

# Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

October, 2010

## Welcome

October is Adopt a Shelter Dog Month, so to celebrate we're looking at what shelter life means. Anderson Animal Shelter and TAILS Humane Society answered questions about what happens to a dog when it becomes a shelter resident and what life is like in an animal shelter. Also we will get to know Amanda, our featured employee for the month of October. Then we will meet Charlie, one of our patients here at EAH and a certified therapy dog. Lastly, Dr Cechner answers a question from one of our clients in our "Ask the Dr" segment. Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff at (630) 365-9599, or you can contact us via email at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).

## October: Adopt a Shelter Dog Month

In the United States, millions of dogs and cats are brought to shelters each year. Over 1,000 facilities exist across the country to help take in and rehome pets. These facilities run at "full capacity" for much of the year, and over capacity for the rest. This month we spoke with Sandy Shelby, Executive Director at Anderson Animal Shelter (AAS), and Michelle Groeper, the Assistant Executive Director at TAILS Humane Society to help us understand how a dog is admitted into and cared for in a shelter situation. Below are the questions we asked, and the answers we received.

### 1) Are most of the pets at your facility owner relinquished or brought in as strays?

- *Actually, some of each. We have animal control contracts with East Dundee, South Elgin and Carpentersville and we take in dogs from them.*



*We also take in animals from the general public, some of which are strays, owner give ups, people moving, pets abandoned and neighbors bringing them in, abuse cases, etc. – Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter*

- *A majority of the adult dogs and adult cats that*

*TAILS receives are relinquished by their owners, though some are brought to us as strays. Young kittens are often found as strays. We transfer in a number of our puppies and small breed adult dogs from high-kill shelters in the Oklahoma area...Small animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters etc. are usually surrendered by their owners, but occasionally come to us as strays. –Michelle Groeper, TAILS*

### 2) What are the top reasons owners give up their pets?

- *We have found that a lot of owners are moving to another house/apartment and cannot take the animal with due to space reasons, or have difficulty finding a pet-friendly rental that they can afford. We have also had animals relinquished to us because the owners feel they can no longer afford the routine medical needs of their pet, often due to a change in their finances. –Michelle Groeper, TAILS*



### 3) What happens when a pet is relinquished to a shelter?

- *All animals are quickly evaluated by a manager and any immediate medical concerns are assessed and taken care of. Then the dog is placed in a kennel, given food and water and a bed, and allowed to acclimate to his/her new surroundings. After three days, the dog has a behavior assessment. –Michelle Groeper, TAILS*



### 4) What procedure is used to evaluate whether a relinquished or stray animal is adoptable?

- *For dogs we do a very stringent temperament test that includes everything from how they react to our trying to take food from them, to hugging and handling, to introduction to another dog, reaction to a stranger, and much more. We use a combination of tests that include some from the Sue Sternberg method and others from the Cesar Milan method. We feel that the combined test gives us a true picture of the dog's temperament.*

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Cats do not have a formal test, and that is based on their behavior after the initial stray hold is up in 7 days. —Sandy Shelby, Anderson AS

## 5) What governs whether the animal is considered adoptable?

- We consider animals adoptable unless they pose a bite risk to other animals or people, or their medical condition is so bad that it's kinder to let them go over the Rainbow Bridge.



There are some animals that may not thrive in a shelter environment, so we transfer them to breed-specific rescues where they have people who are familiar with that breed and the dogs can live in homes. Each animal is evaluated on an individual basis, both behaviorally and medically, and a decision is made on a case-by-case basis, after very careful consideration. —Michelle Groeper, TAILS

## 6) How good does a dog have to do with a temperament test to be admitted to your program?

- The only time we don't pass a dog for [a temperament] test is if we have severe aggression biting, etc. and we feel that animal is not safe to put in the public around other pets or children. We generally look at any and all issues the animal has and have developed a system that we go through at adoption that discusses the issue the dog has...they are also given a tip sheet on things they can do at home to address and correct that issue. We also make sure that if a dog has a certain issue we put a restriction on the adoption. —Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter

## 7) Can you tell me about a typical day at your shelter?

- Every morning the dogs are walked and fed by volunteers and staff, and their kennels are cleaned. During the day, we have volunteers who come in and walk and play with them as well. They are fed and kennels are cleaned again in the afternoon, and they are walked a final time before closing each day. Every dog gets a blanket or bed and a toy to play with, too. —Michelle Groeper, TAILS

- The first staff member arrives at 6:30am. Walks start for the dogs at 7 and two staff members do that while another is cleaning their kennel. They are fed when the kennels are clean in the morning and then they get an afternoon feeding as well. They are walked no less than twice a day, and if we have volunteer help they get more than that mid-day too. —Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter



## 8) How much interaction with humans does each animal receive, on average, on a daily basis?

- We have 7 people on our kennel team and a dog trainer, so they get as much as we can give them. Cleaning and feeding take priority at certain times, but then they get enrichment from the volunteers providing grooming and walking and brushing daily. We have some awesome volunteers that allow us to give these animals a better life while they are here with us...of course, it's not as good as being with a family, but they are safe and loved while they are with us. —Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter



## 9) Do you charge a relinquishment fee?

- We do have a requested (not required) relinquishment donation for all animals relinquished to TAILS. This donation helps offset the cost of the animal's daily care and medical costs (which averages over \$350 per animal while in our care). Each cat/dog is spayed/neutered, microchipped, updated on vaccines, checked for heartworm disease or feline leukemia/FIV, and dewormed/checked for intestinal parasites prior to adoption. —Michelle Groeper, TAILS

## 10) Do you ever have to turn away people who need to relinquish their pet, or with stray pets?

- Sadly, when we are full to capacity, we have to turn people away at times. Our staff has been

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*trained to take an animal, even if we are full, if we feel that animal's life is in danger and that the person that has it is making comments that would lead us to believe the animal will be harmed or killed if we don't take it. Other people are very kind and understand that we are full and are sometimes willing to hold the animal until we have an opening, which is greatly appreciated. –*

*Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter*

## 11) What is the best thing people can do to help animal shelters?

- *Any way that people are able to help TAILS is greatly appreciated, including adopting an animal, volunteering their time, donating items, giving monetary donations, and spreading word about TAILS. –Michelle Groeper, TAILS*
- *Adopt. Volunteer. Donate. –Sandy Shelby, Anderson Animal Shelter*

Employees and volunteers spend hours every day helping to ensure the pets in these facilities are healthy, happy and have the highest chance of finding their forever home. Cats and dogs are given any necessary medical attention before being spayed or neutered, brought up to date with appropriate vaccines, and microchipped. They are socialized regularly. Animals in shelters receive good veterinary care and as much individual attention as possible.

But a shelter is only a temporary stopping place for the pets housed there. Mindy Seifrid volunteered her time at a shelter facility for several years. She's given us some insight into life for the dogs and cats at a shelter.



Mindy told us that the shelter she volunt

eerred at housed ten adoptable dogs at any one time to ensure each dog got enough attention while it was there—but there were also two

quarantine rooms, where dogs dealing with medical issues were housed. Regular volunteers did not handle the quarantined dogs. Mindy wrote, "The highest priority of the shelter was to not spread disease. Sick animals could be showing symptoms to a more serious disease than what was originally diagnosed. For example a puppy with diarrhea could have stress colitis, parasites, or worst case scenario: parvo."

There are almost always many more cats at the shelters than dogs. "During kitten season when cat and kitten numbers were high, I handled

at least 100 cats [per day]. During kitten season there could be litters of kittens in



one cage," Mindy told us. The ASPCA reports an estimated 70 million cats live in the United States alone ([www.aspca.org/adoption/pet-overpopulation.html](http://www.aspca.org/adoption/pet-overpopulation.html)). On top of that, Mindy told us that adult cats have the longest average length of stay in a shelter – about 2 years.

Ms. Seifrid also told us the animals in shelters seemed more stressed on a day-to-day basis. She noticed signs of stress such as shedding more in some of the pets she cared for at the shelter. She said, "The more outgoing pets adapted better and learned to thrive; the shy soft animals sometimes did not adapt as well to the stress." Living in a non-family atmosphere with many other animals can be expected to produce a certain amount of stress in each individual. Both facilities we spoke to utilize foster homes for those animals that are not adapting well to living in a shelter situation.

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Volunteers help reduce the stress on pets living in shelters. If you are able to donate a few hours a week to volunteer your time socializing animals at a shelter it makes life that much more enjoyable for the pets housed within. But volunteering to walk dogs or clean cages is not the only way to help. Mindy told us how easy it is to help out. "Shelters are always in dire need of simple household products...One could donate bleach, paper towels, or dish soap. Checking any shelter website's wish list is a simple way to know what items the shelter truly needs. Volunteering to transport animals is also always needed, or to work as a remote adoption assistant in one of the Petsmarts or off-site adoption locations."

The last aspect of shelter life we asked Mindy about was what she thinks potential adopters should know before they take home their new family member. This is what Mindy had to say: "A common misunderstanding that people have is that a shelter pet was put in the shelter because of behavioral or health issues. This is very rarely the case, and if it were, a good shelter would notify the adopter before they took home the animal." (Both AAS and TAILS do exactly this.) "I wish people could witness an animal relinquishment, it is the most heartbreaking experience. Grown men break down and weep when they sign over their best friend because they are being deployed or have lost their own homes. Often shelter animals were loved and cherished family members who were relinquished because their owners loved them enough to know that they could no longer give them a secure home. They sign over their loved ones trusting that someone somewhere will be able to step in and give their pet a life that they deserve."

