

20 YEARS

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2026 🐾 TULSAPETSMAGAZINE.COM

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**A**s we step into a brand-new year, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who is part of the TulsaPets family. For two decades, our readers, contributors, advertisers and community partners have helped shape this magazine into a trusted resource for everything pet-related, and we simply wouldn't be here without you.

Since 2006, TulsaPets has been dedicated to empowering our community with information, compassion and advocacy. We're proud to promote humane and responsible pet ownership and to stand beside those who dedicate their lives to the well-being of animals — from the veterinarians who keep our pets healthy, to the rescuers, foster families and tireless warriors working every day to rehome vulnerable pets across our city.

This year marks our 20th anniversary, a milestone made possible by your loyalty, involvement and passion for animals. As we celebrate, we want to honor every member of our community who has welcomed TulsaPets into their homes and hearts.

In 2026 and beyond, we renew our commitment to serve, support and uplift Tulsa's vibrant pet community. We can't wait to share the next 20 years of heartwarming stories, helpful resources and meaningful connections that celebrate the unique bond between people and their pets.

Warmest greetings for a wonderful new year — and thank you for being part of our community.

With appreciation,

Casey 

# tulsapets magazine

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*Providing Tulsa pet owners with a one-stop resource for local products, services and information.*

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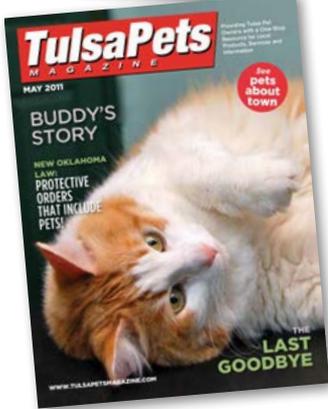
# 20 Years of TulsaPets

Celebrating Two Decades of  
Pets, Stories and Community

**FOR 20 YEARS,** TulsaPets has been proud to celebrate the pets, people and stories that make our city special. From our very first issue to today, we've shared tips, heartwarming tales and helpful resources for pet lovers across the Tulsa area.

Over the past two decades, we've watched furry friends grow, welcomed new additions and cherished the memory of pets who've left paw prints on our hearts; we've also highlighted the local businesses and organizations that make our community a haven for animals. From memorable cover pets to community events, TulsaPets has always been about connecting people with their four-legged companions.

As we celebrate this milestone, we want to thank our readers, contributors and the countless pets who have graced our pages. Your love, loyalty and enthusiasm are what make this journey so special. It has truly been a privilege to be a part of your pets' lives! Here's to 20 years of wagging tails, purring friends and countless cherished moments — and to many more years of celebrating pets together! 🐾



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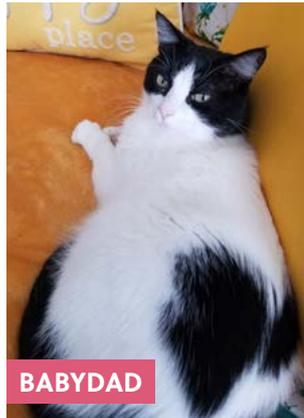
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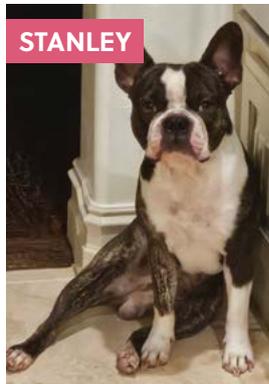
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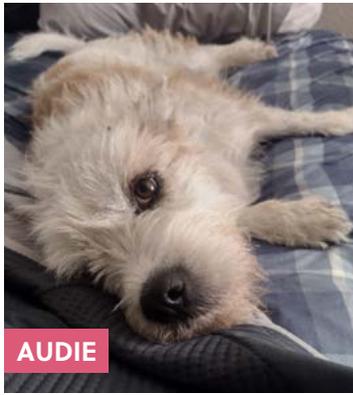
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# Train Your Dog Month

Start Simple with the ABCs of Success

by MARY GREEN

**JANUARY IS** National Train Your Dog Month — the perfect time to celebrate learning, teamwork and the joy of progress with your dog! Whether you're teaching your first "sit" or refining your recall, every success begins with simple steps and a clear plan. Just like we learned our ABCs before we learned to read, our dogs also thrive when training starts simple and builds on success.

## Start Simple — and Make It Fun

Do you remember learning something new? Maybe it was a sport, a craft or even

a new job. At first, it felt awkward — until someone broke it down, step by step. Great dog training works exactly the same way. A good teacher (that's you!) starts with easy steps, rewards small wins and adds challenge only when the student is ready.

Think of it this way: we learn letters, then words, then sentences, and before long we're writing a novel! Your dog's learning journey can be just as exciting when you celebrate each little step along the way.

## Every Dog Is Unique

People often ask, "What's the smartest

breed of dog?" The answer is always "it depends!" Border Collies are brilliant at herding, but a Bloodhound's nose out-smarts everyone else. Your dog has her own strengths — curiosity, enthusiasm, focus or playfulness. When you recognize those talents, you can shape training around what best motivates your dog.

Training is not about perfection; it's about teamwork and discovery. When you and your dog work together, you're both learning a new language of trust and understanding.

## The ABCs of Dog Training

Dogs learn through consequences — just like we do! The A-B-C model helps keep training simple and structured.

**A = Antecedent** — what happens before the behavior.

Think of this as setting up for success: the environment, your tools and your attitude.

**B = Behavior** — what your dog does (and what you do in response).

**C = Consequence** — what happens after the behavior. A reward makes the behavior more likely to happen again. Ignoring or preventing unwanted behavior helps it fade away.

## Example: The Jumping Greeting

Your dog loves you — sometimes a little too much! If your pup jumps up when you come home, she's not being "bad"; she's just learned that jumping gets attention.

### Let's use the ABCs:

**A:** Be prepared before you walk through the door. Keep a leash handy and a few tasty treats nearby.

**B:** Stay calm and quiet. Wait for your dog's paws to stay on the ground, briefly!

**C:** Reward that calm, four-on-the-floor behavior with praise, pets or treats.

Soon, your dog learns that polite greetings earn the best reward — your attention! When that becomes easy, raise the challenge: ask her to sit before you say hello. Before long, she will offer that sit automatically.

### Example: Fetching Fun

Does your dog grab the toy and run away instead of bringing it back? The ABCs can help here too!

**A:** Gather two toys and find a safe, quiet place to play.

**B:** Toss one toy a short distance. When your dog picks it up, show the second toy and act as if it is the BEST toy. Then toss that one and keep alternating live toy/ dead toy.

**C:** The reward for returning is ... another toss!

Two toys keep the game moving and teach your dog that bringing one back makes the fun continue.

### Example: Loose-Leash Walking

Even walking politely on leash can improve when you think ABCs.

**A:** Use the right equipment — a comfortable harness, a 4- to 6-foot leash and great treats.

**B:** Reward small moments of success — even one step of slack leash earns a treat!

**C:** If your dog pulls, stop. If she walks beside you, go forward. She'll quickly learn that she controls the walk with her choices.

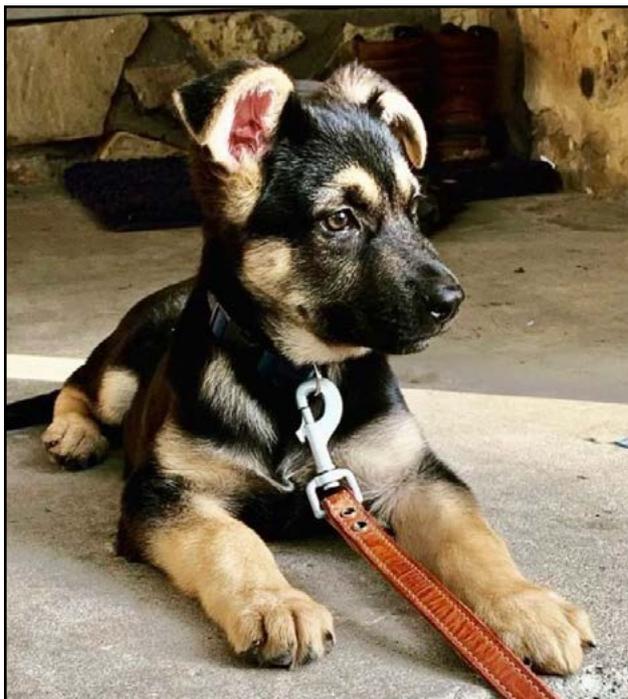
### Keep It Positive

The most successful trainers — and the happiest dogs — focus on positive reinforcement. Set your dog up to win, keep lessons short and upbeat and always end up on a success. Remember, January's "Train Your Dog Month" isn't just about obeying commands; it's about building a joyful bond that lasts all year long.

So this month, grab your treats, your leash and your sense of humor. Start simple, stay patient and celebrate every "A-B-C" step of success. Your dog will thank you with tail wags, trust and teamwork that will carry you far beyond these long winter months. 🐾

---

*Mary Green is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer Knowledge Assessed (CPDT-KA), Certified Dog Behavior Counselor (CDBC), and Certified Nose Work Instructor (CNWI) at K9 Manners & More in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.*



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**The many hats of Cleopatra.**

may be pleasant and comfortable, but the exactly right home is different. That's the way it was with Cleopatra, finding the right home and her true name.

Cleopatra is rightfully my cat. Here is how I found her and how I lost her:

One Saturday, I discovered her at the veterinarian clinic I was visiting regularly at the time. I fell in love with her at first sight: a golden-brown kitty with a flamboyant coat — part circles, part stripes.

This glitzy kitty was a *Felis catus*, domestic shorthair cat, a breed known for being affectionate and playful. More specifically, she was a tabby cat, which is not a breed but a reference to the cat's two identifying characteristics: its coat pattern, derived from an ancestral wildcat, and an "M" mark on the forehead. Some people believe the M refers to mau, the word for cat in Ancient Egypt where cats were sacred. All tabby cats believe this.

The word tabby, from the French word *tabis*, is an allusion to watered silk cloth and a reference to the design on the cat's coat. Tabbies can be mackerel (striped), spotted, ticked, tortoiseshell and more, but this particular kitty was a classic (or blotched) tabby, a coat pattern of artistic swirls and stripes. She was dramatically beautiful and alone.

She was the last of a litter. All the rest had been adopted. The clinic was about to close for a long weekend holiday, and my heart went out to the beautiful little unwanted tabby. I adopted her on the spot. Home we went!

