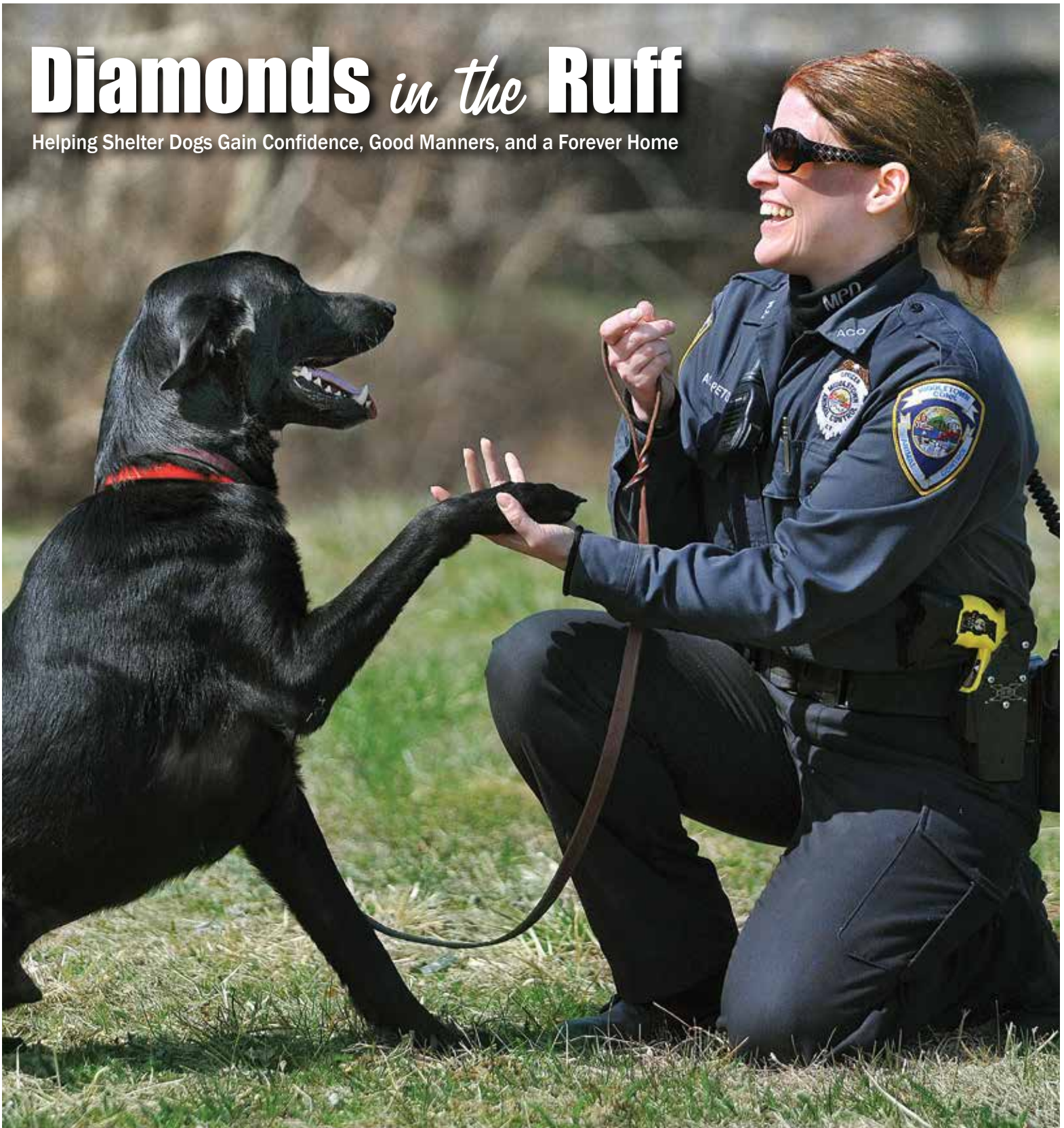


Diamonds *in the* Ruff

Helping Shelter Dogs Gain Confidence, Good Manners, and a Forever Home



- Plus:**
- *Not Just Another Adorable Face: Rabbits Make Marvelous Pets!*
 - *Clicker Training – a Workout Routine to Flex Your Cat’s Muscles*
 - *From Flab to Fabulous – Help Your Pet Shed Those Extra Pounds*

Cover photo by
Catherine Avalon,
“Middletown Press”

Something to Chew On

Dear Friends,

Early last year, when Our Companions Animal Rescue's CEO Susan Linker approached me about serving as the organization's next Board Chair, the first thought I had was, "How could I ever follow Valerie Friedman?" Valerie had done an incredible job serving as OC's first Board Chair and has been universally praised and recognized for shepherding the organization through a tremendous phase of growth. Under her leadership, Our Companions blossomed into a highly effective and fiscally sound organization. Needless to say, I was daunted by the prospect of following in her footsteps.

After a little salesmanship on Susan's part – anyone who knows Susan can appreciate her powers of persuasion – I accepted the offer to serve as OC's next Board Chair. I am grateful for the trust that Susan, the Governance Committee, and Valerie herself have placed in me and I look forward to embracing all that lies ahead in my new role, both the opportunities and challenges.

My first year as Board Chair promises to be an eventful one. This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of Our Companions. It's hard to believe so much time has passed. I look at Susan, who still seems so youthful to me, and think, "My goodness, how young were you when you started this organization?" When I first got involved, circa 2009, the Sanctuary was still just a dream and Our Companions was operating out of Susan's tiny, spider infested basement. With this anniversary in mind, we look forward to finding a multitude of ways to celebrate this milestone year with our donors, volunteers, and staff.

And, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of so many members of the community, we also will undertake the largest expansion yet at the Sanctuary in Ashford, Connecticut. Later this winter, we will begin the construction of three new cottages, doubling the number of lives we can care for at the Sanctuary. While still far from our ultimate goal of 16 cottages, the Sanctuary will become better equipped to meet the demands of the community. The additional housing will allow us to be nimble and adapt to the needs of our always-evolving animal populations. While we have many important programs and services beyond the Sanctuary, the opening of these cottages will be a game-changer for Our Companions.

Throughout my term, I look forward to getting to know many more of our donors and volunteers – the ones who make everything we do for the people and pets we serve possible. As we look to the future and dive head-first into what promises to be a landmark year for the organization, allow me to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Our Companions family for your support, sacrifice, and commitment to our promise to do the right thing for animals.



