



**It's almost Spring** and we are ready for the warm weather, flowers, and sunshine but Spring is one of the toughest times of the year for any animal shelter or rescue group. In early spring and continuing throughout the summer, litters of puppies and kittens born to homeless pets are brought to animal shelters across the country in huge numbers. The statistics are staggering.

Combine that with the fact that animals are being dumped at shelters in record numbers (even when owners are told that their pets are subject to immediately being euthanized), and a crisis is born.

The good news is that there IS an answer—fostering! **AFH** is very lucky to have many wonderful foster parents, but we can always use more. The number of foster parents we have is directly tied to the number of lives we can save.

**AFH** provides everything you will need and we pay all of the vet bills—you supply your time, your love, and a safe place to house a puppy, a litter of puppies, a pregnant dog, a mom and pups, an adult dog, a senior dog, or even a special needs dog. It is all up to you!

Email [volunteer@aforeverhome.org](mailto:volunteer@aforeverhome.org) and we will get you started on your lifesaving journey!

As always, it is your generosity that makes our lifesaving work possible. To make a donation, please visit: <https://to-afh.org/Donate> or mail a check to: **AFH, PO Box 222801, Chantilly, VA 20153.** •

## In this issue...

Happy Retirement to Abby.....	2
Volunteer Spotlight .....	3
In Memory .....	4
Looking for Homes.....	5
North Star's Story .....	6-7
Thank you, Renda! .....	7
GoodBye, Alfie Murphy.....	7
What is Separation Anxiety? .....	8

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

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

## HAPPY RETIREMENT TO ABBY— THE AUTISTIC SEARCH DOG

By Sam Connelly

*Editor's Note:* Abby originally came from a poor rural shelter in West Virginia in March 2011. She was surrendered to the shelter because her family couldn't take care of her anymore.



**I have an unusual job—I search for lost pets.** Yes, I'm a "Pet Detective" and it is the most rewarding job I've ever had.

I'm always on the lookout for a dog that may be a potential pet tracking dog. I initially took Abby in as a foster dog from **A Forever Home Rescue Foundation**. She was almost a year old and looked like a golden retriever except for her wavy, almost curly fur and striking gold eyes. But her most unique feature was that she is autistic.

When I first got her she shunned my touch and avoided all eye contact. She would go off in the corner alone and stare at the wall, lick the floor, couch, or her paws for hours if I didn't stop her. I noticed she had trouble with some motor skills like negotiating stairs or getting in and out of the car. I thought something was physically wrong with her, so I took her to the vet but everything was normal.

Then, one day she saw my cat in the cat tree for the first time and it was as if something just clicked in her head. She stood and barked for several minutes until I took her out of the room and put her in her crate. Hours later I brought her out to feed her and

she immediately ran back to the cat tree. He wasn't there. So I watched her systematically search the room and then the rest of the house until she found him and proceeded to bark again. Hmm, I thought, maybe she would make a good search dog after all, at least for cats.

I started working with her on little problems out in the yard by hiding the cat in his carrier up in a tree, inside the shed, on the other side of the gate, etc. Each time she found him with ease. She was still barking when she found him so I taught her to lie down quietly but she couldn't help her excitement so she would make a soft, high-pitched whine. That finally became her "find indication".

Slowly she became more social and more accepting of affection, and she paid attention to me, at least when she was on the long line. She seemed distressed by strange dogs so I let her "specialize" in cats at first. She found them inside of walls, on roofs, in trees, under furniture, inside vehicles, etc. If it was where she could get access near it she would find it. If she couldn't reach it she would indicate the location so that we could set a trap to catch it.

Now, after 11+ years, she is retiring with an average 90% recovery rate on lost cats. Of course she has found other animals, including several AFH dogs, lizards, ferrets, big African tortoises, and more. In her last year she has assisted in the recovery of 87 animals. She is not retiring because she can't do the job; the nose still works great but she has really slowed down. Her eyesight is failing, she's almost completely deaf, and she has developed a heart condition. She's earned her rest.

