



JAN/FEB 2018

all creatures

The Animals Who Share Our Lives

**Meant
to Be**
PAGE 38



Editor's Note

MY NAME IS GRACE. I am a golden retriever. My human is Edward Grinnan. He is helping me write this. I know I am a good dog—or at least I'm told that about 100 times a day—but I want to be better. I have heard people talking about New Year's resolutions. I think these could help me in my growth and development. So here are a few goals I am going to try and live up to in 2018. But remember, I'm not perfect.

Observe boundaries

I have a habit of running up to strangers and sticking my snout into whatever body surface is convenient. Not all people like this. Some actually howl. Likewise, not every dog wants to play with me or be sniffed, even though I want to play with them and sniff them. I have been growled at several times, which is humiliating. But I have to learn my limits.

Stop chewing rugs in the middle of the night

This is so wrong! But what else is there to do when the humans are snoring and disturbing my rest? It makes them very upset, and I want to make them happy. I do too much forbidden chewing (again, I'm sorry about your new Nikes, Mama). I will stop this behavior. Soon.

Curb my appetite

As my humans point out, they don't get down on their hands and knees and stare at my food while I'm eating. So I shouldn't do that to them. I guess.

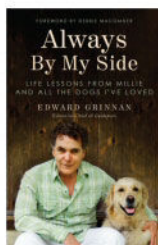
Remember love is patient

I can't have everything I love all at once all the time. Sometimes one or both of my humans go away. I get sad. I forget they are coming back. They always come back. I have to stop acting as if it's the end of the world. I don't want them to feel guilty. I don't think.

Teach others to be joyous and free

That's me in a nutshell, so this one is kind of a gimme. Still, I notice that humans can be very stressed. There is no reason for this. I can help. Life is a blessing. It is the most incredible thing. Every single morning is the best morning ever and you really don't need much to be happy...food, love, hugs. And naps. It's not complicated.

My humans do something called praying. I hope they will pray for me to be the best dog I can be in 2018!



Order *Always By My Side* at guideposts.org/millie, or look for it wherever books are sold.

Happy New Year! —Grace 🐾



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How to navigate this difficult time.

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on the web

Working It

Want to see more animals with cool jobs (page 8)? Go to guideposts.org/animalsatwork.

Oh, Deer!

There's a reason Dillie's Twitter profile says she's a "domestic deer diva." She's made herself right at home with veterinarian Melanie Butera and her husband, Steve. Check out our slide show at guideposts.org/dillie.

Do You Pray With Your Pet?

Share your ritual and send a photo to allcreatures@guideposts.org or *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038, for a chance to appear on guideposts.org.

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allcreatures

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unexpected friends Juniper and Moose



When Jessika brought home Juniper, a domestic North American red fox, her dog wasn't fazed. Moose, an Australian shepherd-malamute mix who had been raised around a variety of animals, ran right up to his new five-week-old housemate, tail wagging. Juniper comes from a long line of captive foxes that have lost enough of their natural instincts to be unfit for the wild, though they're still prone to biting and destructive behavior. She loves to eat socks and Cheerios, keeps stuffed animals and treats under Jessika's bed, and doesn't like to be separated from Moose. They play, eat and snuggle together, and Jessika says she often finds Juniper sitting right on top of Moose—a common behavior exhibited by foxes to show ownership. Turns out a fox and a hound *can* be fast friends! —*Alikay Wood*, Contributing Editor

peaceable kingdom

a winter bluejay

Crisply the bright snow whispered,
Crunching beneath our feet;
Behind us as we walked along the parkway,
Our shadows danced,
Fantastic shapes in vivid blue.
Across the lake the skaters
Flew to and fro,
With sharp turns weaving
A frail invisible net.
In ecstasy the earth
Drank the silver sunlight;
In ecstasy the skaters
Drank the wine of speed;
In ecstasy we laughed
Drinking the wine of love.
Had not the music of our joy
Sounded its highest note?
But no,
For suddenly, with lifted eyes you said,
“Oh look!”
There, on the black bough of a snow flecked
maple,
Fearless and gay as our love,
A bluejay cocked his crest!
Oh who can tell the range of joy
Or set the bounds of beauty?

