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LOOKING TO ADOPT?

Are you looking for a new furry family member?

Go to www.aforeverhome.org to see our available pets. We have many wonderful dogs waiting for forever homes. Once you've fallen in love, the next step is to fill out an adoption application to get the ball rolling.

Go to www.aforeverhome.org for our adoption schedule and available pets.



COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. It has also affected our rescue work and changed the way we do it. Luckily for us, rescue work is constantly changing so we are used to formulating a plan, changing that plan, and changing that plan again – usually at the last minute. This flexibility has enabled us to continue saving dogs and your donations continue to fund that work. COVID-19 may have hurt us but it won't stop us.

In our last newsletter we explained that many transport routes were closed. The good news is that many of these transport routes are now open. We also told you that many shelters were still closed to intake. This means that animals who would normally be turned in to a shelter were very likely being abandoned to fend for themselves. Unfortunately, many shelters are still closed to intake but a few have opened up.

If you follow our Facebook page (<https://afh2002.org/Facebook>) or are a member of our Facebook group (<https://to-afh.org/FBGroup>) you know that we are still bringing in a lot of dogs from Louisiana and Mississippi. As a matter of fact, since the beginning of this year, almost 400 lucky puppies and dogs have made the trip to Virginia and now have loving forever homes. This is on top of the many dogs rescued from our geographically closer rescue partners and shelter partners. Our partners are so grateful for our help. They have asked us to thank every one of you. Without AFH, our foster parents, our donors, and our adopters, these animals would still be suffering and dying. Every puppy or dog we take from them opens up a spot for them to save another one.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

B I A N C E



BIANCE IS LOOKING FOR HER FOREVER HOME

Female (Spayed)

Breed: Labrador Retriever / Pit Bull Mix

Age: 2 years

Biance came to AFH with 9 beautiful puppies. She showed up at a home in rural North Carolina, the people there fed her, and she had puppies shortly afterward. Of course AFH jumped right in to save this family. Biance was a great mom. All of her pups have forever homes and now it is her turn. Biance loves people. She is house trained and leash trained, and she loves sleeping on a comfy bed. She got along great with the dogs in North Carolina but has been a little picky about her dog friends here – perhaps because of her puppies. For this reason, we suggest that she go to a home where she is the only dog.

(continued from page 1)

We are still raising money for heartworm positive dogs in Mississippi and Louisiana. While we have received some donations toward this effort, we still need to raise approximately \$12,000 to treat the remaining heartworm positive dogs. Thanks to you, we have already paid for some of them and brought them to Virginia, but more dogs have tested positive so there is still a huge need. If everyone reading this newsletter would make a small donation, we could easily cover the total cost.

Can you help us to treat the remaining heartworm positive dogs? Once they complete their treatment they will come to Virginia so we can find them forever homes. Please visit <https://to-afh.org/> to donate, or send a check to AFH, P.O. Box 222801, Chantilly, VA 20153 and mark it "Mississippi Dogs".

As always, thank you for everything you do for homeless puppies and dogs.

THANKS TO PETFINDER!

AFH wants to send out a big thank you to Petfinder for giving us a \$1,000 grant to treat some of our heartworm positive dogs. If you don't already know, Petfinder (www.petfinder.com) is an online, searchable database of animals who need homes. It is also a directory of nearly 11,000 animal shelters and adoption organizations across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Mykel, pictured here, is one of the dogs helped by this grant.



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW YOUR AFH DOG GOT TO VIRGINIA?

Have you ever wondered how your AFH dog got to Virginia? You likely know that many of our dogs come from the deep South, but how exactly do they travel so far to get to us? In some cases we have established relationships with paid transporters who are carefully screened to ensure the safety of our animals. They follow strict safety and cleaning protocols to ensure the health of their precious cargo. This is a full-time job for them and they take it seriously.

We also utilize our own vans and volunteers to transport dogs. Recently, long time foster mom Peggy O'Connell and her daughter Ellie did their first transport. We asked them to tell us what it was like.

Peggy writes:

We've been an AFH family for about 14 years, having adopted our first puppy, Sasha, back in 2006. Sadly, she passed a couple of years ago, but a year or so after adopting her, we got Fancy (still kicking at 14) and then Pixie (now 10) a couple of years later.

Having decided no more adopting, we instead became a foster family, and over the years we have been enjoying fostering dozens of dogs, ranging in age from 6 weeks to 6+ years. Yes, we get attached and we shed some tears when they leave, but we have learned how to be happy to let them go to their forever homes so that we can look forward to the next one.

A year or so ago, I started to do home checks in my town as well. However, I've never volunteered to drive the transport...until last week.