What a mistake. My dog Bucky was fine with the two cats already living with us, but he put his paw down at the thought of a new cat. He began barking maniacally and didn't stop for 24 hours. The little kitty fled to the back of a closet. I rescued her periodically for food, water and litter box, but we could both hear Bucky barking in another part of the house.

I have adopted many cats and dogs over the years. This was my only failure. I was sitting on the front porch, morose and weeping, when my friend Anna dropped by. A tiny light of hope flickered. Anna's cat had died about a year before. Anna needed a cat. This cat needed a home.

# Cleopatra the Theatrical Cat

Every Move a Performance

by CONNIE CRONLEY | Photos by ANNA NORBERG

**IN THEATER** costume terms, a headpiece is any hat, crown or tiara worn on the head.

I saw thousands of them when I worked for a ballet company — floral, feathered, glittering, bejeweled. A headpiece is a perfect accessory for a cat I know named Cleopatra. She has many of them, which is only fitting because she is a very theatrical cat.

Each cat has a unique personality. I think it is our job to recognize and appreciate that. I feel the same about a cat's name. Our task is to discover the cat's authentic name, not impose a name on it. Until we do that — recognize the personality and discover the name — nothing quite fits.

For a cat, the greatest challenge is landing in its exactly right home. Many homes

The next day the kitty and I made a trial visit to Anna's house. As I set the carrier down, I explained to Anna that the kitty might not come out of the carrier at all, or if she did, she would run straight into that closet or under this chair to behind the sofa.

"She will hide for hours," I said, as I opened the carrier door. The kitty peeped out, looked around and seemed to say, "Now this is more like it." Instead of my cluttered, funky cottage, here was a spacious home in a soothing palette of white and pale gray, better to highlight her flamboyant coat. The kitty stepped out of the carrier and — not walked — processed across the thick carpet.

Anna is a pianist, a classical musician, so her home is full of the echoes of great music. The kitty strode with such grandeur, I knew she was hearing the regal sounds of the "Triumphal March" from the opera "Aida." And just like that, the kitty found her rightful home, and Anna found her new cat. "I'll name her Cleo-



**Connie with her godcat, Cleopatra.**

patra," Anna said. She knew the kitty's theatrical nature. I would have named her Polly or Florence.

That was six years ago, and she has never spoken to me since. Cleopatra, I

mean. She can't forget the dreadful 24 hours in my home. Anna is still a friend. I have visited them many times and have seen how Cleopatra reigns, pampered and applauded. I see her drifting languorously from room to room to the sound of her personal soundtrack. Sometimes she slinks across the room sinuously, clearly hearing the "Habanera" from "Carmen." When I try to pet her, she throws herself into the mad scene from "Madama Butterfly." I've seen her eye me coyly as she floats to the romantic strains of Debussy's "Clair de Lune," as if to say, "Don't you wish you had a cat as artistic and emotive as I?"

Anna understands Cleopatra's need for theatrical headpieces and provides them for every holiday and special occasion. There are theatrical props, too — every cat toy imaginable. The only thing Cleopatra still needs is a tiny follow spot to track her every dramatic move. 🐾

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Roscoe takes a break by the turntable.

# Dogs, Cats & Vinyl

Brian Price's Studio Records BA:  
Where Paws and Playlists Meet

by Jennifer Sharpe | Photos courtesy of Brian Price

**SINCE OPENING IN** January 2024, Studio Records in Broken Arrow has been a pet-friendly destination, with owner Brian Price's cats and dogs serving as beloved members of the store's team.

A haven for vinyl lovers, Studio Records is a new and used record shop where customers can buy, sell and trade records. The store also offers used CDs and other music

accessories, such as turntables. The business is retired teacher Price's dream come true, supported by his family and pets.

Gus the Bulldog, who passed away in May 2024 at the age of 11, was the original shop mascot. Being older, Gus mostly enjoyed resting on his little bed, but he also made his occasional rounds through the store.

"Gus was not the most energetic, but people would come in and love on him. And he would sit there and enjoy all the attention," Price said. "Gus had a very nice, long life, and he was a special guy. He's still with us in spirit."

In April 2024, Roscoe the cat joined the Studio Records family, arriving from River Trail Animal Hospital & Pet Lodge as a birthday gift from Price's daughter.

"Roscoe is the sweetest little boy — actually, he's a young man now because he's over a year old," Price said. "He welcomes people to the shop and helps customers with records as they're picking them out. He'll get right in the middle of it, and in the end, he'll just flop over and demand to be petted."

After Gus was gone, Roscoe was depressed, so Delia the Russian gray cat joined the shop crew in June 2024.

"Delia and Roscoe just bonded completely," said Price. "She's my little cautious kitty, judging from afar. Lately, she's been coming out of her shell and greet-

ing people, quite the 180 with her social skills.”

For Price’s birthday in April 2025, his wife and youngest daughter brought Silas home from River Trail. At the shelter, he was nicknamed Cyclops because he was missing an eye, but he’s been Silas or “One-Eye Si” since he joined the Price family.

“Silas is a mixed pup with a missing eye and a broken toe, but he is just the sweetest, most lovable and most affectionate pup ever,” Price said. “He’s so grateful, and he just loves life. When stuff is getting me down or starting to stress me out, I take cues from him to just love life right now and enjoy the moment. He’s been quite the savior.

“Roscoe was super excited when we got Silas. They had totally different energy levels. So it took a while for them to acclimate to each other, but they are buddies now,” said Price. “They’re just up on the couch, cuddling together, cleaning each other, having a good time, chasing each other. It’s fun to watch.”

Price said that customers love his shop pets. “I have customers that come in just for the animals,” he admits. “Then they wind up buying a record or two.”

Having his animals in the store also helps customers who come in with their kids, Price shared, because the animals keep the kids entertained — often so much so that the kids don’t want to leave the store, even when mom or dad is done shopping.

Studio Records appeals to customers of all ages.

“A lot of my customers are younger kids starting to collect vinyl and get into the physicality of the music they’ve only streamed or downloaded. They’ve never really had music in a format they can touch,” said Price. “For my older customers, I’m not selling records. I’m selling nostalgia and the memories people have connected to the music.”

In addition to being home to Silas, Roscoe and Delia, Studio Records is proudly pet friendly, welcoming and encouraging customers to bring their own four-legged friends along.

“Silas, being raised at River Trail, was used to being around many dogs, so he welcomes all animals,” said Price. “The cats, if they need to escape, can go upstairs where they’ve got their own little special area.”

At night, Price and Silas head home while Roscoe and Delia remain in the shop.



Price with Roscoe and Silas.



Silas welcomes customers to Studio Records.

“My kitty cats are my night security, and they have the run of the place,” said Price. “They know that’s their time. They’ve got each other, and I have cameras I can watch them with. They also do an excellent job of pest control.”

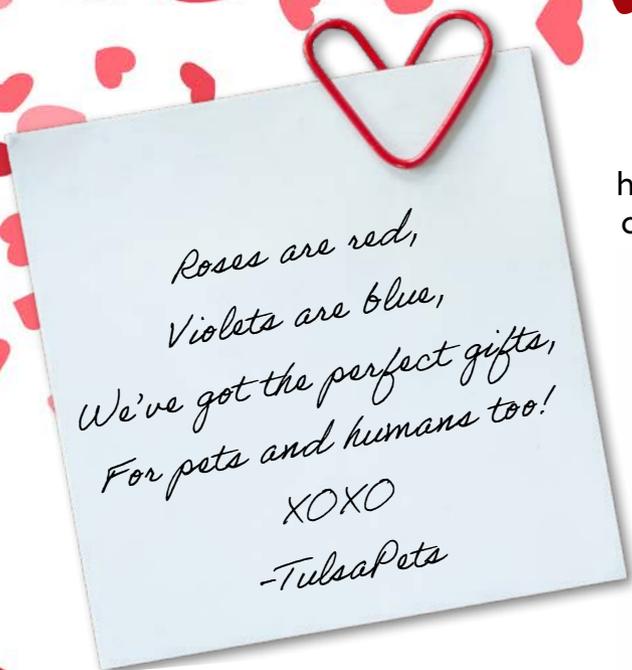
Price said his pets are a reminder of how we all just need to stop sometimes and take a moment.

“I absolutely love having my pets at work,” he said. “They just help me realize that life is special and that we need to enjoy the simple things.”

Studio Records Broken Arrow is located in the Rose District at 111 E. Commercial St. Follow Studio Records BA on Facebook for updates and photos of the furry staff members. 🐾

# Valentine's Day GIFT GUIDE

Whether you're spoiling a furry Valentine or the humans who love them, our gift guide is packed with cute finds that will make tails wag and hearts flutter!



**GLORY HAUS  
RED HEART TRAVEL MUG**  
\$24.99 | Southern Agriculture

Take your love on the go! This cheetah-print mug with a bright red heart keeps drinks warm and hearts happy wherever you roam.



**BARKING BUBBLY**  
\$11.50 | Fetch

Surprise your good boy or girl with a plush bottle of "Muttscato" — the perfect little extra to pair with their toy bouquet or heart-shaped cookies.



**WERUVA BFF VALENTINE  
CANNED CAT FOOD**

\$1.79 | Southern Agriculture  
Your best feline friend is sure to exclaim "Be my Meow-intine!" once they've filled their tummy with this delicious wild-caught tuna and pumpkin dinner.



**THE FOGGY DOG COLLARS**

\$32.99-\$36.99 | Southern Agriculture

Dress your pup for the season of love with The Foggy Dog's Valentine-inspired collars in pink, plum and raspberry hues. From playful gingham to plush velvet, each style pairs standout color with gold hardware.



**GOOD LUCK SOCK — CUPID PUGS**  
\$12.99 | Southern Agriculture

Give your Valentine the gift of toasty feet with these adorable Cupid Pug socks. Cozy, cute and guaranteed to spark a smile, they come in men's and women's sizes — so you can match and share the love!





**ZIPPYPAWS – VALENTINE’S MINIZ HEART COOKIES**

**\$12.99 | Southern Agriculture**

This three-pack of squeaky toys looks just like frosted heart cookies — complete with adorable smiling faces. Sweet, soft and perfectly pup-sized, they’re a Valentine’s treat your dog will love.

**MADE BY CLEO – “LOVE SONG” CAT COLLAR**

**\$22.95 | Southern Agriculture**

Add a touch of Valentine’s charm to your kitty’s style! Festive and functional, this red and white collar with hearts features a jingling bell for a little extra fun with every step.



**THE FOGGY DOG VALENTINE’S GINGHAM BANDANA**

**\$26.99 | Southern Agriculture**

A bright pink gingham bandana is the paw-fect preppy accessory for Valentine’s Day or any time your pup wants to turn heads in style.



