

Please Help Us Save Animals' Lives!

Animalfriends

Spring 2018 OF CONNECTICUT

FOSTERS & FOSTER FAILURES

When you do rescue work, you quickly learn that there are fosters and “foster failures.” The “failures” aren’t, as you might think, the cats or dogs you can’t manage. No, they’re the ones who creep into your heart and set up shop. Permanently.

Dulcie was a Ragdoll. She was, AFOC Director Judy Levy was initially told, in her late teens, and she didn’t get along well with other cats. There was also a disturbing story about her having been kept in a “box” (a cage?) by her original owners.



Well, the Ragdoll who arrived at my home wasn’t elderly. Middle-aged, maybe, but cat years away from collecting Social Security. She also didn’t mind sharing space with other cats. She didn’t interact with them much, but that probably had more to do with her having been kept in isolation.

Happy in her new environment, Dulcie shone. She was an affectionate, gentle-natured cat, and I was deeply tempted to keep her. There is something incredibly moving about a cat learning to trust again...or maybe for the very first time. It’s like watching a rose unfold.

When a cat like Dulcie shows up in rescue, a lot of people see it as a chance to get a free purebred. Lorrie was different, and I knew that almost from the beginning of our phone conversation. “We just lost our Maine Coon a few months ago,” she explained. “Then I saw this cat on the website, and...well, I had a Ragdoll years ago, and I’ve always wanted another one.” We talked for awhile longer and agreed that she and her husband should come by and meet Dulcie.

They clicked immediately. “Are you ready for somebody to spoil you rotten?” Lorrie asked Dulcie, who was lounging atop the cat tree in the breezeway. Dulcie was. Within a week, she left for her new home in the most elegant carrier I’d ever seen. I missed her, but I knew that she had found her person—someone who was going to love her the way that her previous owners hadn’t.

A few months later, Judy called me, asking me to foster some kittens from a feral cat colony in New Britain. I went to the Avon Veterinary Clinic, where the furry little refugees were staying. My son Zeke was working at the kennels there, and he’d already checked them out. “Take the plushy gray one,” he’d advised me, “and the tortoiseshell.”

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If you are interested in being a foster family for future litters, please contact us at the shelter. We need your help.



UNITED WAY

You can donate while at work by making a contribution for THE UNITED WAY. Just specify that your donation is intended for AFOC. Please use the following letters and numbers on the form: AG 0640.



Sunshine Fund

Sunshine was a dog that came to us years ago. She was a Shepherd-Husky cross and was found in a project in Hartford with one eye poked out by a stick. The owners signed the dog over to AFOC. We had her injuries treated and we found her a wonderful home. She lived to be over 14 years old. What happened to Sunshine was just the beginning of many years involved in rescuing injured and abused animals. This fund is in her memory.

I-GIVE MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

Register with I-Give on-line. Shop on line with major retailers and help AFOC at the same time! All consumer transactions will contain a percentage donated to AFOC.

Sponsorship Program

We have many cats that are either unadoptable or hard to place. We are looking for sponsors willing to sponsor rescue cats by helping to cover the cost of food, litter, and basic medicine. Our goal is to sponsor every cat.

ANOTHER CONVENIENT WAY OF GIFT GIVING!

You can now use your credit card and make a donation on-line through PayPal. Just go directly to our website for further details (www.afocinc.org).



AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets you enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/06-1132973>, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to the eligible charitable organization of your choice. It does not cost anything to sign up or add to your purchase price. It is totally funded by Amazon. Remember, when you are shopping on-line with Amazon, go thru AmazonSmile instead and help Animal Friends or Connecticut at the same time.

NEWS FROM THE SHELTER

We have been very lucky to have several new volunteers join us at the AFOC shelter in the last few months. Thank you to them and to our long-time volunteers, who donate so many hours to our kitties.

