Food Glorious Food
What’s Best for Your Dog and Cat

Inside:
Saying Goodbye
Indoor vs. Outdoor Cat
Dog Biting Answers
Reflections from OC Volunteers
Dear Friends,

Everyone reading this magazine will no doubt relate on a very intimate level to one of this edition’s articles — “Saying Goodbye: Making the Difficult Decision to Euthanize a Beloved Pet.”

Personally, while I have been increasingly involved in animal welfare issues over the past decade, compared to other members of the Our Companions family, I would most likely be considered relatively new, not only to the field, but to pet ownership itself.

In many ways, my animal welfare journey paralleled my life with my first dog Buster, whom I rescued as a puppy 14 years ago.

With every passing year, and as my love for him grew, I came to better appreciate dogs—how they play, adore companionship, convey fear and express love. I also became aware of how lucky Buster was to have found his way into our lives. Sadly, so many homeless pets are never rescued and never enjoy the comfort, attention and affection I was able to offer Buster.

To that end, I will be forever grateful to Buster, not only for showing me love on a level I’d never experienced, but also for indirectly introducing me to the depths of the pet homelessness crisis. He taught me so much.

A few months ago, after a protracted decline, it was time to let Buster go. It was my first goodbye to a canine companion.

Buster didn’t die in his sleep. But rather, we decided that the time had come for him to cross the rainbow bridge. And it was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever made in my life.

Buster had become a shell of his former self, and was plagued by chronic illness and dementia. We felt that it was best for him to pass with dignity and in relative comfort.

In this issue, “Saying Goodbye: Making the Difficult Decision to Euthanize a Beloved Pet” explores this morally complicated and emotionally difficult subject with an honesty and sensitivity I hope you find compelling and comforting. The Our Companions family is a broad and diverse group. But our love of animals, and the deep pain we feel when we lose them, is a bond we all share.

The process of saying goodbye to Buster was his final lesson to me about our lifelong obligation to the animals that teach us so much and put their lives in our hands. Thank you, dear Buster.

Valerie

Board Chair
Thank You Our Companions Donors!

With the demand for our programs growing every year (our Helpline Call Center now fields approximately 4,000 calls annually) and with the sanctuary’s first rescue cottage opening its doors in 2012, our Board of Directors recognized the need to increase annual support.

Our operating budget is funded by our annual fund; the success and failure of Our Companions rests on the success or failure of our annual fund drive.

We turned to you for help, and once again you were there for us and the animals!

I am thrilled to report that we surpassed our ambitious goal of $500,000—raising over $520,000—a record for the organization and a 47% increase from 2010.

Our staff and team of more than 150 volunteers go to extraordinary lengths to help animals in need today—and every day—while also working to prevent animals from becoming homeless tomorrow. Our work is made possible thanks to you, and your support serves as a vote of confidence in our mission to always do the right thing for animals, regardless of the challenge or the cost.

So, as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our founding and embark upon what promises to be the most exciting year yet in our journey, I hope you know just how grateful I am for your belief in us.

Susan Linker, CEO

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Thank You to Our Family of Donors and Volunteers Who Made 2011 an Amazing Year of Animal Rescue at Our Companions!

Below are some of Our Companions’ programmatic accomplishments in 2011.

Pet Rescue and Adoption

Rescued and found loving homes for more than 215 pets (37% of adopted pets were considered special-needs cases due to medical or behavioral reasons, including pets that are blind, deaf, FIV-positive or FeLV-positive).

Responded to approximately 3,400 calls and emails for assistance through our Animal Helpline.

Added and trained three new volunteers to work on our Animal Helpline.

Held eight adoption events, and added new locations for our “Home for the Holidays” adoption event.

Launched special Facebook promotions, and began using Twitter to provide more updates on Helpline and rescue activity.

Acquired 25 volunteers committed to working on the Poster Campaign, which promotes adoptable pets.

Scheduled 32 pro bono professional photo shoots for adoptable pets thanks to GeminEye Images.

Provided veterinary assistance for 22 injured feral cats.

Increased Sterile Feral program equipment inventory by 20 traps.

Mobilized volunteers to build 70 shelters for feral cats.

Collected and distributed more than 4,300 cans and over 2,700 pounds of cat food to 25 caregivers of feral cat colonies.

Held 11 Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) group training classes attended by 41 people.

Issued 44 sterilization vouchers for cats and kittens.

Public Education and Volunteer Support

Expanding Special Events volunteer staff to 51 volunteers.

Organized volunteers to attend 46 public events.

Tabled at Ashford Farmers’ Market weekly, May through September.

Canine Behavior and Rehabilitation Programs

Continued to provide free behavior evaluations, and training consultations with Animal Control Officers and other non-profit Animal Welfare Organizations on hard-to-place dogs when requested.

Conducted 95 canine behavioral evaluations for adoptable dogs.

Held 140 private dog training sessions with an increased number led by Canine College volunteers.

Taught 75 dogs through our Family Companion classes, which are team-taught by fully-trained volunteers.

Began a pilot program called “The Buddy Project,” that teaches special needs and at-risk youth how to train homeless dogs to increase their adoptability. Worked with two teens in this program for a total of 18 sessions.

Meet Sweet Little Tasha

This sweet girl is in search of a new home after her owner passed away. At 13 years old, Tasha is still a playful girl. She enjoys hunting her toys and discovering catnip on her scratchy box. Tasha loves to be brushed and is an excellent conversationalist (chirp, chirp, chirp).