**ZIPPYPAWS – VALENTINE’S DAY BURROW BOUQUET OF RED ROSES**

**\$16.99 | Southern Agriculture**

Who says you can’t give your furry valentine flowers? This bouquet stuffed toy features a squeaker in each rose for hours of fun. The soft material is gentle on puppies and older dogs with sensitive teeth. It’s an adorable twist on a classic gift.

**CAVALLINI & CO. VINTAGE VALENTINE PUZZLE**

**\$19.99 | Southern Agriculture**

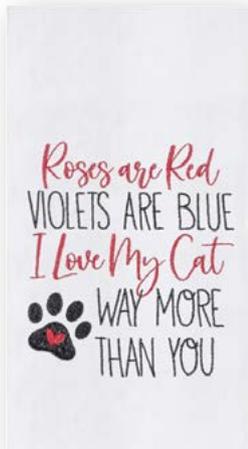
Sending love via Cupid’s arrow has never been easier with this vintage-inspired 500-piece puzzle. Featuring a collage of images from the Cavallini archives, it’s perfect for your human sweetheart (or yourself).



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# Fur-Ever Love

10 reasons pets make the best valentines

**THIS VALENTINE'S DAY**, we're celebrating the furry, four-legged friends who make every day sweeter and a little bit funnier. From cuddles to quirky habits, our pets show love in their own special ways.

**1 They love you exactly as you are — especially in your oldest sweatpants.** Fancy outfits impress no one in your house. Comfort (and crumbs) are what truly matter.

**2 They greet you with Oscar-level enthusiasm every single time.** You stepped outside for 14 seconds? They act like you were gone for a decade.

**3 They never cancel plans — and they're thrilled with whatever you choose.** Romantic walk? Cozy snacks on the couch? Your pet is in.

**4 Their cuddles are top tier... even if they steal 90% of the blanket.** Whether it's a dog sprawling across your legs or a cat burrowing under the covers, their affection makes every snuggle worth it.

**5 They think your cooking is incredible, no matter how questionable it truly is.** Burnt dinner or soggy noodles? Your pet would still write a glowing Yelp review.

**6 They're gifted listeners.** You can deliver a full TED Talk, and they'll just blink lovingly.

**7 They teach you to appreciate life's simple joys.** A sunbeam on the floor, a gentle purr or a soft nuzzle — pets help you notice and savor the little things that make every day special.

**8 They make you laugh like no one else can.** Sleeping with their legs straight up in the air or unexpectedly zooming across the room, pets bring joy in ways only they can.

**9 They inspire creativity and imagination.** Pets spark fun ideas and playful energy every day, whether it's through inventing games or inspiring us to snap photos of adorable antics.

**10 They remind you what real love feels like.** Their love is simple, loyal, unconditional — even if it's accompanied by drool. And we wouldn't have it any other way. 🐾





Elisa and Sullivan

# In Good Company



Paul and Elmo

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*Starting the new year with a good book is always a great habit!  
We've rounded up two perfect picks to kick off 2026.*

# 'Answers to Dog'

A moving tale of friendship, rescue and self-discovery **Review by KILEY ROBERSON**

**SOMETIMES THE RIGHT** companion doesn't need words to understand you. In "Answers to Dog," National Book Award-winning author Pete Hautman reminds readers that healing can arrive on four legs, covered in mud, with burrs in its fur and loyalty in its eyes. What begins as a story about a boy and a stray dog becomes a profound exploration of connection, courage and the quiet ways love finds us when we're most alone.

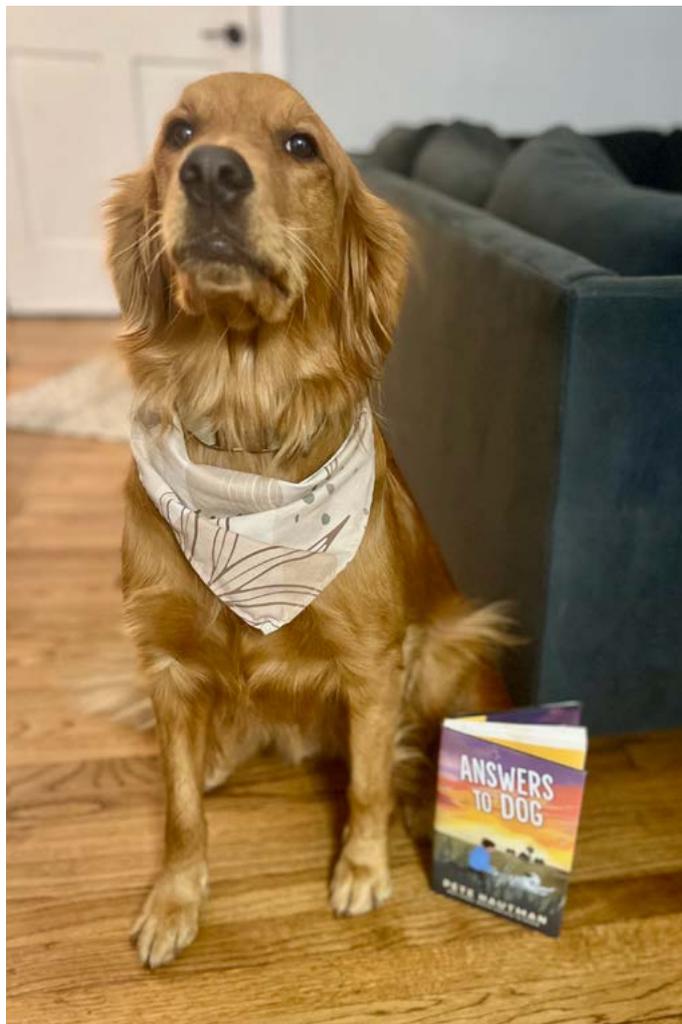
Evan Dunn isn't the kind of kid who stands out. He runs cross-country because running feels simpler than talking, and silence hurts less than disappointment. At home, his parents' arguments hang in the air like fog. Then one afternoon, on a long run through the back roads near his Minnesota town, a Border Collie appears — thin, scruffy and determined to keep pace beside him. At first, Evan tries to ignore the dog, but something about its mismatched eyes and scrappy persistence pulls him in. Before long, the pair form a bond that changes the course of both their lives.

Told in alternating perspectives between Evan and the dog he later names Sam, "Answers to Dog" gives readers a rare view of companionship from both sides of the leash. Hautman gives Sam's voice a canine logic, instinctive and vivid, without ever humanizing him too much. Through Sam's eyes, the world is smell and sound, trust and danger, hunger and belonging. It's a bold narrative move that works beautifully, immersing readers in both the boy's emotional struggle and the dog's fierce devotion. The effect is grounding and deeply empathetic, reminding us of how animals sense truths that humans often overlook.

At its heart, this is a story about neglect and connection. Both boy and dog have been left to fend for themselves in different ways. Evan's parents are caught up in their own struggles, while Sam's backstory involves a cruel breeder and a brush with abuse. Yet Hautman resists turning the story into a simple rescue tale. Instead, he builds a nuanced portrait of healing, one that honors the slow, uneven process of trust.

What makes "Answers to Dog" so compelling is its emotional honesty. Hautman writes with restraint, never tipping into sentimentality, even as the relationship between Evan and Sam deepens. The scenes of training, running and quiet companionship are rendered with such care that they feel lived-in rather than staged. Young readers who have loved books like "Because of Winn-Dixie" or "A Dog's Way Home" will find familiar emotional terrain here.

The supporting characters, from Evan's tentative new friend Hana to his perceptive coach, add gentle layers of community and growth. Each helps Evan see himself and Sam in new ways. Even the setting, a small-town landscape of fields and forest trails, becomes a kind of secondary character, mirroring the rhythms of fear, freedom and belonging that drive the story forward.



**"Answers to Dog" is Charlie approved.**

While "Answers to Dog" doesn't shy away from difficult subjects — animal mistreatment, loneliness and grief — it ultimately offers hope. And for those of you like me, who won't read a book or watch a movie where the pet dies, rest assured that Sam lives happily ever after. That's not a spoiler because the real beauty in this book is that it reminds readers that compassion, even in its smallest acts, has power. While "Answers to Dog" is technically juvenile fiction, readers of all ages can appreciate Evan's journey toward self-confidence, sparked by one loyal dog.

Poignant, perceptive and beautifully written, "Answers to Dog" is destined to join the ranks of modern classic dog stories. It's a quiet triumph that will speak to animal lovers, sensitive readers and anyone who has ever needed to be seen — and found. 🐾

# ‘Think Like a Dog’

Understand Your Dog’s Behavior, Improve Communication, and Apply the Same Principles to Every Area of Your Life **Review by LAUREN CAVAGNOLO**

**HAVE YOU EVER** wondered why your dog behaves the way he does? Some canine habits are easy to understand while others can be a little puzzling — or even leave you scratching your head and wondering what’s going on.

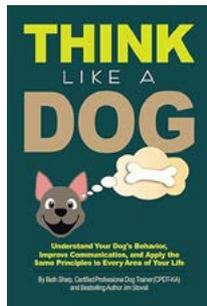
“Think Like A Dog” helps pet owners better understand the why behind their dog’s behavior, improving communication between owner and pet. What makes the book stand out among animal behavior books is that it relates these principles to human relationships, making it applicable across many areas of your life.

Written by Oklahoma dog trainer Beth Sharp in partnership with fellow Oklahoman and bestselling author Jim Stovall — known for his novel “The Ultimate Gift” — “Think Like a Dog” examines topics such as trust, communication, environment management, objective observation and more as they relate to the canine experience.

Sharp, who has more than 20 years of experience training dogs, makes no claims at solving behavioral issues, but rather provides owners with valuable perspectives on a dog’s point of view in a variety of scenarios, empowering owners to find their own solutions to their unique problems.

Before anyone can change a dog’s behavior, they must first understand why the behavior is happening. While we can’t know with absolute certainty what a dog is thinking or feeling, Sharp helps decode the cues our pups are giving us that we may be overlooking or misunderstanding.

Well-intentioned actions or poor environmental management may actually be causing undesirable behaviors in our pups that owners are trying to prevent. Meanwhile, your dog may be telling you exactly what he needs in order to change his behavior, but if you don’t speak his



language, you may never know what he is trying to say.

Sharp’s insights help owners take a step back and look at the bigger picture, giving them the ability

to identify the source of the problem instead of focusing on the symptoms or annoying behavior. Oftentimes, as readers will quickly discover, the problem doesn’t stem from the canine but rather the human.

