



FOTAS News

Winter 2020

FOTAS is a recipient of the Secretary of State of S.C. Angel Award-One of 10, out of 14,000 organizations, recognized as representing the most efficient & effective charities in SC.

The Ballad of Willie Nelson and Blind Bella

Willie Nelson, a medium-sized Lab mix, arrived at the Aiken County Animal Shelter in bad shape. X-rays revealed that his right front leg had a gunshot wound just above the elbow that had shattered the bone. The bone had healed as best it could but wasn't stable. The left front leg had severe nerve damage and had to be amputated.

Over the next few months, Willie Nelson got around on three legs while Dr. Levy, the shelter's veterinarian, tried to save his right leg. She inserted pins for stability, but in the end, they wouldn't hold. She then tried a cast, but the damaged bone wouldn't heal. Through it all, Willie kept smiling and enjoying every moment of life.

"His demeanor never changed," said Brandon Fulmer, a shelter staff member who took care of Willie and immediately bonded with him. "Nothing seems to get him down. He's always been a very happy dog."

But when Willie's leg broke again shortly after removing the cast, it was clear it also would have to be amputated in order for him to live a pain-free life.

"We saw what he was going through and hoped he would get better," explained Brandon's wife, Chase Byers, who is also a shelter employee. "But once we saw he was going to lose both legs, we knew we were going to adopt him."

Shortly after saving Willie's life by adding him to their family, Brandon and Chase took in another shelter animal with special needs: Bella, a white Pit Bull mix who is blind due to glaucoma. Bella is being fostered by Brandon and Chase and is in need of a permanent home. Willie has befriended and mentored this sweet dog, and she will make a wonderful canine companion for the lucky person or family that adopts her.



Bella (left) and Willie with Chase and Brandon.



Staff member Brandon Fulmer cradles Willie Nelson.



Willie Nelson in his custom-made wheelchair.

COVID-19 crisis: Shelter continues adoptions by appointment amid pandemic

During the COVID-19 crisis, our shelter hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., We encourage folks to adopt by appointment but will serve walk-ups. If you are interested in adopting a pet from the ACAS, please view the pets available by going to the FOTAS website (FOTASaiken.org) and then, if you see a pet you like, call the Aiken County Animal Shelter, 803.642.1537 or email info@fotasaiken.org to make an appointment to see that animal. Appointments are made during business hours, Monday through Saturday.

Thankfully, people have adapted to our new appointment process and we have managed to find homes for every adoptable pet at the shelter. We have also hosted three special COVID-19 adoption events in which first responders and essential workers had their adoptions paid for by FOTAS.



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Community Outreach and Assistance Vital During Pandemic

With the pandemic and resulting loss of jobs, people need a helping hand more than ever. FOTAS provides pet food, humane dog runners and dog houses to citizens in need. FOTAS also assists folks by providing food for citizens' pets through our partnership with Meals on Wheels and ACTS (Area Churches Together Serving).

Our Fido Fixer program helps supplement the County Spay/Neuter vouchers. This past year, FOTAS booked Fido Fixer's mobile S/N van and organized monthly S/N event days at Langley Community Center. FOTAS paid for the S/N surgeries of pets owned by citizens in financial need. This mobile unit makes it easy for citizens to have their pet's veterinary needs met. FOTAS already has Fido Fixer dates booked in 2021!

Special care kits are also being distributed to citizens who find kittens that need nurturing. FOTAS pays for the supplies in these kits, which include kitten milk replacer, wet food, bottles, heating pads, kitty litter and more.



FOTAS provides kitten care kits that include milk replacer and other necessities.



FOTAS fosters nurture and socialize pets so they can be successfully adopted. Sean Igoe with foster puppies.



Fido Fixers is a FOTAS program that helps citizens in need by giving them easy access to veterinarian care and paying for their pets' spay/neuter surgery.

Home to Home program protects pets from shelter stress

Our Home to Home program has been a lifesaver by keeping pets out of the shelter so they can be adopted out directly from citizens' homes. Since the program was launched last year, 325 pets have found homes through the FOTAS website program. That's hundreds of animals who were able to avoid the stress of being surrendered and brought into the shelter. FOTAS promotes the available pets on our Facebook page with a link to the Home to Home site, ensuring these animals get seen by many potential adopters.





