# UPCOMING EVENTS

**CANINE CLASSIC: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14** (8am)
Cardinal Park, 7325 Robert Cardinal Airport Road, Tuscaloosa

Calling all runners! Join us bright and early on Saturday, September 14 for the 21st Annual Canine Classic 5K road race. We want to make this year's race the biggest yet, so register early through our listing at runsignup.com. Both runners and walkers are welcome, but be sure to leave your furry friends at home for this event. This fast, flat course will help you hone your skills while supporting a good cause, and it's fun, too! Runners will receive a race T-shirt and a swag bag, and you can enter to win door prizes at the event.

Each year, our sponsors are critical to the success of this event. Both individuals and businesses can help sponsor the race, and we have four sponsorship levels to choose from. Sponsors get program acknowledgements and their names or logos on race T-shirts and banners. You can even be a sponsor AND a runner for this event: Sponsors receive complimentary race entries. For information on becoming a sponsor, email us at humaneswa@yahoo.com or leave a message at (205) 554-0011.

## In Memory of Boots

Our cat shelter lost a legend this summer with the passing of our long-time resident, Boots. Born in 2010, Boots arrived at our shelter in 2014, and she charmed volunteers and visitors throughout her life. She balanced a healthy dose of cattitude with a softer side and was the undisputed queen of the shelter, respected by humans and felines alike. We love and miss you, Boots!

Photo Credit: Wags to Riches Photography

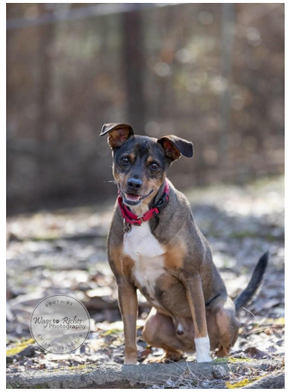


Photo Credit: Wags to Riches Photography

## CONTACT US

**humanesocietyofwa.org**


Humane Society of West Alabama
PO Box 70054
Tuscaloosa, AL 35407
Phone: 205-554-0011
Email: humaneswa@yahoo.com

@humaneswa
@humanesocietyofwacats
@humanesocietyofwadogs



SUMMER 2024
VOLUME 12, ISSUE 2


Humane Society of West Alabama
BECAUSE WE CARE

# WAG RAG & CAT'S MEOW

## Summer Season in Full Swing

Summer is a time to slow down and relax, but that's not always possible for shelter workers and volunteers. Why? In addition to long, hot days, summer also brings an influx of puppies and kittens. And, since shelters in our area are already quite busy, extra mamas and babies can really strain the system.

According to the Shelter Animals Count database, almost half of the felines who entered shelters in 2023 were kittens. These little ones require extra care, and newborns are significantly more susceptible to illness than adult cats. Puppies born during the summer months need extra support, too, and shelters often struggle during the summer to provide the environment mamas and their litters would thrive in. Currently, the nationwide shortage of veterinarians complicates matters even more, since pet parents may find fewer options for having their pets spayed or neutered. Here are some ideas we can all use to make the summer season more manageable for our furry friends:

**Spay and Neuter:** The single most important step you can take is to spay or neuter your pets to prevent unexpected litters from occurring in the first place. If you're a supporter of the Humane Society of West Alabama, you probably already know this. Your friends or neighbors may not understand how critical it is, though. Look for opportunities to promote the importance of spaying and neutering within our community.

**Foster:** We rely heavily on our network of fosters during the summer months to provide comfortable environments until little ones are ready to be adopted. You can find information on how to become a foster under "Get Involved" on our web site.

**Donate:** Just like human babies, puppies and kittens require some specialized supplies. We often need both canned and dry kitten foods. Cleaning supplies like bleach and paper towels are also in high demand during this time to help keep our shelter clean and healthy. You can find the brands and sizes of products we need on our wish list, which is also under "Get Involved" on the website.

If we all work together and take these relatively simple steps, we can make this summer easier for our shelters, our community at large, and, of course, for all the adorable new arrivals who are born this season.

# Maddie's Story

In October of 2022, a very special cat in our adoption center named Maddie went to live with a foster family. As you'll see from this update from her foster mom Jillian, patience, dedication, and—most importantly—love can make such an impact on a pet's life:

