

**HOMELESS ANIMALS ARE IN BIG TROUBLE RIGHT NOW** and the problem isn't just local – it's country-wide. In our entire history, we have never seen so many dogs and puppies being taken to shelters. It is primarily because people refuse to spay/neuter their dogs and had an "accidental" litter. Many times, it isn't the first litter either – they are repeat offenders who continually take unwanted litters to shelters and they often blame their dogs for getting pregnant. Many rescues will pay to have the dogs spayed and even that doesn't convince them that it is time to spay their dogs.

We can't keep up – the need is too great. We get pleas for anywhere from 50-100 puppies or dogs who need rescue every single day. Like every other rescue in the country, we are limited by the number of foster parents we have. The most precious commodity that a rescue has is their foster parents (with monetary donations being a close second).

We have a wonderful and dedicated group of foster parents, but we need more. We always need more; there is no such thing as too many foster parents.

**Fostering is a great experience for families.**

Not only does it give parents the chance to teach their children about compassion, but it is an experience that the whole family can share. Even young children can participate by performing simple tasks such as filling up a water bowl or just providing love and attention (under parental supervision of course).

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Are you looking for a new furry family member? We have many wonderful dogs waiting for forever homes. Once you've fallen in love, the next step is to fill out an adoption application to get the ball rolling.

Go to [www.aforeverhome.org](http://www.aforeverhome.org) to see our available pets.

**Fostering is a great experience for single people.** If you have a foster dog at home, you'll never be alone. Your foster dog will be happy to see you every time you walk through the door. Dogs are also a great way to meet new friends because dogs bring people together. Walking your foster dog in a public place (wearing an "adopt me" vest) often leads to conversations with strangers (strangers who may turn into friends, adopters, or foster parents). At the very least, you will make friends with our other foster parents and volunteers.

**Fostering is a great experience for senior citizens.** Sometimes senior citizens may retreat from being out in public – perhaps due to losing a partner. Fostering is an opportunity to get back out in public and interact with people while saving a life.

Most of our fosters go the extra mile by posting their foster dogs on their social media platforms and sharing their information with friends and family. Many dogs have found their forever homes this way.

We're often asked how much of a time commitment is involved in fostering. That is completely up to you. Fosters bring their foster dogs to our adoption events on Saturdays between NOON-3PM – that's just three hours per week. We do understand that everyone is busy so if a foster has to miss an occasional event, we're ok with that.

The duration of a foster commitment will vary. There are many different ways to foster.

**PUPPIES.** Puppies are usually adopted fairly quickly.

**ADULT DOGS.** Adult dogs can often find forever homes within a few weeks.

**PREGNANT DOGS.** Fostering a pregnant dog saves multiple dogs – the mom and her unborn babies. This is a commitment of anywhere from two-five months depending on how pregnant mom is when she arrives.

**HEARTWORM POSITIVE DOGS.** This is usually a commitment of three-four months. Heartworm positive dogs are easy to foster because they must be crated during certain stages of their treatment. They also cannot attend adoption events during treatment.

**SENIOR DOGS.** There is nothing more satisfying than caring for an old dog who someone has discarded. They often land in shelters after having been with their person for their entire lives. They are sad and confused as to why they have been abandoned.

They are usually fairly low maintenance because they don't require a lot of exercise and are happy just to be fed and loved. Senior dogs are usually with us the longest because most people want to adopt younger dogs. Senior dogs make great foster dogs for senior citizens too !

So what are **AFH's** responsibilities and what are yours? That's easy. We pay for everything – vet bills, food, and supplies (crates, leashes, collars, bowls, etc.). You take care of our dogs like they're your own. You feed them, walk them, love them, and teach them basic commands like sit and stay. You bring them to adoption events. It really is that simple and when you foster, you not only save your foster dog – you also open up a spot in a shelter for another homeless dog. It's a win-win.

We will match you with a dog (or puppies) who matches your lifestyle. Are you an avid runner? We can pair you with a dog who wants/needs/loves lots of exercise. Is your style more laid back? We can match you with a calmer dog. Do you have the desire to save a special needs dog (blind, deaf, etc.)? We can find you one. Do you love love love puppies? No problem there – shelters are overflowing with puppies.

The need has never been greater. There are thousands of dogs sitting in shelters right now. Their fates are uncertain and without you, many will not make it out of the shelter. **Their lives literally depend on you.** •



**How do you get more information?**

Email **[volunteer@aforeverhome.org](mailto:volunteer@aforeverhome.org)**  
We look forward to expanding our foster team!

