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Fall/Winter 2020

# Animal Tales

## Animal Services Response to COVID-19

By Randy Covey

As the provider of essential services that protect both pets and people from a variety of issues and concerns, and the primary agency for all animal-related questions in Washington County, Animal Services and the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter have remained quite busy throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Emergency preparedness is something we focus on and plan for year-round, so when we got word in March there was a serious health concern threatening

people from all walks of life, our staff knew that we had work to do. For most of our staff, that has meant reporting to work at the shelter or in the field. It is essential to have skilled people here to receive and care for lost pets and sick or injured animals. Our field staff must be able to respond to public safety concerns related to dangerous dogs and investigations of animal abuse and neglect. For these reasons, we have continued to keep the shelter running seven days a week.

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Officer Hansen and Field Supervisor Smejkal deliver supplies to the respite shelter.

## A Fond Farewell from Jen Keene, Editor of Animal Tales

This is the 17th issue I have written and produced as the editor of the Animal Tales Newsletter. We skipped the Spring/Summer 2020 issue due to uncertainties and additional responsibilities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, but every other issue since Spring/Summer 2012 has been a labor of love for me.

When I first started at the shelter, I heard so much about how many improvements had been made and how the shelter was a better place than ever before. In the

time that I have been here, that progress has continued to happen, and I am so proud to have been part of it.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all our readers. Whether you are an adopter, a donor, a volunteer, someone who was reunited with your lost pet at the shelter, a community member, or all of the above, I am grateful for the part you have played in our shelter's success. Your support means everything to us.

Unfortunately, I must now also say farewell. I am moving out of the area with my husband and dog and will no longer be working for Washington County. I am very sad to leave the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter and this beautiful and vibrant community. I will miss the people and the animals immensely. However, I know this organization will continue the good work and upward trajectory I have been so privileged to contribute to for the past eight and a half years.

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Like Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter on Facebook or follow @BonnieLHays on Twitter to stay up-to-date on happy reunions, adoptable animals, events, pet news and more.

# Greetings from Your New Field Supervisor

By Stacy Smejkal



Field Supervisor Stacy Smejkal

Greetings! I have worked in animal welfare and sheltering for over six years, beginning with four years in nonprofit before moving into the public sector in 2018, first with Multnomah County and now with Washington County Animal Services.

I have focused my career on staff support and development, exceptional customer service, animal behavior and humane handling. I hold a bachelor's degree in animal sciences from Oregon State University and am certified in animal shelter management through University of the Pacific. I am also a certified animal control officer through the National Animal Care and Control Association.

Joining Washington County in this position meant shifting my career from in-shelter animal care to outreach, education and community safety. It was a leap of faith for me, and it has challenged me every step of the way, but I am so glad I took it.

Stepping into the role of field supervisor at Washington County Animal Services meant joining an already established team of exceptional Animal Services officers I have had the pleasure of working with and learning from over the last year. They go above and beyond every day to do their jobs with respect and a level of professionalism I have rarely encountered in my career. I look forward to continuing my career with Washington County Animal Services where I will strive to serve our community with the same level of compassion and effectiveness as my team has done for years before me.

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## Officers on the Road

By Stacy Smejkal

Although people seem to notice when an Animal Services vehicle is in their neighborhood, many may not realize the wide variety of services provided by officers while they are out on the road. Most people know that officers secure loose stray dogs and bring them to safety, either returning them to their owner or driving them to the shelter. They follow up in person on bite investigations and nuisance barking complaints when necessary.

Our officers also regularly provide transportation for animals and supplies. Prior to COVID-19, officers transported cats for the Spay & Save program, driving them to and from Cat Adoption Team in Sherwood for their spay and neuter surgeries and then returning them back to the shelter for their owners to pick up

at the end of the day. Officers still drive animals to or from necessary veterinary medical treatments at other facilities. They also transport animals to our rescue and shelter partners for additional care and eventual adoption. This has become even more important since we closed our adoption area to minimize contact and help slow the spread of COVID-19. Animals still come in every day, and not all of them are reunited with or have families. This has made officer transports (and our partners) more important than ever.

Officers also provide community support by transporting much needed supplies in various situations.

As part of Washington County's Emergency Operations Center response to COVID-19, Housing

Services created a respite shelter at the Comfort Inn near the Hillsboro Airport. The initial goal was to provide a safe and healthy place for COVID-positive houseless individuals who have been discharged from the hospital to recover. Over time, they added other categories of need, such as those who had been exposed to COVID-19 but didn't have a safe place to quarantine. We worked with Housing to make sure that people in this situation had the information, supplies and support to keep their pets safe and housed as well.

Our officers never know where they will end up driving on any given day, but it is a certainty that their time on the road will benefit the animals and people in our community.

# When Animals Need More than Basic Medical Care

By Dr. Allison Lamb

As the staff veterinarian, I am responsible for the health of all animals in our care. For most of the animals, the needs are routine, and they may only require intake vaccines before being reunited with their owners. Our staff is very good at playing detective and locating owners, but what many people don't know is they are equally good at identifying medical concerns for the animals in our care. When staff identify that an animal needs medical care, I get to step in and help to address their concerns. Here are just a few examples of types of medical treatments that we have provided recently:



Jules recovered from surgery in a foster home.

