



A Letter From Friends

Friends of Austin Animal Center is the 501c3 non-profit dedicated to helping Austin Animal Center, the largest municipal no-kill shelter in the nation.

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue #1 - Fall 2012

The Shade Project

Texas summers get hot! Friends of AAC is sponsoring a project and raising funds to provide waterproof shading around the dog kennels and walkways at AAC to create a better environment for dogs, staff, and adopters.

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Hard Luck Hounds

HLH is one of our two signature programs that help save the highest-risk animals at AAC.

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Happy Tales

A moment of serendipity reunites a woman with her beloved dog after being apart for 5 months.

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Desperate Housecats



Desperate Housecats is our other signature program dedicated to saving the cats no one else does.

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Our Mission

What does Friends of Austin Animal Center do, and why is it important? Our Mission Statement clearly sets forth our purpose and goals.

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Volunteer!

Join the community of Austin Animal Center volunteers and become an important part of no-kill solution.

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AAC Celebrates First Year Anniversary!

The new Austin Animal Center opened its doors on November 11, 2011. The opening of AAC marked a significant milestone in Austin's commitment to no-kill.

The new, state-of-the-art Austin Animal Center facility replaced the old Town Lake Animal Center facility last year. Designed to provide a safer, healthier atmosphere that allows for more efficient and effective care by staff and volunteers, it features vastly improved facilities for animals with injuries or illnesses. Friends of AAC was proud to raise over \$30,000 dollars last year to provide improved veterinary equipment and supplies for AAC veterinary services staff. AAC staff tell us they've seen real improvements in the overall health of the



The new Austin Animal Center Facility, opened in November 2011. AAC takes in over 20,000 animals a year and saves over 90% of them in cooperation with rescue partners.

animal population as well as being able to perform procedures and treatments that were not possible in the old facility

A Model for No-Kill

Austin Animal Center is currently sheltering **dogs, cats, rabbits, and other stray animals**. Projections indicate that over **21,000 animals** will pass through the shelter this year, approximately 16,000 of which

will be dogs and the rest mostly cats. **Austin is the largest city in the United States that has a municipal, open-admission, taxpayer-funded shelter that meets the no-kill standard of a 90% or higher survival rate.** AAC typically averages about 91% a month. According to a recent article by MSNBC, AAC has become a model for the rest of the country and for the no-kill movement, in particular. As a result of AAC's no-kill policy, Austin has been cited in conferences and articles published in the Christian Science Monitor and on MSNBC.

Awarded for Green Design

Austin Animal Center recently received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Gold certification for its sustainable features.

Almost a year after the Center's opening, the City facility was recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council for its green features after verification the building is operating as it was designed. LEED™ is a third-party certification program developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and is a nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. Gold certification is the organization's second highest rating.

Shelter Director Abigail Smith

discusses the relationship between the shelter and Friends. Watch the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upWf9x-q-5Q&feature=plcp>



The Shade Project

While the new shelter constitutes a dramatic improvement over the old one, it will always need improvements. One area that needs improvement is a lack of shade in the areas where dogs live, and on the pathways where they are walked by customers, volunteers and employees. This is a serious problem because daytime summer temperatures frequently exceed 100 degrees. The gravel, concrete, block pathways, and even the dark mulch used around the plants heat up to over 140 degrees by late afternoon.

This is not just uncomfortable for potential animal adopters, volunteers, and employees; the high floor temperatures can even blister and burn the dogs' paws when they walk on those surfaces. Staff and volunteers take measures to protect the dogs by doing things like watering down pathways and avoiding the worst areas in the heat of the day, but a more permanent solution is needed.

Friends of AAC, at the request of the shelter, is seeking to raise the funds to provide waterproof shading for the dog kennels, walkways, and pathways. IBM has helped kickstart this project with a generous donation of \$3,000, but we need to raise far more. Friends will be having a big fundraiser this spring and will be seeking grants and donations in order to fund this important and much-needed project.