If you would like to help us care for the puppies and dogs in our care, please consider making a donation at **<https://to-afh.org/Donate/>** or by mailing a check to **AFH, PO Box 222801, Chantilly VA 20153.**



## LETTER FROM HOME



### DAISY (*used to be Annabelle*)

Jeff & Susie Harris

Daisy has happily settled in to her new forever home and she is loved very much!! She has a wonderful vet and a very caring doggy dad! She really enjoys her multiple daily walks and she has friends wherever she goes – the neighborhood loves her. On four separate occasions, she was the first dogs these folks ever touched – she's very gentle and kind! One lady actually had her husband stop the car when she saw us walking Daisy so she could come over and get some "Daisy-love"!! Thank you to the volunteers for saving this precious dog and taking such good care of her until she came home to us! ●

## IN MEMORY



### MAGNOLIA

Magnolia "Maggie" Grahame, originally M pups Mandy, passed away suddenly on 12/26/23. Maggie was the sweetest, most smiley lab mix you could ever meet. She loved truck rides to the farm, running fast as heck around the garden and "cultivating" our family farmstand's veggie fields, chasing squirrels or "wiggles," playing ball, getting cozy under blankets, brushing her "teef" (via Greenies), and kissing all of her many family members and friends.

Thank you **AFH** for trusting us with Maggie. We were "the three best friends" and we will be forever grateful for the time—however heartbreakingly brief—we had together. ●

Rachael Grahame



### STELLA

Stella was my loyal companion for over 17 years through young adulthood, loss, rebuilding, marriage, and starting a family. She was an energetic puppy who loved everyone. We started running together and so began a lifelong love of it. She was always a fighter, overcoming cancer when she was nine years old. She was unsure of our kids in the toddler years, but as she and they got older, a precious bond formed. They were able to care for her and snuggle with her in her old age. It was the sweetest thing to witness. Our sweet Stelle Belle, we will love you and hold you in our hearts forever. ●

Sarah Shaffer

## A RESCUE STORY WITH A HAPPY ENDING

As you know, shelters are overflowing and begging for help. As you read earlier in this newsletter, due to a lack of fosters, we have to say no to most of their requests for help. Axcela's story is one that we just couldn't say no to.

On Thursday, January 18, 2024 we became aware of a shelter in Oklahoma City that was desperately seeking rescue for a dog and her seven babies. Axcela, an Australian Cattle Dog and her babies were all scheduled to be euthanized the next day at 9:00AM. We had approximately 14 hours to do something about it.

How they ended up there didn't matter – the point is that they were all going to lose their lives because humans had failed them.

Within literally two hours, **AFH** reached out to the shelter to commit to saving them. The next day, January 19, two volunteers flew to Oklahoma City and on Saturday, January 20, they loaded up mom and babies (and a dog named Magnus who was also scheduled to lose his life) into a rental vehicle and began the 19-hour drive back to northern Virginia.

While they were at the shelter, our volunteers got a hard look at what happens in shelters constantly. Their first experience was with a person who showed up at the shelter to surrender three puppies. The shelter is currently caring for 1,100 animals (that is not a typo) and has not accepted any owner surrenders in over a year due to overcrowding (just take a minute and really think about that). The person left but not before trying to give the puppies to our volunteers. They eventually did leave but obviously there is no way to know what happened to the puppies. They could have been abandoned somewhere – or worse.

Their second experience was with two men who pulled up outside the shelter and dumped out two young dogs – one with a serious leg injury. One of our volunteers yelled “you can't do that” and the men drove off – with the two dogs chasing behind them. Our volunteers went back into the shelter to tell them what happened. We are unfortunately not aware of the outcome, although it is likely that the shelter did come out to take them in.

These are just two examples of things that happen every single day at animal shelters across the country. Axcela and her babies and Magnus were lucky – thousands of other dogs are not. **This is why we need you to foster.** •



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If you would like to join the **AFH** team as a foster parent, please email [volunteer@aforeverhome.org](mailto:volunteer@aforeverhome.org)

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*Upon arrival back in Virginia, Magnus' foster (a brand new foster) sent us the following email. It looks like she has found her calling as a foster!*

Have you ever had that feeling? You know, the one that tells you that you are doing something right no matter how crazy it seems?

I am so glad I followed my heart. My dear friend and neighbor travelled from Virginia to Oklahoma to pick up a mom and seven puppies. I thought she was crazy – but in looking at her Facebook page, I saw a video of this adorable two year old heeler and for some reason I couldn't get him out of my head. I then reached out to **AFH**, who made arrangements to have him transported along with the mom and babies they were saving.