I'm grateful every day to **A Forever Home Rescue Foundation** for bringing this amazing girl into my life. She has been a wonderful partner and a true challenge to help her reach her full potential despite her learning disabilities. Now I just need to figure out how to leave the house without her since she has started sleeping against the door to block my escape. ●

# Volunteer SPOTLIGHT

## MEGAN MCCOLLOUGH

Rescuing animals is something I've always been passionate about. It started when I was teenager I and would help my mom with the puppies she fostered and volunteer at adoption events. A few years ago, my mom passed away and I was really struggling with my grief. I needed a way to connect with the memory of my mom that would also bring me some joy and that's when I saw a post from **AFH** about fostering. I remembered all of the love my mom and I shared over the years fostering and volunteering with **AFH**. For me fostering is a way to not only save lives but also a way for me to connect with the memory of my mom. It brings me so much joy and I love being able to pass that joy onto the dogs and their forever families. •



## CANDI LUCHINO

I knew going in as a foster that I wanted to help dogs—that was a given. I absolutely adore them. What surprised me was seeing how much they change the lives of their new families for the better. Each and every single dog is wonderful and worth the potty training, sleepless first nights, and other challenges that sometimes come with being a foster, I fall in love with every single one. After welcoming them into my home and seeing their goofy, lovable selves revealed, the most wonderful feeling is finding someone who loves them as much as I do. I can't imagine what it would be like without my own zoo of unofficial emotional support creatures. Every time I read an application, I imagine how my pup will fit in with that family, how Poppi will make her mom's morning yoga so much more fun by stretching out and chewing on the mat, or how Eloise will refuse to go outside until her new dad stops to give her ear scratches first. Working with **AFH** lets me share that experience with them. You think by fostering a dog that you will be saving a life, but sometimes you save a few. •



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



## IN MEMORY

### Amalia Sobalvarro wrote to tell us about **BLITZ**

I recently had to let Blitz go to Heaven. He was suffering from congestive heart failure. I adopted him in May of 2011. He gave me the most perfect love I have ever known; he was a real angel, a magical dog...so magical that on the evening of his passing he sent me a rainbow to let me know he made it to Rainbow Bridge. Thank you **AFH** for giving me an amazing little boy. ●



### Phil Dolliff and Suzanne Day wrote to tell us about **OREO**

Our beloved Oreo passed away in October 2021. While broken-hearted, we are thankful for **AFH** bringing us the cutest, brightest, sweetest puppy in 2006. With her alert eyes, expressive ears, and silky black hair, we were immediately enamored and so was our older dog as she took his dog bed, toys, and spot on the couch. Our 10-year-old giddily walked her and started a lifelong tradition of running home from the corner. Oreo returned our love and devotion in spades. She was always within sight, often within reach, and loved nothing more than being with us—and it was entirely mutual. ●

### Sean McCarty wrote to tell us about **CODY**

We adopted Cody in February of 2006. When we first met, I sat in the pen with his brothers and sisters and he immediately jumped into my arms and started linking my face. That was all it took. He was a wonderful addition to our family for over 16 years and was a great pet to my two children. He loved to go on vacations with us and explore all the places we would go. He was the protector of our home with his deep loud bark but at the same time wouldn't hurt a soul and loved everyone he met. ●



### Carolyn Glassman wrote to tell us about **KAUAI**

Our **AFH** dog Kauai, recently passed away at the age of 15. We adopted her in 2007 as a puppy. We miss her so much. She was an exceptionally loving dog and even won a most beautiful dog award in our community. ●

### Rachel Dorsey wrote to tell us about **POE**

We are incredibly grateful to **AFH** for matching us with Poe in 2012. His foster said "this puppy doesn't like being alone." None of us were ever alone again because of the unconditional love we shared. Poe was independent but always near us. When we had children, Poe was the first one to run when they cried and he kept us company late at night. He was incredibly smart and did lots of cool tricks. Poe loved going on walks, going to the beach, and napping on his window seat. We miss him terribly but will always carry him in our hearts. ●



**LOOKING FOR OUR FOREVER HOMES**



**RUBY'S ROLLY**

**Age:** 6 months | **Breed:** Beagle Mix  
**Gender:** Male

Rolly is the sweetest boy ever. He is a cuddle bug and a great movie night partner. Rolly will always engage when there is play involved. His favorite game is keep away. He is crate trained and house trained. This boy is awesome on leash and does wonderfully with other dogs. •

We did a Wisdom Panel DNA test for Ruby's litter and these are the results:

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 13% Bluetick Coonhound       | 3% American Staffordshire Terrier |
| 12% Rottweiler               | 3% Labrador Retriever             |
| 11% Golden Retriever         | 3% Chow Chow                      |
| 11% Treeing Walker Coonhound | 2% Redbone Coonhound              |
| 8% American Pitbull Terrier  | 2% Bulldog                        |
| 7% Beagle                    | 2% Collie                         |
| 5% Chihuahua                 | 2% Siberian Husky                 |
| 5% Poodle(Toy and Miniature) | 1% German Shepherd Dog            |
| 5% Boxer                     | 1% Cocker Spaniel                 |
| 3% Boston Terrier            | 1% Miniature Pinscher             |



