

## Foster Care

Providing a temporary refuge for a homeless pet has to be one of the most fun and rewarding things I have the privilege of doing as a volunteer for the Randolph County Humane Society Animal Shelter. From seeing a formerly scared dog come out of his or her shell to watching a new mother cat care for her babies - it is all a great experience.

Foster homes are needed for many different types of animals, especially those with special conditions. My background is with small long haired dogs and with cats. Our home is often opened up to frightened little dogs who need some grooming as well as TLC. I enjoy bringing them home and working on the fur and getting them spiffy looking to enhance their chances of being adopted. If they are timid or shy, I try to work with them to help them feel a little more loved and confident. We also have momma cats with their babies as our house guests, giving them time out of the shelter and into a home to raise their little ones.

One of the most memorable of my fosters was a tiny elderly dog, named "Little Man." His human mom had to go into a nursing home, and as he had been adopted from the shelter originally, the family brought him back. This little guy was about 18 years old, weighed about 5 pounds and had no teeth in his head, but was he a dynamo! He moved into my animal family and took his spot at the foot of the bed, where he guarded his chew bones from the other dogs (and cats) with ferocious (although tiny) growls. We had him in our home over Christmas, and he became our special "Elf" - I dressed him up as a "Santa Paws" dog, and I took him nearly everywhere with me, carried about in a little doggy purse. People just fell in love with him. This gave him exposure to potential adopters and kept him socialized to new people and places.

He was listed on Petfinder.com and ultimately adopted by a wonderful lady in Virginia who loved older dogs and just fell in love with him through his photos. Two years later, he is with the same person and was even in a Fireman's Christmas parade this year.

Many folks have told me that they could not be a foster care provider as they would become too attached and would not be able to let the animal leave. And yes, letting go is hard at times, but the joy of seeing these little ones go to a brand new home overrides any of the feelings of "loss" that you may experience. To me, the "attachment" that we as the care providers feel for the foster pet is a very important part of the help we offer.

If we did not feel love for these little guys, then how could we help them? After all, giving love to a homeless pet is really what it is all about!

At this point, I have lost count of how many little ones have had a temporary stop in my life and home, but each and every one has a special place in my memories and heart. I hope that other people will step forward and give foster care a try. It is well worth the time invested, and the reward is great - knowing you have been a nurturing point for a formerly homeless pet on the journey to a new home! *Vicki Aucremanne*