Maria das Neves

Maria das Neves,
Board Chair

About Our Companions News

Our Companions News
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How does a dog become homeless? Often it is due to a lack of human compassion, love, and proper training. Some dogs are abandoned. Some are surrendered. Some run away from a bad situation. Whatever the reason, many of these dogs end up at a municipal animal control facility. The primary goal is to reunite them with their owners, when appropriate, or find another suitable home.

When you think of dogs in a shelter, a positive image does not usually spring to mind. We picture them barking and perhaps behaving aggressively. This is not always the case. Some are well-behaved and ready to be adopted immediately – but what about the dogs with behavioral issues? Can they be transformed into adoptable dogs? The answer is very often “yes.”

Our Companions’ Canine College is a behavior modification program that provides individual and group dog training in an effort to prevent a dog from becoming homeless. Trainers work directly with owners to determine possible issues and then use proven techniques to alleviate the fear-based, anxiety-produced behaviors that some dogs experience. The trainers have had remarkable success in keeping these dogs in their homes and reducing the number of dogs surrendered by their owners.

A lesser known offering within Canine College is the “Making of an Adoptable Dog” program. In this newer program, OC’s volunteer dog trainers partner with municipal shelters that have dogs in need of homes. The OC volunteer trainers provide enrichment and training to dogs living at the shelter, and educate Animal Control Officers (ACO) on what they can do to reduce noise levels and stress for dogs in their care. They also offer advice for making the dogs more adoptable, which is very important to ACOs who sincerely want the very best for these animals.

“A municipal shelter is a stressful environment for any dog. There is constant barking and the dogs are confined in an unfamiliar situation,” says Susan Linker, CEO of Our Companions.



Manny was adopted with the help of a trainer in the Making of an Adoptable Dog program.

“Even a well-behaved stray can become fearful and exhibit behavior issues in such an environment. Some dogs are brought in with behavior issues that may have been the cause for their becoming homeless in the first place. This is where OC’s Canine College steps in to help.”

The Making of an Adoptable Dog program began at the Glastonbury Animal Control facility some five years ago. OC regularly evaluates dogs at municipal shelters for their adoptability potential. One of our volunteers went to Glastonbury for an evaluation on Manny, a pit-bull mix with absolutely no manners. The OC evaluator knew that Manny had potential and volunteered to work with him. She started going to the facility regularly to train him and teach him manners. After a year and a half of OC’s on-site training, Manny was adopted and now lives happily in a forever home. The Making of an Adoptable Dog program was born from this success.

There are currently 12 OC volunteers in the Making of an Adoptable Dog program. The volunteer training process is both rigorous and rewarding. The formal program started in 2014 and OC volunteers have worked with 25 dogs to date. Twenty-one of the 25 have been adopted.



At the Plainville Animal Shelter, OC volunteer trainer Loretta works with Sugar, who is looking for a home.

Continued on page 4



After a rough start, Blue is now thriving in the Adoptable Dog program and is currently up for adoption.



Rooney curls up cozily on the couch in his new home.

Volunteers work on manners, sitting, loose-leash walking, and play – all important skills for a dog to be adoptable. Volunteers spend approximately 45 minutes per session with the dog. After a dog completes the program and is adopted from a municipal shelter, the new adopter can continue the dog's training in OC's traditional Canine College classes at a reduced rate.

OC works with the municipal shelters in Glastonbury, Portland, Middletown, Plainville, Windsor, East Windsor, Manchester, and Cromwell.

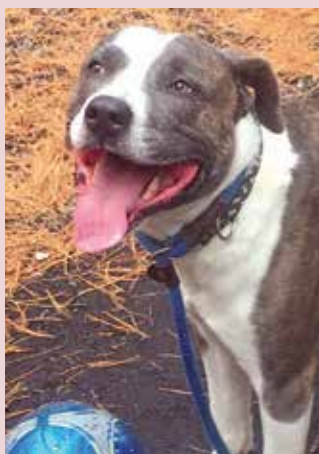
An OC volunteer is currently training two dogs at the Glastonbury facility. One of these dogs is Blue, who arrived at the shelter in early June.

His owner had to leave the home suddenly and Blue was brought in by a temporary caregiver. Blue had lived happily with his owner, an extended family, three cats and an older poodle mix dog; however his size and energy was too much for the new caretaker. When Blue first arrived at the shelter, he was stubborn, hard to leash, and didn't want to go into his kennel. He would bark and cry when left alone and refuse treats and toys. After OC began working with Blue and established a routine, Blue began to blossom. He now knows that a leash means a walk and a chance to get out of his kennel. OC discovered that he is food-motivated and loves mealtime. He also made an unlikely friend – a little black kitten who escaped from her own kennel twice and made her way to Blue's bed to sleep with him. He happily let her.

Rooney arrived at the Middletown shelter after his owner moved out and left him behind. After enduring two subsequent failed adoptions, Rooney was chosen to participate in the Making of an Adoptable Dog program. He thrived and everyone fell in love with him. Fortunately, the shelter was able to continue providing him care until the right adopters came along. Rooney was featured on *Portland on the Move* and was adopted by a newly-married couple the day after they got the keys to their new home. They decided within minutes of meeting him that he was the dog for them. Rooney's parents report that he is very well trained, knows basic commands, and is protective of his new family. Rooney respects the furniture and stays within the yard, even when off-leash. He happily shares his new home with a cockatiel.

Connecticut is fortunate to have dedicated ACOs who are willing to invest their time and energy helping homeless dogs become more adoptable. If you are an ACO not currently working with Our Companions but would like to, please call the OC Helpline at (860) 242-9999 or email Helpline@OurCompanions.org. Our Companions is looking for volunteers for its Sanctuary in Ashford, its Canine College, and many other programs. Please visit the Our Companions website at www.OurCompanions.org to find out how to become a volunteer.