Unlike many shelters, the AFOC doesn't keep its cats caged. Because our building used to be a medical office, we have many small rooms. Depending on the size of the room (and how well the cats in it get along!), we have anywhere from two to six cats in each room. For example, the black-and-white room -- so named because all the cats in it are either black or black-and-white -- is one of our largest rooms and has six cats in it. These cats all get along very well and are, in fact, a "community" of friends. We often find them curled up together.

Adoptions were down toward the end of winter but seem to be picking up. If you are interested in adopting or in just visiting our resident cats, please call, and I'll be happy to show you around. You'll be able to see the wonderful work we do and the lives we've saved.

-- Jean Blackman, Shelter Manager



We hope you like our new color newsletter. We felt that it was time for a new look!

Judy Levy, Director

T.J. Banks, Editor

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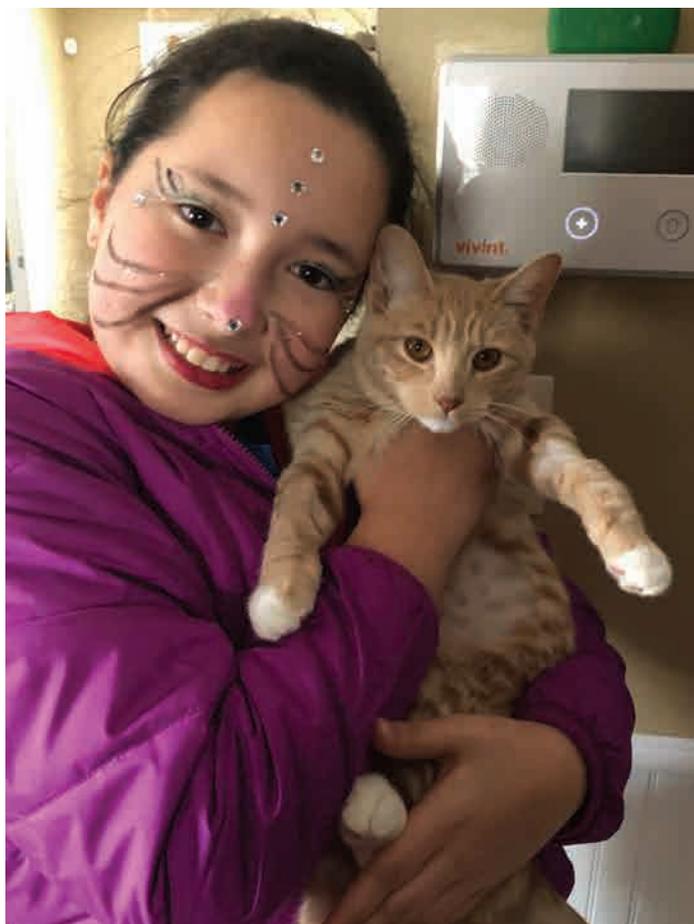
TABITHA

Back in January, Animal Friends got a call from a man who had gotten a “free kitten” for his children from Craigslist. He had decided he was allergic to the little buff-colored girl, however, and asked if we would take her.

We did. The kitten, Tabitha, is now living a spoiled life with her foster mama, Michaela.

Tabitha’s story had a happy ending. Many such stories don’t. Putting a “free to a good home” animal on the internet, or even in the newspaper, can result in the animal ending up in a research facility or as bait to train fighting dogs. If you have an animal you do not want, PLEASE make sure it goes to a loving home or to a no-kill shelter.

-- Jean Blackman, Shelter Manager



Volunteers needed, sometimes on very short notice, to transport cats to veterinary appointments. Most appointments are from the shelter in New Britain to a vet in the Farmington Valley. Very occasionally, the appointment could be to specialists in Massachusetts or just over the border in New York State. If you are willing to do this, please call Jean, the shelter manager, at 860-489-4901.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Rex: A donation was made in memory of the late Rex Schneider-Garcia.

-- Nicola Rubinow

Sailor: A donation was made in honor of the late Sailor Kaizer, a beloved foster dog.

-- Nicola Rubinow

King: A donation was made in memory of the late “King” Johnson.

-- Nicola Rubinow

The CREC Soundbridge CTS Team: A donation was made in honor of the CREC Soundbridge CTS Team.