**Jules** is a young cat brought in by a finder who recognized she was in distress and likely having difficulty giving birth. We initially gave Jules a quiet space where she could rest, as we gathered more information. It soon became evident that it was necessary to perform an emergency C-section. She recovered quickly and started her new life raising two large kittens. She proved to be a great mother, but needed time to recover from her surgery and settle into the routine of being a new mom. We reached out to our ASAP coalition partner, Cat Adoption Team, which placed her with an amazing foster home where she could get all the one-on-one attention needed. After a few normal post-surgery ups and downs, Jules and her kittens, Jack Jack and Juneau, were adopted into loving homes.

**Dahlia** is a middle-aged pit-bull terrier that came to our shelter as a stray. A few days after her arrival, a staff member observed Dahlia not feeling well. We don't always have a veterinarian in the building and available, but staff quickly determined that Dahlia needed immediate care. We were able to provide her with this through an arrangement with a local veterinary clinic. She was diagnosed with pyometra, a bacterial infection in her uterus. She was stabilized and returned to our shelter where she was spayed to prevent future pain or infection. Dahlia was transferred to another one of our ASAP coalition partners, Oregon Humane Society, where they were able to follow up on her medical needs and quickly got her adopted by a new family.

**Puybo** the Lhasa Apso was lost for two weeks before finally being caught in a humane trap set by one of our Animal Services Officers. Many lost dogs are so scared they don't let anyone approach them. Our staff recognized Puybo from the lost report his owner had filed with us and contacted them immediately. Staff also noted that he was limping and reported this concern to me. I was able to evaluate and treat Puybo while we waited for his owner to arrive. Fortunately, his injuries seemed minor and consistent with a dog that had been running outside. We provided pain medication to make Puybo more comfortable and advised his owner to have him rechecked by their regular veterinarian.

Whether you bring us a lost animal that you found, or if you learn that your animal is here, rest assured that we are making sure each animal's health needs are attended to. Many of the additional services are made possible by our partners in the veterinary and animal welfare community, and by generous financial donations.

## Therapy Llama Visits the Shelter



Beni the therapy llama visited the shelter

In June, Beni the therapy llama from Classy Camelids paid the shelter a special visit. The main purpose was to celebrate the birthday of our fabulous veterinarian, Dr. Allison Lamb. In addition to her regular responsibilities as a veterinarian and a manager, she has also served as our safety officer during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Lamb came up with some clever, fun and highly motivating ways to keep us all engaged and vigilant about maintaining the recommended six feet of distance, which coincidentally is about the length of a llama.

# A Fond Farewell

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This is my last issue of Animal Tales as editor, but I look forward to reading future issues and learning about what the shelter is up to. Thank you for reading Animal Tales and allowing me to share our stories with you. I hope you will continue to support the shelter and be prepared to help as they move toward future projects in our ever-changing world.

## COVID-19 Response

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Washington County stood up an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate the county's response to COVID-19. Animal Services has two staff members assigned to the EOC to serve as our liaisons and a voice for the animals and their owners. This participation allows Animal Services staff to play a vital role in the discussions and decisions that affect the services provided by our agency and throughout the County's response to COVID-19.

Under the Governor's initial "Stay Home, Save Lives" order, we limited some services and closed our doors to the public to encourage people to stay home and slow the spread of the virus. Although our adoption area and main lobby were closed, we continued to allow community members to drop off stray dogs or to be reunited with their lost animals. From March 23 through Washington County's entry into Phase 1 on June 1, we reunited 119 animals with their families. We continue to have one of the best return to owners rates in the country!

Questions about animals started coming in from the community almost immediately. People were naturally very concerned about their own pets and

whether they were at risk from COVID-19. They worried about how they would care for their pets if they themselves became sick or needed to be hospitalized. An overwhelming number of people also simply wanted to provide support for our shelter in the form of donations or by offering to foster or adopt a pet. We created a page on our website to provide answers to the most common questions about COVID-19 and pets as well as additional resources.

As time has passed, we have been slowly bringing back our full services. We've even found new ways to enhance the services we provide, including having greeters at the door to welcome guests (see volunteer spotlight on page 5). We've also implemented a more robust animal transfer program to help place animals that need new homes.

This pandemic is far from over, and along with the rest of the world we look forward to the day that it is. Until then, or when we get to the point where we know what our "new normal" looks like, Washington County Animal Services and the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter is committed to working tirelessly to provide the very best public safety and animal welfare services you have come to expect.

## RC and Sparkles Adopted Together Through Separate Transfers

### Why do we love transfers?

When we say we do more transfers than adoptions at the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter, people are sometimes surprised and even dismayed, as if somehow a transfer is not as positive of an outcome as an adoption. But a transfer to one of our shelter and rescue partners is a win for us and for the animals. We transfer animals so they can have a foster home to give them time to come out of their shell. We transfer animals so they can receive medical or behavioral care beyond what we can provide. We transfer animals we believe will get adopted more quickly or simply be more comfortable in a different environment. We transfer animals when we believe a transfer is the best path to an eventual adoption.