Believe it or not she also loves getting her face groomed by the dog in her foster home!

For more information, contact Stephanie at 860-242-9999 x303 or Stephanie@ourcompanions.org
Are you overwhelmed when it comes to buying food for your pet? You aren’t alone. A visit to your local pet store is becoming more and more confusing with so many different brands to choose from—all promising to be the most healthful way to feed your pet. Then there is the controversy over which is best—wet food versus dry food—and even the raw food approach.

So what are pet owners—in particular cat and dog owners—to do? With the experts disagreeing on what’s good or bad, the choice of how you feed your pet becomes that much more challenging.

While there are no definite rules for what to feed your pet, many experts say that a good rule of thumb is to know the essential ingredients required to help your dog or cat maintain optimum health. Foods that have a seal of approval from the Association of American Food Control Officials (AAFCO) have passed safety requirements through trial feeding tests. Be sure to note that the label says “as fed” and not “as formulated.” Formulated means the food was designed according to AAFCO standards but the food has not been tested as it is with the “as fed” label. Although the food product may have the AAFCO seal of approval, consumers also need to be aware of how digestible the food may or may not be.

**The By-Products and Whole Grains Controversy**

Many brands now advertise their product as being more healthful because they have fewer by-products or whole grains. Grains such as soy, corn, and wheat are not meat and are therefore less nutritious according to pet food activists. Experts also cite that cats and dogs don’t have the digestive system to benefit from these grains the way that cattle and horses do.

However, some experts believe that grains and by-products can actually be healthful additions. According to Dr. Calico Schmidt, a clinical veterinary medicine instructor at the University of Wisconsin, “By-products (mainly organ meats) often provide more nutrients than muscle meats. Whole grains, rather than being ‘fillers’ contribute valuable nutrients including vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids and fiber to diets while helping to keep the fat and calories lower than if animal products were used in their place.”

**Wet Food vs. Dry Food**

The pros and cons of wet food versus dry food continue to confuse pet owners. Some pet nutritionists advocate for canned food because it contains fewer preservatives, less grain and more moisture which is better for your pet’s urinary tract. Wet food is also easier to digest, particularly for puppies and kittens. In order to maintain a balanced diet, experts suggest that high-quality wet foods containing a high meat content should be supplemented by dry food.

Read the label to see what the company recommends for the right percentage of dry food to be used with premium wet food.

Premium dry food can also be very healthful as long as it contains high-quality carbohydrates, such as potatoes and 100 percent whole grains. Experts recommend avoiding the lower-quality products such as corn, wheat and soy, glutens and by-products. Some kittens and puppies have trouble chewing on dry food, but there are dry foods made specifically for them. Dry food can be made soft by adding water. A diet of dry food can also keep your pet’s teeth clean and is said to promote better smelling breath. A big advantage of feeding your pet dry food is that you can leave it out, allowing your pet to graze throughout the day.

**Premium Pet Store Food vs. Supermarket Brands**

Generally, mass produced pet food found in supermarkets contain lower-quality, less-digestible ingredients. While premium food in grocery stores contains higher-grade ingredients, they may still include some unhealthful elements such as artificial colors, flavors and chemical preservatives. Premium food found in pet stores is more expensive because the ingredients are of a higher quality.

High-quality, premium wet and dry food usually has higher meat content, which is considered the most important ingredient in pet food.

**How does your pet food rate?**

There are a number of websites that rate pet food. Here are some samples:

- www.TruthAboutPetFood.com
- www.DogFoodAdvisor.com
- www.PetFoodRatings.net
- www.ConsumerSearch.com
Pro and Cons of Raw Pet Food Diets

A new trend is feeding pets homemade food. This has proven to be controversial due to the fact that these diets have not been sanctioned by the AAFCO. Raw ingredients also may contain bacteria and parasites that can infect both the food preparer and the pet. They can also prove to be more expensive. Raw food must be stored properly to prevent spoilage, and fruits and vegetables need to be processed in a blender to make them digestible for pets. Because raw food spoils quickly, food that is not eaten within a half-hour should be discarded.

Advocates of raw pet food diets, however, claim that these meals are rich in enzymes and nutrients. Some pet owners who feed raw food claim their pets have healthier teeth, shinier coats, a healthier weight and more energy. More pet food companies are offering commercial raw food, which is one way to reduce preparation time and potentially reduce the risk of contamination. Companies such as Paw Naturaw makes USDA certified organic frozen raw foods, which contain balanced ingredients, and can be left out without the potential for spoilage.

Deceitful Advertising

Many brands invoke clever advertising that hides the fact that the food contains a high amount of grains. That’s why it’s important to read labels carefully before you buy any pet food. The food should contain protein from meat or fish as the first ingredient. Be aware, too, that pet food companies can claim no preservatives added when, in fact, some meats used in the food already had preservatives in them.

In the End

Choosing the right food for your pet is a critical decision that can impact your pet’s longevity and overall well-being. While there are no definitive answers to what is best, perhaps the real answer lies in your pet’s enjoyment (or dislike) of what he or she is eating. Many a dog and cat owner has experienced buying that expensive premium food only to discover that Fido and Cleo won’t eat it. In the end, it comes down to reading labels and doing your best to provide meals that your pets will enjoy.