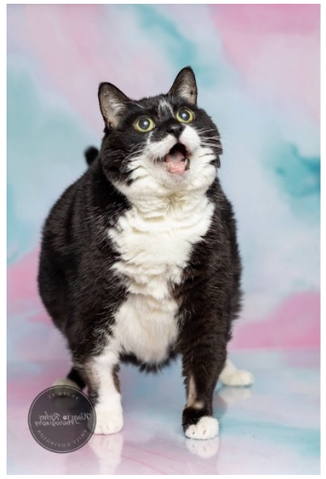


Photo Credit: Wags to Riches Photography

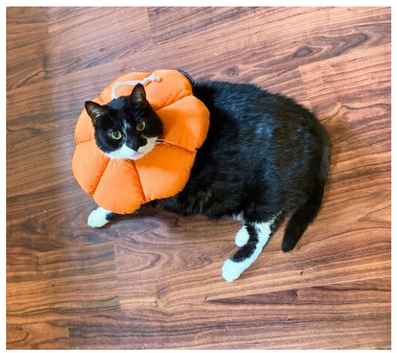
"As I completed the foster application for Maddie, I knew already from her online profile that she was extremely overweight and, therefore, had minimal mobility, even causing issues using her litterbox. Despite this, I wanted to try to work with this girl in our home where she could get more individualized care and attention.

When I arrived to see Maddie, she was out on the catio in one of the many enclosed box beds; she sniffed me a little, but walking to say hello was out of the question. I'll admit I briefly questioned if we had bitten off more than we could chew, but I quickly decided we could at least try. The next thing I knew, I was taking the big girl (24.9 lbs., to be exact) back with me to Starkville, MS!

Those first few months were the most difficult; she was at her heaviest and, therefore, did not want to move more than she had to. Over time, though, she consistently lost weight and became more mobile and better with the litterbox, but we noticed another issue: she was picking her fur off. She likely learned this behavior before coming to the shelter to calm herself during periods of stress. She was placed on kitty Prozac, which she took happily in a pill pocket every morning.

She is a sweet girl but is independent, not a lap cat. After a couple of months, though, she learned human touch is a good touch, and after maybe three months she began to purr around us, which made my heart so happy as this to me meant she was finally trusting us to take care of her. This past November 2023, I was greeted by Miss Maddie on the second floor of our apartment wandering around at 4 am. She had come up a whole flight of stairs in the night! As of January 2024, she was 15lb, maybe less by now, but she is still making progress! She is, for the most part (95%), fully litter-trained and can now move around better than she ever had (no pain meds needed!).

Miss Maddie is slowing down on her weight loss journey and may not be hearing much anymore. Last November, we were told she was starting to develop cataracts and was heading in a kidney disease direction. Maddie has come such a long way, and with kidney disease on the horizon, her days will eventually be numbered. We decided to adopt Maddie as she has grown accustomed to us and now is like any other cat. We continue to support whatever bit of weight she can lose (almost done!) and will manage her kidney disease as long as we can. She enjoys her days on the couch or the sunspot on the spare bed upstairs. I used to be sad thinking about how no one would put in an adoption application for this sweet girl, but I can honestly say that after the first couple of months, I knew we would be her family, even if it meant foster failing. We love you, Maddie girl!"



# HSWA Hires Executive Director

We're excited to announce that the Humane Society of West Alabama has hired our first-ever executive director, Brian Gaerity. Brian brings a wealth of experience with nonprofits and will assist us with critical operations including fundraising, budgeting, and communications. Brian writes:

"I'm thrilled to join the Humane Society of West Alabama as it takes the next step in its 50-year evolution as a leader in the care and rehoming of abandoned, neglected and abused dogs and cats in our community. The volunteers, board, donors and other supporters do heroic work and I'm humbled to join their team. I'm looking forward to getting to know and working with the entire Humane Society family as we increase our capacity to care for our canine and feline friends and strengthen our partnerships with area rescue groups.

"I have had dogs and cats my entire life, and my wife and I are currently fostering a momma cat with four newborn kittens. We also have an indoor cat we rescued from the engine compartment of a car, and a dog we inherited from an aging relative. We're already living the Humane Society mission, so this position is a natural fit!"

*"It's a small thing to help one animal but to that one animal it's a big thing." -Gene Baur*

# Riggs is Ready to Romp

Handsome Riggs is more than ready to finally find his forever family. At about two years old, Riggs is a Shepherd/Catahoula mix with a brindle coat and white highlights. There's something special about his appearance, too: Riggs has one blue eye and one brown eye! Those eyes reveal his friendly, easygoing nature; Riggs is up for any kind of adventure and would be a great walking or hiking companion. While he loves to get energy out by playing outside, Riggs is also an affectionate boy who's ready to share some kisses with his people.

Although he's always a happy-go-lucky guy, the past few weeks have been a little sad for Riggs. He was adopted by a wonderful family, but their current dog simply couldn't get along with Riggs. They were heartbroken but did the best thing for Riggs by returning him to our care. Let's make this a temporary arrangement, though! Help us find this playful pup a home he can finally call his own.

If you're interested in Riggs, please get in touch with us by emailing us at humaneswa@yahoo.com or calling (205) 554-0011 (be sure to leave a message).