

FSPCA providing better guidance for volunteers

BY PAGE H. GIFFORD
CORRESPONDENT

The Fluvanna SPCA, under the direction of Tricia Johnson, is now organizing and implementing a new volunteer program. The staff, management and the volunteers are already working toward making the shelter a better place to work and volunteer.

"I hold forth great hopes for this new volunteer recruitment and training program. It will be marvelous to have more volunteers come in on a scheduled basis who share our commitment to improving the lives of the dogs and cats in our care," said Johnson.

Volunteer Debbie Howe and others have worked together to rewrite the volunteer handbook, giving new volunteers guidance. There are many volunteer jobs to be done, including walking dogs, socializing cats, grooming, assisting at the front desk, yard work, handyman work, vet visits, transporting cats to Happy Tails, helping with fundraisers and adoption events, humane education and fostering animals.

The FSPCA has seen its fair share of ups and downs but is making a strong comeback and a commitment to the homeless, abused and neglected animals left in their care and to the community to follow through in making sure that these animals find their forever homes.

Volunteers with FSPCA are dedicated and have already made a difference in the last two years. The annual wine tasting event and silent auction is a big yearly event where many volunteers come out to support, help and bake for this fun event. The Halloween costume contest at Happy Tails is a big hit with dog lovers. And like Caring For Creatures, FSPCA volunteers never cease to come up with innovative ways to help their furry friends.

But fundraising events aren't the only area volunteers shine. Dog walking is also a great way to meet other volunteers or friends can come in a group or families can spend time together walking dogs. It is also good exercise. Fluvanna High School students have walked and socialized dogs as part of their community service project. There are a couple of volunteers who work with the dogs, socializing and training as well.

"On a practical note," said Johnson, "volunteers should come suitably attired for training and dog walking, including long pants, stout closed-toed shoes-no flip flops and insect repellent." This is the required uniform at all shelters.

Howe is one of the lead volunteers along with Flo Marks who love the cats and are often seen at adoption events. A young mother and her daughter often visit and socialize the cats and have also fostered a special needs kit-

ten, which they kept after a searching for a forever home. They soon realized many of the potential adopters could not understand the needs of the special kitten. Long-time volunteer and former FSPCA board member, Sharen Montgomery, is always tops when it comes to adoption events at FSPCA and CFC. Howe also volunteers as an assistant at the front desk once a week.

Adoption follow-up is where volunteers help by checking in with adopters to see how their new pets are doing and to make sure any necessary spays/neuters have been done.

CFC has always had a strong group of volunteers, walking dogs, helping with mailings, fundraisers, adoption events and doing landscaping and gardening. FSPCA would like to see the same thing happen at their shelter. It is happening but some are reluctant to volunteer, thinking there is still a stigma attached, that there is nothing positive happening and it is still a high-kill shelter. A visit to the shelter and speaking with Tricia and volunteers would obliterate this myth.

"Public perception about the shelter is definitely something that we need to address," said Howe. "If we can get some people interested in doing humane education that would help immensely." Volunteers interested in edu-

cating the public would visit schools and other community groups, talking about responsible pet ownership and the need to spay/neuter all pets to prevent overpopulation problems as well as the role of animal shelters, like FSPCA.

"On a spiritual level," adds Johnson, "while volunteers will definitely have the thanks of the Fluvanna SPCA staff, they will find gratitude far more appropriately expressed by the purring of the cats and the wagging tails of the dogs. The animals in the shelter are so very grateful for any attention they receive; it can be very rewarding for our regular volunteers to help them along their path to adoption."

For more information about the volunteer program, visit their website at <http://www.fspca.org> or call (434) 591-0123 or send an email to director@fspca.org if you're interested in volunteering. They welcome all ages (16+), skills and talents. Once ready to make a more serious commitment, the volunteer application can also be found online and is a downloadable MS Word file and can be filled out and returned to the FSPCA as an email attachment, or printed and mailed or dropped by the shelter. Please contact the shelter if you'd rather have a paper version.

Fluvanna SPCA 5k raises \$2,200



Two runners take part in the FSPCA fundraising race.

CONTRIBUTED BY LEAH GRIFFITH SHIRAISHI

The Fluvanna SPCA held the first annual 5k Run/Walk at the Lake Monticello Golf Course on Saturday, April 2. Over 80 participants hit the pavement raising over \$2,200.00 for the animals of the Fluvanna SPCA.

All proceeds directly fund the care of over 125 animals on a daily basis. "We are thrilled with the today's success and look forward to making this an annual event," said event organizer Kristen Minnis. "Events like this one would not be possible without the support of the public as well as our generous sponsors."

The event is made possible by the following sponsors: Ragged Mountain Running Shop, Sir Speedy, Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, Drs. Douglas and Victoria Weiss, optometrists.

To learn more about the Fluvanna SPCA, please visit www.fspca.org. The Fluvanna SPCA is a registered 501c (3) nonprofit organization.