Available for Adoption



Blue is a five to six year-old pit bull. During the day when the ACO is working, he sleeps in the office and is well-behaved. Blue likes to play with his soccer ball and go for rides in the car. Blue would love a home where people are present much of the time. He is happy to just be in a room with you – as long as you don't mind his snoring! **Contact Glastonbury Animal Control, 1086 New London Turnpike, Glastonbury, (860) 633-7227**



Champ's previous owner passed away and he went to live at a rescue facility. He had spent a lot of time in a too-small cage and had little social interaction. Over time, Champ has made dramatic positive strides as a result of working with OC volunteers. He has learned manners and is a perfect gentleman on a leash. Champ is a very sweet

boy, with a lively personality. He has been in training for about six months and is a very good student. He needs a strong hand due to his size but has learned a lot of basic commands. **Contact Plainville Animal Control, 19 Neal Court, Plainville, (860) 747-1616**

Dee Dee came in as a stray so her background is unknown, but she is a loving dog that had very little life experience. Everyday noises scare her. Dee Dee is approximately one year old and still has some puppy energy. She appears to be a shepherd mix with gorgeous mocha and cream brindle coloring. She is shy, smart, and loves attention. Dee Dee has probably reached her full height and weight of 35 lbs. She would love a quieter home, but one that still offers her some play and stimulation, and preferably with a fenced-in yard. She would blossom with an older friendly dog to teach her about life. **Contact Glastonbury Animal Control, 1086 New London Turnpike, Glastonbury, (860) 633-7227**



Ready to Volunteer? Start MEOW!

Calling all cat lovers! If you are ready to step up and help out some kitties in need, you are in luck. Our Companions is putting out an enthusiastic cat-call for more volunteers to help with the cats at our Sanctuary in Ashford, Connecticut.

What does this entail, exactly? We need YOU to come spend time snuggling and playing with the kitties at our cozy Sanctuary. That's right, we need people to volunteer to hang out in what is basically a Kitty Paradise.

At the Sanctuary, as with all of our programs, we promise always to do the right thing for the animals in our care. We provide these deserving animals with a safe, home-like environment where they can become their best selves – and we truly couldn't do it without our volunteers.

So whether you want to throw down with some energizing interactive play, snuggle up to a senior cat, or work on helping our most introverted feline guest become more confident, we have eager critters here just waiting for you. Are you ready to join the OC team?

Learn more about our volunteer program by visiting OurCompanions.org.



CAT LOVERS

WE WANT YOU!



Can't have CATS in your apartment?

Too busy to have your own PETS but still want feline company?

Can't ever have enough FELINE interaction?

Want to help CATS but hate seeing animals in cages?

We need people like YOU to volunteer!

Our Companions' Sanctuary, the only one of its kind in New England, provides a cage-free, home-like environment where each animal is lovingly cared for until new homes are found.

We need volunteers to help rehabilitate cats - with cuddles, playtime, and socialization. Advanced opportunities available.

Not Just Another Adorable Face



Rabbits Make Marvelous Pets!

Who doesn't love bunnies? Most of us find them irresistible – with their big, expressive eyes, long velvety ears, and twitching noses – maybe you have secretly thought about how sweet it would be to have one as a pet. But perhaps you're not sure what kind of upkeep rabbits need, how long of a commitment it typically requires, or maybe you didn't realize that pet rabbits are more than just cute little creatures you take out of a cage once in a while. Those who have pet rabbits know that they are actually highly intelligent, interactive and integral members of the family, whose daily habits and care are similar to those of a cat.

Rabbits are meticulously clean animals and are easy to housebreak and train. Much like a dog, a pet rabbit can be taught to come to his/her name, sit in your lap, and do simple tricks. Happy rabbits perform an endearing behavior known as a “binky” – they jump up in the air and twist and spin around!

Rabbits should be considered indoor animals, and should not be relegated to living outdoors in a hutch. The indoor cage should be roomy enough to allow the rabbit to stand up on its hind quarters and to stretch out fully. At a minimum, the cage should be two feet wide, two feet deep and two feet tall – the larger the structure, the better. Look for a cage with a solid bottom, since wire cage bottoms are uncomfortable and can hurt rabbits' feet. Provide hay and soft bedding material like synthetic sheepskin for the bunny to make a place to sleep.

There are simple yet specific requirements for providing a litter box area for your rabbit. The litter lining material is different than cat litter, which is generally not safe for rabbits, and the placement and upkeep of the litter area is easy and will ensure that the rest of your house stays clean. The good news is that it's never too late to housetrain a rabbit. In fact, the older the rabbit, the more quickly they learn. Our Companions can provide further information on these specifics, or you may wish to visit the House Rabbit Society's webpage at rabbit.org for details and options on all aspects of bunny care.



Feeding rabbits is straightforward. They should be given approximately 1/8 to 1/4 cup of rabbit pellets daily, containing 15 to 19 percent protein and 18 percent fiber. They also need plenty of fresh hay, which aids in their digestion. Of course, plenty of fresh water is important, changed daily. Lastly, in order to thrive optimally, they need fresh leafy greens in the amount of 2 cups per day, for every 6 pounds of their bodily weight.

Activity is very important for rabbits – they need to be allowed out of their cages for at least several hours each day for exercise, play and socialization. In some households where there are no hazards present (such as aggressive pets), the rabbit is free to come and go from his floor-level or very low-level cage as he likes, and has the run of at least a part (if not all) of the house. A rabbit's life span is about eight years, though rabbits who are spayed/neutered can live as long as 10 to 12 years.

Here are some lesser known facts about rabbits:

- A baby rabbit is called a kit, a female is called a doe, and a male is a buck. A group of rabbits is called a herd.

- They are herbivores, eating a diet entirely of grasses and other plants. Because their diet contains so much cellulose, they pass their feces two different times, in order to completely break down their food. While other grazers will chew and swallow their feed, then “burp” it back up before ingesting it, in order to glean all the available nutrients (as cows chew cud), rabbits will re-ingest their feces to get all of the nutrients they need.

- A rabbit's teeth never stop growing. Many people believe rabbits need to chew to keep their teeth short. While they do enjoy chewing, it's the normal wear from where their top and bottom teeth meet that keeps a rabbit's teeth short. Bunnies cannot vomit, so it is vital to feed them only healthy, fresh, appropriate food.

So what do you think? Might a rabbit be the perfect pet for you and your family? Rescue organizations and animal shelters throughout New England have homeless rabbits just waiting to be adopted into loving homes. Here at Our Companions, we have three such “adorables” in need of adoption. Read on to learn about these very special pets and see if you don't find them irresistible!