**ANNABELLE**

**Age:** 3 years | **Breed:** Coonhound Mix  
**Gender:** Female (Spayed)

AnnaBelle is just a loving, sweet girl. She does well with other dogs and enjoys sitting on the couch with you. She is good with kids and is very chill. She has good house manners and can't wait to find her forever home. •

**Editor's Note:**  
 Rolly and AnnaBelle have been with us for several months. We don't get it—they're both great dogs!



**HAVE YOU JOINED OUR FACEBOOK GROUP?**

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

Join at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/aforeverhome>

## NORTH STAR'S STORY

By Lorelei Pulliam, Founder and President  
Gallastar Equine Center, Inc.

**Editor's Note:** AFH has been a rescue partner with Ranger's Rescue at Gallastar for many years.

**Gallastar Equine Center, Inc.** is a center for therapeutic horseback riding that has specialized in serving young people with cognitive and emotional difficulties since 1994. Based in Esmont, VA, Gallastar was one of the first in the nation to form a true collaboration between the mental health community and therapeutic riding in what is now called equine assisted psychotherapy.

**Although he did not know it at the time** North Star was heading to Mexico on a semi truck. His non-stop destination was a horse slaughterhouse in Mexico.

Some believe that finding your North Star helps you live with purpose and gives you a reference point to keep you moving in the right direction. Having a North Star doesn't mean that life isn't still challenging, but when you're living with purpose it's much easier to stay on track and weather the storms that come your way.

My busy life was truly adrift. A severe trauma and several severe medical setbacks had me wondering what the future would hold and if I would even survive long enough to have much of a future. Riding horses and teaching therapeutic riding seemed to be slipping out of my grasp. The goals that we had worked so hard for so many years seemed out of reach. I could no longer even get up onto a horse without assistance and riding was painful both physically and mentally because my body was so weak and unsteady.

I had a fantasy of rescuing a small gentle horse that could carry me onto the trails that I loved so much. Perhaps I could even teach off of this wonder horse. No doubt he would be gentle enough for the therapy program. But our barns and pastures were filled with rescued horses. To even think of bringing in another seemed ridiculous.

Then I saw him on a video at a kill pen—just an old white horse. Nothing special unless you took the time to really look at him. To experienced eyes, it was easy to see that he was used to working hard and doing what he was told. He had scant hair under his eyes so something was obviously wrong there.



Otherwise, he seemed sound and well trained. I inquired about his price and was satisfied that he would find a buyer.

The day that he was to ship to slaughter came and I looked him up when I got home. The old white horse they called Bruno was gone. I messaged the Kill Pen and asked what had become of him. Bruno was on his way to Mexico on a semi. I told this to my husband as we went to sleep, but sleep was not to come to me. All I could see was this brave, stoic horse crowded with so many other doomed souls—obediently doing what he had always been told. After years of faithful service, this was to be his reward. I messaged the sales lot and asked if there was any way to get him off the truck. There was but I had to act fast because he was rolling quickly along to his date with death. I sent funds to get him taken off the truck and re-routed to his home.

It took me a while to name him and I was stuck. Then an old friend, Carmen from **A Forever Home Rescue**, contacted me about the horse. Their organization wanted to sponsor him. It was a true miracle and a blessing that I never expected in a million years. Carmen told me that she too was so heartbroken about all of the beautiful horses shipping to slaughter, especially the pregnant mares. She was delighted to be able to do something to help. Through this old white horse, her dream was coming true as well.

Continued on next page

One of my students at school pointed to a beautiful desert picture on our wall with Polaris shining brightly. He excitedly said “There is the North Star!”—and that became the old white horse’s name from that moment on and he has lived up to his promise in every way. He carefully carries me up mountain trails where I had so longed to go. He is gentle enough for anyone to handle and ride. Thanks to **AFH**, his every medical need has been met. An equine ophthalmologist has his eyes healing well.

The farrier who pulled his shoes off found barium welded into them so that he could work on rocky trails or slick pavement. She said he had been worked very hard. His past is a mystery but his future is secure and the rest of his life is sure to be as special and blessed as the promise of his name. ●



## THANK YOU RENDA!

Renda is one of our young volunteers who helps us at adoption events. She also has her own pet sitting service! Renda is also a charity minded young lady—she donates \$1 to **AFH** every time she completes a pet sitting job! She recently handed our Treasurer her latest donation.