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Pawsitive Ending

Does this guy enjoy getting a hug every now and then? From looking at his photos, it would seem it is his favorite pastime. Buddy also now enjoys camping, playing with toys and going for long walks with his new family. Fortunately, his days of walking the streets all alone are long gone.

Buddy was just a few months old when he was found roaming the streets of Waterbury. He was very skinny, cold and scared. A wonderful woman named Tanya rescued Buddy and brought him into her home. Already a mom to five Chihuahuas, Tanya had her hands full. But Buddy was so gentle with the five tiny dogs, and Tanya fell in love with him.

Tanya contacted the local animal control department to notify them about finding a lost dog—they said she could keep him if she wanted to. Deep down, Tanya knew she couldn’t afford the care of another dog. She sought help from Our Companions because she wanted to be sure Buddy would be placed into a loving home. It is wonderful how Buddy trusted his rescuer to help him, and she trusted Our Companions to find just the right situation for him.

Soon after, OC Adoption Volunteer, Gina, introduced Buddy to Ali and Steve—and it was the beginning of another new chapter in Buddy’s life. For Ali and Steve, it was love at first sight! They couldn’t wait to bring him home. For Buddy, it was sad when Tanya left, but his new parents distracted him with toys and fun and before long he knew he was home. Today, Buddy can often be caught sleeping on Steve and snuggling with Ali, and if you look closely you would swear Buddy is smiling.

When asked how Buddy was doing, Ali was beaming with excitement, “I just wanted to say thank you for everything. Gina and Tanya are both angels in disguise and we couldn’t have gotten such a wonderful little boy without your help. Everything is going great and Steve and I are the happiest, proudest parents around. We can’t believe such a perfect little boy is ours and we are totally head-over-heels, absolutely in love with Buddy.”

It seems Buddy is feeling the very same sentiments about his new forever home.
Our pets are important to us – they offer companionship and comfort and often are considered a member of the family. We don’t like to think about it, but eventually the time will come when we have to say goodbye. Some advance preparation can make this difficult decision a little easier.

If we are lucky to have a long-lived pet, the most likely scenario at the end of their lives is to have organ failure, cancer or some other untreatable illness. The time at which a disease is declared terminal is usually the time when a pet owner’s grieving begins. In human hospice care, this is called “anticipated grief,” meaning we are coming face-to-face with the prospect of death and anticipating how we will feel at the time of actual loss.

Unless your pet is in pain, there is probably no reason to seek euthanasia immediately just because you receive a terminal diagnosis. Your veterinarian can give you information that can help determine your next course of action, and if there’s any sense of urgency. If the animal is suffering, timely euthanasia is probably the most loving thing you can do for him/her.

Being afforded a window of time together (anywhere from days to weeks or even months) can make the eventual loss of a terminally ill pet less shocking. Knowing that your time together is limited, you may wish to take your pet to his/her favorite places and give them lots of extra “together time” and special treats. Again, in human hospice care, this transition period is considered an important time for closeness and closure. Animal end-of-life care, to an ardent pet lover, is no different.

Joanne Wholey, a Licensed Professional Counselor who provides support for individuals experiencing difficulty with the loss of a companion animal, suggests gathering people and/or animals that your pet has a relationship with to hold a “living memorial.” Ms. Wholey states, “When our Sophie was near the end, we had a get-together of friends and family to celebrate her life. We shared funny stories about Sophie, told her how much we loved and appreciated her, and in the process provided comfort to each other.”

As lovely as this time can be, it is obviously not easy to witness a pet’s decline. So how will you know when it may be time to assist your pet in making their final transition? Look for a few key changes to help you decide, and seek advice from your veterinarian.

If the pet seems comfortable and content, then there’s really no urgent need to hasten the death process. In such a case, the terminal illness hasn’t progressed to the point that may require action. Like humans, toward the end of a pet’s life, they are no longer interested in food and water. Their body can no longer expend the energy required for digestion, nor does it require the sustenance to complete the life cycle. It’s winding down. It’s at this point that you should observe the pet carefully for signs of discomfort. If they don’t demonstrate any, let them be, but know that they are down to their last few days.

Don’t be surprised if toward the end, your animal seems to have a sort of “rally” – this is normal, in both the human and animal death processes. For example, a dying cat may have stopped eating, and yet, the next thing you know, he’s jumped onto your desk and is walking across your computer keyboard, just like the old days. These are “gifts” in hospice care – these precious last vestiges of normalcy.

While the refusal to eat or drink likely signals their time is near, the amazing three-foot leap indicates it’s not quite here yet.

Pay special attention to signs of acute weakness. While they may have been slower moving, due to their illness, as they near death they will eventually become too weak to move. A cat may be suddenly too tired to climb out of the litter box, or a dog may lie down and not get up. The animal may have a wobbly walk or falter when they walk, or may miss a jump they normally are able to make – or not be able to hold their own head up. This usually means they have only hours left before they will likely experience discomfort, and should be helped to pass comfortably as soon as possible. Of course, this necessitates that the veterinarian can fit you into his/her schedule – so it’s a good idea to keep your veterinarian posted on the animal’s condition regularly, so that he/she can be prepared to see you when the time comes.

Usually within just hours of the onset of acute weakness, the animal’s body begins to shut down; their bowels and bladder release uncontrollably and they may experience seizures. This is definitely not something you want to witness. Do yourself and your pet a favor and schedule the final vet visit before this takes place.
Letting Go, continued

Many pet owners assume that if they wait long enough, the animal will pass on its own. Unfortunately, in most cases, this would mean a prolonged and agonizing death. If you decide to provide end-of-life care to your animal in its last days, it can afford you some precious extra time, but this time should not be extended beyond the acute weakness stage. When you note the animal’s inability to move, prompt action is necessary.

