



Fall/Winter 2021

FOTAS News

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 SOUTH CAROLINA.

Senior dog Earlene overcomes past abuse

Her new name is Mira – short for ‘Miracle’

While the Aiken County Animal Shelter, like most shelters across the country, is crushed between a high intake of animals and a decline in adoptions, there are still many wonderful success stories.

One of the most heartwarming stories this year was about Earlene, a 10-year-old, overbred, balding dog with a tummy that sags from nursing litter after litter, and wounds from being attacked. This girl desperately needed a home, but we knew the odds weren't good. A shy senior with skin issues and a difficult past will often get ignored



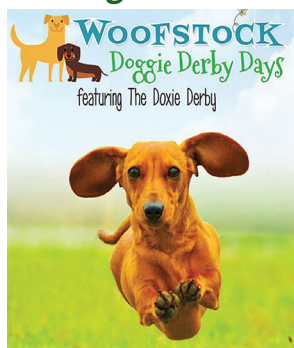
Cathy Martin hugs Mira before taking her home.

by prospective adopters when there are 25 younger, healthier dogs barking for their attention.

But Cathy Martin and Sharon Cormier saw Earlene's post on Facebook, featuring a photo in which her skin showed through and her sad eyes dominated her face. They fell in love and took her home.

What happened next nobody could have foreseen. A stranger in Atlanta, moved by Mira's unlikely rescue, sent a perpetual PetSmart card to cover the cost of food for the rest of Mira's life! A hospital patient in Vienna, Austria, wrote that reading Mira's story helped her to heal more quickly. Cathy and Sharon have made new friends in seven states, so far, connected by a dog nobody wanted. Until they did. Now this sweet senior has a soft bed, home-cooked food, and a family who loves her dearly. She has a new name, too — Mira, short for Miracle.

Looking forward to fun & familiar activities in 2022



Will 2022 be the year we finally put the pandemic behind us? We certainly hope so! We are looking forward to hosting Woofstock Doggie Derby Day on April 16 and bringing back our Playing for the Pets Golf Tourney in October. We're thrilled to be opening the shelter up more for group visits, offering larger orientation classes again and giving presentations to schools and clubs. For more information about upcoming events, email info@fotasaiken.org and follow our Facebook page.

Blind Tortie kitten Halo rules her new home



Grace Renken holds Halo.

Halo, a small Tortie kitten with no eyes, found her forever home when Grace Renken decided she had to have the 2-pound cutie-pie. Though she originally came to the shelter to look for a dog to adopt, the 10-week-old feline captured her heart the instant she cradled the loving, purring bundle of fur in her arms. Halo's eyes were removed due to irreparable damage she sustained before being found and brought to the shelter. But she sprints around Grace's home so effortlessly, Grace said she sometimes forgets the sweet kitten is blind.

"Once Halo memorized the layout of our home, she was off to the races, playing and interacting like any other cat," she said.

AIKEN COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER
333 Wire Road, Aiken, SC • 803-642-1537

FOTAS • 803-514-4313 • info@fotasaiken.org
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President's note: 2022 promises to be an exciting year



Jennifer Miller, FOTAS President.

For the past 12 years, FOTAS has made a real difference in the community. The euthanasia rate at the Aiken County Animal Shelter was over 92% before FOTAS, and now the save rate is over 92%, with every adoptable animal saved.

None of this could have happened without the help of our tremendous volunteers and wonderful donors. Every donation to FOTAS's lifesaving programs, from the smallest to the largest, or time spent volunteering or fostering is so important and appreciated.

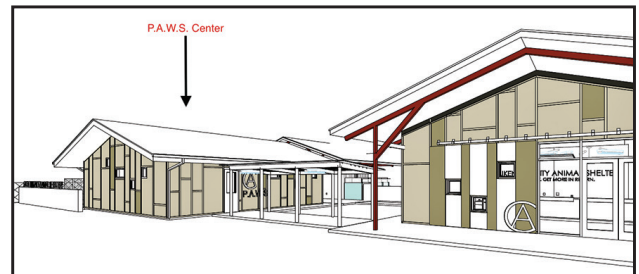
Now, it is time look ahead and 2022 promises to be an exciting year for the shelter.

Thanks to the generosity of two estate donations along with FOTAS fundraisers and donations, FOTAS is now planning the construction of the shelter's much needed P.A.W.S. Center (Primary Learning, Adoption, Wellness, Socialization).

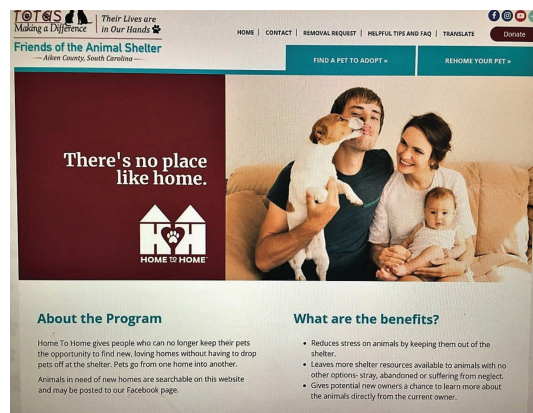
The building will include two meet and greet rooms where potential adopters can get to know a new dog; an indoor training room that will double as a space to work with dogs for adoption and an area to hold educational events for children as well as staff and volunteers; and a new stress-free cat room/patio for the shelter's adoptable cats. The building will have epoxy flooring to help keep the floors clean, hygienic, slip resistant, safe and bacteria free for the animals. We hope to continue the epoxy flooring to every inside and outside kennel in the adoption wing for the welfare of the animals. The P.A.W.S. Center will help increase the rate of adoptions and reduce length of stays of shelter animals, a win-win for everyone.