Thank you Renda! Our pups appreciate you—and so do we!

Left to right: Jessica (**AFH** volunteer), Hanna, Renda, Aiden

## GOODBYE ALFIE MURPHY

*Submitted by his wonderful foster Christy Newman*

I first heard Murphy’s story in July 2021, when at 18 years old he found himself homeless for the second time. It broke my heart that he had not only been given up twice but that he had to go through the transition to a new family again. I immediately agreed to foster him, knowing that his age meant he could become a permanent foster. I figured that an 18 year old dog couldn’t have more than a few months left so no big deal right? Boy was I wrong!

Murphy was with me for a year and a half—a feat I never thought imaginable. No matter what the universe threw at him he always handled it with the determination to make the best of it and keep on going. He never met any person or animal (or snack!) he didn’t like. He was such a happy, easy-going little guy. His spirit was still there until the end but his body couldn’t hang in any longer and he crossed the rainbow bridge just two days before his 20th birthday.

On his birthday, I couldn’t think of a better way to celebrate his life than to host a fundraiser for **AFH**. I was

blown away by the support, raising about **\$1,400** in just 24 hours. It makes me so happy to know that his last act was to give back so more dogs can be saved—a small thank you to honor **AFH** for never giving up on him and never saying no to making sure he had the best care.

Happy Birthday in Heaven Murphy. I’m sorry so many people gave up on you, but I’m glad **AFH** and I did not. May we all live life with your drive, and hope to have even an ounce of your zest for life when we reach your age. Until we meet again. ●



We need to discuss a term that is casually tossed around a lot—as a matter of fact too much.

## WHAT IS SEPARATION ANXIETY?

**SEPARATION ANXIETY** is behaviors that are triggered when dogs become upset when they are separated from their guardians, the people they're attached to. Escape attempts by dogs with true cases of separation anxiety are often extreme and can result in self-injury and household destruction, usually around exit points like windows and doors.

*True separation anxiety is when the behavior becomes harmful and destructive.*

### SOUNDS SIMPLE, RIGHT? NOPE!

Separation anxiety is not just crying, whining, or barking when your dog is left alone. Many puppies and dogs will exhibit these behaviors when you leave. You should immediately take action to avoid the possibility of separation anxiety occurring by ignoring crying, whining, and barking. Yes—it is going to be annoying—but if you give in, you are telling your dog that they will get attention when they do these things. As they get older, they will think that they are in charge. It is your job to teach them that YOU are in charge. Patience is the key.

We have had a number of adopters—and even fosters—who tell us that their dog suffers from separation anxiety because they bark or cry when left alone. This is a major mistake because it puts an unfair label on a dog that will follow him/her for the rest of their lives.



*The best way to handle separation anxiety is to avoid it in the first place.*

### TEACHING YOUR PUP HOW TO BE ALONE.

**Create a safe enclosure** for your puppy's alone time. **AFH** highly recommends using a crate to contain your pup and keep him/her safe when you have to leave the house, at bedtime, or when he/she needs a time out. The ASPCA offers some great tips on crate training at <https://www.aspcapetinsurance.com/resources/how-to-crate-train-a-puppy/> and all adopters receive a handout about crate training in their adoption packets.

**Practice separations** in the same room. Put your pup in the crate while you are in the room and ignore him/her. This will teach them that crate time is their time and they should relax. Start with short periods of time and gradually increase that time.

Practice separations with you out of sight and then with you leaving the house.

**Leave “activities”** to keep your dog occupied. Examples include a **SAFE** chew toy, or an interactive game where your dog works to get a treat out of a puzzle.

**Be calm.** Are you one of those people who are very animated when saying goodbye to your dog? That's a problem. Dogs pick up on our energy so if you get them all worked up before you leave, they are not going to relax. They must be in a calm state of mind. Avoid the fanfare—put them in the crate and walk away. Whenever possible, exercise your dog vigorously before you leave. This allows your dog to rest well in your absence.

### HOW CAN I FIX SEPARATION ANXIETY?

Unfortunately, you can't but separation anxiety can be managed. You shouldn't have to be a prisoner in your home because your dog doesn't want you to leave, so the only way to get your dog's separation anxiety under control is to hire a professional behaviorist. ●