I was laid off from my position as a director of meetings and housing (thanks COVID), and made a decision that in between applying for new positions (and unemployment), cleaning out my office, etc., that I wanted to take the rare void in my schedule to do things that I care about but never had the time to do. When the request came in for a driver to go to Tennessee and bring back a group of dogs, I looked at my 16 year old and we decided "why not?" Work, school, soccer, dance, and various responsibilities never allowed us to just take an impromptu road trip, so we decided to seize the day and take off!

Knoxville, Tennessee is almost 500 miles from here and that's a long drive! If you have the right music and a good

www.aforeverhome.org



ELLIE AND TAFFY

driving companion, it's a lovely drive. We were able to take our time on the way down and arrived in Knoxville in time to shake off the dust, check in to the hotel, walk around downtown, and have a nice dinner. This was my first time in Tennessee, and I can't wait to go back when there's time to see more (Dollywood, here I come!).

We were there for a purpose, so bright and early the next morning, we met Lori and her boyfriend, who had driven all night from Mississippi to transfer one adult dog and 15 puppies to us. I was blown away by their dedication. Despite being 'dog-tired', they were so patient as we took each dog and placed them in the AFH van, changing gloves in between each one to keep them safe.

Thirty minutes later, we were off. Anyone who has driven an AFH van will understand that it takes some getting used to, especially if you, like me, typically drive a compact car! But by the time we set off for home on that sunny Saturday morning, I was pretty comfortable with it and we sailed home to meet the foster parents. We expected the ride to be noisy, but once we got on the road, the dogs settled down and snoozed...except for Taffy, the smallest, youngest, and most adorable little beagle mix, who wanted to remind us periodically that she was on board (lest we forget). But even Taffy snoozed for a good part of the trip back.

All in all, it was a smooth trip. Knowing that it served such an important purpose made it very satisfying. I was nervous to take this on at first. I felt a keen responsibility to AFH, to Lori, to the fosters, and to those innocent dogs to get it right. But truth be told, it was a great experience, and I'm so glad we did it!

DECKER THE WRECKER

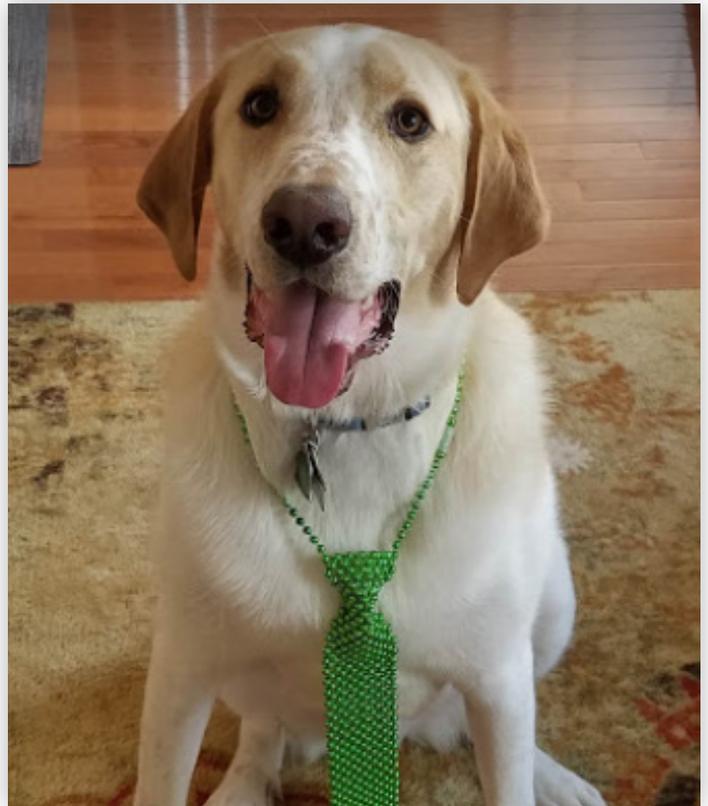
Submitted by Michele Cochran

Hi! I'm Decker! I was adopted from AFH on June 8, 2019 when I was 5 months old. I am also known as Decker the Wrecker because just a few weeks after I got to my forever home I broke my own toe running in the yard. I also accidentally broke Mom's little finger with my leash when we were sitting outside one day because I saw this really interesting moth and had to have it. I really like to chase bugs. I got big really fast and I was 70 pounds before I was a year old. Now I am 97 pounds and Mom says I sound like a dinosaur coming down the hallway. Mom says I am a La' Houndenees (Lab, Hound, Great Pyrenees). I think she says that so I feel fancy and I don't feel bad I was a stray. She also says it means that fur goes in her teeth when we are driving in the car.

I am a very busy boy. I like to be active and if Mom or Dad sit around too long you can be sure I let them know. Sometimes I even nose Mom's arm so hard that her phone flies out of her hand. She really doesn't like that. She says I am bossy. Mom and Dad say I am a good boy though and that I am a dog comedian. I also despise getting my picture taken. I get right up and bark at any puparazzi immediately.