—Sara Teasdale



RICHARD WEAR/DESIGN PICS/GETTY IMAGES

Share a poem or a prayer about your connection with one of God's creatures. Send it to allcreatures@guideposts.org or *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038.

How prints

News, expert advice, fun facts and more

Work It!

*9 animals
with
unique jobs*

By **Monica Lester**,
Contributing Editor



YOU MIGHT BE USED to seeing police dogs, but how about these other animals working in unusual ways to help us—and other species—live safer, better, happier lives?

◀ **Jake the Diamond Dog**

Golden retriever Jake travels to ball-parks around the United States to lend a helping paw at minor league baseball games. Though he's not likely to step up as a pinch hitter, he can deliver the ball to the pitcher, shag foul balls, play batboy and even bring water and towels to the umps and players. Follow Jake on Facebook @jakethediamonddog.



▲ **Golf Caddie Llamas**

Some golf courses in North Carolina offer a unique type of caddie. Friendly llamas, whose feet cause less wear and tear on the course than carts, carry your clubs in a special harness. Between shots, they enjoy strolling and nibbling grass. The llamas are accompanied by a human supervisor, who can measure yardage and read greens.



▲ **Land Mine- and Tuberculosis-Detecting Rats**

What's that smell? If it's TNT or TB, African giant-pouched rats trained by Tanzania-based APOPO can tell you. They sniff out land mines and tuberculosis using their exceptional sense of smell. One mine-searching rat can cover more than 2,000 square feet in 20 minutes, which would take people 25 hours using metal detectors. A TB-detecting rat screens 100 samples in 20 minutes, a job that would take a lab tech four days.

paw prints

► LiLou the Airport Therapy Pig

In 2016, therapy pig LiLou was the first of her kind to join San Francisco Airport's Wag Brigade, a program created by the San Francisco SPCA that aims to ease travelers' anxiety. Rocking a "Pet Me!" vest, a pilot's hat or a tutu, and a pink manicure, the spotted Juliana pig roams the terminals with her handler, working to spread cheer. Follow LiLou on Instagram @lilou_sfpig.

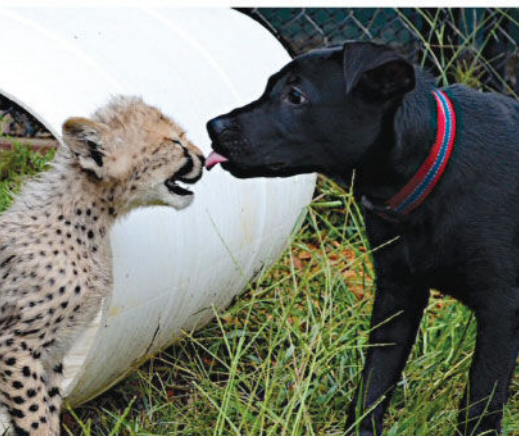


Most Distinguished Mouser

Known as Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office, Larry lives at 10 Downing Street, the London residence of the United Kingdom's prime minister. According to the cat's official biography on the government website, Larry, who has held the seat since 2011, "spends his days greeting guests to the house, inspecting security defences and testing antique furniture for napping quality."

Ecosystem Engineer Oysters

Oysters were the keystone species and original ecosystem engineers of New York Harbor, according to the Billion Oyster Project. The group is an ecosystem restoration and education project working to bring back 1 billion live oysters to the harbor. This mighty species filters toxins from the water, allowing the local marine ecosystem to naturally maintain itself.