The book is full of real-life, relatable examples pulled from both Sharp’s experiences as a dog trainer and foster for rescue dogs as well as Stovall’s own life experiences.

Short chapters and a quick pace make “Think Like A Dog” a fast read, perfect for any dog owner who is looking to cut to the chase and start improving their relationship with their pet right away.

Sharp is a certified professional dog trainer (CPDT-KA) and sees clients for training and behavior help through her business, Train Great Dogs. Sharp previously offered free training classes for those adopting from Tulsa Animal Welfare as a way to help reduce the return rate. She has also supported Tulsa rescue programs through a variety of volunteer activities.

Stovall is a bestselling author, athlete, investment broker and entrepreneur, all while overcoming the challenge of blindness. An advocate for the visually impaired, he was chosen as the International Humanitarian of the Year in 2000 for his work through Narrative Television Network. 🐾

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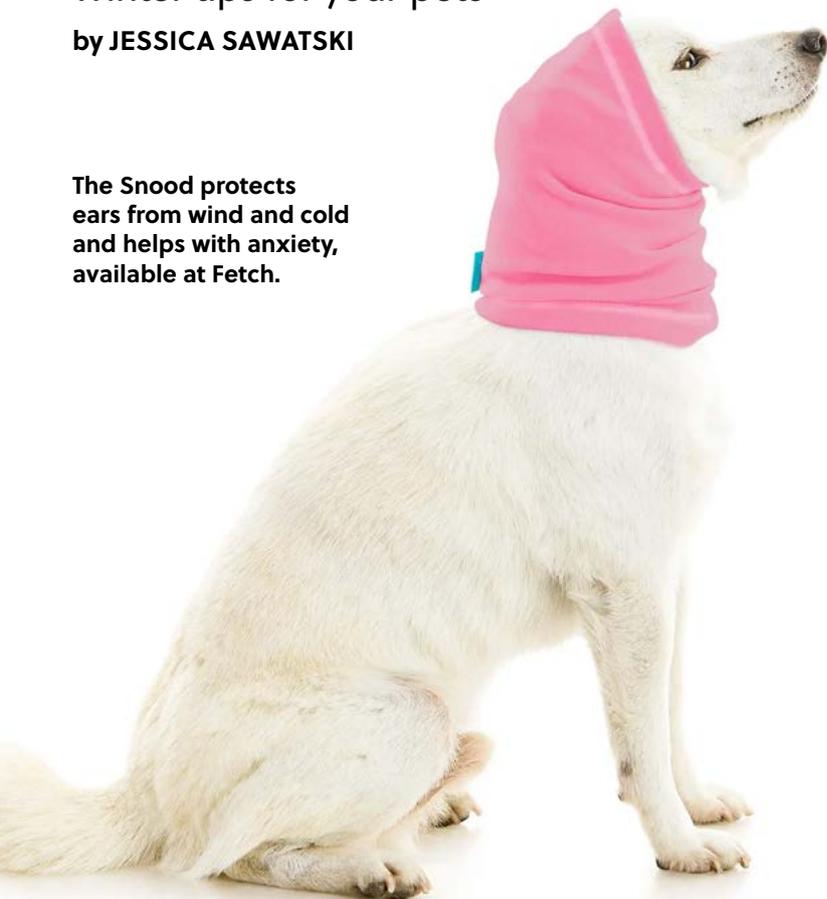


# Safe, Warm & Active

## Winter tips for your pets

by JESSICA SAWATSKI

The Snood protects ears from wind and cold and helps with anxiety, available at Fetch.



**WHEN TEMPERATURES** drop in Tulsa, it's tempting for people and pets to hunker down. But winter doesn't have to sideline exercise, enrichment or wellness. With a few tweaks, you can keep your pets happy, healthy and safe all season long.

### Indoor Fun for Active Minds and Bodies

When icy sidewalks or freezing winds make walks less appealing, bring the fun indoors. Interactive toys, puzzle feeders and treat-dispensing games turn mealtime into a brain workout, while simple games keep energy and spirits up.

"Hide-and-seek is an especially good game for kids and dogs to play together," says Mary Green, CPDT-KA, of K9 Manners & More. "You can also reintroduce toys that may have fallen to the bottom of the toy box, as these can become 'new and novel' to the pup. Better still, have a stash of toys they haven't seen yet."

Food can be enriching too. "We lose a big opportunity when we simply put our dog's food into the bowl," Green adds. "Put part of their meal in a Kong™, puzzle feeder or snuffle mat to encourage foraging and focus."

And don't forget: enrichment doesn't have to break the budget. "Take an old muffin tin, put some treats in the spaces and put tennis balls on top. That's a great way to introduce an easy game," says Green.

### When It's Safe to Go Outside

Fresh-air walks are still doable — just shorten outings, stick to dry, non-icy surfaces and be observant. Since stiffness and pain from arthritis may worsen in the cold, watch for signs of discomfort, such as lifting paws, shivering or slowing down as these can signal frostbite risk or hypothermia.

"When temperatures are below freezing, most pets should be outside no longer than 10–15 minutes. Pets

## Cold Weather Myths and Facts

**MYTH 1:** My dog's fur keeps them warm enough.

**FACT:** Even thick-coated breeds can get cold, especially in wind or wet conditions. Limit time outdoors and offer shelter and layers as needed.

**MYTH 2:** Pets don't need as much water in winter.

**FACT:** Indoor heating causes dehydration just like summer heat. Always provide fresh, unfrozen water — especially after walks or play.

**MYTH 3:** Cats are fine in garages or sheds.

**FACT:** Garages can dip below freezing and often contain toxins like antifreeze. Even "outdoor cats" need a warm, insulated, dry shelter.

**MYTH 4:** Booties are just for fashion.

**FACT:** They protect paws from salt, ice melt and frostbite. If your pet refuses them, try paw wax or rinse and dry feet after every walk.

**MYTH 5:** Pets don't get bored in winter.

**FACT:** Less outdoor time means fewer outlets for energy. Rotate toys, add indoor games and make enrichment part of your pet's daily routine.

accustomed to being outdoors need shelter and protection from the elements, including warm bedding and fresh, unfrozen water,” says Alyson Fryer, DVM.

Breed and coat matter as well. “Determining when it’s safe to take a dog outside is dependent upon the dog and the breed of the dog,” says Green. “Dogs such as Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies and Great Pyrenees love to be outside in the cold and even the snow. Dogs without an undercoat — not so much. Let the dog tell you whether or not they are comfortable outside. When you take them out for a potty break, do they want to play? Or are they making a beeline back to the house?”

Additionally, older pets feel the chill more. Offer warm, draft-free beds and opt for gentle, frequent movement over long, strenuous sessions.

### Winter Hazards & Gear to Help

Ice and toxins are the two biggest hazards, according to Fryer. “Slipping on ice can cause traumatic injuries, from sprains to fractures,” she says. “Toxins, such as anti-freeze and ice melt, are common winter hazards. Anti-freeze ingestion is life-threatening. As little as a few licks



can be toxic and result in kidney failure. In addition, choose pet-safe ice melt (or sand for traction), use booties or paw wax, and always wipe paws after walks. Around the holidays, keep an eye on décor: poinsettias can cause drooling, vomiting or diarrhea if ingested, and sap may irritate skin or eyes.”

Dry indoor air can leave skin flaky and coats dull; regular grooming helps distribute natural oils. Protective layers and paw care go a long way too. After each outing, wipe paws to remove ice, salt and chem-

icals that can irritate or make pets sick.

“At Fetch, we carry natural skin and paw care, omega oils to combat dryness, and protective apparel like Ruffwear jackets, boots and Gooby fleece for smaller pups — plus Snoods to keep ears warm,” says Jennie Gilpin, owner of Fetch. “My personal favorite is the Ruffwear Overcoat Fuse Vest — it’s practical, durable and cozy.”

### A Note for Cats and Small Pets

Cats, especially those kept strictly indoors, benefit from climbing furniture, scratching posts and interactive play to stay stimulated during winter months.

Small pets like rabbits, guinea pigs and birds are particularly sensitive to temperature changes. Keep them away from cold windows and drafts, and ensure their enclosures are well-insulated but still well-ventilated.

Cold weather may slow us down, but it doesn’t have to sideline your pet’s health and happiness. With a mix of indoor activities, smart outdoor strategies and seasonal care, you can make this winter your pet’s coziest — and healthiest — yet. 🐾



## Crestwood Crossing Animal Hospital





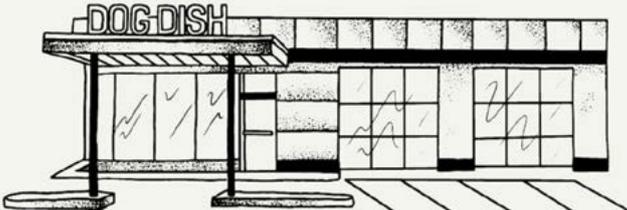
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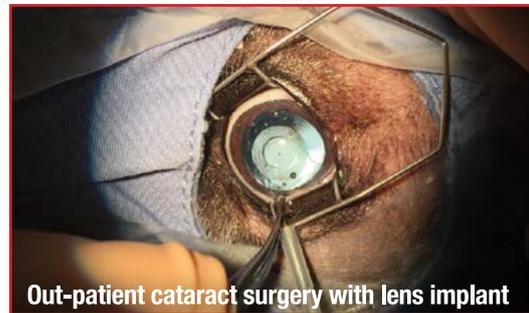
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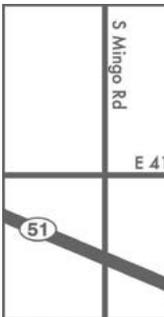
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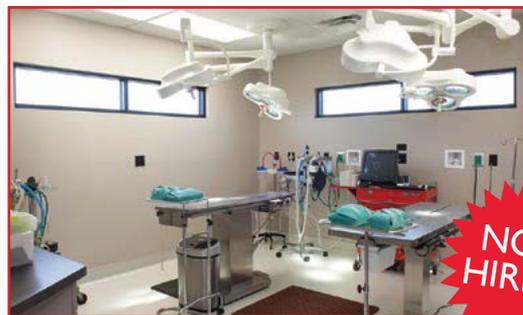


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# NEW YEAR, NEW PET

*A new year is the perfect time for a fresh start whether you've welcomed a new puppy into your home or you're ready to build better habits with the dog already by your side. From DIY enrichment treat recipes and fun indoor games to conquering new training skills, these ideas will help keep pets happy, engaged and thriving all year long, setting them up to grow into their best selves.*



# NEW PUPPY IN THE FAMILY

If the new year also brought a new pet along, congratulations! The first weeks are the perfect time to establish routines, explore enrichment activities and build a strong bond. Short daily play sessions, gentle training and interactive toys help your pet feel secure and set the stage for a happy, healthy year together.