After his long ride, I went to pick him up at my friend's house. He got out of the car wagging his tail and came up to me with lots of kisses. Clearly he was grateful! We took a little time getting to know each other – we went shopping at PetSmart and got some toys and treats and he was such a gentleman! We spent the afternoon playing in the snow and getting to know my other dogs (we are still working on that – but so far it seems to be working).

We then spent the evening at a dog friendly restaurant/pub and what a hit he was! He was the perfect dog, gentle and grateful. He sat for treats – and then took a long nap under the table. No one could believe that a dog this good was just thrown away.

I am so blessed to be able to offer a foster home for this dog (although as my friend says– I'm a foster failure!) I may be in fact be a foster failure if Magnus continues to blend in with my other dogs!

I wish more people would open their hearts and homes to give these loving animals a second chance in life. They deserve it and I believe they know that they are being rescued!

I want to challenge each of my friends out there who are dog lovers and who can open up their homes to at least foster one of these beautiful creatures. They need us!

Thank you Carmen and **A Forever Home**. You are an amazing group of people – the world needs more people like you. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make a difference – I absolutely made the right decision.

**Follow your heart folks! You will find that you are blessed.** ●

## CODY'S BOOK

**Editor's Note:** Cody the dog wrote a book about rescue with help from his human mom Marilyn Christensen. Marilyn is a long-time, valued, trusted, amazing foster mom who routinely takes in dogs who may never get adopted for various reasons. **Cody Fosters Dogs** is beautifully illustrated (black and white hand drawn illustrations), is 27 pages long, and is written from Cody's point of view.

Marilyn and Cody have donated copies of their book to **AFH** with the goal of first educating people about dogs who need a little extra help, and second, to fundraise for **AFH**. The book is available for a suggested donation of \$15. If you would like a copy, please email [maribel@foreverhome.org](mailto:maribel@foreverhome.org).



**Marilyn, the author, writes:**

I connected with Cody, the Shepherd on the cover, as Velcro connects. You know I wrote the book, but it's as if he ran the house full of foster dogs. I fostered for 20 years. Cody tells many situations that he "took care of" and helped me through. It is written for adults to read to children who are interested in animals and caring for animals, and perhaps the family who has considered fostering a dog. It starts out simply – talking about saving dogs who are homeless, hungry, and cold. It gets more adult in situations as puppies are returned to the foster because life happened to the family. It's about Cody distressed over a hound that had run loose for four years, ended up in our house after a 19 hour transport ride, and was so scared that Cody thinks he's adopted a broken dog. I show Cody how to put those pieces back together. It's about foster dogs who never move to adoption...they need sanctuary and they never know they didn't get adopted. ●



# Volunteer SPOTLIGHT

## COURTNEY CARPENTER

I grew up in a home with three beagles and volunteered at our local animal shelter with my mother. In those early days I developed a deep empathy for the animals who needed love the most. Flash forward to becoming an adult – it was only a matter of time before I made my dreams of fostering dogs come true. As soon as we had puppy-proofed our home, I immediately signed up to foster. As a young couple, **AFH**'s policy of providing all supplies for foster families made this dream possible for us. Since then, we've fostered 19 different puppies, each of whom has left a lasting mark on our lives. Thankfully, each dog found the best forever home, and some of the adopters still keep in touch with us. Above all though, we're thankful to **AFH** for bringing us our foster fail Pixie. Without fostering and **AFH**, we wouldn't have found the perfect dog for our family – a spunky, sweet, and cuddly girl who loves to teach her foster siblings what it means to be a dog. Our lives revolve around Pixie, and we wouldn't have it any other way. •



## ERIN MARTIN

I have always been an animal lover and after losing our French Bulldog too soon I was lonely without a canine companion. However, due to my husband and I working in different states we had agreed to wait for a dog until we were together again. In 2023, I contemplated fostering so I'd have that animal connection. **A Forever Home** was recommended to me by my sister and I decided to apply. Once approved, I started my journey and I'm glad I did. Choosing a dog to save and then actually getting that first glimpse of them arriving to **AFH** is exciting. Then, when someone chooses your foster for their forever home, it is an overwhelmingly rewarding feeling. The fosters and volunteers have been very welcoming. These individuals do more than just take care of dogs and puppies – they are also wonderful to their fellow humans. I'm glad I volunteered here as I've met amazing people. My family said I'd end up adopting all the dogs if I fostered – I've only adopted one (so far)! •



## HAVE YOU JOINED OUR FACEBOOK GROUP?

Do you know **AFH** has a Facebook group for our volunteers, adopters, and friends? There's no spam, no politics, no debates – just pictures and stories about our dogs! We love seeing our dogs in your homes, with you on vacation, and living their best lives.