◀ Cheetah Support Dogs

Cheetahs are shy, nervous creatures who can learn a lot from the typical happy-go-lucky pup—and zoos around the country are taking note. Support dogs help curb cheetahs' anxiety, making them more likely to breed and warding off their extinction. In Africa, dogs protect cheetah populations in another way: Anatolian shepherds guard cattle from cheetahs, which makes it unnecessary for farmers to trap or kill the big cats.

THIS PAGE AND PAGE 11: CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: MICHELLE CURLY/CINCINNATI ZOO/REX FEATURES VIA AP IMAGES; © SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT; GENEVIEVE VALLEE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. PAGE 11: TOP RIGHT: COURTESY BETTY WALTER (2)

Coconut-Picking Monkeys

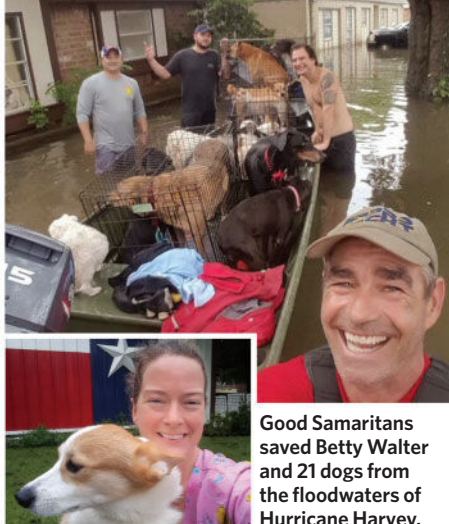
For nearly 400 years, pigtailed macaques have been picking coconuts in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and India. They reach treetops easily and are incredibly efficient. While a human can gather only about 80 coconuts a day, a male monkey can collect an average of 1,600, and a female can average 600.

▼ Weed-Eating Manatees

Manatees living in canals of the South American country of Guyana have been keeping the waterways



clear of weeds for more than a century. Although they were never specifically trained to keep canals functional, these marine mammals' ability to eat as much as 10 percent of their body weight (some weigh more than 1,000 pounds) in vegetation every day has made them an important part of the community.



Good Samaritans saved Betty Walter and 21 dogs from the floodwaters of Hurricane Harvey.

going beyond

EVEN WITH HURRICANE HARVEY

bearing down on southeast Texas in August 2017, Houston resident Betty Walter, 44, didn't hesitate when two homeless men asked her to take in their dogs. Her biggest concern wasn't what flooding might do to her house. "I just wanted to make sure the dogs were safe," she said. As other people evacuated ahead of the storm, Betty, who has four dogs of her own, also opened her door to foster dogs awaiting adoption and a few of her neighbors' pups. By the time Harvey touched down, she had 21 dogs taking refuge in her attic. Betty tried to stay calm as the floodwaters rose, posting messages on social media until her phone battery died. After 14 hours, several Good Samaritans searching the neighborhood in a boat showed up. Betty refused to leave unless every dog could come with her. Her persistence saved them all. She's now helping to find homes for the 1,500 other dogs rescued in the aftermath of the storm.

—Alikay Wood, Contributing Editor

I'll never forget you

Special ways we remember our companions



I STILL REMEMBER it to this day: I was about seven years old, riding in our family's pickup truck with my dad and checking the cattle on the back edge of our Tennessee farm, when I declared, "If I ever get a dog, I'd name him Buffalo." It just came to me out of the blue.

Dad didn't question me. He simply smiled.

A year later we took in a three-month-old cocker spaniel from a couple that wasn't able to keep him. Dad let me name the pup. Buffalo was like a little brother to me, sitting patiently as I dressed him up in doll clothes,

playing along as I chased him around the house. He happily shared the back seat with my sister and me on family road trips and took naps with me on the couch.

Buffalo lived a good, long life on our farm and passed away at the age of 14. I'd been toying with the idea of getting a tattoo; when he died, I knew it was meant to be. I had my dog's name in Cherokee—part of my heritage—tattooed on my wrist, so my sweet, stubborn, faithful companion will always be with me.