**Daily play session:** Try a five-minute “find it” game using small treats or kibble. Hide a few pieces around one room while your dog watches, then give the cue: “Find it!” It engages their nose, builds confidence and is easy for puppies who aren’t ready for active fetch or tug.

**Gentle training for a new or shy puppy:** Introduce “touch” (nose targeting). Hold your hand out a few inches from their nose. When the puppy sniffs or boops your hand, quietly say “Yes” or click, and give a small treat. It’s low pressure, builds trust and becomes a useful cue for guiding them through new environments.

**Interactive toys:** Treat dispensing toys, like the Kong™ puppy activity ball, support appropriate chewing behavior while encouraging gentle play and problem-solving skills. It’s a great way to keep shy puppies engaged, build confidence independently and provide a calming activity during downtime.



The Kong puppy activity ball supports appropriate chewing behavior while encouraging gentle play and problem-solving skills.

# OWNER RESOLUTIONS FOR PET HEALTH



*Start the year by committing to small daily habits and scheduling key wellness checks that support your pet’s long-term health and happiness.*

- **Walk More, Together** – Add short daily walks or indoor play sessions, even on chilly days.
- **Track Meals & Treats** – Keep portions in check and avoid overfeeding.
- **Schedule Vet Checkups** – Annual wellness exams, dental cleanings and vaccines.

## QUICK TIP:

Try a new route or a dog-friendly trail once a week to keep walks exciting for both of you.

- **Daily Enrichment** – Rotate toys, puzzles or short training sessions to keep their brain active.
- **Groom Regularly** – Brush coats, trim nails and clean ears to prevent discomfort and detect changes early.
- **Hydration Goals** – Ensure fresh water is always available, even in winter when pets may drink less.
- **Fun Fitness** – Try a new activity: fetch, agility or indoor obstacle courses.
- **Pet-Proof Your Home** – Keep hazards like chemicals, small objects and seasonal décor out of reach.
- **Document the Year** – Take monthly photos or keep a pet journal to track milestones, growth and new tricks.
- **Bond Daily** – Spend intentional time cuddling, playing or practicing gentle massage for stress relief.

# MINDFUL MORSELS

*From brain-boosting frozen bites for dogs to crunchy turkey treats for cats, these DIY recipes aren't just tasty, they're a chance to engage your pet's mind and kick off the year on a high note.*

## PAW-SOME PUZZLE TREATS

### WHAT YOU NEED

- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt (unsweetened, no xylitol)
- 2–3 small pieces of pet-safe fruit, diced (apple, blueberries or banana)
- 2 tablespoons of your dog's regular kibble

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a small bowl, mix the yogurt and diced fruit.
2. Fill a muffin tin or a Kong™ toy about halfway with the yogurt-fruit mixture.
3. Sprinkle a few kibble pieces on top for a crunchy surprise.
4. Freeze for 1–2 hours until firm.
5. Serve in small portions and watch your pup work to uncover the tasty layers.

**TIP:** Encourage your dog to sniff, paw and problem-solve while enjoying a healthy snack. You can rotate fruits or add a spoonful of pumpkin puree for variety.



## WHISKER-LICIOUS TURKEY CRUNCHIES

Keep your cat busy and happy with a crunchy, protein-packed treat they can “hunt.”

### WHAT YOU NEED

- ¼ cup cooked, finely chopped turkey (plain, no seasoning)
- 2 tablespoons oat flour or whole wheat flour
- 1 egg white
- Optional: a pinch of dried catnip for extra fun

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix turkey and egg white until well combined.
3. Stir in flour until a soft, slightly sticky dough forms.
4. Roll into tiny pea-sized balls or small disks.
5. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake 8–10 minutes until firm.
6. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.

**TIP:** Turn snack time into enrichment! Hide a few treats in a paper bag, small cardboard box or puzzle feeder, so your cat can use their nose and paws to “hunt” each bite. Small changes in placement make each session a new challenge.

# HELP YOUR PUP SHINE

## Canine Good Citizen Program

Helping your dog become the best version of himself isn't just about obedience — it's about strengthening your bond, building trust and nurturing confidence in everyday situations. Training can open the door to better communication and a deeper connection between you and your pet.

The American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen® (CGC) program supports dogs of all ages and breeds in becoming well-mannered companions while empowering owners with the skills to be confident, responsible leaders. It's a positive path forward for pet parents who want to bring out the very best in their dogs.

The CGC program focuses on 10 essential skills, each aimed at fostering good manners and positive interactions:

1. Accepting a friendly stranger – Your dog calmly greets new people without jumping or barking.
2. Sitting politely for petting – Ensures your dog remains gentle and patient when meeting others.
3. Appearance and grooming – Your dog tolerates brushing, nail trims and handling, making vet visits and home care easier.
4. Out for a walk – Walking politely on a loose leash makes outings more enjoyable for both dog and owner.

5. Walking through a crowd – Teaches calm behavior in busy public spaces, from parks to pet-friendly events.
6. Sit and down on cue and stay in place – Builds reliable obedience, helping your dog remain under control anywhere.
7. Coming when called – A dependable recall keeps your dog safe and your mind at ease.
8. Reaction to another dog – Encourages calm, friendly behavior around other dogs.
9. Reaction to distraction – Helps your dog stay focused even with sights, sounds and smells around them.
10. Supervised separation – Teaches comfort and independence when left alone for short periods.

Visit [akc.org](http://akc.org) to learn more about the Canine Good Citizen program and how it can help your furry citizen shine. 🐾



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# Foster Facts

Busting the biggest myths about fostering pets in need

by SHARON BISHOP-BALDWIN



**Most foster pets are happy to simply hang out with you.**

**FEW THINGS CAN** be more beneficial to cats or dogs stuck in an animal shelter's cage or a rescue group's boarding facility than getting those prospective pets into foster homes as soon as possible.

No matter how modern, clean and cozy the facilities might be, they're simply not great environments for dogs and cats. Animals in shelters can develop behavioral issues or become anxious or depressed. Kittens and puppies, especially, are prone to catching diseases from other animals.

So why don't more people foster? Perhaps they subscribe to some of the myths surrounding fostering, such as that it's expensive, time-consuming or requires special skills, or they fear that they will get "stuck" with an animal.

The truth is that fostering isn't as difficult as many people think — and the rewards are well worth it.

## Cost and Resources

"The rescue gives me everything I need" in terms of supplies and advice, and they cover the costs of any medicines or care, says Emily Hornay, who has fostered for Skiatook Paws and Claws Animal Rescue for about three years. "I don't spend any money unless it's something that I want to buy for the animal."

## Time Commitment

Hornay, who works as a registered veterinary technician at Forest Trails Animal Hospital and the Animal Emergency Center in Tulsa, in addition to going to school, says the time commitment isn't always what people expect. It can be a factor of what animal a person chooses to foster. Bottle-feeding kittens will require more hands-on care than fostering a 1- to 2-year-old dog, for example.

"These guys (the dogs she fosters) just want to hang out with you," Hornay says.

"They don't need to be pampered. They're just so excited to be out of a crate."

Christina Shepherd volunteers for Pause for Paws. The Tulsa nonprofit arranges foster homes for pets whose owners are experiencing homelessness, mental illness or addiction so that the owner can get urgent medical, mental health, or substance abuse treatment.

Shepherd tends to specialize in animals with medical or other special needs, and she knows that not everyone can or wants to handle those cases, but she also knows that organizations won't force animals on people who aren't comfortable with their level of required care.

And Pause for Paws' unique mission ensures that she won't "get stuck" with an animal.

"You know going in that they have an owner. That removes a lot of the barriers to fostering. It's going to be short term, and it will be easier to give them up," she says.

Ashley Dwyer works for the Oklahoma Alliance for Animals in Tulsa and also fosters for OAA and other rescues. Since 2014, she has fostered about 45 to 50 animals, primarily dogs.

She says her friends admire the work she does but don't typically get on board themselves.

"I feel like a lot of them want to do that, ... but it's so intimidating. It can be overwhelming," Dwyer says. "But usually the first time somebody fosters, then they'll foster forever."

## Letting Go

All three say the thing they hear most from people about fostering is their fear that they wouldn't want to give up the animal.

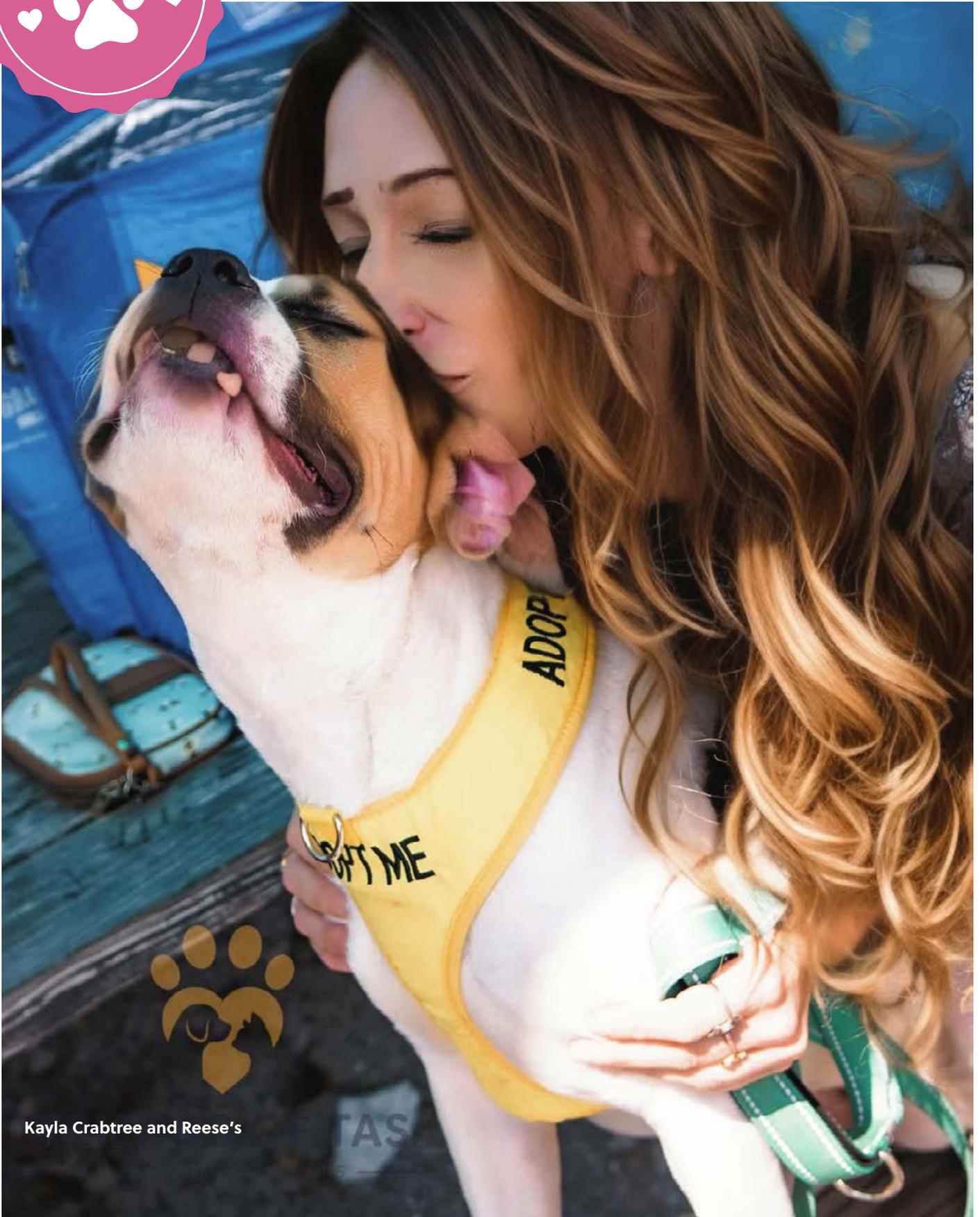
"I do get it," Shepherd says. "I certainly understand that you fall in love, and I have certainly foster-failed. But the lives saved are what I wish more people put in the forefront.

