



“Working together to improve the welfare of reservation dogs and cats”

“Diné Bikéyah bikáá’góó, ahil neilnishgo lééchqá’í dóó mósí baa’ ádahwilyáago”

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Lovable But Troubled Dogs: A Little Patience Yields Big Rewards

Believe it or not, we have no trouble adopting out dogs with physical handicaps. Tri-pawds and one-eyed pets fly off the shelves, thanks to an abundance of kind-hearted people who want to make a difference in the life of an imperfect pet.

But dogs with behavioral issues are another thing entirely.

We get it. Dogs that are fearful or aggressive aren't for everyone. The wrong adopter can actually set them back. But if you have the patience and the desire, helping an animal with behavioral issues become a loving pet is a reward like no other.

Lucy, who had spent the first four years of her life in a pen with her siblings at a local shelter because of fear and aggression, had been deemed unadoptable, and after we got her, we had to agree. At her foster mom's home, she spent a week inside her crate, venturing out only to urinate or defecate. She barked threateningly at anyone who got within 10 feet of her. Once she came out, she would slink around the yard and retreat behind any available barrier if someone approached. On the off-chance we got a leash on her, she would flatten herself to the ground and refuse to move.

We were contemplating euthanasia when we decided to put her on Petfinder and just be honest. You never know.

Unbelievably, Joyce C. of Eaton, Colorado, stepped up within a week. “I’m used to difficult animals,” she shrugged. “I’ve worked in zoos, I’ve worked in kennels, I’ve worked shelters. All my animals have been special needs.”

Although Joyce now describes Lucy as “perfect,” that certainly wasn't the case at first. She hid in her crate for days. She escaped and eluded animal control until they were finally able to trap her four days later. Odd things terrified her ... the bed, a toy that consisted of a stick that flung a ball. The first time Joyce got her into her trailer, “she peed and pooped all over my blankets and clothes,” Joyce said. “I had to throw everything away.”

But Joyce was in it for the long haul. She was retired, COVID was settling over the country like a dank fog, and “I had all the time I needed,” she said. She determined she would make it her life's work to earn the little red dog's trust.

Little by little, Lucy came around. She started taking treats from Joyce's hand and letting her pet her head. “Once I had her trust, training was easy,” Joyce said. “She is so smart. She learned the leash in 20 minutes.” Sit, heel, lie down and “Get on my lap” were mastered in days.

But something was happening to Joyce too. “I’m bipolar,” she said, “and since I got Lucy I’ve been able to drop one of my meds.”

There are still things she has to be careful with. Lucy gets agitated around young children, she has pretty major separation anxiety and she doesn't like fast movements. When Joyce isn't looking, Lucy stalks and kills the wild birds at her feeder. “She’s a monster,” laughed Joyce, “but I love this dog.”

Currently we have three dogs that have been in board-and-train facilities for more than a year, waiting for just the right foster family or adopter. All of them would make great pets for the right people.



Mama G is a playful girl who loves her hikes. (Photo courtesy of Paw Creek Training)

Mama G

Mama G was the leader of a feral pack an elderly couple in Many Farms, Arizona, had been feeding for a few years. When both the husband and wife died of COVID in 2020, their son called Blackhat and we were able to catch all the dogs and pups.

In a stable and loving foster home, fearful Mama G made great progress. But her adopter turned out to be just the wrong fit. She indulged the little shepherd mix and before long, Mama G was running the show, lunging at any person or animal who came in the house or within 20 feet of her on the leash. The good folks at Paw Creek Training in Phoenix stepped forward to help. Mama G has been there ever since, learning commands and that people are now the pack leaders, not her.

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“She’s an undersocialized, fearful girl who doesn’t trust easily,” said her trainer, Amanda Blondin. “But she loves her hikes and she’s really very playful. Once she trusts you, she trusts you, and you can do anything with her.”

Mama G has improved a lot, but her adopter should never set her up for failure. “Don’t allow strangers, dogs or people, to just walk up to her,” Blondin advised. And although she has made some friends at Paw Creek, “unless you really know what you’re doing, it would be best to keep Mama as an only dog.