Cookie and Pierre

Cookie and Pierre are sweet and happy three to four year-old neutered males who are also BBF (Best Bunny Friends) so we would love to keep them together. Cookie is a talented escape artist – he successfully and magically emerges from his cage when he knows the latch is not

secure. He loves to be spoken to and is very inquisitive about what's going on around him. Pierre has a little mustache that makes him very dashing indeed. He loves his vittles and appreciates time outside of his cage to explore and play.

Wilbur

This handsome boy is a real delight. Wilbur is a big, gentle cotton ball. He enjoys running around the living room doing binkies then flopping in front of the TV. He currently shares his home with a dog and a cat and does well with both.

Please contact Marlene@ourcompanions.org for more information or to request an adoption application.

We're Begging for Cat Food and Supplies! Can You Help?

Our Companions is always in great need of canned and dry cat food for our feral cat program. The food dropped off at our Program Center in Manchester will be distributed to feral cat caregivers in the community.

We are also always looking for people to host Feral Cat Food Drives. To learn more, contact Caroline@OurCompanions.org or call her at 860-242-9999, ext. 306.



In addition to cat food, we need supplies for our Sanctuary, including:

- Supermarket and pet supply store gift cards
- Poop bags
- Paper towels
- Kitchen trash bags



There are many specific items listed on our Amazon Wish List, which allows you to order online and have the item(s) delivered directly to us. Please visit [Our Companions.org](http://OurCompanions.org) to view the Wish List and learn more. Thank you for anything you can do to help!

OC Welcomes Four New Board Members

By Jennifer Barrows



As we embark on the next phase of our life-changing work in 2017, building upon the considerable and diverse accomplishments of the last fifteen years will be no small undertaking. It will demand very special leadership to continue to steer the course for meeting our bold goal of improving the welfare of companion animals in Connecticut and beyond.

For leaders to be effective they need to be resolute and passionate; they should possess a gift for governance as well as for inspiring others to action; and they must hold fast to a shared vision. Our Companions is tremendously fortunate to have four such individuals joining its already robust Board of Directors, who will help guide the organization during the next several years. We would like to introduce these new Directors to our readership and thank them for agreeing to guide us on our very ambitious journey.

Ed Young



Ed with his wife Kathy, their children Neil and Cheyanne, and their dog Brandy.

Ed is the President of Hitchcock Printing, a three-generation family-owned business in New Britain. He and his wife Kathy, both long-time animal lovers, live in Southington with their dog Brandy. Ed had served on the OC Board of Advisors since 2011. Over the years, Ed has enjoyed working with many organizations. His most fulfilling affiliations have been with his local church, the Central Connecticut State



Ed and his dog Brandy.

University, and Our Companions. “Every time I think about lightening my load, I find Our Companions is too wonderful an organization not to be involved in,” he says.

During his time on the Board, Ed would like to see OC enhance its base of support. “We’ve done a wonderful job involving very high-level donors. I’d like to see us expand from the base up.” He also sees tremendous potential for extending OC’s outreach to include surrounding states, to become more regional, rather than focused just within Connecticut. “Once people hear about the great work we’re doing, they will want to become involved. OC has gained the trust of the community by keeping its promise to always doing the right thing for animals no matter what the need is.”

Ed is very excited about being on the Board and working with other dedicated animal welfare advocates. “There is much to celebrate,” Ed says. “We have worked to change public policy with respect to animal welfare issues. There is more to do – with local animal shelters, as well as engaging with lawmakers at the State Capitol. I look forward to the work ahead.”

Pat Foley

After a 30+ year career in the financial industry, Pat recently retired from her position as Senior Vice President with US Trust, Bank of America Private Wealth Management. She was introduced to OC by another Board member



Pat and her cat Laura.



Pat's cat Laura basking in a sunny window.

who thought Pat’s financial background could add value to the organization. “I was very impressed with OC’s commitment to do the right thing for homeless animals,” says Pat. Pat was invited to join the OC Advisory Board, where she served since 2011. She has also been a member of the Finance Committee, on which she will continue to serve.

“Five years have passed – it’s been an exciting time watching Our Companions’ vision come to fruition,” says Pat. “With the opening of the Sanctuary in Ashford and the many programs offered to the public, this really expanded the organization. Now that I am retired, I am excited to be able to commit more time to OC on the Board of Directors.”

One aspect of OC which holds a great deal of meaning for Pat – and remains a source of pride for all of us – is the involvement of The Newman’s Own Foundation in OC’s fundraising efforts. “I am very impressed that the Foundation has recognized Our Companions as a legitimate animal welfare organization and has made several major contributions towards our Capital Campaigns,” says Pat. “I am very excited that I can be an active participant with the new construction in the next phase of the Sanctuary.”

Pat lives in West Hartford with her beautiful cat, Laura, who was rescued as a stray in Waterbury and was brought to OC. “Laura has been with me for several years now and has quite a personality. She has trained me well and clearly has forgotten where she came from!” Pat is thrilled that her daughter, Alex, an English teacher, has moved back to the area from Washington, DC. Alex and her husband Matt also live in West Hartford.

Adam Zweifler



Adam is a real estate attorney in West Hartford, representing lenders making loans secured by commercial properties (office buildings, shopping centers, warehouses and apartment complexes throughout the United States). He first got involved with Our Companions in 2001 and 2002 when he learned that Susan Linker and Marie Joyner were looking for an attorney to help them acquire the land that is now the Sanctuary, from a donor. “In return for helping them, Susan and Marie helped our family adopt our dog, Gizmo, who was with us for 10 years before we lost him to brain cancer a few years ago. We were very lucky to have him in our lives

and we still miss him. There is a bench dedicated to Gizmo at the Sanctuary,” says Adam.

During his time with Our Companions, Adam helped to acquire the Sanctuary land and file initial incorporation papers. He served on the Board and has been a member of the Governance Committee. “Throughout these experiences, I have been thrilled to see the organization grow from a team of three to literally hundreds of volunteers working towards our mission of making this world a better place for animals,” continues Adam. “In that time, I have been so impressed with how this organization is managed and their dedication to doing things right and staying true to their mission. I was more than glad to return to the Board when Susan asked.”

Adam lives in West Hartford with his fiancée Maureen. They have three daughters, Hannah, Rebecca and Jamie, ages 26, 24 and 19, all of whom have helped out at Our Companions over the years.

Maneesh Shanbhag



Maneesh with his wife Sandra and their children Shakira and Maddox.