"For every animal you foster, you're saving two animals — the one you foster and the one you're giving more time in the shelter," she says. "Every time you can make space in the shelter, another animal gets more time. That's the math."

Dwyer explained that finding temporary homes helps dogs avoid the stress and expense of long-term boarding and gives them a better chance to thrive. "Fosters are everything to us," she said. 🐾



*In each issue this year, meet a local foster parent and discover why they open their home and heart to pets in need.*



Kayla Crabtree and Reese's

# Fostering Reese's

by KAYLA CRABTREE

**EIGHT MONTHS AGO**, I walked through the doors of Tulsa Animal Services. What began as a simple act of volunteering quickly became an extraordinary journey that touched my heart in ways I never imagined. With over 200 hours of volunteering, I became part of a passionate community dedicated to the well-being of our furry friends.

Recently, TAS began releasing their at-risk lists twice a week, showing dogs in urgent need of help. Inspired, my fellow volunteers and I started a Facebook page called "Friends of TAS" to showcase these pups because we believe visibility leads to salvation. Our mantra? "Seen equals saved."

My heart sank when I discovered that four of my favorite dogs had landed on that dreaded list. Three were swiftly adopted, leaving only Reese's behind. An hour before her deadline, I felt a deep pull within me. I had every reason to say, "I can't." I already had three dogs, a busy schedule and a full plate. But looking at her sweet face, I felt a surge of conviction. How could I not? So I decided to open my heart and home, and let me tell you, it has been one of the most rewarding decisions I have ever made.

Reese's immediately illuminated our lives with her gentle spirit. Watching her discover what it means to feel safe, to love, and to simply be a dog has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. I sometimes catch myself staring at her, marveling at how close she came to being forgotten. Yet here she is, curled up beside me, radiating warmth. Each goofy tail wag and hopeful gaze feels like a miracle I never want to take for granted.

When I first took Reese's in, I was excited but nervous. Would she adapt?

Would I have the time? My heart knew the answer. So I opened my home and heart to her. We built trust, shared countless cuddles and created small victories together. And as she grew, this small, feisty spirit reminded me every day why fostering matters so much.

Yet I'm aware of my role in her journey. Fostering always carries the bitter-sweet understanding that my heart will break when it's time to say goodbye. I do this knowing that letting go is truly an act of love. Each time a foster leaves for their forever home, it's not just a loss; it's also a victory. By giving a pup the chance to flourish, I create space for another life to be saved. Yes, I'll cry when Reese's leaves, but those tears will be filled with gratitude.

During my time fostering Reese's, I've also had the privilege of temporarily fostering another dog named Peanut who was pulled by a rescue. Peanut's stay was brief, but his impact was monumental. Saying goodbye to him was difficult, yet knowing that I played a role in his transition made the tearful farewell worthwhile. Each goodbye opened a door for another soul in need, and that thought alone holds its own kind of beauty. As Reese's and my time together continues, I remind her daily that she is not disposable, not forgotten and certainly not too much.

She is precious, worthy and deserving of all the love the world has to offer. It's incredible to realize that every ounce of care and commitment poured into fostering builds a bridge to happier endings for these beautiful souls. I can't save them all. But for Reese's, Peanut and every foster who comes through my home, I can be the reason their story continues. And that's enough to keep me going. 🐾

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# Solutions in Action

Fighting pet overpopulation through spay/neuter,  
community collaboration

Story and photos by SHARON BISHOP-BALDWIN



**Maximilian, a flame-point Siamese kitten, is among the thousands of pets that were neutered or spayed at Spay Oklahoma in 2025.**

**HARDLY ANYONE** was surprised when Bissell Pet Foundation founder Cathy Bissell wrote that the nation's overburdened animal shelters are in a crisis of "perfect storm" proportions, but local animal rescue advocates say there are ways to help part the clouds.

Bissell wrote in a June blog post that a "perfect storm" — created by a housing crisis, veterinary shortages and economic strain — has resulted in fewer adoptions, shelters increasingly beyond capacity and more unsterilized animals roaming the streets.

Unsurprisingly, the worst of these conditions tends to be in the South, where poverty is harshest, pet regulations are weakest, the breeding season is the longest and resources are the scarcest.

In the first half of 2025, approximately 2.8 million cats and dogs entered animal shelters and rescues across the United States, according to Shelter Animals Count, a national database. Of those, some 1.9 million were adopted into homes. Simple math shows a difference of about 900,000 cats, dogs, kittens and puppies. That's the number that the nation's 4,000-plus municipal shelters and 9,000-plus nongovernmental rescues have been desperately working to place in loving homes.

Sand Springs Animal Welfare Coordinator Tracy Arvidson is one of those shelters' employees, but even as she begs people to adopt the pets in her kennels, she knows that adoption can't be the only solution.

Spaying and neutering "is the only way to get things to slow down," she says. "We are being reactive (in focusing only on adoption). ... If we can get ahead of it and be proactive and stop the babies that are unwanted, then that's where we can get somewhere.

"It's just like eradicating a disease. What do we do? We vaccinate. What is that? It's a preventative. We figure out how to stop that disease. We don't just figure out how to treat it afterwards."

It would be easy for Kelly Hines to be despondent.

"What I look at weekly are the TAS (Tulsa Animal Services) euthanasia numbers, and then we also have a good feel for how things are going because we're there every day, and we see firsthand the need in our city," says Hines, the clinic manager at Spay Oklahoma, a Tulsa-based nonprofit whose sole mission is to reduce the numbers of unwanted cats and dogs through sterilization.

"Some days it's overwhelming, honestly. We can do 10,000 surgeries a year between our main veterinarian and our relief vets and still feel like we are just making a dent," Hines says. "We could easily do two to three times more surgeries a year with unlimited resources. The backlog never goes away."

But while Arvidson sees her share of people who are still resistant to sterilizing

their animals, Hines says she encounters far less apathy and ignorance than in the past.

“I just see the need firsthand and the desire firsthand,” she says. “I think awareness is really high for spay and neuter. I think people understand that it’s important, and they want to get it done, but in this economy, there are challenges across the board.”

Certainly, financial obstacles are an issue.

“Oftentimes, people are upset about the cost, but what we charge is actually less than what we pay,” she says, adding that Spay Oklahoma recently had to raise its rates a small amount in order to cover more of its costs. “We’re a nonprofit. That’s a tough decision for anyone,” she says. “But we have to close the gap.”

Another major hurdle is the lack of available appointments, an obstacle tied to a shortage of veterinarians.

“We stay booked three weeks out year-round, and that’s as far out as we open the calendar,” Hines says, likening the experience to “trying to buy concert tickets.”

Other barriers can be more complicated: A person doesn’t have transportation to get a pet to or from surgery. The owner can’t take off work during the hours the pet needs to arrive or be picked up. Perhaps the pet needs other medical care before it can be sterilized.



Even those challenges can be overcome, says Hines, who also administers a Facebook page created to connect people in need of assistance — such as funding or transportation — with those who have the means or time to help.

The page, Oklahoma Spay and Neuter Assistance, has expanded into a clearinghouse for information about where to obtain spay and neuter surgeries and what organizations offer low-cost services or reduced-price vouchers.

Another ray of hope for Hines is that animal assistance organizations are joining forces in ways they haven’t previously.

“I like seeing some collaboration between groups to get some more surger-

ies done,” she says. “This is just going to require a lot of different entities working on it.”

Arvidson says municipalities can help by rethinking often-punitive pet policies. In her city of Sand Springs, when dogs are picked up and found to be unsterilized, instead of fining owners an exorbitant amount, authorities give them the opportunity to “readopt” their pets for the standard adoption fee, which includes spaying or neutering.

The city of Tulsa recently announced a program wherein owners of unaltered animals can have citations waived with proof of sterilization, and owners are offered a low-cost voucher for the surgery.

“You’ve kind of got to look at what’s going to get you somewhere,” Arvidson says. “I know it’s very frustrating, and it’s very easy to just write people tickets. But that doesn’t accomplish anything ... and you’re going to be the enemy.”

“We try to be the person you call when you need something. If you can’t get your animal fixed, then you call us. We will help you figure it out.”

Hines says that’s exactly what people need — help.

“I think most people would want to have their animal fixed in a perfect world. Everyone coming through the door is trying to do the right thing by their animal.” 🐾

## What Can I Do?

1. Ensure that your own pets are spayed or neutered, and if they aren’t, keep them indoors except for supervised bathroom breaks until you can do so.
2. Cover the cost of having stray, feral or community cats in your neighborhood sterilized.
3. Donate to organizations that provide TNR — or trap, neuter, return — services for stray or feral cats in your community.
4. Support, financially or otherwise, shelters, rescues or other organizations that provide low-cost sterilization.
5. Donate to organizations that provide voucher programs for low-cost spaying and neutering.
6. Volunteer to help a friend, neighbor or even a stranger pay for their pet’s sterilization or help with transportation on the day of surgery.
7. Adopt additional pets if your lifestyle and budget allow for it, and make sure they’re spayed or neutered. Most shelters and rescues won’t adopt unaltered animals.
8. Become a foster home for a shelter or rescue organization. Besides freeing up space at the shelter or rescue, keeping animals in foster homes instead of cages ultimately makes them better pets.
9. Volunteer your time for an animal assistance organization that is close to your home or your heart. The needs — and opportunities — are endless.
10. Advocate for animals and the people helping them. Lend your voice to efforts to improve their lives.