To make up for all that I try to help out around the house. If there is a shower door or gate left open, you can be sure I will close it. For some reason I really like to rock the vacuum cleaner back and forth until it bounces off the wall. Mom says that is not so helpful. I do a really good job of guarding my older sister when she gets too close to the stairs. She is 17 and doesn't move around very well.

Like a lot of strays and rescues I was afraid of a lot of things because I had a rough start in life. I grew to be scared of other dogs. Mom and Dad love me a lot and took me to dog school and now I am not so scared of things. A really nice lady named Jenn at my dog school helped me learn a lot of things and I passed my AKC Canine Good Citizen test. Even though I am still working on being less nervous, I have a busy dog life and car rides are my favorite. People always point and smile when they see my big floopy dog face hanging out of the car window in the wind. I now enjoy going to wineries and cafes, and I like to help with running errands. Did you know that there are people at Home Depot that have pockets full of snacks?!? It's a good dog life!



TRIP AND TAFFY HIT THE JACKPOT!

Submitted by Stephen & Kristen Allen



We have adopted from a Forever Home before and were ready to open our home to pups again when we saw Trip and Taffy online. After seeing the two, and how much they looked like our previous dog, we knew it was a sign that they were for us. From the website, we learned that they were brother and sister from the same litter and had been living together before being rescued. We immediately put in an application asking for both dogs, hoping that we would not only be selected, but that we could keep them both together. Thankfully, we were chosen to give Trip and Taffy their new "forever home". Trip arrived first. When we went to pick him up, he was highly distracted by his favorite thing, playing fetch. He happily went with us as we were eager to introduce him to his new home. Trip looked up adoringly at us for most of the ride until he fell fast asleep. Over the next couple weeks, Trip took long walks with us every day, trained, and played fetch for what seemed like hours. He wore us out as much as we did him! He even joined us for a couple of bike rides. Then came Taffy. She was much quieter and very shy when we first met her, accessorized with a small cone. She was less than excited to see us at first. After sitting down, letting her come to us, and offering treats she began to slowly warm up. Again, during

the ride home in the back seat we started to notice her becoming more comfortable and we knew soon a bond would occur. This time it was different because Trip was waiting at home not knowing he was going to be reunited with his sister. We introduced them outside the house, and they were excited to see each other. Taffy was tentative to play with Trip when she had her cone on, but when it came off, they went at it like brother and sister. They chase, tug and wrestle until they are wiped out. They love going on long walks, getting their leashes tangled, chasing squirrels and birds, and napping together in the same bed. Having these two keeps us busy, like full time parents! We are so thankful and lucky to have them and are thrilled to be able to keep them together!



IN MEMORY

Our sweet Trixie Belle was a beloved family member who brought joy to everyone who knew her. We, her family, always felt that Trixie chose us. I knew from the minute she climbed into my lap and laid her little head down to sleep, a true sign of unconditional trust, that she had to be in our lives. That trust reigned true as the memories we made with her are filled with love and happiness. Even in darker days, Trixie supported her family with concern in her eyes and obvious love. It always seemed that she knew not only exactly how you were feeling but exactly how to help. Every happy family memory includes Trixie - family vacations, holidays, family gatherings, playing in the yard (she was a fantastic soccer player) - and every day you could come home to her sweet and excited greeting. Now that Trixie has said goodbye to her family, there is a void of that love, that comfort, that presence. Trixie was truly the best dog and we take comfort knowing that Trixie not only had a good life but gave her family a good one too.

- *The Wiser Family*

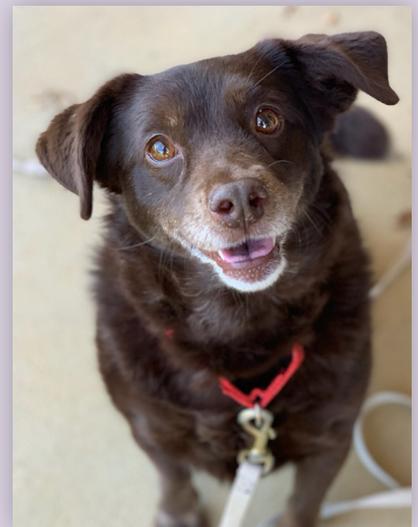


Six months ago I lost my wonderful dog Apple (Precious). I adopted her from A Forever Home in August 2008. She will forever be missed. She was one of the biggest blessings ever in my life and gave me more than I could have ever imagined. She came to me at just the right time and for the exact right reason. From the countless before and after work walks all over DC to the thousands of nights keeping me warm under my blanket or watching tv with me, Apple made me a better person and was a dream come true for me. There were so many years without family nearby and it was just me and Apple. I am so glad she was able to end her life surrounded by a new dad and her devoted grandpa. A day will not go by that I won't miss her terribly. I am forever grateful to A Forever Home