Desperate Housecats

In January, 2010, 5 year old Shadow (pictured above) went to live in a foster home because she was terrified living at TLAC and she refused to eat. Even in a home, she hid for days, and had to be pulled out to be force fed. After a couple of weeks, she finally started eating on her own, and began hiding less. As the weeks went by, she grew to trust her foster parents, and her true 'oh-so-sweet' personality emerged. Now it was time to find her a 'forever' home. But she couldn't go back to living in the shelter. **How do you get a cat adopted if she can't be seen?**

Her foster mom talked to the foster coordinator about Shadow's predicament. Although Shadow had photos and videos, **it's difficult to spark interest in a cat that isn't physically living at the shelter.** And what about all the other adult cats living in foster homes that didn't do well at the shelter? There had to be some kind of adoption event for this type of cat.

BINGO! Foster coordinator and foster mom came up with Desperate Housecats – a program for cats like Shadow: cats who have been surrendered and are overwhelmed by shelter life; cats over five years of age who still have a lot of life left in them, but are frequently passed over for adoption because they
(continued on page 4, column 1)



Hard Luck Hounds

The fact that AAC has achieved no-kill status is a truly remarkable thing...but that still leaves 10 percent of the dogs who for whatever reason were considered less desirable and ended up sitting in the shelter for months. It became clear to me that the last piece of what we needed to do was to start finding the right homes for these dogs. That's where the Hard Luck Hounds program came from - David Pasztor, founder and patron saint, Hard Luck Hounds

David and a small group of committed volunteers started the Hard Luck Hounds program in late September of 2011 with the goal of getting 58 dogs adopted in a year's time. One the very first day of HLH's existence, a young couple walked into the shelter, heard about the HLH program, and asked who the longest-stay dog in the shelter was. His name was Jake. They fell in love with him and took him home that day.

That's when I knew we could do this. That's when I knew we could make this work - David Pasztor

A year later, over 125 Hard Luck Hounds have gone home with their forever families. Every adopter receives a crate, a voucher for training or medical care, post-adoption visits and support from volunteers, and a hotline they can call at any time if they need help, advice, or support. Their story doesn't end for us when an HLH goes home - we
(continued on page 4, column 3)



Volunteering at AAC:

AAC Cat Team: Changes Lives, Saves Lives

Most animal shelters struggle to create and maintain strong cat volunteer programs. Not so, Austin Animal Services -- the "cat team" of AAC has been going strong for 8 years.

The cat volunteer program has been a consistent, self-managed and effective team since 2004. This is because the shelter has engaged with cat volunteers to identify and solve problems and over time has trusted the team to develop and run innovative programs that most shelters don't even consider. Below are some of the ways the volunteer cat team makes a difference.

Behavior Support (Cat Whispering)

It's a fact: cats have not been domesticated as long as dogs have. And many cats are roaming or living on their own. As a result, there is a subset of the cat population that needs help habituating to indoor life with people. Even cats perfectly suited to domestic life with humans can display confusing, unsocialized signals when put in a stressful shelter environment. The cat team works with these behaviorally challenged cats to increase their adoptability and suitability as companions in human households.

Space Management

Options for cat housing at the shelter include quiet restricted-access areas, individual kennels in the main adoption area, and group housing. The cat team evaluates behavior and makes room assignments and decisions about where cats will be most comfortable and therefore most adoptable.

Special Feeding

Cats are sensitive creatures who don't respond well to change. The shock a cat who has lived its entire life in one household experiences when confined to a cage surrounded by foreign people, smells and cats is tremendous. Many cats react to the stress with anorexia (failure to eat) and must be fed by syringe until they adjust. The special feeding team, armed with all manner of enticing foods, syringes and tongue depressors, works with these cats daily until they start to eat on their own.

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Reunited

There was a very sweet, sad girl who came into the HLH program this fall. Her name was Sophie, and like so many of our Hard Luck Hounds she'd been overlooked for several months for no good reason we could see. Several of the volunteers got to know her and fell in love with her, but were unable to coax her out of her sad state.