# Brushing Up on Pet Dental Care

What Every Pet Owner Should Know

by LAUREN CAVAGNOLO

Dental chews and toys can help maintain oral health.



**HAS YOUR PUP** stopped eating like he used to or started pawing at his mouth? Maybe you've noticed his breath has been especially foul lately, or he is drooling more than normal. These can all be signs of poor dental health in your pet.

February is National Pet Dental Health Month, designated to raise awareness about the importance of oral health in our family pets. Good oral hygiene not only prevents pain and infection but can also protect vital organs and improve overall health, adding years to your pet's life.

## Warning Signs of Poor Dental Health

In addition to poor appetite or difficulty eating, discolored teeth, broken or loose teeth, and blood in the food bowl can all be warning signs of poor dental hygiene.

"Most pet owners don't look in their pet's mouth, let alone think that their pet's teeth will rot," said Dr. Kimberly Weiss, owner of Healing Hands Veterinary Wellness Center in Oklahoma City. "Many pet owners don't think their pets have dental issues."

Additionally, pets don't always show obvious signs of oral pain, making it difficult for pet owners to recognize, said Dr.

## Pet Owner Action Steps

- Know the warning signs of dental problems.
- Look in your pet's mouth regularly and brush their teeth.
- Provide proper food, dental chews and toys.
- Have your pet's teeth examined annually by a veterinarian and follow their recommendations.

Ashley Feeley at River Trail Animal Hospital in Tulsa. "Sometimes the only sign is decreased interest in eating."

Left untreated, poor dental hygiene can lead to bigger problems (and bigger bills) down the road for pet owners.

Bacteria are the cause of bad breath. Coupled with inflamed gums, these early signs of poor hygiene will lead to bigger health issues, explained Dr. Dan Danner,

owner of Danner Veterinary Hospital in Tulsa.

"Bacteria in the mouth can enter the bloodstream and damage the heart, liver and kidneys, leading to more serious health problems," added Feeley.

## Prevention Is Key

The best ways to avoid dental problems and related health issues are feeding your dog quality food, brushing his teeth, giving him dental chews and toys, and taking him for an annual veterinarian exam.

Common sense and awareness can go a long way, said Danner. Pet owners should look in their pet's mouth two to three times a month.

"It's really important to monitor that, and if you can sense the dog's not doing something right or licking more, then take a look under that lip and see what's going on," Danner encouraged.

As with people, brushing daily is one of the best ways to keep your pet's teeth clean and healthy.

"Start early with conditioning your pet to allow brushing of teeth daily," Feeley advised. "Preventing the accumulation of dental tartar is the best way to keep your pet's mouth healthy."

The right food, toys and products can also help keep dental health issues at bay.

“Good nutrition is a start for good teeth, as well as proper dental chews or toys. Pet owners can get enzymes that can help dissolve tartar,” Weiss said.

Danner recommends using canine enzymatic toothpaste or rinses at the end of the day after taking up food and water. This allows the treatment to stay on the teeth longer.

And when it comes to cats and other small mammals, the advice on oral hygiene can vary.

“Cats don’t chew toys like dogs, and they won’t drink their water if additives are in the water. So proper food is best,” Weiss said. “Rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas, rats, mice, gerbils, etc., all have teeth that grow constantly. Pet owners must provide proper enrichment that can be chewed to keep their teeth at a healthy size.”

Weiss said signs of dental issues in pocket pets and rodents are weight loss, not eating and excessive salivation.

Have a veterinarian evaluate your pet’s teeth at least once a year; they can advise



**Annual exams are an important aspect of your pet’s oral health.**

you on the need for an anesthetic dental procedure for your pet, said Weiss.

Your veterinarian may recommend a professional dental cleaning under anesthesia for your pet.

“This allows us to examine the teeth safely and effectively,” Feeley said. “Dental radiographs (X-rays) are also beneficial as it allows us the ability to evaluate the integrity of teeth under the gum line. Based on a complete dental exam, your veterinarian may recommend tooth extractions.”

Veterinarian dental care has come a long way over the years, with more options and procedures that mirror human dental care, said Danner.

### Common Misconceptions

Some pet owners incorrectly believe that it is not safe for older pets to undergo anesthesia for routine dental cleanings.

“Anesthesia can safely be performed on older pets,” Feeley said. “Depending on your pet’s health history, your veterinarian may recommend additional bloodwork or testing prior to anesthesia to ensure they use the right anesthetic techniques.”

Additionally, there are pet owners who think providing hard plastic toys and bones for their dog will help keep their pet’s teeth healthy.

“These products can actually cause more damage and tooth fractures that expose the tooth to infections,” Feeley added.

The bottom line is to take care of your pet’s dental hygiene at home, monitor for early warning signs of a problem and don’t skip the annual vet visit. Preventative care and early action can keep your pet happy and healthy for years to come. 🐾

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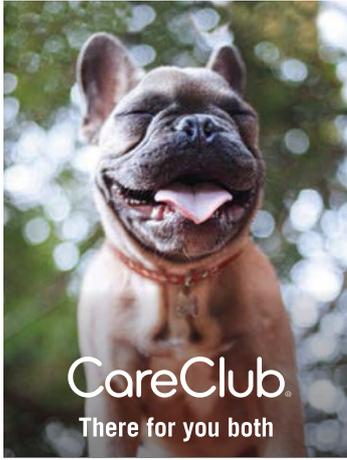
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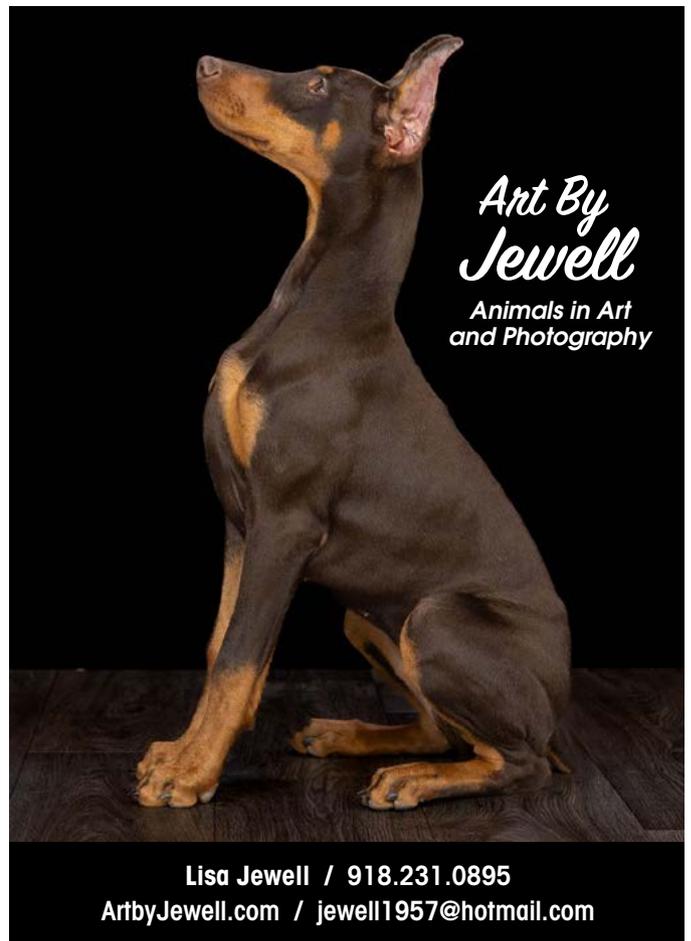
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# One Man's Trash

How a severely neglected dog became a beautiful treasure

by NANCY GALLIMORE

Photos courtesy of ASHLEY DWYER

**I RECOGNIZED** her eyes immediately from photos posted on Facebook. She was considering me politely, her gaze thoughtful and, reflexively, the slightest bit guarded. Though I knew we were destined to fall in love with each other, I did not blame her for making me earn her trust.

The beautiful hazel-colored eyes studying me belong to a Pit Bull Terrier mix named Fern. For all this young dog has endured, her momentary reservations were more than validated. For those who have not heard her tale, I'll give you a recap.

Fern's story started with a frantic phone call to the Oklahoma Alliance for Animals (OAA) office. OAA employee Ashley Dwyer answered the call, and the moment she heard the words "emaciated dog in a dumpster," she flew into action without a moment's thought.

Two sanitation workers were checking a commercial dumpster behind Tulsa businesses near 71st and Peoria when they made a heart-wrenching discovery. At first glance, the dumpster appeared to be empty, but then they saw her. Immobile and nothing more than flesh stretched across fragile bones, a dog was lying discarded in the damp filth. If not for the flash of the white of her eye, they would have believed the dog deceased.

Unsure how to approach the dog, the men put out a call for help. Ashley quickly



Fern, healthy and thriving.



Fern in the hospital with her stuffed turtle.

arrived on scene. Prepared for the worst, she peered into the large metal bin.

"The first thing I saw was her eye, large and round, looking up and rolling toward

me," said Ashley. That's all it took for Ashley to launch herself into the dumpster. The dog was unable to move a muscle. Her body went completely limp in Ashley's arms, but those bright hazel eyes stayed wide and somehow alert.

When asked how she managed to get herself and her precious cargo back out of the dumpster, Ashley paused and tried to remember the moment. "I really have no idea," she replied as she shook her head. "I just put her over my shoulder and knew I had to get help immediately."

Ashley raced the critically ill dog to Oklahoma Veterinary Specialists (OVS). Still running on pure adrenaline while choking back sobs, she burst into the lobby and simply said, "I found this dog in a dumpster — please help."



**Left: Fern at her new home with Ashley and Presley.**

**Below: Fern meeting her new canine family.**



The veterinarians and staff jumped into action. The dog, named Fern by her rescuer, received immediate treatment for extreme dehydration as the rest of her condition was assessed. The open pressure sores on her hips were gently cleaned. Her filthy body was given a tender sponge bath to provide much-needed relief.

Fern was treated to a heated bed, the softest blankets, a pillow for her head, a stuffed turtle friend and even a tablet propped up so she could watch Disney movies while she rested. Everyone at OVS rallied to provide every conceivable comfort to their little patient.