Some veterinarians will make house calls for euthanasia, and certainly this provides your animal with a less stressful experience than a clinic setting. However, everyone is different, and either option should be in your pet’s best interest ultimately. Many veterinarians do not offer house call services, and that is why being prepared in advance is helpful. If you think you’d prefer to have your pet euthanized at home, do some research now to ascertain who in your area provides this service. Give them a call and ask how much notice they typically need. Then, when the time comes, you can spend the last remaining moments with your pet, instead of frantically trying to make arrangements for how you can help them during their most vulnerable time.

Many people wish to be with their pet at the time of the euthanasia procedure, but everyone is different. If you have children, you may wish to allow them to say goodbye to the pet before the final appointment. The last decision you will need to make is what to do with your pet’s remains. Your veterinarian can provide information about burial, cremation, or other alternatives.

Recommended Reading - Pet Loss/Bereavement


Websites

www.aplb.org Resources and live chats for pet loss support

www.critters.com Resources and forum to post thoughts/feelings

www.pet-loss.net Resources, Post memorials
The Henry & K.K. McLane Society

The Henry and Katherine (K.K.) McLane Society was established in 2007 as a way of honoring the memory of Mr. Henry and Mrs. K.K. McLane, Our Companions’ first donors.

Our Companions recognizes the following individuals, businesses and organizations that made a leadership contribution to Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary’s 2011 Companions Fund.

**Founders Circle ($10,000+)**
- Mr. Samuel and Mrs. Janet Bailey
- Ms. Maria R. Das Neves and Mr. Frank Hawkins
- Ms. Valerie Friedman
- Gerald and Claire Gerath Foundation
- Mr. Rob and Mrs. Susan Mason
- Mr. Leon and Mrs. Bernadette Olivier
- PetsMart Foundation
- George J. Germaine Estate
- United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Kim Zimmermann

**Guardians Circle ($5,000-$9,999)**
- Aetna Foundation, Inc.
- Elinor Patterson Baker Foundation
- Ms. Paula Fischer and Mr. Jeff Durham
- Mr. Robert and Mrs. Linda Forrester
- Mr. Josue Harari
- Mr. Randall and Mrs. Marie Joyner
- Mr. George and Mrs. Lynda Trumbull
- Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Shivery
- Ms. Gail Perkins-Gemme and Ms. Lida Orzeck
- Newman’s Own Foundation, Inc.
- Mr. Irwin Linker
- Ms. Dottie Kern
- Ms. Barbara Prine and Mr. Cyprian Martin
- Petcare Veterinary Services
- Mr. Leon Carberry
- Ms. Carol Carpenter
- Ms. Fanchon Cartin
- Ms. Richard and Mrs. Ellen Cartun

**Caregivers Circle ($2,500-$4,999)**
- Mr. Reginald and Mrs. Barbara Brack
- Mr. Brian and Mrs. Kimberly Chagnon
- Mr. Timothy and Mrs. Carol Covello
- Frontier Medicine
- Fuller Charitable Lead Trust
- Ms. Nancy Goodfellow
- Hanky Panky Ltd.
- ING Foundation
- Ms. Leigh Ann Kissner
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- Mr. H. Richard McLane
- Ms. Joleen M. Nevers and Mr. James Larabee
- Ms. Ruth Rollin and Mr. Henry Petrofsky
- Ms. Penny Petrone
- Mr. Douglas and Mrs. Julie Reid
- Ms. Barbara Ruben and Ms. June Roy
- Ms. Helen Savage
- Mr. Patrick and Mrs. Kathleen Sullivan

**Rescuers Row ($250-$999)**
- Anonymous (4)
- Ms. Maureen Zaslowksy and Mr. Adam Zweifler
- Ms. Vanessa Yi and Mr. Kevin Mounts
- Ms. Maureen Zaslowksy and Mr. Adam Zweifler

**Companions Row ($1,000-$2,499)**
- Mr. Bruce and Mrs. Terri Alpert
- Ms. Laura Baker
- Bank of America Matching Gifts
- Dr. George and Mrs. Jennifer Barrows

**Consolidated Fund**
- Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Kim Zimmermann
- Ms. Elizabeth Reed
- Ms. Susan Smith Rubin
- Mr. Anthony C. and Mrs. Sharon Scussel
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- Mr. Roy Simpson
- Specialty Transportation, Inc.
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- The Baranyai Group LLC
- Mr. James and Mrs. Whitney Vose
- Veterinary Specialists of Connecticut
- Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Rita Weidman
- Ms. Jennifer Whitlow
- Mrs. Betty Willis
- Yalesville Veterinary Hospital
- Ms. Vanessa Yi and Mr. Kevin Mounts
- Ms. Maureen Zaslowksy and Mr. Adam Zweifler
Very Veggie Is Back and Better Than Ever!

Our Companions is delighted to announce the availability of the 2nd Edition of our Very Veggie Cookbook containing recipes contributed by Our Companions volunteers. Many of these delicious recipes you will recognize as favorites from the 1st Edition, however, you won’t want to miss our new additions, including a new veggie burger section and a vegan section featuring recipes from Jenny Manley of The Nutmeg Cookery.