Maneesh is Co-Founder and Chief Investment Officer at Greenline Partners. He lives in New York City with his wife Sandra and two children, Shakira and Maddox. “We also have a rescued cat, Marcel le Chat, who used to live on the mean streets of Brooklyn,” Maneesh says. Maneesh has been an animal lover and advocate for more than a decade, which is about as long as he’s known about Our Companions. He has served on the Board of Advisors since 2013. “I initially got involved because of the animals



Maneesh’s cat Marcel lounging on the sofa.

but have stayed and grown my involvement because Susan and Mitch [Linker] and the whole organization are amazing stewards of donor capital,” says Maneesh. “Many for-profit businesses could learn to run more efficiently from them.”

Maneesh demonstrated with his own business a talent for starting a company from the ground up and fostering it to become a sustainable small business in a short amount of time. “We established a culture of operating like we are always in a recession, so that we are prepared when that day eventually comes,” he says.

Maneesh looks forward to guiding OC toward meeting its future goals. “All I can hope as a Board member is to help perpetuate the high standard of stewardship and culture that those before me have set and that drove their success to date.”

We could not have said it better ourselves. Indeed the previous Board members have positioned OC as an innovative, expanding, highly efficient, and financially solvent organization. These new Board members will take us to the next level; infusing this organization with the added energy and talent it will need to build upon its successes and create a brighter future for animals.

***Are you looking for a way
to use your time and
talents to help animals
live a better life?***

*Visit our website
OurCompanions.org -
Get Involved - Volunteer*

New Construction To Begin Soon

What a way to end 2016! Thanks to our generous donors, Our Companions is on track to undertake ambitious plans in 2017 to double the size of our animal Sanctuary in Ashford, CT, thereby doubling our capacity for assisting animals in need.

Our Companions Animal Rescue raised more than one million dollars this year to fund Phase-Three of Sanctuary construction. This expansion has been critically needed, since the Sanctuary offers a one-of-a-kind resource to animals who are in dire circumstances. Each year in Connecticut, animals are destroyed – many of whom could have been saved if they had a proper environment for longer-term physical or behavioral rehabilitative care.

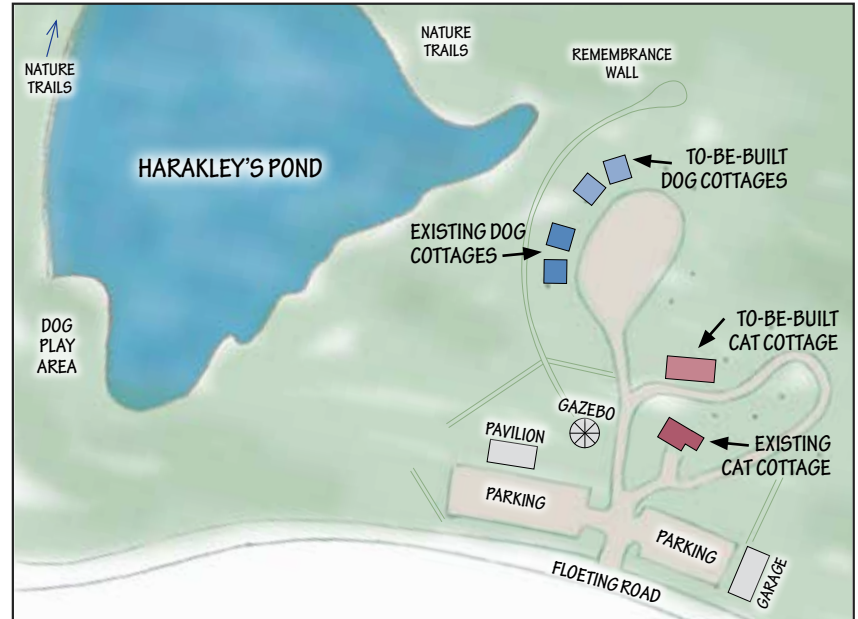
The Sanctuary’s purpose is to meet the needs of this most vulnerable group of animals, providing a home-like setting that is conducive to a longer-term stay and creating a low-stress, enriching atmosphere that encourages healing and rehabilitation. Each animal receives a medical and behavioral treatment plan that is modified weekly. The Sanctuary also serves as an adoption center, providing an inviting place for people to meet our animals.

This next phase of construction will allow us to provide many operational enhancements to facilitate the animals’ rehabilitation while at the Sanctuary. For example, additional housing will allow us greater flexibility in “mixing and matching” the communities of animals in each cottage, creating compatible living situations for all of the animals in our care. In this phase, we also will improve the design of the cat and dog cottages, incorporating what we’ve learned from the current housing experience to provide an even more supportive and enriching atmosphere for the animals. The additional housing also will allow us to add a kitten nursery and isolation areas for animals who may be sick or require close observation.

With your help, OC is making a tangible difference for homeless animals in Connecticut, and we are gradually but steadily changing the face of animal rescue. Our many programs target the root causes of pet homelessness, help keep pets in their original homes, and our Sanctuary offers a safe haven for the area’s most difficult cases. Please know that each and every gift you make is necessary and life-changing. We thank you for your past and future support for the important work that we all do – together.

This expansion is one component of a larger multi-phase Sanctuary construction plan that comprises the building of 17 cottages for cats and dogs, an education center, a dog park, walking trails and a nature preserve. Below, is a chart of the Sanctuary project phases and timeline.

Phase	Details	Goal	Fundraising Status	Project Status
Demolition	Demolish Defunct Factory Farm	\$300,000	Completed Fall 2008	Completed Winter 2009
1	First Rescue Cottage, Welcome Center, Garage, Site Work & Vehicle Purchase	\$1,000,000	Completed Spring 2011	Completed Fall 2012
2	2 More Rescue Cottages, Remembrance Wall & Reflection Gardens	\$630,000	Completed Spring 2013	Completed Fall 2013
3	4 More Cottages (2 Feline & 2 Canine)	\$1,000,000	Completed Winter 2016	Begin Construction March 2017
4	10 More Cottages & Social Building	\$4,500,000	TBD	TBD



Interior & Exterior Plans for Phase 3 Canine Cottage



Interior & Exterior Plans for Phase 3 Feline Cottage

Architectural design by Dennis Davey



Looking for Some Indoor Winter Fun?

Cozy on up at the Sanctuary!