Still completely prone and unable to even lift her head, Fern found her voice and started talking to her caregivers. And then, when Ashley came to visit, Fern found the strength to wag her tail in obvious recognition and delight.

Fern's recovery was a slow and gradual climb. Over the first few days, supporting her condition was a journey filled with highs and lows as the dog's system struggled to recover from the most profound neglect her caregivers had ever witnessed. But through sheer determination, this little dog defied the odds.

The staff at OVS quite literally helped her every step of the way, fashioning a sling to support her frail legs as she learned to walk again. Fern spent nearly two weeks in intensive care, supported by OAA and donors from across the country.

With Ashley by her side, she took life-altering steps through the hospital halls and out the front door, her caregivers lining the way to cheer her on.

So what becomes of a Pit Bull tossed in a dumpster with no more thought than you would give when throwing away a bag of garbage? She becomes a princess, of course!

I asked Ashley when she realized Fern was a forever dog instead of a foster dog. "I knew the moment her eyes met mine from the bottom of that dumpster that this was my dog," Ashley said with complete conviction. "I was ready to do whatever was needed to save her."

Fern, still very weak and in need of specialized care including a regimented feeding plan, made the move to Ashley's home and straight into the hearts of Ashley and her equally compassionate daughter, Presley. Integrating easily with Ashley's other dogs, Fern was finally home.

The Fern I recently had the pleasure of meeting is a completely different dog from the one who nearly died from cruelty and extreme neglect last July. She is a sweet, robustly healthy dog with toned muscles and a sheen to her coat any hair stylist would envy. She has boundless energy for playing with her canine siblings. She has discovered a love for swimming. She eats the best food and sleeps cuddled closely to her favorite humans. And she wears a collar sporting a big pink bow instead of a crown.

Once cast aside like trash and left to perish, this beautiful girl is now a treasure to not only her family but to countless followers who supported her journey along the way. And though Fern has no idea of her celebrity status, she is an inspiration and a battle cry for compassion and justice — an accidental poster child for animal advocacy.

And the thing I love most about Fern? Those beautiful round, hopeful eyes. The eyes that spoke volumes when Fern could not. The eyes that refused to give up. 🐾



**Friday WITH FERN**

If you would like to see Fern's progress, Visit the Oklahoma Alliance for Animals Facebook page to follow the "Friday with Fern" series. Fern still has a story to tell as she uses her celebrity status to help others.

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# Pushing Those Buttons

Can pets really learn to talk? by JENNIFER SHARPE

**WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE** talking animal on social media? Is it Bastian or Bunny the dog? Or perhaps you prefer felines, like Billi or Steve B? Maybe you just adore the sassiness of Merlin the pig.

Pets that talk by pressing buttons with pre-recorded words are taking over the Internet, garnering followers on Tik Tok and Instagram, eager to see what these animals have to say.

Pet owners are giving their animals a voice by buying buttons that emit sounds or messages when pressed. The animals learn the meaning of each button through training, allowing them to tell humans when they want to play, eat, go outside and more.

## How do the buttons work?

Buttons are programmed with words and sounds of your choosing. There are many brands of button on the market, offering varied sizes, colors, shapes and configurations.

"The buttons emit a sound that is already familiar to most dogs," said Dr. Leticia Fanucchi, clinical assistant professor, behavioral medicine service, Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine. "The sounds are words they learn from simple operant conditioning."

Operant conditioning is a learning method that rewards or punishes behaviors. Positive reinforcement rewards can include praise, affection and the use of treats, although it's important with language training to limit when and how treats are used as rewards — you don't want to confuse the word's meaning with your pet.

## How much training does it take?

According to FluentPet's "The Complete Guide To Teaching Dogs To Talk with



**Teddy knows the word "treat."**

Photo by Melissa Schmitt.

Buttons," successful learning starts even before the buttons arrive.

There are likely many words that your pet already knows. FluentPet's Guide advocates paying attention to the words that you frequently use and are "highly motivating" to your learner, such as toy, walk, play or treat. Then talk to your learner all day long, being consistent with your language and responsive to your pet.

"Dogs learn from repetition, just like people. The more you repeat, the faster you consolidate memory and learn the final behavior," said Fanucchi.

**Banks is learning to use his first button with his favorite word: "walk."**

Photo by Anna Holton-Dean.

When the buttons are set up, FluentPet's Guide says to add them into your conversations with your pet. Whenever you say a word, press the corresponding button and follow-through on what it's about — this is called modeling.

Fanucchi said that the amount of training needed to teach a pet to use buttons depends on the animal and how much time the owner invests in training. "Usually, five minutes a day is very effective," she said.

FluentPet's Guide recommends adding new words only after your learner understands how to press buttons, realizes that pressing a button causes something to happen, and knows the meaning of the buttons they already use.

A typical learner's flow might start with observing and investigating the buttons, then pressing a button repeatedly to get what they want. Mapping is when learners realize that the meaning of a specific button is the same no matter where the button is physically located.

## How much do pets actually understand?

With or without buttons, your pet understands certain words and commands, and they can be taught words just like we teach our young.

"Animals understand what the sound means just like people do," Fanucchi

**Right: Bunny (of @whataboutbunny) communicates with over 50 words.**  
 Photo courtesy of Alexis Devine.

said. “We are not born knowing words. We learn them over time from repetition and association. A sound means a specific outcome.”

**Is there scientific research supporting animal communication and cognitive thought?**

The Comparative Cognition Lab at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) has been researching pet cognition and communication for many years. The lab’s Animal Communication project is studying whether and to what extent animals trained to use Augmentative Interspecies Communication (AIC) devices, or soundboards, can communicate with their humans. Buttons are one type of AIC device.

According to the UCSD Comparative Cognition Lab, their work with AIC-using animals involves three broad scientific approaches: collection of owner-provided survey data, chronic video and audio recording of a small pool of



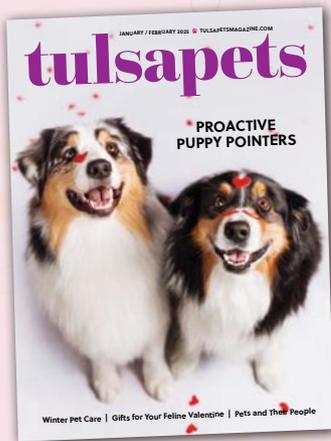
**Get your pet talking with buttons, available at Fetch.**

participants over several months or years, and both remote and in-person controlled experiments.

As the lab states on its website, “The use of soundboards has the potential to be a powerful tool through which dogs, cats, and other domestic animals might be able to communicate their needs, wants, and internal conditions to their owners. The potential welfare impacts of this technology are powerful: if pets can tell their owners when they feel ill, for example, they might be taken to the vet sooner and treated before their condition becomes severe.”

Published scientific research also validates the accomplishments of those Internet-famous pets we all love to follow.

“The Comparative Cognition Lab at UC San Diego has published about it and is still doing research on thousands of dogs worldwide. However, canine cognition is not a new area of research,” said Fanucchi. “Dogs have been living with humans for a long time and have adapted and learned what is meaningful for their survival.” 🐾



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# Community Roots

'Lake Dog and Their People' brings neighborhood spirit to Broken Arrow

by ANNA HOLTON-DEAN | Photos courtesy of SHARI WILKINS

**SINCE MAY 2021**, Lake Dog and Their People has been known as a place where dogs and their humans can shop, socialize and give back, all in one visit. What began as a lakeside dream in Eufaula has now grown into a second location in Broken Arrow, where owner Shari Wilkins plans to bring the same neighborly spirit and community connection to her hometown.

"I traded the corporate world for dogs!" Wilkins says. "Before opening the store, I was in insurance and recruiting. Once it became clear that COVID wasn't going away quickly, I realized my career path needed to change. During the pandemic, many people were working remotely — often from the lake — and, of course, getting dogs! That inspired us to open Lake Dog and Their People in Eufaula, Oklahoma, to create a place for lake lovers and their furry companions."

Lake Dog and Their People is a pet boutique offering grooming services, self-serve dog wash stations, high-quality pet food, apparel and more. "Our name reflects that it's not just about spoiling the dog — it's also about celebrating their people," Wilkins explains. "Our Eufaula store is a tourist destination, offering healthy dog food and fun gift items. In Broken Arrow, we focus more on healthy food options, an expanded treat and chew bar, and, of course, plenty of fun toys and

gear for dogs and their owners.

"We want to be Broken Arrow's neighborhood pet store — where customers can find healthier food, trusted advice and genuine care. Our goal is to help pets live longer, happier lives with fewer health issues, which, in turn, makes their people happier too! We also carry a selection of quality cat food and treats in Broken Arrow."

Wilkins says opening the Broken Arrow location was a natural next step. "Broken Arrow has been our home for over 35 years. My husband John and I got married here, raised our kids here, go to church here, and my parents still live here. ... We wanted to bring something truly special to the community we love."

## Giving Back

Being "in community" means giving back, and that idea is an integral part of Wilkins' business model in both Eufaula and Broken Arrow.

"When we opened in Eufaula, we saw that local resources, especially for law enforcement K9 units, were limited," she says. "We began fundraising and partnering with vendors to help. Through these efforts, we raised enough funds to expand the number of K9 officers, directly improving safety and service in both the city and county. We continue to sup-

port the Eufaula Police Department K9 Unit and the McIntosh County Sheriff's Office K9 Unit through our charity Lake Dog K9 Charitable Foundation."

While preparing to open the Broken Arrow location, Wilkins discovered Paws for Patriots, a division of the Soldier's Wish organization that provides life-changing support to veterans through canine companions.

"With my husband, father and many family members having served in the military — and our store being surrounded by a strong veteran and senior community — it was a perfect fit. We launched our Broken Arrow grand opening with a fundraiser for Paws for Patriots," she says.

"Most recently, we've started a donation campaign to support Broken Arrow Neighbors through Cali's Cart, which helps provide pet supplies for families receiving assistance for their own needs. Since we have access to dog-related resources, we focus on helping organizations that serve both pets and people."

The heart of Lake Dog is more than retail; it's about relationships.

"We love getting to know our customers and their pets — seeing pictures, hearing stories, and learning what works (and doesn't)" Wilkins says. "If a product isn't a fit, I want to know so we can make it right or find something better."

"At Lake Dog, we have a loyalty program that offers competitive pricing and a program for those that adopt or rescue a dog; they get a free starter bundle. Our goal is to offer quality products, fair pricing and outstanding service because happy dogs and happy customers are what matter most." 🐾



Lake Dog donation to Paws for Patriots at Lake Dog's Halloween event in Broken Arrow.



Lake Dog self-wash bays in Broken Arrow.



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