Very Veggie can be yours for a minimum donation of $15. You may place your order via our secure website at OurCompanions.org, or call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 300. The best part? You’ll enjoy wonderful vegetarian and vegan fare and help support animals in need. It doesn’t get any better than that!

Say Cheese! It’s Time for the 7th Annual Love Your Pet Photo Contest!

You know your dog or cat has what it takes to be a calendar girl (or boy). Sign up your furry valentine today to participate in what is now a favorite Our Companions annual tradition.

For the 7th year in a row, Paulette Mertes Studios is raising funds for Our Companions with their “Love Your Pet” calendar photo competition.

Throughout the month of February, have your pet professionally photographed at Paulette Mertes Studios in West Hartford during the “Love Your Pet” promotion.

Once your pet is photographed, he or she is eligible for inclusion in our 2013 calendar. Photos will be posted on the Our Companions website beginning in the spring; your votes ($1/per vote) will determine which furry felines and adorable pooches are included in the calendar. The pet with the most votes wins the coveted cover photo!

Get all the details at www.pmertes.com. Then put your favorite pet in the running by calling 860-521-9700 for an appointment. Don’t delay—appointments are already being booked, and available slots are limited.

Last year’s winner and “Cover Pet” was Lizzy. Could your dog or cat be the 2013 Our Companions calendar cover pet?
Hey Kids, Get Ready for the
16th Annual Easter Egg Hunt to Benefit
Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary!

Saturday, April 7th
11am-2pm

Farmington Miniature Golf
& Ice Cream Parlor
1048 Farmington Ave, Farmington, CT
(860) 677-0118

Join us for CT’s best Easter egg hunt with over 15,000 Easter eggs filled with chocolate and prizes!

Join the hundreds of people who enjoy the event’s family fun!

Meet Mike Stacy from 100.5 WRCH
Free Face Painting
Free Bounce House
Tie-Dye Vanilla Ice Cream Cones
Ice Cream Parlor
Pictures with the Easter Bunny

Become a Member of the Our Companions Forever Home Society

There is no better way to honor your pet than to help other animals who are less fortunate. By including Our Companions in your estate plans, you will become a member of our Forever Home Society, which will help us fulfill our promise to help thousands of abused and neglected animals who have no other place to turn.

Giving is one of life’s greatest satisfactions, especially when you know that your gifts will improve the lives of deserving animals for generations to come.

Please contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext. 301 to learn more about leaving a timeless gift to the animals.

The Perfect Gift for You and the Animal Lover in Your life.

Rescued Pet Collection
Note Cards

8 designs available of various paintings of rescued pets!
Blank cards measure 4½” x 5½”
Individual cards $3.00 or in sets of 4 / $10.00

To order cards, contact artist
Dina Marie Pratt
PaintedByDina.com

For more information or to commission a portrait of your pet:
PaintedByDina.com

Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary information:
Legal Address: P.O. Box 673, Bloomfield, CT 06002
Tax ID number: 41-2047734
Tell us about your animal companions and why they are so precious to you, and, in what way did they lead you to get involved in Our Companions.

Speak!
A Special Section for Animal-Related Musing from Our Companions Volunteers.

Daryl Carbone
Animal Helpline and Canine College Volunteer

I have a gorgeous German Shorthaired Pointer, Jackee, who came to me a year before my last child graduated from high school. I think that my daughter realized that I’d need company once she left for college. I had been a stay-at-home mom and part-time school nurse for many years and now my life would be very different. Little did she know that the dog we chose would get me involved with Our Companions!

Jackee is a bit of a challenge—she is fearful and therefore of the mind that she needs to protect herself, and now me too, before anything bad happens. Needing someone who would help me manage her behavior and not kick us out of class, I found my way to one of Marie’s classes and became hooked into learning the why of animal behavior. I am now actively involved in Our Companions’ training program and helping others with their special dogs.

Through the years that I have had my girl (I can’t believe it has been seven years), we have had many challenges and I have sometimes questioned my ability to keep her mentally fit, but in the end, she has been such a joy and I can’t imagine life without her. She loves us all, greets everyone in the family with a toy and unbridled enthusiasm. She is the family bed warmer, the protector of all.

Carol Noyes
Canine College and Special Events Volunteer

In 1991, I took a vacation on my own—camping in Nova Scotia. On the way home, I decided to stay at a B&B in the northeast corner of Maine. The B&B was a llama farm, and as I was wandering around the property before leaving, I spotted a small, long-hair tuxedo kitten, frolicking among the llamas! Of course, I stopped to pet him and play with him, but then I had to be on my way.

All the way home, I couldn’t stop thinking about him. When I arrived home, maybe a week passed, and he was still on my mind. Finally, I called the B&B and asked if he was available. They said they were giving away the entire litter, and he was the only one left (waiting for me??). I explained I was heading to a conference the next day, so couldn’t drive all the way back up to Maine for awhile. As luck would have it, they were traveling to Connecticut to visit a relative, and would be happy to bring the kitten if someone would meet them on the highway.

I explained this to my husband, who said he’d pick up the kitten, and I headed off for my conference. After the meeting took place, I phoned home to see if all had gone as planned. My husband, a man of few words, couldn’t stop talking about this kitten. I could hardly wait to get home. As the kitten turned out to be full of mischief, we named him Huckleberry, after Huckleberry Finn.