—Katie Hogin
New York City

Do you commemorate your pet in a special way? Share it with us! Send a photo to allcreatures@guidenposts.org or *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038.

A Therapy Dog's Journey: Part One

Behind the scenes with a pup in training

By Peggy Frezon, Contributing Editor

MY THREE-MONTH-old golden retriever Petey charged into puppy kindergarten, tugging at his leash and tripping over his big feet. And *he* was supposed to become a *therapy* dog?

I first encountered a therapy dog six years ago, when my husband lay gravely ill in the hospital. Fear overwhelmed me until Gabriel, a huge Bernese mountain dog, strode into his room. The dog sat patiently while I hugged his neck and released all my worries. That moment, I knew that one day I'd train a therapy dog of my own.

And I did. First there was 10-year-old Ike, his gentle temperament just right for helping homesick college students. Next Ernest, 8, passed the test. Now it's Petey's turn. But he has a long way to go!

A therapy dog needs to have a calm, friendly

disposition. His or her main role is to provide comfort and affection to people in need, whether in a hospital, a nursing home, a school, a disaster area or another setting. That's why the first step with any puppy being trained to fill that role is *socialization*. If puppies aren't socialized properly, they may become fearful and reactive. So my husband and I bring Petey out every day to experience new sights, smells and sounds and to meet friendly people and dogs. We also enrolled him in puppy kindergarten, where he's learning to sit, respond to his name and come when called. Petey and his classmates also learn to play together in a safe and positive environment.

One common puppy issue we're working on is bite inhibition. Those sharp teeth need exercise—but not on



Petey listening carefully in class

our arms. We redirect Petey's behavior by offering him an appropriate chew toy. And we reward him when he mouths on us softly.

Next it will be time for Petey to learn more complex manners, such as good leash etiquette and greeting guests calmly. Do you think he's up for it?

Follow Petey's progress in our next issue.

should I be worried?

My cat ate some string. What should I do?

—Sabra Ciancanelli, Tivoli, New York

Did your kitty get into your craft kit? Don't panic. This is a common concern among cat owners. Here's what you can do to make sure your pet is well taken care of.

First, when was the string consumed? If you saw it happen or are sure it was ingested within the past 30 minutes, take your cat to the vet immediately so she can safely induce vomiting. Never try to induce vomiting at home (such as by giving your cat hydrogen peroxide).

If you're unsure about the time frame, call your vet to discuss your options. Many cats will pass a swallowed string or ribbon naturally without any complications, and the doctor may tell you to just monitor your cat for several days. Watch for lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea, refusal to eat, abdominal pain or significant behavioral changes. Any of these

symptoms requires a visit to the vet.

Your vet may suggest an endoscopy—a noninvasive procedure during which a small camera is placed inside your cat's stomach—to see what's going on internally and possibly remove the string in a nonsurgical way. However, if the intestines become compromised (bunching up due to the position



Featured expert:
Eric Dougherty, DVM

of the string, for instance), surgery will be necessary to avoid bowel obstruction and possible infection.

If you notice a piece of string or thread hanging from your cat's mouth, do not pull on it. This can cause serious damage to the stomach and intestines if the item is long and already partly ingested. Let your veterinarian take care of it.

Of course, prevention is the best medicine. Keep string, thread, ribbon, yarn, dental floss, fishing line, hair ties and rubber bands (as well as feline favorites, plastic bags and dryer sheets) stored out of your cat's reach. Looking for a simple toy to keep your kitty entertained? Don't opt for a ball of yarn; cardboard boxes and catnip are definitely safer choices. A string-type interactive toy that dangles an object from something like a fishing pole is fine for supervised play; just remember to put it away when playtime is over.

Eric Dougherty is the medical director of the Cat Practice in New York City, the first feline veterinary hospital in the nation.