Then one day a young woman and her boyfriend came to TLAC to get a cat. They were waiting to finalize the adoption and went walking around to see some of the dogs. Of the hundreds of dogs there, they turned a corner and there was Hard Luck Hound Sophie. The boyfriend looks at her and says... Hey, this looks like your mom's dog. The girl looked at her too and said "Sophie?!?!!" It WAS her mom's dog!

The girl immediately called her mom and she rushed right down to TLAC. When the mom walked in the courtyard Sophie was standing there. At first Sophie was a little stiff, but then started sniffing her feet. She started wagging her tail and sniffed the woman all over and pressed her body into the mom's lap! It was so sweet to see her just overcome with happiness that her mom was there to get her.

This was such a heart-warming story that we put it on our Facebook page, where it became our most popular post ever. But many people wondered what had caused Sophie and Jennifer (the mom) to become separated. Jennifer told us this:

I lost her in the process of divorce...long story. I was led to believe she had been put down, 5 months ago, but she's very much alive and is a very happy girl now. So am I!!!!



Volunteering at AAC:

Dog Wellness:

The dogs at Austin Animal Center come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and personalities, and so do the volunteers who work with them. They range in age from teenagers to retirees, and come from a wide range of backgrounds. There are teachers, lawyers, engineers, journalists, students, housewives, office workers, city employees, PR and marketing people, and just about every other profession or vocation that you can think of.

This diversity of interests and skill sets comes in handy when it comes to dog wellness. Some volunteers work with small dogs. Some work with big dogs. Some work with shy and timid dogs, and some work with rowdy dogs, both of whom need special attention and training.

Some volunteers assist the staff with administrative and logistical tasks. Some volunteer at shelter-run events such as rabies clinics, offsite adoption events, and special events such as Mutt Match and Pet Extravaganza.

Some volunteers work exclusively with the dogs., training them, talking them for trail walks, and giving them concentrated attention to help make them more adoptable. Others do customer service, helping potential adopters find the right dog for them and helping to guide them through the adoption process.

Many volunteers become invaluable assistants to shelter staff, helping to ease the burden of the shelter's dedicated but overworked and often under-appreciated staff. Volunteers create adoption folders, bathe dogs, help staff move dogs to and from kennels, and even clean out dirty kennels. When the weather turns cold, volunteers often do nightly pull-ins, closing the dogs in their interior kennels at the end of the day, giving them blankets and treats, and relieving the staff of this job (as well as giving the dogs several more hours in their full kennels, since volunteers can do this after hours when most of the staff has finished their work day).

So if you're a dog lover, no matter what your interests, age, or abilities are, there's a place and a need for whatever you can do to help Austin's homeless dogs. You'll get to be part of a great community of volunteers and take pride in being a part of the largest municipal no-kill shelter in the United States!



Desperate Housecats (cont.)

are thought to be “too old”; cats with special medical needs such as having only 3 legs or 1 eye, or a medical condition that scares many adopters, even though the treatment of these conditions is often minimal.

The first Desperate Housecats Adoption event was held in April, 2010 at TLAC. There were only 6 cats in attendance from foster homes, and only 1 adoption. But it was groundbreaking. Since then **almost 200 Desperate Housecats have been adopted at these monthly events** (held the 4th weekend of every month at AAC), **and even more have been adopted in between events** (from foster homes and from the shelter).

The Desperate Housecats Team is a group of volunteers and foster parents dedicated to helping promote this special group of homeless pets living at the Austin Animal Center and in foster homes. Please visit www.desperatehousecats.info for more information, or to find your own Desperate Housecat.

Shadow was adopted in June, 2010. Her foster mom still gets updates – Shadow has a terrific life. Thank you, Shadow!

AAC Cat Team: Changes Lives, Saves Lives (cont.)

Photos Get Cats Adopted!

The photo team does an amazing job of taking “glamour shots” of the cats. Every new cat needs a photo -- and photographers are always needed. Many times people make up their minds to adopt a certain cat based on the photo they see on the website, so appealing photos can make all the difference.

Respiratory Treatment

Feline URI (a viral Upper Respiratory Infection) is almost unavoidable in shelters. URI symptoms range from a mild runny nose to severe congestion, bacterial infection, and can result in death. When a cat can't smell food it won't eat and this can lead to liver failure, especially in big cats.