Huckleberry was an exceptionally beautiful, smart, and sociable cat, and when we had to let him go due to kidney failure at 12 years, it was heartbreaking. I thought I’d never again have a cat anything like him, but two years ago, I adopted a shorthair tuxedo kitten from Our Companions. Daffodil is different in many ways, but is Huckleberry’s equal in “smarts” and sociability. And so my heart continues to be captured by these little feisty felines.

Catherine Peterson
Our Companions Office Volunteer

I have four OC rescue cats and one OC dog. My husband and I have found such joy with these animals. We have a 14-year-old cat with a pin in his leg—thus a limp. We have a special pen/cage so he can go out and lay in the sun with complete safety. He is out a couple of hours a day, weather permitting, and loves it.

Another cat, Whiskers, only has three legs and actually rules the house. Two young male cats, Retread and Ben, are best pals and often sleep together on the couch. Cindy, our latest rescue, is a nine-year-old Cairn Terrier/Maltese. She is in the bed every night snuggling up.

She came from abuse and now her life is so special. Daily walks and playing fetch with her stuffed toys (babies) makes for a great day.

When I think of happiness, I think of our animals. They are a treasure to us and so enjoyed and loved.

Our volunteers love these books about animals...

Caroline Gaetano
“Following Atticus” by Tom Ryan - is the story of a 20 pound dog and a middle-aged, overweight, former journalist who chose to honor the passing of a dear friend by hiking all 48 of New Hampshire’s peaks over 4,000 feet, twice, during the winter.

Daryl Carbone
Having a challenging dog (and being part of Canine College) means that I have a lot of training books. My absolute favorite is “When Pigs Fly: Training Success with Impossible Dogs” by Jane Killion.

Carol Noyes
“The Art of Racing in the Rain” by Garth Stein. This story is narrated by Enzo, a mixed breed dog, who lives with Denny, a race car driver.

“A Big Little Life”
Dean Koontz may be a writer of horror stories, but this is the sweet non-fiction account of his first dog, Trixie, a Golden Retriever.

Mary Tulumanis
“The Art Of Racing In The Rain” by Garth Stein. Truly a great read!! It will make you laugh and cry!!

Judith Almeida
“Homer’s Odyssey” by Gwen Cooper about living with a blind cat. It’s very uplifting and shows you how adopting a disabled pet is very rewarding.

Allie Philips
I’m thrilled to announce that my latest book is now available! “Defending the Defenseless: A Guide to Protecting and Advocating for Pets” details how people who love companion animals can be more involved to protect and advocate for their wellbeing.
**Paula Fischer** Former Board Member and Special Events Volunteer

“Replacing Grief with Grace”

When people lose a pet to illness, injury or just old age, many feel they need to take a long period of time before they “replace” that pet. It’s almost like getting remarried right after a spouse passes on. It just doesn’t seem right.

In December 2008, I lost my 15-year-old tabby, Scooter, to kidney failure and hyper-thyroid disease. One year earlier, I lost her brother Jiminey “Jim” in much the same way. Jim and Scoot were inseparable littermates I adopted as kittens to keep them together, and their relationship with each other was a gift in and of itself.

Scooter and I had a very special bond throughout her life... so special I called her my little soul mate. She helped me through one of my darkest times as I recovered from a failed relationship. Night after night, Scooter would curl up on my chest and lick away my tears as I prayed for peace and healing of my broken heart. Jim would be at the foot of my bed, keeping my feet warm.

In Scooter’s final year, after her brother left us, I spent all of my free time nursing and comforting her. It was heartbreaking knowing that at some point I would have to say goodbye, and I lived with that pain for months leading up to that dreaded December day.

So there I was, single and completely alone in my home in West Hartford. I would come home from work night after night to no little faces greeting me at the door. I wondered when it would feel right to welcome another cat or two into my home.

Well it was only a few weeks later, in January 2009, that Susan Linker told me about this beautiful dilute calico Our Companions had rescued. Understanding my grief, she gently asked if I would be interested before they put her up for adoption and suggested she email me a photo. That was it. Two days later I was introducing Cali to my home along with a beautiful four-month-old tabby, Lyla, who I fell in love at first sight with as well.

I never again dreaded coming home to an empty house, and I felt Scooter and Jim so alive in spirit as these two new furry friends frolicked in their tracks. I cannot explain the joy I felt rescuing two homeless animals, sharing my home and giving them the life and love they so deserve. It was the best way to celebrate the lives of those I so loved and missed, replacing grief with grace.

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**Erin Vivero** Special Events Volunteer and Assists with Promotions and Public Relations

When I got my first home I decided that I definitely wanted my own dog too. So I found Hunter the dog online at Petfinder. I had grown up with male dogs and husky breeds so I figured I’d go with that. The search narrowed down to Hunter (seven-year-old Siberian) in Milford. I went to visit him and like most Huskies she saw me and couldn’t care less. She was also HUGE and I didn’t recall my dogs being that big but I figured who cares! So, I decided to adopt her and came back a week later to pick her up. The shelter said, “Oops we didn’t think to look under the hood and the he is a she, do you still want her?” Of course I still adopted her. I should have known that was the beginning of a ridiculous relationship with a ridiculous dog.

I also added another Husky to my family, Dirty Dog who passed away last year. Today my canine pack includes Hunter and Woody. All my dogs have survived unspeakable cruelty and neglect before entering my life. Their resilience and ability to continue to love is remarkable to me.