Are you concerned about your pet? Send your questions to allcreatures@guideposts.org or *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038.



Penguins are extremely intelligent and self-aware creatures.

calendar

PENGUIN AWARENESS DAY

JANUARY 20

Find out why penguins and other animals are using iPads in our latest installment of "Is This for Real?" on page 42.

NATIONAL CAT HEALTH MONTH

FEBRUARY

Did you know cats are almost three times more likely to get diabetes than dogs? Help your feline stay healthy with routine vet visits.

LOVE YOUR PET DAY

FEBRUARY 20

Tell us about something special you've done

for a pet! Send your story to allcreatures@guideposts.org or *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038.



Snickers earned his owner's undying affection (page 27).

for the love of a wolf

She gazed into my eyes. Something in her connected with something deep in my soul. I knew I had to save her

By **Darlene Kobobel**, Lake George, Colorado

It was my first day as a volunteer at the animal shelter. What was I doing there when I had so little to offer? I wasn't sure. But I'd been drawn to strays for as long as I could remember.

I didn't have a stable family environment as I was growing up. My mom had issues, and we moved around a lot. By the time I was 15, I was on my own. It was hard for me to let people get close enough to trust them. So I turned to animals. I took in every lost dog, stray cat and injured bird that came my way. I tried to nurture them, make them feel loved. Maybe I wanted to give them hope for the future, a hope that I didn't believe was possible for myself.

After all, I'd just turned 30, and my life was still going nowhere. I was renting a tiny one-room cabin in the foothills of the Rockies, living paycheck to paycheck. I worked two jobs—construction by day, waitressing by night—neither of which I would have been doing if I'd had any other option.

I guess I could relate to the dogs at this shelter. They were out of options too. I was grabbing some water bowls from near the kennels when I saw

her—the most magnificent animal I'd ever laid eyes on.

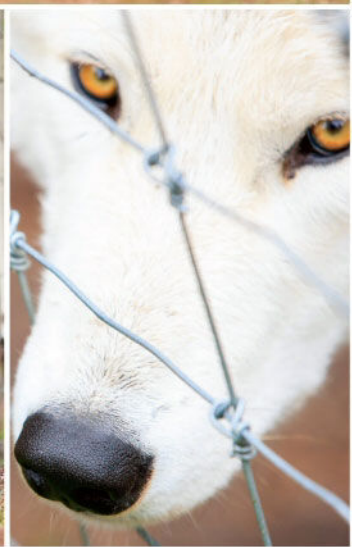
A huge silver-gray canine in a chain-link kennel. Her long, thick coat and unusual size made me curious about her breed. She stood stock-still, her amber eyes tracking my every move.

"That one's gorgeous," I said to a shelter worker. "She'll find a home in no time."

HE SHOOK HIS HEAD. "Wolf hybrid. We don't offer them for adoption. They generally don't make good pets, but that doesn't stop people from trying. She's scheduled to be euthanized in a few minutes."

That couldn't be right. I went over to the kennel door and checked the intake card. Part wolf, part husky. Two years old. No behavioral problems. The owner had surrendered her because she'd grown too big and it cost too much to feed her. The thought of this beautiful creature being killed made me feel sick to my stomach. She hadn't done anything wrong. She was only being who she was bred to be.

The sanctuary's wolves roam 35 acres.



Darlene feels blessed to be able to care for these majestic creatures.

The wolf dog came closer. Tentatively I put my hand on the chain-link fence between us. She brought her snout up to my hand and sniffed. Then she licked my fingers through the wire, her tongue surprisingly soft against my skin. She cocked her head and gazed into my eyes. Something in her connected with something deep in my soul. I knew what it was like to be alone. Neglected. Unwanted. Unloved.

I had to save her.

I got the shelter director on the two-way radio and begged him to let me take her. They couldn't place her because she was part wolf, so I figured she could stay at my cabin until I found someone to keep her. "I'll find her a good home," I promised. "She deserves another chance." Finally the director relented.