[www.facebook.com/groups/aforeverhome](https://www.facebook.com/groups/aforeverhome)



# Thank You from the Heart

*Editor's Note:* A long-time **AFH** foster mom adopted a deaf puppy from us. The puppy needed emergency surgery and other **AFH** volunteers rallied to help. **AFH** truly is a family.



**Words cannot adequately capture the depth of gratitude that I have for the people I volunteer alongside in this organization, but I will make my best attempt...**

Early morning on October 10th of this past year, I found out my sweet pup Axl needed emergency surgery for a bowel obstruction. There was never a question that he would get the surgery he needed, but the cost was overwhelming for my family. As soon as I got in the car after dropping him off at the veterinary hospital, I called **AFH** volunteer Annette Anderson just to cry. I was so scared. Axl is the kindest boy – an **AFH** foster fail, deaf, fluent in ASL, and an amazing little brother who leads with his heart.

As we worked through Axl's surgery and recovery, behind the scenes this unbelievable organization was rallying behind me to help me through what was a huge financial challenge. So many of you supported my family and our boy and I am truly overwhelmed. The goodness in your hearts is not quantifiable. Beyond your continued giving for **AFH**, you gave of yourselves to help my family. You care so much for the wellbeing of others in your community that you gave without question. So many people offered financial assistance to us and allowed us to really focus on making sure Axl was okay. You checked in with texts and emails and questions during adoption events.

**Your hearts are immense. I am so honored and grateful to volunteer with each of you. My family thanks you for all of your goodness and support. •**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...



**A Forever Home (AFH)** is a 501(c)(3) animal rescue organization located in Northern Virginia. Our goal is to rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome abused, abandoned, neglected, and unwanted puppies and dogs. There are many ways that you can help a homeless puppy or dog.

### **MONETARY**

- **Donate** once or set up recurring donations through **JustGiving** <http://to-afh.org/Donate> or through **Paypal** [Paypal@aforeverhome.org](mailto:Paypal@aforeverhome.org). Recurring donations help us budget more efficiently and even \$10 a month makes a huge difference to a homeless, abandoned or abused puppy or dog.
- **WoofTrax** Donate just by walking your dog—visit [to-afh.org/WoofTrax](http://to-afh.org/WoofTrax) to download the app.
- **Karmakarma** offers you the chance to make an impact through micro-donations. Go to [www.karmakarma.com](http://www.karmakarma.com) and register. Log in, click on **Get Karmapoints** to see how to get points and/or click on **Make an Impact** and then **Animals** to navigate to **AFH's** page to make a donation.
- **Estate Planning** Leave a lasting legacy. Email [info@aforeverhome.org](mailto:info@aforeverhome.org) for info..
- **Donate Your Used Car** Email [info@aforeverhome.org](mailto:info@aforeverhome.org) for info.



### **HANDS-ON VOLUNTEER HELP**

We have many hands-on volunteer needs. Email [volunteer@aforeverhome.org](mailto:volunteer@aforeverhome.org) if you can help with any of the volunteer activities below.

- **Fosters:** Without fosters, the rescue ceases operation. Fostering can be long- or short-term. **AFH** provides all supplies and pays for all approved veterinary care. You can choose what dog(s) you want to foster too!
- **Transporters:** Drive a dog or dogs from our rescue/shelter partners to their **AFH** foster parents.
- **Home Checkers:** Home checks are done virtually.
- **Do you have a special talent or skill?** We would love to talk to you about using it to help us help homeless puppies and dogs.

### **SHOPPING**

- **eBay Sales** You can select **AFH** to be the beneficiary of a percentage of your **eBay** sales! Just select **A Forever Home Rescue Foundation** when you are creating your listing and indicate what percentage of the sale gets donated to **AFH**.

**Shop with any of our partners:**

- **Jeanne Taylor Pet Portraits** ... [to-afh.org/JTPetPics](http://to-afh.org/JTPetPics)
- **Hale Pet Doors** ..... [to-afh.org/Hale](http://to-afh.org/Hale)
- **Bissell** ..... [to-afh.org/Bissell](http://to-afh.org/Bissell)
- Shop through [to-afh.org/GivingAssistant](http://to-afh.org/GivingAssistant) and donate all or part of your cash back to **AFH**.
- If you or someone you know is looking to buy or sell a home, you can refer them to us by emailing [Homes@aforeverhome.net](mailto:Homes@aforeverhome.net). For every home referral successfully closed through this program, **AFH** will receive a **\$500** donation in your name.