-- Casey O’Connell

Brie & Cade: A donation was made in honor of the adopted Brie & Cade.

-- Joseph Picuch, DMD

Lady: A donation was made in memory of Lady, our beloved Golden Retriever.

-- Janice & William DeDomincis

Riley: A donation was made in memory of Riley, Nancy & Ray Lodge’s pet Labrador retriever.

-- Ellen Koch & Marty Shinder

Heather & Baxter: A donation was made in honor of Heather Viets & Baxter.

-- Karin Peterson

Paisley & kittens: A donation was made in honor of Paisley & her 2 kittens.

-- Anne & Richard Davenport

Sapphire: A donation was made in honor of Sapphire, our dearest cat.

-- Ann & Michael Buchas

Emily: A donation was made in loving memory of Emily, adopted in 2002.

-- William Mustard

John, Edna, Judie, & Erice: Donations were made in memory of John, Edna, & Judie Shea and Erice Roraback.

-- George & Jacqueline Roraback

Lilly: A donation was made in memory of Lilly.

-- Tony Sefter

Pepper & Puddy: A donation was made in memory of Pepper Hitchcock & her cat, Puddy.

-- Nancy Taylor

Roger: Donations were made in memory of Roger Dion.

-- Leslie Thibodeau; Michael Stoller; Amy Dresner; Francine Phillips; and George & Mary Elmore

Ruth: Donations were made in memory of Ruth Gillespie.

-- David Gillespie; Timothy & Louann Maher; Veronica Zecchin; Alison & Jeff Rudolph; Elaine Geick; Ruth Hart; & Lanie Lee

Shotzie, Jessie, Lacey Lu, & Killie: Donations were made in memory of Shotzie, Jessie, Lacey Lu, & Killie.

-- Jo Anne & Henry Bochicchio

T2: A donation was made in memory of T2.

-- Frank Valvo

Geno: A donation was made in memory of Geno Vicino.

-- Barbara Vicino

Marlene: A donation was made in honor of Marlene McKinley's birthday.

-- Patricia McKinley

Ozzie: A donation was made in memory of our beloved Ozzie.

-- Michael & Shelly Levy

Stormy: A donation was made in memory of Stormy.

-- Jean Buzzi Blackman

Filbert: A donation was made in memory of Filbert the dog.

-- Barry Liberman

Harold: Donations were made in memory of Harold Banks.

-- Anne LeBlond; Steve & Claire Marsden; Robert Bravo; Pamela Casner; Kathy Ferrelli; Bernadette Gresczyk; Ellen & Robert Hollis, Sr.; Colette Hunt; Eva & Michael Long; MaryAnn & George Machan; Mark & Sarafina Mangiafico; Lucille & Michael Manka; Anne & Brian Reilly; Susan Sakolowski; The Tomasso Family; and The Mazarella Family



Photo by Alina Oswald

We would be happy to accept a donation of a car, van, truck, RV or boat in any condition, running or not. They are a charitable tax deduction and help us continue our daily work.

THE BIONIC PET

I've known dozens of three-legged pets over the years. I've created more than a few, in fact. The pluck and perseverance of these animals has always been an inspiration to me. I'd go as far as to say that they are models of how we humans wish we would bear up in the face of similar adversity. Even so, missing a limb is far from an ideal situation. There are the abnormal dynamic stresses put upon other joints; and the psychological toll that it takes often results in a shorter lifespan. In spite of this, many pets do quite well as "tripods." Sometimes I've been nearly finished with a physical exam on a dog or a cat before it even occurs to me that the animal is missing a limb. Their resilience is simply amazing.

But how much better could they be? The answer these days is: a lot better. In the documentary "My Bionic Pet" (2015), a half-dozen animals are featured whose lives have been radically altered by prosthetics. Through the use of carbon fiber, lightweight plastics, and 3-D printing, these "other-abled" (the word "disabled" is never used) pets can walk and even run, sometimes for the first time in their lives. The documentary begins with the story of Driftwood, a border collie who lost both of his hind legs soon after birth. After a minor surgery to strengthen one of his legs, fiberglass impressions were made of his incomplete limbs. The owners, the vet, and the prostheticist were all equally dubious as to how Driftwood would handle the new attachments. Their fears turned out to be completely unfounded. He accepted them just fine—and then took off running in the direction of the road!