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**Valerie Friedman** Our Companions Board Chair

Having put down Buster, my 14-and-a-half-year-old Lab mix, only four weeks ago, I can definitely find a few words to explain how he changed my life. Without Buster, I would never have found my way to animal organizations generally and to Our Companions specifically. Buster changed my life. I was not one of those kids who had a loving relationship with a pet. In fact, in my adult years, focused entirely on my career, I thought of pets as a nuisance. But, to my great surprise, things started to change.

First, my sister, another career woman, had a standard poodle that she adored, and when she lost her first one, she adopted another. Umm, I thought. There might be something to this animal thing.

Then my partner and I moved to the country, and he felt strongly that I needed a pet. I was still not convinced. But trusting his instincts and with great apprehension on my part, we took into our home, and our life, seven-week-old Buster from friends who had the mom. I will never forget our friend picking up Buster from the litter saying “take this one; he’s special.” And this little guy—soon to become a big guy—changed my life.

Buster was a sensitive, loving dog. He always wanted to do the right thing, and was easy to train. So far so good. But it soon became clear that Buster needed a pal, so we adopted Scooby, a rescue from Animals for Life, another good experience. Now I was on a roll. More recently, we added another rescue to our canine family.

These experiences—which showed me a loving side of myself that I was not even aware existed—led me to Our Companions, a unique organization in the world of animal welfare. And now all the pieces came together in my commitment to making sure that every animal has a loving home. I would never have gotten to this point without my wonderful first experience with Buster.
My dog tried to bite someone recently. What should I do if she does bite?

There are a variety of reasons why a dog may bite. The dog could be in pain, feel threatened, wants to protect her territory, or is trying to establish control, among other reasons. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, each year approximately 4.7 million people (mostly children) are bitten by a dog. Pet dogs are the most likely to bite and typically the dog has been friendly in the past.

As a responsible dog owner, there are steps you can take to prevent your dog from biting. These include ensuring that your dog is properly socialized, appropriately supervised (especially when around children), trained in a positive manner, spayed or neutered, and confined in a safe environment as needed. Understand whether certain situations, such as being in crowds or with small children, make your dog nervous. Try to avoid putting her in a position that creates anxiety.

Make sure to bring your dog in for routine annual veterinary examinations and required vaccinations, including rabies which is required by law for both dogs and cats. To protect yourself, review your homeowners or renters insurance to determine if liability for dog bites is covered under the policy. You may want to consider purchasing additional coverage.

If your dog does bite someone, remain calm and remove your dog from the situation immediately. Be kind and polite to the individual; make sure he or she gets medical attention if needed – and offer to pay for the medical bills.

Following the incident, seek training and/or engage a behavioral specialist or your veterinarian to determine why your dog chose to bite. Try to stay in touch with the individual who was bitten and express your concern about the injury. Explain the actions being taken to prevent your dog from biting again. If you seem genuinely concerned and are taking steps to address the issue, he or she may decide to drop the matter.

There can be legal consequences if the injured person chooses to make a claim against you. According to the website of Attorney Kenneth Phillips, a leading expert in dog bite law, you could be taken to civil court, criminal court or “dog court,” where animal control officers can pursue action against you under state and/or local laws. Phillips notes that while dog owners often do not face criminal charges, they could be taken to criminal court if the injury is severe or if the dog has bitten someone before.

Action may also be taken against your dog. In Connecticut, when a bite occurs off the owner’s property, the law requires the dog to undergo an off-property quarantine. In an on-property bite, the dog is usually quarantined at home. “On-property bites are handled at the animal control officer’s discretion,” says Middletown Animal Control Officer (ACO) Gail Petras. “If there are other circumstances, the ACO may quarantine the dog off property to ensure the quarantine is handled properly.”

During the quarantine, the dog’s health is monitored and the severity of the incident is evaluated, Petras explains. From there, the ACO has the discretion to return the dog to its home with no restrictions, return it with a restraint order placing conditions on the dog, or issue a disposal order.

Our Companions offers many dog training classes and resources to help with behavioral issues. Contact OC’s Marie Joyner for more information: 860-646-9999.

Chained dogs are far more likely to bite.

Please do not leave your dog tethered and unattended.
Think Small to Afford Veterinary Care

The veterinary receptionist expected the client would pull out a credit card when she reached into her purse to pay her bill for five pets’ routine exams and vaccinations. Instead, she proudly produced a worn manila envelope stuffed with cash—over seven hundred dollars. The client went on to explain how she set aside a specific amount from her paycheck each week, saving all year to take care of her pets. She even had money left for an emergency fund.

Budget experts advise it’s not the large expenses to watch, but rather the small ones over time. Take a peek at your latest credit card statement and track all those seemingly insignificant charges. They add up quickly. So why not use that bit of knowledge, as this client did, to prepare in advance for veterinary services?

Take, for example, coffee. The average cost of a large cup of Dunkin’ Donuts® coffee is $2.33. Multiply that times five workdays each week, 52 weeks per year, and it equals just over six hundred dollars. Setting aside the same amount you spend for coffee can help pay annual veterinary expenses without breaking the bank. Or, consider how many times you end up tossing a still half-full cup in the trash. Switch to a small size, take the $195.00 per year savings difference and place it in an envelope. That’s enough for routine veterinary care for two cats.