As we celebrate Adopt a Shelter Dog Month, we should all keep these words in mind. A family once loved many of the pets housed in shelter facilities across the state. Others started

life as strays, or worse—in abusive and hoarding situations. All of these animals show remarkable resilience and heart as they wait patiently for their forever homes. Shelter employees and volunteers work hard each and every day. Their goals are simple and few: reduce pet overpopulation; promote companion animal welfare; keep pets with their human families if possible; rehome them appropriately if necessary. It is so easy to help animals shelters reach these goals—the number one action a person can take to help animal shelters reach their goals is to spay and neuter their own pets. By doing this we not only decrease health risks for our pets, but we can slow the pet overpopulation rate and one day, control it.

## Shelter Contact Information:

Anderson Animal Shelter is located at 1000 S. LaFox Rd, in South Elgin. You can ask questions, see the facility's hours, and look at dogs and cats available for adoption through their [website](http://www.andersonanimalshelter.org), [www.andersonanimalshelter.org](http://www.andersonanimalshelter.org). Or via telephone at Phone: 847-697-2880.

TAILS Humane Society is located at 2250 Barber Greene Road, in DeKalb. Find out more about the pets available there and how to make one your new family member by visiting their website at [www.tailshumanesociety.org](http://www.tailshumanesociety.org), or via phone at (815) 75.TAILS (758-2457).

## Meet Our Staff: Amanda

Our featured employee of the month for October is Amanda. She has been with us at Elburn Animal Hospital for over two years, after first interning here. She was here while she was pursuing a



assistant certificate. Amanda has three rescue kitties. She didn't get them from shelters, but

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they were feral kittens she took in at different times. Their names are Koono, Kobe and Olive.



Olive was very young when Amanda took her in after a child found her abandoned under a pine

tree. At first Olive required bottle-feeding, but now she is four months old and thriving. All of Amanda's kitties had tough beginnings to life, but now they have a life of ease! Her cats actually have their own room to play in, their own version of a kitty playground and a jungle gym. Amanda has such a soft spot for cats; we know she'd open her own shelter if she could! Eventually, Amanda wants to study marine biology, but right now the cats and all of us here are happy to have her as part of our Elburn Animal Hospital family!

Darlene Adams, office manager



Also, Amanda is currently fostering a beautiful, sweet one-year-old kitty. Her name is Jude, and she was rescued from an unhealthy situation. Jude didn't know she could have it so good, but with Amanda's help she'll get

her own home and have it even better someday. If you are interested in meeting Jude, please call the clinic at 630-365-9599 and speak with Amanda.

## Feature: Spotlighting Our Patients

Each month our staff collaborates to present photos and a brief summary of an interesting or touching case we've seen the previous month. We want to showcase the diversity in patients we see and let you know a little more about our daily activities at Elburn Animal Hospital.

This is Ziggy Marshall. Ziggy is a 20-year-old cat that began coming to us for help with both mobility and urinary issues. We began a regimen of treatment including traditional Western veterinary medicine as well as



acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments. Over the past few months Ziggy's weight has increased by almost a whole pound. Her mobility is also slowly improving, which helps her urinary issues in turn. Although Ziggy will never be a spring chicken again, she's pretty plucky for a 20-year-old! One interesting thing



about Ziggy is that, although she does not like it when we poke and prod her for routine examinations, she doesn't mind Dr

Dr Cechner placing her acupuncture needles at all! We have several pictures of Ziggy on our Facebook page showing how she calms down and even looks entranced when she's "cooking" with her acupuncture needles in her. Ziggy also has a cute poodle brother named Arnold and a sweet Chow-Chow sister named Hannah, both of whom see Dr Cechner for holistic treatment. Ziggy is over 100 years old in "human years," so she's our featured patient of the month—Keep it up, Zig!



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The month of November recognizes cancer in companion animals. In next month's newsletter we will focus on ways to lower your pet's risk of cancer, as well as pain management techniques if your pet is diagnosed. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information, visit our website at [www.elburnanimalhospital.com](http://www.elburnanimalhospital.com), or give us a call at (630) 365-9599. If you would like to opt out of receiving our newsletter, please send an email to us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net).

**October Special:** New pets adopted from a shelter or foster organization since July 1, 2010 receive a free stool check. A \$31.00 value! Make sure you mention this ad to get the discount! ☺

**Events:** We'd like to thank all our clients and new visitors that came out to meet us at our open house! We had such fun playing with the animals from TAILS, too.

Congratulations to the winners of our raffle! The Kupars won first place, a free exam and comprehensive blood panel. Steven Seers won second place, a free comprehensive blood panel. Andrew Kovarik won third place, a free exam. Each also won a bucket of Halloween goodies. Thanks so much for everyone's participation, and we hope to see you there next year!!!

Do you have an idea for a newsletter? A question you'd like answered about caring for your pet? Email us at [3lburn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:3lburn@sbcglobal.net) and let us know! We are always interested in what you have to say, and what you want to know.