The neb team (so-named because of the nebulizers used for breathing treatments) provides respiratory therapy twice a day, morning and afternoon, every day of the year (including holidays). They also monitor the weights, eating, peeing and pooping, and recommend appetite stimulant medication when warranted. Syringe feeding for non-eating cats happens daily.

Ringworm Treatment

Another issue that affects cats and especially kittens is ringworm. Ringworm is just a fungus similar to athlete's foot that causes hair loss and irritated skin. It is contagious to mammals and in cats can take a long time to cure. Many shelters euthanize cats with ringworm. But at AAC ringworm is treated with oral anti-fungal medication and twice weekly dipping of the entire cat's body in a lime-sulfur solution. A small team of “dippers” don plastic gowns, rubber gloves and shower caps twice a week to douse cats with the solution. Cats typically require a month or more of treatment before they can return to the adoption population.



Hard Luck Hounds (cont.)

think of ourselves as a community, not an adoption service, so we keep in touch with our adopters and are always ready to support them in whatever ways we can.

...Nobody's adopted them, the rescue groups won't take them...nobody is going to take these dogs out of here unless we find a good home for them. So that's what we're going to do. - David Pasztor

Saving these dogs requires a concerted effort from both staff and volunteers. Many dogs require training to improve their kennel and leash manners in order to make adopters consider them. HLH works with a whole network of trainers around the Austin area. Many dogs require medical treatment that the shelter is unable to provide, so Hard Luck Hounds raises money to pay for their medical care. But perhaps the most important factor in saving these dogs is what we call volunteer love. A group of dedicated volunteers work with these dogs, training them and doting on them. Time and again, a difficult, at-risk dog gets transformed into an adoptable animal who goes on to thrive in a good home because a few determined volunteers see the potential in that dog and work to bring it out.

"The success of the Hard Luck Hounds program is a testament to the Austin community's concern for animals and belief in second chances" - David

Mission Statement

Friends of Austin Animal Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for animals both inside and outside the Austin Animal Center. To accomplish this mission, Friends of AAC:

- **Conducts fundraising activities** to help bridge the gap between funds budgeted by the City of Austin and animal needs.
- **Sponsors volunteer-run programs** that address the special challenges faced by Austin Animal Center's neediest and most at-risk animals.
- **Promotes community awareness**, education, and mental and physical wellness programs to promote animal welfare.
- **Manages raised funds** to create a legacy and funding stream to support future animal well-being at AAC



Your Donations to Friends of AAC Save Lives!

Friends of AAC is all-volunteer 501c3 non-profit, so all your donations go to help the animals of the Austin Animal Center. The money you contribute has a profound effect on the wellness, adoptability, and ultimate survival of these animals. The Desperate Housecats and Hard Luck Hounds programs save the animals no one else saves- prior to the existence of these programs, the vast majority of the animals these programs now save would have been euthanized.

We've saved animals by sending them to some of the best trainers in the Austin area, by getting them much-needed medical care and surgeries, and by providing adopters with the tools they need to succeed such as crates, training vouchers, and

medical vouchers. But sustaining these programs and sustaining Austin's commitment to no-kill is an ongoing effort requires a wide-ranging community effort. We're asking you, and all the citizens of Austin, to contribute to our efforts in any way you can.

You can donate on-line at http://www.friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com/foaac/?page_id=32. If you want your contribution to support a particular program of ours, just write us a note in the comments block on our donate page and we'll make sure that the money goes to the program that you want to support.

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David Pasztor - Board Member
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If you're interested in joining our board or just attending one of our meetings, join us at Kerbey Lane Cafe South, 2303 S. Lamar Blvd, at 7:00 PM on the second Thursday of each month. Check our events calendar at www.friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com/foaac/?page_id=126

Contact Us

info@friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com

president@friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com

Friends of Austin Animal Center
P.O. Box 297
Austin, TX 78767

www.facebook.com/fotlac
www.friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com