

Animal shelter works to find homes for all

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Staff Writer

Rescue groups are the savior of animals at Randolph County Animal Shelter (RCAS) who are not easily adopted.

Those associated with the shelter work hard on a number of sites to get animals adopted but sometimes they have special needs or are elderly.

"Because of rescue groups we've not had to put down a well animal in four years," said Chuck Smith. He is president of the shelter's board of directors.

The rescue groups in New York, New Jersey, and other northeastern states are eager to get animals because they have had spay and neuter laws in effect 40 years and there are fewer animals available.

Potential adopters pick them out on the website, then the rescue group comes down and picks up the animals, he said.

Dr. Seth Taylor in Clay County makes sure they are healthy. Once the animals get there they are placed in quarantine for 10 days, then the adoptive people come in.

The Cardboard Boat Race, which generates some funds for the shelter as well as Randolph County Schools, is Saturday, May 9, at the Lakeside Marina & Grill, Wedowee.

Special this year is a chance to strut your pet's stuff in the shelter's pet parade. It will begin at 11 a.m. Prizes will be given. There are categories such as best dressed, most unusual, smallest and largest. For more information call 256-357-0101 or stop by the shelter, 104 Animal Shelter Road, Wedowee. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Shelter manager Elisabeth Stanford said the rescue groups do have checks and balances. They check the backgrounds of the adopters before approving the adoptions.

Smith said the shelter has been asked to do home checks and they were asked to ask questions you wouldn't do if you were adopting a baby. He had never seen such a comprehensive verbal investigation, he said.

RCAS networks with reliable 501c3 non-profit animal rescue organizations who are dedicated to saving unwanted dogs and cats that would otherwise languish in shelters or be euthanized for lack of space.

Since RCAS new arrivals far outnumber adoptions it reached into the the rescue world to save lives, according to Stanford. Rescue asks for the young and old, abandoned and homeless pets, who often have issues. Rescue pays for transportation, often for hundreds of miles. When they arrive each pet is placed with a dedicated foster-trained foster parent in their home. They give the animal loving care and one-on-one training to rehabilitate or train each dog prior to adoption. Cats are house trained.

Rescue pays all vet bills including arrival checkup, spay and neuter, which RCAS could not afford. They advertise the pets with photos and descriptions to attract potential adopters.



Rescue flight

Pilots N Paws donated a flight to Kentucky for local shelter dogs Chance and Miracle, where both senior strays will find the medical attention they desperately need and more love than they knew possible. Chance (blind, deaf, hit by a car twice) and Miracle (loose teeth, losing hair) didn't have many options being disabled and homeless.



The clients fill out applications to pre-qualify including many other careful checks to ensure the fit is good for a lifetime of love. If three adopters pre-qualify for one dog the pet picks.

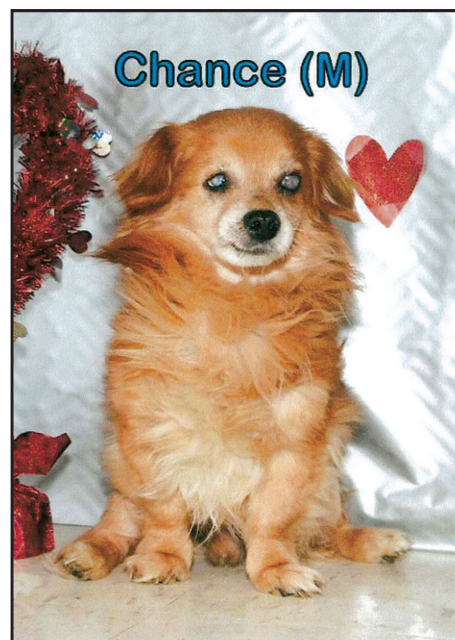
Wyatt, formerly Benji, waited 10 months here for the perfect home, but only waited two days before rescue found his new home. Here he was a hopeless boy but in Pennsylvania he now loves to play in the snow with his brother Jem. He has

visited the Alabama Memorial at Gettysburg and this beagle mix is loving his new life with a family that adopted and adores him.

Two dogs, Chance and Miracle, found their new homes in Kentucky after 'leaving on a jet plane' Stanford said. When turned in as a stray Miracle was in pitiful shape, missing almost all of her teeth and missing fur. She was estimated to be about 10 years old and had lived a rough life. Chance was turned in by a local police department. Deaf and blind, he had been hit by a car twice.

Pilots N Paws donated their flight to Kentucky, two pilots and two planes. Both senior strays will want for nothing as this is like hitting the lottery. They will have more love than they knew possible, a permanent home, including sleeping on their rescuer's bed at night. These disabled dogs did not have many options, homeless on the streets in the cold. Now, they are being spoiled rotten, Stanford said.

Puddin Pie was at RCAS for seven months before finding her new home in Pennsylvania. After two weeks in a foster home she went to her forever home.



Dasher also went to Pennsylvania. She was adopted to be a service mobility dog for a man with MS. She gets the laundry out of the dryer, cans out of the fridge, opens doors, wears a stability harness, and picks up things you drop.

Not only do rescues accept many dogs from RCAS they also provide the shelter with much-needed supplies like dog food, cat food, cat litter, crates and more.

According to Stanford this is why RCAS rescues--to avoid the deluge of raining cats and dogs. Even with the rescues they are barely able to balance incoming/outgoing pets with available kennel space. Rescues help them avoid having to make a call as to who will have to be removed, which to this point has almost been eliminated. This is why RCAS asks that you call before bringing in a "surrender" to a full facility, allowing staff to make room...usually within a few days.

Your shelter did well in the last 16 months. About 400 animals got on the rescue bus, both locally and as far away as 1,200 miles. And the shelter no one expected to succeed has now placed more than 2,500 dogs and

cats in loving homes since Oct. 27, 2007, Stanford said.

Smith said a wealthy lady in Kentucky, who has a heart for animals with special needs, adopted Chance. Chance became friends with a pig. When Chance could not get up to get food the pig brought him food.

Like so many other rescuers and adopters that lady keeps up with RCAS on Facebook, he said. They follow up on how their former chargers are doing in their new lives.

The hard-working dedicated small staff is frequently overwhelmed, which means they run non-stop and sometimes fail to return a call or answer one of 100 messages they receive per day, she said.

The volunteers who help clean the cat room, walk dogs, and socialize the pets so they can be adopted more quickly is deeply appreciated. Volunteers can help with cleaning, small building projects or repairs, office filing, and other jobs that allow the staff to concentrate on animal care, adoptions and rescues. Stanford said feel free to stop by and find your niche and help out a little.

She also noted RCAS has always earned about 50 percent of their annual operating costs and the rest is from local government funding. That is why RCAS is always begging for canned dog and cat food, winter bedding, kitty litter and pet treats.

They love supporters' donations that help for special things like the new fenced play area for the dogs--a project volunteer Ellen Wylie Sims started.

Smith said a group raised money for the dog run. It has a picnic table and umbrella. The dogs absolutely love it. It is exciting to them.

Stanford said during her seven and a half years as a volunteer she has seen such amazing progress and growth.