Perhaps people grumble about prices at the coffee house drive-through window, yet they still pull up every day and make their purchase. However, often when clients realize the cost of veterinary services, they stop bringing in their pet. They don’t view routine care as a necessity. They rationalize that Fluffy is “acting fine” and therefore doesn’t need an annual exam or preventive management. Sometimes pet owners refuse certain treatments, medications, or preventatives, and opt to administer their own medications or treat the pet themselves at home without veterinary consult. As a result, the pet is the one who pays the price. Delays in treatment or neglecting preventive services can turn what might have been a simple medical problem into a major one. Worse still is the pet who cannot be helped because care was not sought soon enough.

Unexpected costs also hit the wallet hard. Even indoor pets may get themselves into trouble. Accidental poisoning, injuries, and sudden illness can all lead to an emergency hospital visit. As pets grow older, they may be diagnosed with a disease that requires intervention. This is just part of life and not the time to give up on your pet. With back-up funds in place your pet can be treated without the worry of financial strain.

No, Fluffy can’t get a job or be claimed on your income tax. Just like children, pets are a huge responsibility. They depend on you to take proper care of them. Whether it’s routine services or costs associated with illness or injury, the expense of life-long veterinary care should always be a consideration before adding a pet to your family. After all, isn’t a pet family member worth the price of a cup of Joe?
The Indoor vs. Outdoor Cat Debate – An Our Companions Perspective

The topic on whether cats should be kept indoors exclusively is a huge debate in the animal world and depending on your perspective, you may have a strong opinion one way or another. That being said, it’s never a great idea to deal in absolutes. Every situation is different and Our Companions believes in being supportive with creative ideas, education and solutions.

Know the Facts!
It’s no secret that indoor cats have a much greater chance of living a longer life. This can range from 12 to 20 years for the average indoor cat to only five years for the outdoor cat. While the ultimate decision rests in your hands, you should be aware of, and consider, these important factors:

Disease Transmission – Rabies, feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and parasites are just a few of the most commonly mentioned diseases. All cats (both indoor and outdoor) are required by law in Connecticut to be up to date with their rabies vaccination, so make sure you are doing this annually or every three years based on the vaccine your cat receives. FIV is a virus that is contracted mainly through deep bite wounds and is often transmitted by unneutered males vying for their territory. FIV is incurable, but not a death sentence.

FeLV is spread quite easily through bodily fluids including blood, saliva, urine and feces. FeLV is incurable and deadly, but can be prevented with an annual vaccine.

Harmful Situations – Having access to the outdoors literally opens the door to a host of dangerous situations that indoor cats remain sheltered from. Traffic, toxins/poisons, predators, becoming lost or stolen and injuries are the most common issues, and can be very expensive, painful and in some cases, deadly.

Quality of Life – This area is a bit more subjective than the first two. Many of us were raised in homes with indoor/outdoor cats and that’s how we know them to live. We’ve seen their joy in experiencing freedom, their love of grass, digging in the dirt, playing and hunting. But there are ways to offer the outdoors without giving up the safety of being indoors—I’m talking about a cat enclosure. If you’ve been to the OC World Headquarters, you may have seen one of these.

Using a window in the basement (or a window on the first floor), the cats are able to go out to their secure outdoor enclosure whenever they want. They are able to breathe fresh air, eat grass, and dig in the dirt—all in complete safety. Enclosures come in all sizes and prices or, if you are handy, can be a fun do-it-yourself weekend project. Here are some websites to check out for enclosures:

www.CatsOnDeck.com
www.cdPets.com

Not convinced that the indoor lifestyle is right for your cat? Here are some important safety tips OC recommends:

• Felines should always be spayed/neutered before being allowed outdoors.

• Use break-away type collars with identification (phone number) and a bell. Break-away collars are designed to break apart to avoid strangulation if the cat gets caught on something. The bell will help alert birds and other forms of wildlife that there is a cat around.

• Microchip your cat. This is a simple, inexpensive procedure that implants a tiny microchip under your cat’s skin. The microchip contains an identification number that when scanned helps identify cats and reunites them with their owners.

• Dawn and dusk are prime hunting times for predators, so make sure your cat is not out too early or too late.

• Vaccinate for rabies, distemper and feline leukemia. Our Companions does not recommend vaccinating for FIV since cats will test positive for FIV once vaccinated, making it impossible to distinguish FIV-vaccinated cats from FIV-infected cats.

Our Companions’ Adoption Policy Regarding Indoor/Outdoor Living:
Our Companions will adopt cats as indoor/outdoor cats only if the cat(s) have had indoor/outdoor living experience and it is in the best interest of the cat to continue with this lifestyle (e.g., semi-feral, high stress, etc.). The location must be deemed safe from traffic, predators, etc. Cats need to wear a break-away identification collar and should be microchipped if possible. This type of adoption requires a three-month indoor-only transition period to ensure the adopters see the cat as primarily an indoor cat, who goes out on occasion, that the new cat will become a part of the family and bond with the people and animals in the home, and that the cat is familiar with its surroundings and will not get lost. A typical “sanctuary room” approach should be used for the first month. For adopters looking for outdoor cats, who only come inside on occasion, we’ll match them with a semi-feral cat, which will require a different transition process. This policy does not apply to kittens. Young kittens who were brought inside at a very young age or who have always been inside, should be adopted as indoor-only pets.

Andrea Dobras is an Our Companions board member and one of our animal welfare professionals. She specializes in the placement of cats with FIV. In this regular feature, she helps others with the most complex cat conundrums.

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.
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