

Caring For Animals Is Ageless And Rewarding

Sharon Allen Gilder
The Almanac

No one could forecast a more perfect day for the Friends of Montgomery County Animals' (FMCA) annual luncheon meeting catered by River Falls Market on May 28, 2009 than the event's hosts, WUSA9's Chief Meteorologist Topper Shutt and his wife, Alison. The lush landscape of their Potomac home set a beautiful stage for eighty members and guests who gathered to support animal welfare. The Shutt's dog Gibby, named in honor of a favorite Washington coach, served as mascot.

Explaining the tri-color Cavalier King Charles Spaniel's moniker Shutt said, "His name is all for Coach Gibbs coming back into town."

Board president and Potomac resident, Claire Proffitt, in her address to the gathering, noted that FMCA is all volunteers with few administrative expenses. Ninety percent of funds raised go directly to animal care. Recent cases benefiting from FMCA's help include: Timmy, an eight year old cat owned by an elderly woman on a fixed income who is diabetic. FMCA paid for medical tests and food; Jasper, a young dog with seizures whose evaluation and expenses are on-going; Max, a geriatric dog with fatty tumors and Lyme disease. FMCA is paying for Max's Lyme treatment and monitoring the tumors; Sandy "the service dog" is being supported by FMCA with a small monthly subsidy for her veterinary bills; and Eva the Diva, a geriatric four pound Chihuahua with digestive problems has her testing, food and continued monitoring supported by FMCA.

Shutt's rescue efforts extend beyond his lifelong love of dogs. "Actually, I'm kind of a nut. I catch and release pretty much everything, stink bugs, moths, everything else that comes in here." Shutt added, "It is our pleasure to host this event and, I can't turn Claire down."

Potomac resident, Susan Cameron has been a member of FMCA for five years she said, "Because animals need a voice. They're my favorite creatures on the planet. We have four cats and our house revolves around their happiness and welfare. My husband and I share our passion about animals. It's a wonderful union for the two of us."

Alison Shutt expressed her enthusiasm for the event, "I'm happy to do this. It's such a great cause. The rescue work is important so the animals don't get put down in a shelter. FMCA is an adjunct to the Humane Society that I think is critical."

One of the senior friends of *Friends* is Virginia Scalzone. She will celebrate her 90th birthday in August. She is a cat



Gibby the Shutt's Cavalier
King Charles Spaniel

sitter for her friend, Cynthia Edwards. Edwards said, "She's someone I trust. I've known her for twenty-five years." Edwards has been an FMCA member for fifteen years. When Scalzone was asked about the secret to a long life she enthusiastically exclaimed, "It's my sense of humor, keeping busy and movement. I'm still hangin' on, but walkin' around. My son fixed my late husband's cane for me to use. I look at it, I touch it, and leave it where it is." In addition to the fact that she likes cats and they like her, she wanted to attend the luncheon she said, "Because when I heard about Topper Shutt, I wasn't going to miss that fella! I watch him faithfully. Whatever he says, I believe!"

Monies are always needed for the organization's outreach to cats, dogs, horses and the people who create loving homes for them. Longtime Montgomery County resident and FMCA treasurer, Winnie Reed shared, "We run at a loss but that's what we're here for. When we send out a newsletter, a lot of you respond with donations." Still the group can use much more help financially. Proffitt asked attendees to contribute to the Fix-it Fund that pays for Trap-Spay-Neuter-Release (TSNR) and Trap-Spay-Neuter-Place (TSNP). She issued a challenge by committing personally to match donations up to one thousand dollars. She added, "We are, and always will be, dedicated to helping solve animal homelessness because of overpopulation by supporting TSNR and TSNP. We are only hampered by the lack of money in the Fix-it Fund. In these hard economic times, the calls for help with dumped cats, many into feral colonies, has dramatically increased. We need to double our efforts to be sure the feral colonies are stabilized by TNR and the friendly cats and kittens are trapped and spayed or neutered and placed."

Andrew Barto has two Burmese cats. He and his wife are *Friends* volunteers at the Germantown PetSmart where FMCA holds cat adoptions. They nurture the cats and clean cages. Barto said, "This was my wife's idea more than mine but it makes me feel good to help the cats and in some way that they can't otherwise help themselves. The organization is wonderful and everyone seems to be working for a good cause. I'm glad to be part of it."

North Potomac resident, Carolee Priddy has six cats, two dogs and six horses. She said, "I've rescued animals all my life. I've lived in my home almost forty years. People used to open their car doors on farmland and shove their animals out. It was all open country then. It makes me feel good to help and they're such giving and forgiving animals. My main goal is to find homes for them. I don't just take them in to keep them."

Kathy Bonebreak came from Clarksville, Maryland to be part of the event. She said, "I'm an animal lover so I'll go anywhere I have to to be involved." Her German Short Hair Pointer is twelve years old. Her dog developed breast cancer

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