That evening I took the wolf dog home. The yard wasn't fenced and the cabin itself was too small for her to romp around. I rigged up a 60-foot run, attaching one end of a cable leash to her halter and the other end to the clothesline outside my cabin. Not ideal, but it was far better than the alternative she faced at the shelter. She could run and burn off energy until I could find a permanent home for her.

THE NEXT DAY I cautiously took her for a walk. She was six feet from nose to tail, much bigger than any dog I'd been around. Fortunately, her first



owner had leash-trained her and she walked well, though I could sense her strength at the other end of the leash. She was socialized too. When we strolled past the apartment complex next door, she didn't seem bothered by all the people staring at her. Not that I could blame them for being awestruck by the stunning 100-pound creature walking regally by my side.

I named her Chinook, after a large breed that was developed as a sled dog. I called shelters, zoos and wildlife preserves in the hope of finding her a home. I learned a lot about wolf dogs and the issues and controversies surrounding them. It wasn't illegal to breed or own them, but compared with the typical pet dog, these hybrids were difficult to manage and needed tons of stimulation and plenty of space to exercise their wild senses.



Complete maturation happened around age two or three. It took that long for their true personalities to develop, and a once playful and docile wolf dog puppy could grow into a large aggressive adult. Of the 250,000 that were bred as pets each year, 80

I opened the door and my breath caught in my throat. There was Chinook, curled on the ground, a toddler beside her.

percent ended up at animal-control centers. Shelters usually didn't have the space to properly care for wolf hybrids or the resources to find them homes, and they were euthanized.

None of the places I called wanted Chinook. But I couldn't keep her, either. It wouldn't be right for her to live tethered to a 60-foot run. Besides, she was partially wild, and wild animals could be unpredictable, even when raised in captivity and well socialized. What if someone triggered her predatory or territorial instincts and she hurt them?

ONE AFTERNOON I LOOKED out the cabin window and couldn't see her. Had she broken free of the cable leash? I opened the door and my breath caught in my throat. There was Chinook, curled on the ground, a toddler from the apartment complex next door beside her. I'd seen the child wandering unsupervised before.

I wanted to run over and scoop him up. But I forced myself to approach slowly so as not to startle the wolf dog. Chinook bent her head over the toddler. My heart pounded. She opened her mouth. One more step and I could grab the child. Then I saw what Chinook was doing. She was licking and grooming the little one, a wolf's way of showing affection and forging a bond.

Something in me unclenched, something that had kept me from trusting, from hoping, for so long. Chinook deserved a good life; maybe I did too. Could we find it together?

I couldn't live in town with a wolf dog. I had to find a secluded place in the country, with enough space for Chinook to roam. Down a dirt road, I found a run-down old house needing

**Darlene embraces
Chinook, her first wolf dog.**



so much work that no one else wanted it. What I liked was that it sat on eight undeveloped acres—enough room for it to be a safe haven not only for Chinook but also for others like

her. I put up a sign by the dirt road, “Wolf Hybrid Rescue Center,” and placed a small ad in the paper.

Word spread far beyond our area. The phone calls came, sometimes 15 to 20 a day, from people around the country who wanted to surrender their wolf pets. Soon the center was home to 16 wolf dogs.

VOLUNTEERS BUILT enclosures. I talked veterinarians into discounting their fees. Still, feeding the pack forced me to take on a third job. It also made me realize that there would always be wolf hybrids that needed help. Try as I might, it was impossible for me to rescue every animal.

If I wanted to save more wolf dogs, I had to get the word out about their plight. That presented another problem: I was terrified of public speaking. But after a teacher visited the center and invited Chinook and me to give a talk at her elementary school, I couldn’t say no. If these kids met Chinook, they could grow up to love and protect wolves instead of fearing them.