Whether you love cats or dogs (or both!), you will find tons o’ fun at our Sanctuary in Ashford. Our cozy rescue cottages are specially designed with our furry guests in mind, and we think you will love how innovative and playful they are. In this safe, homelike space, the abundant nurturing and kindness of our visitors foster amazing transformations in the animals.

Please come check us out! Every Saturday from 1:00-3:00 p.m., the Sanctuary is open for tours. Upon arrival, you will be greeted by eager, furry faces, welcoming you to our comfortable and warm retreat.

Visiting hours are hosted by knowledgeable staff and volunteers who will be thrilled to introduce you to the many animals recovering and rehabilitating at our center. Some of these lovable critters are finally ready for their forever homes – who knows, maybe one of those forever homes will be yours!

While there, you can also learn more about volunteer opportunities and some of the many ways you can become involved in the wonderful work we do.

Here are some gratuitously cute photos to entice you to visit. We hope to see you soon!

**Our Companions Animal Sanctuary,
46 Floeting Road, Ashford, CT 06278**



Gidget has a new talent — snow scribing.



Cheetah a beautiful tortie would love a home where she can be the only kitty.



Elizabeth is a quiet, loving kitty who would love to keep you warm this winter.



Hera loves playing dress up, regardless of the season.



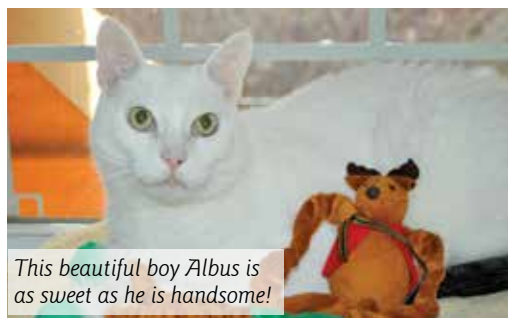
Romeo will surely steal your heart!



Lucy & Brody are great friends & would love to be adopted together



Fillmore is a uniquely marked, sweet, easy-going boy who would do well in any home.



This beautiful boy Albus is as sweet as he is handsome!



Lucy loves the snow!



Look at Where We Are Today: Honoring Those Who Have Led the Way

All of us who have played a part in the evolution of Our Companions share a collective feeling of pride when we look back at all that has been accomplished since its inception. With the initial establishment, subsequent expansion, and slated further expansion of our Ashford Sanctuary, not to mention our numerous programs, OC is making a difference in the lives of people and animals every day.

OC has been fortunate to have had exemplary leaders and loyal donors who, together, have provided the vision and the means to make these achievements possible. At a reception held each year since 2007, we honor a distinguished group of donors who generously supports Our Companions Animal Rescue by donating at leadership levels. The prestigious Henry and Katharine K. McLane Society was created



L to R - Susan Linker, Chris Shivery, Kim Zimmermann, Andrea Dobras, Valerie Friedman, Mitchell Linker



L to R - OC donor Joleen Nevers, Zellene Sandler and James Larabee



L to R - Gale Epstein, Lori Ann Brass, Lida Orzeck



Senator Tony Guglielmo shares remarks during the event



L to R - Matthew and Deanna Nickles and Scott and Mandy Wieting



Valerie Friedman and Dottie Kern



GIVING

and named in honor of Our Companions' very first donors, who shared our vision of helping animals in need, regardless of the challenge or cost.

The end of 2016 saw the terms of four members of OC's Board of Directors come to a close. At this year's McLane reception, held September 22nd, at the Hartford Golf Club, we also honored these leaders for their decade-long dedication to the organization and its mission: Andrea Dobras, Valerie Friedman, Chris Shivery and Kim Zimmermann.

These individuals began their service when Our Companions' aspirations for a Sanctuary and Program Center were simply a vision. "In many ways these Board members were founders of our organization," said Susan Linker, CEO, during her remarks at the event. "They invested in our work during the very early days and, without their many contributions, Our Companions would not be where it is today."

A special tribute was given to Valerie Friedman who served as Our Companions' first-ever Board Chair. Her leadership and personal example inspired not only the Board, but also our family of donors and volunteers, to reach beyond their usual capacity to help us achieve our ambitious goals. When we think back on all the individual animals whose lives we have touched through our life-saving programs and still-evolving Sanctuary facility, we realize it could not have been accomplished without Valerie's commitment.

This annual event also recognizes those individuals who have included Our Companions in their estate plans and are members of our Forever Home Society. A full listing of our Forever Home Society donors is on page 14.

On behalf of the entire organization we once again extend our tremendous gratitude to our generous donors and to these four exemplary leaders, all of whom have committed to further sharing their energy and expertise as members of OC's Advisory Board. In this role, they will work alongside the Board of Directors, which now includes four new members (see story on p. 8).



L to R - Ed Letteron, Frank Adams, Henry Petrofsky and Senator Tony Cuglielmo



L to R - Jessica Davis, Jonna Paz, Kim Zimmermann



L to R - Susan Linker, Chris and Chuck Shivery and Mitchell Linker



L to R - Mark Starace, Kerri Mansberg, Pat Starace



L to R - Chris Shivery, Kim Zimmermann, Andrea Dobras and Valerie Friedman



The Homeless Pets of the Future are Counting on Us

At the end of every year, we look back and marvel at all we have accomplished for homeless pets in Connecticut – and with the support of our generous donor family and phenomenal volunteers, we always have much to celebrate. As we begin another new year in our effort to end pet homelessness, it's simultaneously thrilling and daunting, as we quickly realize there is so much more work that needs to be done. We are very grateful that you are on this journey with us.

Our Companions' *Forever Home Society* was created to honor those who have included Our Companions in their estate plans through charitable bequests, trusts, beneficiary designations or other provisions. Including OC in your estate plans ensures that we will always have the resources to fulfill our promise to do the right thing for animals, regardless of the challenge or cost.

The *Forever Home Society* is made up of people just like you. They want to see the good work of Our Companions carried forth far into the future. Won't you consider adding OC to your estate plans and join us in making a world of difference for years to come? Following is a list of our current *Forever Home Society* members. We hope you will consider adding your name to this list.

If you have already included Our Companions in your estate plan, please let us know so that we can welcome you as a member of the *Forever Home Society*. To learn more, please contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext. 301 or email SusanL@OurCompanions.org.

Donor Feature

Carol Covello became a member of the Forever Home Society in 2014.