There are still naming opportunities available for large donations for the building. We thank Aiken County for additional funding to help with the unexpected increases of the building costs due to COVID.

Thanks to the generosity of our Aiken community, the shelter's number one wish since the current facility was built in 2014 will soon be a reality. We hope to break ground by the first of the year.



Home to Home program needed now more than ever



The surge of homeless pets and strays arriving at the shelter has been relentless in 2021, making our Home to Home program more vital than ever. Home to Home is the program where a pet is rehomed directly from one home to another, with the pet never having to go into the shelter.

There can be valid reasons an animal owner has to give up their pet. Most owners on Home to Home want the best for their pet and seek to ensure the new home is a good fit before finalizing the rehoming.

Recently our Home to Home program, funded by your donations, was nationally recognized as one of the best examples of a shelter effectively managing this online program. We've worked hard to make Home to Home a key resource to keep animals out of the shelter and in loving homes. You can find out more about Home to Home on the FOTAS website, fotasaiken.org.



Shelter Pups Opportunity Training (SPOT) helps dogs learn good habits



Christopher sits for volunteer Linda Leblanc.

FOTAS Volunteer Jen Jotblad introduced a different kind of “training” program to the shelter in October. Called Shelter Pups Opportunity Training (SPOT), the program is designed to train shelter dogs with the help of volunteers.

Jen, who has decades of experience with training dogs, said each volunteer is matched with a shelter dog that needs some extra help to find a home. The class is short and held during adoption hours on Saturday mornings at 11 a.m.

The program teaches dogs leash etiquette and simple commands such as “sit” and “down,” which helps them gain more confidence and present better to potential



Jen Jotblad shows how a gentle lead works.

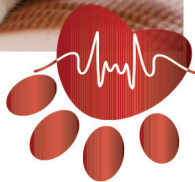
adopters. The dogs love the class and many that were labeled “not good with other dogs” are in a yard together with other dogs, calm, and enjoying personal one-on-one attention from volunteers. Our volunteers love the program and are already seeing a positive difference in the shelter dogs’ manners and temperament. It is no coincidence that since starting the class, dogs that were formerly passed over are now being adopted.

If you would like to join FOTAS and volunteer to help the shelter pets, please call, 803.642.1537 (option #3) or email info@fotasaiken.org. You can download a volunteer application at FOTASaiken.org. Or just stop by the shelter and we’ll help you get started.

More than 1K heartworm positive dogs adopted & doing well



**HAVE A HEART
SAVE A HEART**



Just some of the amazing dogs recently saved through the FOTAS Have a Heart, Save a Heart program:
(Clockwise from left) Peaches, Jack, Dax and Amethyst.

The FOTAS “Have a Heart, Save a Heart” program provides treatment for our adoptable dogs infected with heartworms. Since we launched the program in 2017, we have saved more than 1,000 dogs who tested positive for heartworms, but were otherwise healthy and extremely adoptable.

In the past, shelter dogs with heartworms would be euthanized because the shelter didn’t have the funding to treat them. But thanks to your donations, we are saving these dogs, ridding them of the heartworms and finding them loving homes.



Donations cover cost of Fiona's surgery

Poor pocket Pibble Fiona needed major surgery on both ears by a specialist, and your donations helped her to get it. Her ears were so badly infected, scar tissue built up and covered her ear canals. The damaged tissue was removed by a specialist and after a short recovery period, Fiona was adopted by a lovely family. Thank you to everyone who donated to Fiona's surgery and made her future so much brighter!



Fiona before and after ear surgery.

Girl Scouts build and donate bench to shelter

Wow! Samantha Schooler (left) and Christina Proctor of Girl Scout Troop 1186 built a wooden bench for the shelter. The girls received their Silver Award for this achievement. Our visitors and volunteers (and dogs) are already making great use of this beautiful bench, resting between walks or while cuddling dogs. Thank you so much, Samantha and Christina!



Our volunteers are the lifeblood of FOTAS

Our volunteers walk and socialize the dogs and play with the cats, which makes them more adoptable. They foster homeless pets, organize transfers, take photos of shelter pets and post them on social media. And they also help organize and staff special events, like the Woofstock Doggie Derby Day. They assist at the front desk, help with administrative matters and fundraisers. We would be lost without our volunteers – and we could always use more. If you would like to be a FOTAS volunteer, stop by the shelter, 333 Wire Road in Aiken, and complete a short application. You can also download the volunteer application from our website, fotasaiken.org.



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