- *Wanda Perez*

We had seven of the most amazing years with our sweet girl Macy. She was filled with snuggles, wiggles, and the softest most velvety ears. She was the sweetest soul and I could not have asked for a better girl to join our family. Macy recently had a grand mal seizure and was diagnosed with a brain tumor. After a consultation with the neurologist we put her on anti-seizure medication which gave us the gift of two more weeks with our sweet girl. She then had a series of seizures and we rushed her back to the emergency room. They monitored her overnight and she had a grand mal seizure the next day. It was at this point that they told us she was not going to be coming home. She held out long enough for us to be with her before she passed away. I don't have the right words to express how much I miss my girl. She was truly one of a kind. I just wanted to thank you so much for rescuing her and allowing her to be part of our family.

- *Tricia Drummond*



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

In 2005, I adopted Sara and Willow from AFH. Both pups were wonderful additions to our family. When my son needed to complete mandated community service hours as a high school senior he signed up to help at adoption events, playing with pups, but then emails regarding transports and the need for more fosters started pulling at my heart. So many sweet pups needed our help, so we started fostering. Our fosters included litters of puppies, young adults, and a few with challenging health issues. Fostering is such a wonderful experience! About 80-90 fosters later, I branched out into conducting interviews and home checks. Home checks are the second “check” in the application process. Pre-pandemic, I would conduct 1-3 home checks a week. Home checks were assigned geographically, so I would schedule them on my lunch hour or on my way home. Then March 13, 2020 came and Virginia was shut down. AFH quickly considered



KELLY BYRD

their options, as the rescue’s needs would continue regardless of the shutdown, and virtual interviews and home checks commenced. Virtual home checks utilize Facetime, Zoom, Hangouts, Duo, or whatever the potential adoptees have on their phones, and with this technology my ability to conduct home checks within the week tripled. Virtual home checks are faster, more convenient, safer, and can usually be done in less than 30 minutes, rendering the family one step closer to adoption contract signing and happiness!

It has been a wonderful 15 years volunteering with A Forever Home. If you can help in any way please consider fostering, volunteering, transporting, donating, and shopping through Amazon Smile with AFH as your charity.

Together with my kids and a very willing husband, we have been volunteering with AFH since 2013. Our first fosters were 10-week old sisters who were both adopted to local friends. Once they were safe in their forever homes, we were committed to saving as many litters as possible. We’ve lost count of all the pups but we do keep in touch with many adopters.



JENNIFER BOWMAN RAMIREZ AND THE BOWMAN/RAMIREZ FAMILY

What we love most about volunteering is the ability to support AFH in a variety of ways given our current home situation. For example, we recently took the lead on maintaining the AFH storage unit and supply van.

There are definitely many unexpected bonuses to volunteering. One of our favorites is seeing our foster pups as they grow. We love comparing their puppy pictures to their adult pictures and hearing about all the fun they are having in their new

homes. Additionally, we love the opportunity to foster various breeds and the education that comes along with it. Our most recent foster was a Pit mix, Glory, and at first glance you can’t help but notice the adorable bullseye around her eye that reminds many of either the Target dog or Petey from the Little Rascals (depending on your age). Some people show some trepidation about the breed, but we used this opportunity to showcase Glory’s friendly demeanor to educate people about the breed. More often than not, breeds with negative reputations don’t have the opportunity to personally defend themselves and we loved having a small role helping redefine negative stereotypes.

If you’re reading this and haven’t taken the plunge to volunteer, now is a great time to do so! We’re seven years into our work with AFH and can’t imagine our lives without it.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU RETURN TO WORK?

Many people have adopted dogs (thank you!) since the pandemic struck us in March, but have you given any thought to how your dog will feel once you start leaving the house again (and leaving him or her behind)?

You've had time to get your new dog adjusted to your home and hopefully started some basic training. Perhaps you have already started your required training (online of course). Our dogs love having us home with them but at some point we will all start to leave home when we get back to our regular lives. This will be a drastic change for our dogs so you need to start thinking about how to make the transition easy for him/her. It is a very real possibility that your dog can develop separation anxiety if the transition is not handled properly. There is a lot of information out there so please feel free to do your own research; however, a great place to start is <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/dog-care/common-dog-behavior-issues/separation-anxiety>.

CAN YOU COMMIT?

Did you know that you can make a huge difference for formerly unwanted dogs for just \$.33 a day? That's right! If you can commit to just \$10 per month, it will go a long way toward helping us with our vet bills (which average \$25,000 per month). Please visit to-afh.org/Donate to set up recurring donations.