"I thank Our Companions for doing what I wish that I could do for every abandoned, neglected and frightened animal. I cannot do that but am so grateful to be able to support their wonderful work.

I also thank them for our Chapin. He is the most intelligent and fabulous big kitty that we could ever have hoped for. If there were a Kitty Harvard he would be first in his class. He comes when called and sits for treats and his food. He is also very spoiled. How wonderful!

If only every suffering animal could find his way to Our Companions." — Carol Covello



Carol and her beloved Chapin.

The language to include Our Companions as a beneficiary of a charitable gift through your estate (will) is as follows: "I give (x dollars/ x percent or all of the residue of my estate) to Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary (DBA, Our Companions Animal Rescue) organizing and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut, and with a principal business address of P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045-0956. TAX-ID # 41-2047734

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Dr. George and Mrs. Jennifer Barrows	Mr. Marvin Fried	Ms. Jacqueline Mickiewicz	Mr. Charles and Mrs. Chris Shivery
Mrs. Deborah Batten	Ms. Valerie Friedman	Ms. Olevine (Lois) Morin	Ms. Joanne Singer
Ms. Lisa Marie Bigelow	Ms. Anna Maria Fornio	Mr. Jaroslaw and Mrs. Elizabeth Nyczak	Ms. Vi R. Smalley
Ms. Joan Oppelt Brodeur	Ms. Lyn Garson	Mr. Len Oberg and in memory of	Ms. Diane Smith
Ms. Doreen Brown	Ms. Michele Greaves and	Mrs. Diane Oberg	Ms. Joyce Snyder
Ms. Beverly Buckner-Baker	Mr. Joseph Popovitch	Mr. Roger and Mrs. Barbara Orsie	Ms. Lisa St. Germain and
Ms. Lana Burchman	Mr. David Gregorski	Ms. Lida Orzeck	Ms. Karen Beaulieu
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Mr. Harry and Mrs. Joan Curry	Ms. Lisa Ireland *	Ms. Barbara Prine and	Mr. Jess and Mrs. Janet Wagner
Ms. Christina (Tina) Davies	Ms. Kathleen Kennedy	Mr. Cyprian Martin	Mr. David and Mrs. Terry Walker
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Mr. Kevin Gillespie	Ms. Estelle Langlois	Ms. June Roy	
Ms. Claudette Douglas	Ms. Mary Kathryn LaRose	Ms. Barbara Ruben	
Ms. Christine Durrer *	Mr. Neil and Mrs. Janice Levett	Ms. Susan Smith Rubin	



When first meeting Hazel and Pippi, two young female calicos ready for adoption at the Our Companion's Sanctuary, Hazel is more likely than not perched like a statue on the kitchen counter or high atop the refrigerator keeping a watchful eye on her daughter Pippi's antics. Perhaps Hazel's protective motherly instinct is attuned to the fact that while Pippi is completely healthy, she is not exactly the same as other cats. Happily unaware, carefree Pippi explores the world around her with exuberant fascination, though not in typical cat-like fashion. Her walk is wobbly and sometimes she loses her balance.

Pippi has Cerebellar Hypoplasia (CH), a neurologic disorder in which the cerebellum at the base of the brain fails to fully develop. The most common cause of CH occurs when kittens are affected by the Feline Panleukopenia Virus (commonly referred to as Feline Distemper) as a result of their mother's being exposed to or infected with the virus during late-term pregnancy. Prior to birth, kittens can also acquire CH due to injury, bacterial infection, toxins or malnutrition, any of which may impede proper brain development. CH is not contagious to other cats, dogs or people. Adult cats cannot contract CH as they age – it is strictly a condition originating prenatally.

Symptoms of CH become much more apparent when kittens begin to stand and walk at four to six weeks of age, as they are extremely uncoordinated. The cerebellum portion of the brain is the command center responsible for synchronization of the body's nerves, muscles and bones for movement, balance and fine motor skills. Although CH cats retain normal cognitive function, their sensory information pathways are disrupted causing unsteady or wobbly limb movements, a wide hind-end stance, and an inability to gauge distances resulting in stumbles,

flips and falls. They often display a stiff marching-type gait, or walk like their paws are on sticky ground. Their head can shake side to side, or bob while eating as if pecking at their food. Symptoms become exaggerated during focused tasks such as drinking, eating, or walking but interestingly CH cats show no signs at all when sleeping.

It is important to rule out other possible neurologic conditions with a thorough examination by a veterinarian who can usually diagnose CH without an MRI due to its classic symptoms. Although the label "kitty Parkinson's disease" is sometimes used to describe CH cats due to their tremors, CH is not progressive like Parkinson's in humans, meaning CH does not worsen over time. There is no cure for CH but improvement may be seen as cats learn various ways to compensate. Physical rehabilitation with hydrotherapy and muscle strengthening exercises can also be helpful. Life expectancy is not shortened due to CH and cats are otherwise healthy and fully capable of a good quality of life. Sadly, many CH cats are unnecessarily euthanized due to misconceptions that the condition is painful and/or contagious.

The degree to which CH cats require special care varies depending upon the severity level of CH affected cats – mild, moderate or severe. Some cats may have difficulty using their litter boxes, but modifications can be made by purchasing or making litter boxes with high sides and low entrances. CH cats are more prone to falls so precautions should be taken to ensure safety around stairs. The most common injuries seen are chipped teeth and broken nails. CH cats should remain exclusively indoors since they do not have the ability to easily defend themselves from predators. Although not as adept at jumping, CH cats are amazing climbers using their



Hazel (L) and Pippi (R) enjoying a cozy nap together.



Amelia reaching out for attention.

claws to grip carpeting or explore high places. They tend to dislike being grabbed or picked up quickly but they love attention and snuggling and are the sweetest most loving cats with easy-going personalities. For more information about CH and feline physical rehabilitation email the author at: FelineRehab@gmail.com.

Our Companions often has CH cats for adoption. Pippi has a mild case of CH and is looking to find a home with her mother, Hazel. She uses her litter box with no problems, easily climbs her multi-level cat tree, and especially loves playing in and on top of cardboard boxes.

Amelia, another offspring of Hazel, is also looking for a home. While Amelia's CH is more pronounced than Pippi's, she is a happy, affectionate, easy going cat who loves the companionship of people and other cats.

If you'd consider adopting a cat with CH, please contact us at Helpline@ourcompanions.org.