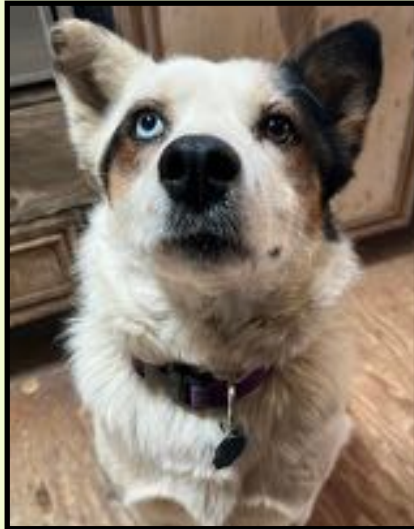
Roxy

Roxy had also been running with a feral pack. Little by little, an elderly woman who lived in the neighborhood began trapping, fixing and finding homes for the dogs until only the wily little Aussie mix with the mismatched eyes was left. When she finally caught her, the lady chained her to her kitchen table to prevent her escaping, letting her out only for potty breaks. Roxy learned to love her finder and even moreso her finder’s grandson, but anyone else who came into the trailer was treated to a frightening display of growling, barking and bared teeth.

When Blackhat got her, “she had to be sedated for transport,” said her trainer, Amanda Ballard of Halo Dog Behavior in Ramah, N.M. “She woke up with a hangover and immediately started barking.”

Roxy didn’t seem to be making any progress with people, but “I noticed that every time the dogs got near her kennel, she would become almost exuberant,” Ballard said. She slowly introduced Roxy to her personal dogs, and one day when Ballard’s Malinois, Ivan, was in the kennel with her, “she came up and gave me a little leg lick,” Ballard said. “That’s when I knew there was hope.” Roxy has failed several meet-and-greets and ran away from one adoptive home, but Ballard thinks there’s someone out there for her.

“It’s going to have to be someone very patient, who can put up with being barked and growled at for a few weeks,” she said. “The home needs to have a very stable, confident dog who can model for her.”



Roxy’s perfect adopter would be “a cat person who doesn’t have cats,” according to her trainer. (Photo courtesy of Halo Dog Behavior)

What Roxy really needs most of the time, at least at first, is to be ignored. “Ideally,” said Ballard, “she would be adopted by a cat person who doesn’t have any cats.”

Max

Most of the time Max is a typical Rottweiler ... 91 pounds of goofy energy. But let another dog get near his food or toys, and he can turn into something else entirely, something a bit scary. Although



Max is 91 pounds of goofy fun ... until another dog messes with his stuff! (Photo courtesy of Halo Dog Behavior)

he’s gotten a lot better in training, especially with people — “He now has no problem letting an adult human touch his food and toys, which wasn’t always the case when I got him,” said Ballard — she still feels he would do best as an only dog. He has also learned a lot of useful commands at Halo Dog: sit, stay, down, and leave it. “Recall is about 30-70,” laughed Ballard. “It depends what distractions are out there.”

In general, Max is “just a really nice, easy-to-handle dog,” but because of his size, he needs an adopter who will learn how to use the prong collar and take charge right away. He also has not been around young children and Ballard isn’t sure a home with lots of kiddos who may inadvertently steal one of Max’s toys would be a good fit.

All three of these dogs, say their trainers, need to move on sooner rather than later. They have bonded with their trainers, which will make the transition difficult for them, and the longer they wait for a foster or forever home, the harder it will be.

Both Amandas are willing to put in some time with these dogs’ adopters and teach them how to work with their unique behavior traits.

If you think you might be ready for a dog with behavioral issues, give us a call. You don’t have to make a decision right away. We will put you in touch with the dog’s trainer who can assess whether you’d be a good fit for one of these quirky but wonderful pets. You’re welcome to visit and work with them for a few days and check out the chemistry. We believe in these dogs and we will do everything in our power to make them successful in their adoptive homes.

~ Cindy Yurth

Partnering for Puppies

A conference for animal welfare groups working on the Navajo Nation

Blackhat was honored to be invited to the first-ever conference of groups involved in animal welfare on the Navajo Nation June 7-8.

About 100 people representing 13 non-profits, Navajo Nation Animal Control and the Navajo Nation Veterinary and Livestock Program

met at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort and shared their situations and ideas for the future at the invitation of Best Friends and the tribe. The event was titled “Nihik’is (Our Friends): A Collaborative Animal Summit.” Cindy Y. and Debbie R. Represented Blackhat at the conference.