Ponies, swans with prosthetic beaks, and even an alligator missing most of its tail are all featured. Journey, a Golden Retriever born blind and without front legs, becomes a therapy dog for disabled kids, thanks to carbon-fiber blades. Chris P. Bacon, a pig in a wheelchair, is rescued by a vet who takes an interest in his rehabilitation.

But the one machine that has revolutionized the field of animal orthopedics is the 3-D printer. Not too long ago, Cyrano, a 10-year-old cat, was provided with a total knee replacement by doctors at the University of North Carolina. All of the components were produced on a 3-D printer, and the unit fit perfectly in between the femur and the tibia. Cyrano went from being a cat in constant pain who could barely walk to one who was once again jumping up on the windowsill and checking out the birds.

The benefits of prosthetics versus the old method of "living with it" are many, but three stand out. The first, and most obvious, one is mobility. Experience has shown that animals will accept a prosthetic leg, beak, or tail almost immediately because it makes their movements that much easier. Their brains are hard-wired for the normal, and they will fall right in with whatever simplifies their efforts. Anyone who's ever seen a dog in a K-9 Kart knows this to be true. Second are the positive mental aspects of suddenly regained mobility, same as with people. And third, a more natural ambulation preserves the other joints; takes most of the strain off the neck and spine; avoids the risk of laminitis in horses; and extends the animal's life.

But it's not cheap. A custom-made prosthetic device could set a dog owner back a couple of thousand dollars. The devices themselves are designed to last for the life of the pet; but the internal padding and external straps need replacement every one to two years, depending on wear and tear.

My single experience with applying a prosthetic was with a box turtle, who had lost the use of his left front leg due to paralysis. This was remedied by sawing a miniature billiard ball in half and Super-gluing it to the underside of the shell on the affected side. This gave the turtle his life back, albeit one lived out in captivity.

Prosthetics, as an adjunct of veterinary medicine, is a science in its infancy -- less than two-decades-old. Many of the mechanics behind it are still fraught with trial and error. But new designs tried out on pets are providing avenues of research in the human prosthetic industry as well, advancing both lines of technology. As 3-D printing becomes more sophisticated and the prices inevitably come down, it wouldn't be out of line to think that some day, the "tripod" dog of old will truly become a creature of the past.

-- Dr. Thomas D. Morganti, Avon Veterinary Clinic



Fosters & Foster Failures

(continued from p.1)

Well, I followed his advice in part: I took the stocky gray male kitten. Then I saw his smaller inkblot of a sister. She was so like Bandit, the big black cat we'd lost to cancer a few years earlier. He, too, had been a velvety little inkblot when I'd gotten him for Zeke...

So she, and not the tortie girl, came home with me. Zeke named the big gray guy "Thor"; and I, determined that his sister should have some goddess power to match, named her "Freya."

The kittens, blissfully unaware of their foster status, decided that they had traded up into a much nicer cat colony. "I think Freya and Thor need to go together," I told Judy. "I'll miss them when they go – but I'll feel better if they're together."

Shortly after that, a woman called, expressing interest in both of them. We arranged for her to come see them. She never showed. Finally, I called Judy. "About the kittens--," I began.

"You want to keep them, don't you?" she replied.

I did, and four years later, they're still here. They are my foster failures, and I don't think that I've ever failed so happily at anything.

- T. J. Banks



Please reach into your heart and give what you can afford to help these animals get a second chance in life.

Your gift is tax-deductible.

We would be happy to talk with you about endowments, grants, gifts-in-kind, corporate sponsorship or other donation long-term support. Please call us at (860)827-0381

Animal Friends of Connecticut, Inc.
P.O. Box 370306
West Hartford, Connecticut 06137-0306

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