Scan this square with your smartphone to see Pippi in action!



Technically Speaking is written by Certified Veterinary Technician, Lyn T. Garson, to address basic information on animal health issues and how they needn't be barriers to adopting a great pet.

Technically Speaking

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *Technically Speaking*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



For the feline guests at our Sanctuary, overcoming emotional trauma from their earlier experiences is often the necessary step to finding the perfect forever home.

Jupiter, Colt, Tetris, and Chickpea came to the Sanctuary from a feral colony in Hartford (see more of their story in our Fall 2016 issue). These kittens arrived at the Sanctuary terrified and with no desire for human contact. However, an intense socialization program, which included clicker training, drew them out of their shells, and they went home this past November. Tetris was even able to high-five his Sanctuary caregivers on his way home, in large part due to the clicker training he received.

Clicker training has some valuable uses and can be an important tool for all personality types in an environment like the Sanctuary. It can also deliver tremendous benefits for cats already settled into a home.

Why Clicker Train?

Clicker training is a great way to exercise a cat’s body and mind. Since most cats live indoors without the stimulation of natural hunting behavior, clicker training can provide valuable mental and physical stimulation; it enriches the cat’s life and can help her to be healthier, happier, and more emotionally balanced.

Clicker training is a fantastic way to bond with your cat. The technique focuses on positive reinforcement of a behavior that you choose and provides a simple way to communicate and engage with your cat that is positive and rewarding for both of you.



Jupiter, Colt, Tetris, and Chickpea during their first few days at the Sanctuary.

Clicker training has practical purposes. You can teach your cat to come when summoned or comfortably stow themselves in a carrier. If your cat demonstrates problematic behaviors, you can utilize clicker training to produce more acceptable behaviors.

The Basics of Clicker Training

Clicker training uses an otherwise arbitrary sound – the “click” – to mark the desired behavior at the exact moment that it’s happening, and it holds a promise that a reward will follow, be it affection – or even better – a tasty treat.

To begin training it is important to pick a time when your cat is active and hungry, and a small, quiet location without a lot of distractions.

Once you are armed with some “rewards” – typically an especially tasty treat (tuna, chicken, cheese, etc.) and your clicker, you’ll begin by establishing meaning between the sound of the click and the tasty treat. This is done by just repeating a sequence of clicking and then providing a small treat (click-treat, click-treat, etc.) until your cat anticipates a treat after every click.



Tetris showing off his high five skills.

When this connection has been clearly established, start associating the click with desired behaviors, preferably something simple such as: sit, come, follow a target wand, or climb onto a perch. Cat owners can teach their cat to high-five or jump onto their cat condo. Click once during the desired behavior to mark that exact behavior – and then present a treat. When your cat consistently performs the behavior that you want, you can later add voice or visual commands.

Repetition, consistency and patience are important things to keep in mind when training your cat, and of course, always remember to be extra nice to your cat so he’ll want to please you.

There are a number of great resources for clicker training. We recommend Karen Pryor’s online course, (www.karenpryoracademy.com/train-your-cat). Pryor also has informative books and clicker training kits.



Karen Aseltine is the Feline Behavior Manager and Caregiver at the Our Companions Sanctuary. Karen is a Certified Cat Behavior Counselor and serves as one of our resident “kitty psychologists.” She receives questions every day about cat behavior. This column will highlight the most commonly asked questions.

The Scoop

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *The Scoop*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



With a new year upon us, some of us may be trying to rid ourselves of extra pounds gained over the holidays. We know that a healthful diet and exercise are essential for maintaining our well-being and the same is true for our pets. But the hustle and bustle of the holidays can get us out of our routine, which may also impact our canine companions. At this time of year, our clients often ask us for ideas on how to help their dogs get fit. Here are some suggestions.

For starters, have your pup checked out by your vet to rule out any underlying medical conditions such as hypothyroidism, which can affect his weight. If your vet determines there's no medical condition involved, then you should discuss what the best options are for helping your dog slim down.

Your vet may suggest decreasing the amount of food your dog eats or feeding him a premium quality lower calorie kibble (formulated for "less active" pets, or a "lite" option) and increasing exercise. Ask your vet to determine what will be most beneficial based on your dog's health, weight and particular situation. Your vet can tell you how much exercise your pup can handle to lose weight and build muscle, which will make him healthier. Depending upon your vet's advice, you may consider adding five minutes extra to each walk or playing fetch more often to boost your dog's activity level.

If needed, there are prescription "healthy weight" foods available that you can discuss with your vet. Another option is to feed your dog kibble that contains extra fiber, or provide



a grain-free option that includes sweet potatoes instead of rice or wheat, which are in many dog foods and have a tendency to pack on the pounds.

If your vet suggests decreasing the amount of food, you can substitute fiber, using canned sweet potatoes or green beans to make up for the reduced kibble. Adding fiber allows your dog to eat the same amount – with fewer calories – and help him feel full, so he doesn't get the sense that he's missing out on food. Search online for details of the "green bean diet" to learn how this approach might benefit your pet. Once your dog reaches his ideal weight, you can start to cut out the green beans and transition him to an appropriate ratio to maintain his new physique.

Eliminating table scraps and reducing treats can be effective. For example, give half a treat instead of the whole, or replace higher-calorie treats with fresh vegetables. Also, remember to feed your pet a precise amount of food twice a day using a measuring cup. Keep in mind that treats, which ideally should be given for training, need to be factored into the total number of calories your canine consumes each day.

Just like people, pets who maintain a healthy weight feel better, have fewer joint and back problems and may even live longer as a result. Help your dog start the year off right with a well-balanced diet and exercise routine. He will thank you for it.



Our Companions Canine Operations Director, Marie Joyner, receives questions every day about dogs and their behavioral issues. Marie's Den answers some of the more commonly asked questions.

Marie's Den

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of Marie's Den, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.

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Love Animals? Come Volunteer at the Sanctuary!



Each week dozens of volunteers from all over Connecticut assist us in providing care to the deserving animals at our Sanctuary in Ashford. We currently have more than 200 individuals who give some 180 hours of their time per week. With the upcoming construction of the new buildings that will double the number of animals we can house, we are sure to need much more help! We hope you will consider getting involved as a Sanctuary volunteer.

Visit our OurCompanions.org for full job descriptions and volunteer requirements.