Transporting ACAS dogs to their forever homes.



Hit and run victim Kai gets used to her new cast.



Holly, a one-eyed cat, found a loving forever home.

How your donations make a difference and save lives

The shelter took in 4,029 abandoned, neglected and abused animals last year and continues to receive high numbers of homeless pets in 2020.

But thanks to your donations, the euthanasia rate at the Aiken County Animal Shelter has dropped from 71% in 2013 to less than 5% in 2019. To put it another way, the save rate at the shelter is 95%, a complete turnaround from where we were when we started out 10 years ago. Indeed, every adoptable animal has been saved over the last three years!

All FOTAS donations go directly to programs that help save the homeless pets at the Aiken County Animal Shelter.

FOTAS had to suspend its big fundraising events this year due to the COVID-19 crisis but the annual Playing Fore the Pets golf outing and Woofstock Doggie Derby Day are scheduled to carry on in 2021. With the pandemic causing such chaos, every dollar you donate is more important than ever and greatly appreciated!

Your donations pay for:

- Specialized surgery and physical rehab for adoptable dogs and cats who arrive abused, injured or sick
- Medical treatments such as those for heartworm positive dogs
- Medical equipment and facility improvements at the shelter
- Transports of shelter pets who are not locally adopted. to rescues in the northeast Without these transports, our shelter would be overcrowded and at risk of having to euthanize adoptable pets.
- Fenced in play yards for incoming dogs
- Flea and tick treatment, leashes, toys collars, beds for the shelter animals
- Spay/neuter for community cats and pets whose owners need financial assistance
- Humane runners to get pet dogs off chains
- Food for community pets in need
- Adoption fees for active military and veterans



Volunteers are still the lifeblood of ACAS and FOTAS

We can't thank our volunteers enough for walking the dogs, cuddling the cats, helping at the front desk and fostering shelter animals in need during the 2020 pandemic. It's been one crazy year but having our FOTAS family has kept FOTAS steady and strong. We've always said volunteers are the lifeblood of FOTAS and the shelter, and this year confirmed that conviction.

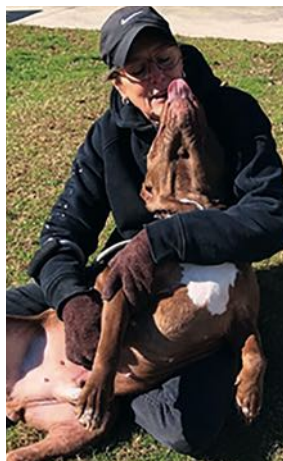


FOTAS Volunteers Jeri Wesner and Jackie Edel walk dogs at the shelter nearly every day.



Sandra Procter is one of the first volunteers to join FOTAS.

Wayne kissing FOTAS Volunteer Malia Koelker.



Enclosure of intake wing marks another milestone

A grand opening ribbon-cutting was held October 30 to celebrate the enclosure of the back wing of the shelter's intake kennels. The shelter's back intake wing, where dogs are first received and housed during their five-day stray hold, contains 30 kennels. Dogs in this wing now have both indoor and outdoor areas and will be protected from severe weather elements. We thank the County, the Aiken County Council and our community for making this happen.

Children come through for homeless pets in 2020

Young animal advocates continue to make us proud. Here are just two examples of many FOTAS donations spearheaded by kids this year:



Zephan and Raegan with Bobby Arthurs; Miss Teen South Carolina with donations

Two 8-year-olds who live across the street from each other, Zephan and Raegan, set up a lemonade stand together and donated their profits to FOTAS by buying food and treats for the homeless animals at the Aiken County Animal Shelter. They raised \$80 from their business enterprise and delivered the goodies they bought with their earnings to Shelter Manager Bobby Arthurs.



Sarah Adkins, Young Miss Teen South Carolina, brought a bevy of pet food and toys to the shelter. The 14-year-old from Lexington managed a donation drive for FOTAS and personally delivered her gifts to the shelter.



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