While we already knew the situation for animals on the Rez is pretty dire, there were some shocking revelations, including that at present there are only two animal control officers for the entire Navajo Nation (an area the size of West Virginia), the three shelters only have the capacity for eight to 14 animals each, and the Shiprock shelter is presently out of commission because of a broken water pipe — and has been since February.

The Navajo Nation’s only tribal veterinarian revealed that her salary is only \$65,000 — a little more than half what she would be making in private practice off the reservation, and less than some teachers in the Window Rock School District. Between the low salary and lack of housing on the reservation, it’s no mystery why the tribe has trouble attracting veterinarians, she said.

The good news is that 23 rescue non-profits are currently working on the Navajo Nation, including one founded by the Navajo Nation veterinarian, Dr. Kelly Upshaw-Bia, and the director of Navajo Nation Operation Puppy Rescue, Olivia Holiday. Between them, seven non-profits specializing in mobile spay-neuter clinics are sterilizing about 10,000 animals per year.



Jonathan Nez, President of the Navajo Nation, spoke to the conference. The First Lady also attended the full two day conference.

Another bright spot was a report from Dr. Loretta Mayer, a researcher with the FYXX Foundation, who is developing a birth control pill for dogs and cats. Mayer said her team has been very successful in reducing the rat population at Best Friends’ California pet food warehouse and is now working

on developing trials for other animals. Imagine being able to put an oral contraceptive in dog or cat food at places where stray animals congregate instead of hosting costly, time-intensive spay-neuter clinics that only work on the animals people voluntarily bring in!

We also learned a lot about tribal sovereignty and how animals are viewed in Navajo culture, to help us approach the Navajo people humbly and with respect.

While no firm action was taken, there was a lot of discussion on how to improve relationships and work more collaboratively, and a strong consensus to continue meeting.

Some ideas floated included a database of organizations working on the Rez, including upcoming spay-neuter clinics; a regional shelter that could be a collaborative effort between animal control and one or more humane societies; and Navajo-language PSAs on KTNN radio highlighting the benefits of vaccination and spay/neuter.

“A window has opened, and now it’s up to us to walk through,” stated one participant.

As the cherry on the sundae, Best Friends held an informal grant-writing competition and Blackhat Humane won one of three grants! We will be using the \$3,000 award to do another targeted spay-neuter event with Rez-Solutions, so stay tuned for an awesome volunteer opportunity!

~ Cindy Yurth

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To: Friends of Blackhat Humane Society



B L A C K H A T H U M A N E S O C I E T Y

Calling All Calendar Pets!



Is your Blackhat dog calendar worthy? We are accepting entries for the 2023 Blackhat Humane Society calendar! C. Stoeffler, who did an amazing job last year, has volunteered to put together the 2023 calendar. Please email a high resolution photo (300 dpi) and short paragraph about your dog (or cat) to blackhatcalendar@outlook.com, before August 1, 2022.

Photos that are seasonal (winter scenes, etc.) are helpful. For privacy issues, please don't include people in your photo. Lucky dogs whose photo gets selected will receive a free calendar to share with their family!

The Numbers

For April - May 2022

\$6792.00 spent on foster animal veterinary services
\$8,752.00 spent on foster animal support and supplies
\$2,135.00 spent on transport
\$2,109.00 spent on community service

102 animals taken into care
22 adoptions
10 transfers to partner rescues
66 animals in foster care as of 6/1

Honorariums

Ahéhee'!



Thank You: 4 Corners MASH, Airport Animal, Dr. Burns, Continental Animal Wellness, Kaibab Vet, Montezuma Veterinary Clinic, Mountain Girl rescue, Nav Nation Veterinary Services, Rez Solutions, Dr. Sand, San Juan Veterinary Hospital, K. Arrington, W.& C. Foote, J&C Gometz, P. Hall, E&A Hardin-Burrola, K. Harris, T. Himelick, C. Greiner, K.& J. Parr, J. Price, M & B Quakenbush, L. Quinn, L. Reed, Dr Ross family, B. Selig, R. Sherwin, K. Trottingwolf, O. Bortfeld, K Ashcraft & P. Simonson, and A. O'Leary and all who fostered, adopted, donated, prayed, transported or contributed in any way.

K. Trottingwolf - in memory of Steve's beloved cat Autumn

K. Ashcraft & P. Simonson - in honor of Zorro and Diego