through donations and adoption fees. Donations are tax-deductible (Tax ID # 52-1979581). If you would like to help, you can do so by donating money, earmarking your charitable donations to PAW, helping with some of our fundraising activities, or donating food, blankets and other supplies.

**Natalie:** Here's a little background on a wonderful match between a shy, timid, long-term foster cat and a suddenly lonely, once-social, active senior just as the statewide quarantine took effect: March 2020—Etta's granddaughter Michelle and her family knew that distancing themselves was the safest thing they could do for her. But, staying away from their grandmother, whom they affectionately call "Gommy," would be hard on everyone.

As the days progressed and isolation began taking a toll on Gommy, her family knew exactly what was needed to ease her through this difficult, scary time. Etta was known for her lifelong love of animals. In fact, it was Etta's passion for four-legged friends that inspired her son to become the veterinarian he is today. That's when fate stepped in, leading Michelle and Gommy to PAW's website.



*Gommy and Leo*

Soon Gommy met her new best friend, PAW cat Shooting Star, whom she renamed Leo—another Leo! Their days are spent watching TV while Leo perches on Etta's lap and purrs loudly as he's being brushed. Leo entertains

Gommy daily by moving his toys all around the house. Before naps and at bedtime, they are never lonely as they snuggle into the instant comfort they find in each other's company.

August 2020—Michelle writes "Gommy and Leo are a perfect match. Leo is still shy but once you are sitting down on the couch quietly, he comes up purring loudly to get all his cuddles. He jumps up in her recliner and sits on her lap, he snuggles right next to her at night, and he loves sunbathing out on the porch with her. His toys and cardboard boxes are all over the place! I think this quiet one-person house is the best setting for him, and he clearly has bonded with her. She has framed 8x10 photos of him up in every room and is quick to tell everyone who calls her how handsome he is. In a difficult time, they bring such joy to each other!"



## Donations in Honor of and In Memory of . . .

### In honor of people:

- In honor of Anne Winefried Basson, by Patricia Horner
- In honor of Cathy Lorberbaum, by the Elliot Mitchell Family Foundation
- In honor of Dr. Barbara Henderson, by Nancy E. Parker
- In honor of Liani Setyawan's birthday, by Amy Zbikowski
- In honor of Robert & Lori Loftus, by Mt Airy Mattress

### In memory of people:

- In memory of Barbara Benson, by Patricia Smith
- In memory of Charlene & Suzanne Mattingly, by Patricia & George Hendrick
- In memory of Debbie Breuer & Suzanne Mattingly, by Susan Flashman & Richard Bissell
- In memory of Louis Rainone, by Iris Rainone
- In memory of Suzanne, by Vicky & Dick Hageman
- In memory of Sylvia J. Hargrove-Haberman, a former PAW cat foster mom, by John, Michael, Edward, & Nicholas Haberman

### In honor of people and pets:

- In honor of Jackie Threatte & all the deaf dogs she rescued, by Susan Flashman & Richard Bissell
- In honor of Jeff Carow & Robert the Bruce, by Shelley Carow

### In honor of pets:

- In honor of Ginko, who gave us so much over 14 months, by Tovi Lehmann
- In honor of Jack Daniels & Jim Beam, the Whiskey Boys, by Sharon Herndon
- In honor of Jaxson, by Gisela Peace
- In honor of Lili, by Barbara Rubin
- In honor of Oscar, by Gil Crawford
- In honor of Poocher, by Ed Pastula
- In honor of Rhett & Scarlett, by Brian & Beth McAllister
- In honor of Rover, by Lisa Barry
- In honor of Russell/Rocket, by Ajia Minnis
- In honor of Shadow, a wonderful animal, by Barbara King
- In honor of Winston & Ziti, by Jennifer & Alvin Mineart

### In memory of pets:

- In memory of Alex, Nipper, & Roxie, by Mary C. Scott & Cindy Todd
- In memory of Daisy, the Lauffer family's beloved black & tan coonhound, by Diana Gough
- In memory of Davy, by Madeleine Oakley
- In memory of Kramer, forever in our hearts, by Twyla Henderson & Michael Backenheimer
- In memory of Koda, by Barbara Rubin
- In memory of Luke, AKA Man Cat, and Zoe the Toe, by Skye & Daniel Chacon
- In memory of PAW pup, Winifred, by Stefanie Pryor
- In memory of Phoebe, the Kenny family's beloved cockapoo, by Michael Weiss
- In memory of Ull & Thor, Sharon Romm's beloved feline companions, by Michael Weiss
- In memory of Wiggley, Gepetto & many dear cats, by Susan Flashman & Richard Bissell
- In memory of Woofie, with love, by Guinness, Bailey, Brody & Patty Galek

### In memory of people and pets:

- In memory of Curly, our beloved miniature poodle, and Rosemary Watton, who fostered him, by Elizabeth Seastrum



**Partnership for Animal Welfare**  
**P.O. Box 1074**  
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## PAW Shakes to . . .

PAW's ADOPTION SHOW HELPERS, DRIVERS, and FUNDRAISING VOLUNTEERS for sacrificing many hours throughout the week to help keep our group going. PAW's KENNEL BUDDIES, who exercise and socialize our kennel dogs all week. TRANSPORTERS, who take them to and from the vets. The dogs and cats are so grateful. PAW's FOSTER and ADOPTIVE FAMILIES—we couldn't save lives without you. VETERINARIANS AND STAFF at Beltsville Veterinary Hospital; Animal Behavior and Wellness Center & Amy Pike, DVM, DACVB, Jessey Scheip, and Kayla Paugh; College Park Animal Hospital; Lake Forest Animal Hospital; Veterinary Orthopedic Sports Medicine Group Pet+ER/Columbia, MD; and CVCA/Columbia, MD for providing reduced-cost medical care to PAW's homeless dogs and cats. TRAINERS Beth Joy, Joyce Loebig, Sarah Stoycos, Jen Boyd-Morin, and Jennifer Owens, and Jackie Moyano for their generosity, help, and training advice for our more challenging dogs.

YOUR DOG'S FRIEND, Debra Ekman for offering free workshops, training referrals, and more. DALE'S PET GROOMING in Laurel, Dale Martins for free grooming of PAW dogs and cats. PRESTON COUNTRY CLUB FOR PETS in Columbia, owner Fred Wolpert, Quan Harper, Sarah Horstkamp, Tyler Crotty, and all our friends at Preston. SNIFFERS DOGGIE RETREAT in Rockville, owners Hillary Stains and Laura Mathieson Green, for boarding some of our dogs at discounted rates, and all Sniffers staff for the kindness and energy they give to PAW dogs. PUP SCOUTS BOARDING AND DAYCAMP in Rockville, owner Henry Toberman, and Monica Franco for the TLC they show our dogs. PARADISE FOR PETS in Beltsville, many thanks. LAST BUT NEVER LEAST, Maryland-area PETSMART, PETCO, LOYAL COMPANION, PET VALU stores for hosting our weekly dog and cat adoption shows.

## PAW Shakes

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*Editors:* Lisande Bissonette and Jodi Koehn-Pike

Partnership for Animal Welfare, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1074  
Greenbelt, Maryland 20768  
(301) 572-4PAW (4729)  
[www.paw-rescue.org](http://www.paw-rescue.org)

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