**Sparkles and RC with their new owners.**

Sparkles and RC were both recently adopted from Indigo Rescue. We transferred RC to them almost two years ago and Sparkles about a year ago. During that time, they were in foster homes, gaining confidence and learning what it means to be a loved and well cared for family member. Being transferred gave them each the time and the environment they needed to thrive and be ready to be great pets. We were thrilled to learn that they were adopted together!

# Staying Connected With Volunteers During COVID-19

By Karrie Johnson

In mid-March, as people across the community were heeding stay-at-home orders, we suspended our volunteer shifts because our shelter building is too small and cramped to provide enough physical distancing to keep staff and volunteers safe. We also closed our doors to the public, suspended our adoption program and limited other services. Although we continued to care for animals, we had less need for the services of our dog and cat volunteers. Make no mistake — things were not the same around here and our wonderful volunteers were dearly missed!

Our volunteers are our best advocates and ambassadors, and we wanted to keep them

engaged in our efforts. Together we learned to connect online through Zoom or Microsoft Teams where we provided updates on what was happening at the shelter. Volunteers also continued to receive weekly email updates.

Volunteers (as well as staff!) had the opportunity to keep their skills in animal welfare honed through a variety of online training courses, the new online version of the volunteer information session and a national training program called Fear Free to help reduce fear, anxiety and stress in shelters.

Even with fewer animals, there is still a mountain of dishes and laundry to keep under control. A great team of five volunteers

continued to come in once a day to work by themselves to help us out. Once we moved to Phase 1, we invited a small group of volunteers to act as greeters for visitors to the shelter. One of the things we quickly learned amid this pandemic was that information changes almost daily. At the time of this writing, we have not yet been able to welcome back all our volunteers. And although we are not able to actively recruit new volunteers to join our team, we continue to receive a lot of interest from people wanting to serve with us. If you are interested in volunteering, please keep checking the volunteer page of the website and follow our Facebook page for the most up to date information.

## Greeter Spotlight



### Florence

"I wanted to be a greeter because I missed seeing all the staff!"

### Kay

"I signed up to be a greeter because I want to help the shelter any way that I can!"

### Jessica

"The shelter needed help so I know this is one way I can help!"

### Sue

"What I like most about being a greeter is talking with and helping customers."

When Washington County entered Phase 1 of reopening, our shelter considered how to successfully implement guidelines such as limiting the number of people in the building and requiring visitors to wear face coverings. We decided we needed greeters to provide a warm welcome to visitors and implement COVID-19 guidelines.

For the first few weeks, shelter staff served as greeters. During this time, we tracked the number of guests who visited us as well as

the reason for their visit. We had an average of 130 customers per week, with the majority buying or renewing a dog license.

The increase in customers as well as animal intake led to our staff being so busy that it became challenging to meet those needs as well as fill the greeter shifts. We needed help! We reached out to a few of our most seasoned volunteers whose regular shifts with animals had been suspended in mid-March

and asked them to train for a new volunteer role. Though being a greeter meant they didn't have the animal interaction they cherished, they still stepped up.

Thank you to Kay, Jessica, Florence and Sue for serving as greeters, providing a warm welcome and helping to provide a safer environment. If you stop by the shelter, be sure to thank them for their service!

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 Ana Jones  
**Phoebe and Lucy**  
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**Pierre**  
 Sandra Banke  
**Pikku**  
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**Portia**  
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 Catherine Fields  
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 Stephanie Gravelle  
**Rosealie**  
 Misty and Josh Hagen  
**Roxie**  
 Azure Allen  
**Roxy**  
 Sally Williams

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**Rudy**  
 Gilah Tenenbaum  
**Sam**  
 Gregory Courogen  
**Samantha**  
 Brittany and Rick Bucholz  
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 Nathaniel and Teresa La Barre  
**Sarah the Cat**  
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**Scotty**  
 John and Darlene MacInnes  
**Seumas**  
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**Siggy**  
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**Skipper**  
 Bhaskar and Sudha Madari  
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 Toni Precourt  
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**Sugar**  
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**Sunny**  
 Joseph and Rachelle Ferrin  
**Sunny**  
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Bonnie L. Hays

SMALL ANIMAL SHELTER

WASHINGTON COUNTY

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Thank You

Let me thank all of you in our community for supporting us and working with us as we all found ways to make the best of things during this unexpected and difficult coronavirus pandemic. Thank you! From the people who made donations in support of our operations to those of you who kept your pets safe and sound at home so they didn't put an extra strain on our operations; to the dog owners who kept their licenses up to date and the community members who followed the latest but ever-changing guidelines related to physical distancing and face coverings that have helped keep us all safe and healthy; Thank you again! On behalf of the staff here at the Bonnie Hays Animal Shelter and Washington County Animal Services, who have worked tirelessly to provide the best service possible throughout COVID-19, we are grateful to be working for and with you.

Randy Covey,  
Manager of Animal Services

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