I walked onto the school auditorium stage. My hands were shaking so much, I hid them by burying them in Chinook’s thick coat. A funny thing happened. The more I petted her, the more my fear receded. With my wolf dog by my side, I had the

courage to speak out. The kids listened, fascinated. Soon Chinook and I were going to more schools, civic clubs and parks, educating people about wolves and wolf dogs.

What was I doing at the animal shelter that day? It was the one and only time I volunteered there, and looking back, I have to believe it was because Chinook and I needed to find each other. My love for her led me to create what is now the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center, a 35-acre nonprofit animal sanctuary dedicated to wolves and wolf hybrids. Our staff and volunteers have led tours and conservation and informational programs for 25 years now.

Not a day goes by that I don’t feel blessed to live and work at this beautiful, peaceful place that provides sanctuary for these majestic animals and a fun, educational environment for visitors. When I found Chinook, I found my purpose and my future. 🐾

Want to support, visit or volunteer at the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center? Find out more at wolfeducation.org.



winter's tail

THE CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM, 10 miles up the road from my home in Florida, takes wounded or sick dolphins, sea turtles, otters, sharks, stingrays and fish and nurses them back to health so they can be returned to the ocean. My favorite mammal at the aquarium is Winter the dolphin, who lost most of her tail in a crab trap and had to be fitted with a prosthetic that has an extra-sensitive silicon sleeve. Developed just for Winter, it can be suctioned to her body so that she can dip up and down the way dolphins normally do.

Watching Winter swim with her artificial tail reminds me that for 15 years I had to wear reading glasses. Then my eyes changed and I could read and see without glasses for about five years. I felt as free as a fish in the ocean. But slowly, reading anything became impossible, and the eye doctor put me back into wear-them-all-the-time bifocals. After all those years of not needing glasses and feeling free, I suddenly felt the way Winter must feel every time they put on that prosthetic tail.

Sometimes there are other things I resist just because I don't want to be encumbered, like my helmet when I go biking, a life jacket when I'm in a kayak or snorkeling, my daily vitamins or a seat belt when I'm in the back seat of someone's car. But I know these things, like my bifocals, are gifts that keep me safe, healthy and feeling and acting normal. And so I strap it on, buckle it up, take the pills, put on the bifocals and like Winter, I'm ready to flip my tail!

Lord, as I get older, help me to accept your aging-gracefully gifts with gusto and grace.

—Patricia Lorenz



saving dillie

What one particular patient taught this veterinarian about love, healing and hope

Adapted from *Dillie the Deer: A True Story of Love, Healing and Family*
by Melanie R. Butera, DVM

In more than 20 years of practice, veterinarian Melanie R. Butera had treated countless animals in life-or-death situations, but nothing prepared her for the blind fawn brought into her emergency clinic by farmer Al Glick one spring night in 2004. The three-day-old deer, who had been abandoned by her mother, hadn't nursed since she was born. No one expected her to survive.

"IT'S A GIRL!"

The fawn was dying. Her temperature was so low, it didn't register on the thermometer. I prepared myself for Mr. Glick to say, "Just put her to sleep."

"I thought maybe you might want her if you can save her," he said.

"Pardon me?"

"Well, I know you said you had a barn and all, and you love deer, so if you want to try to save her, you can. I just can't put any money into her."

"I'll try," I answered, not really thinking ahead. I didn't expect the fawn to survive the night.

"If you can get her to nurse, here's some goat's milk." Mr. Glick set a Mason jar full of milk from his goat on the exam table.

"We'll leave it in God's hands," I said.

Dillie finds comfort in her own room.

My team sprang into action. I placed an IV into the baby deer's jugular vein to deliver the fluids she needed to survive. My veterinary technician and assistants gently put her in an incubator and sat with her. The fawn made it through the night.

The next morning, my husband, Steve, who has helped with thousands of animals over the years, took a milk-filled syringe and dribbled some milk on the baby's tongue. She swallowed and he fed her a little more.

I told him how the fawn had come to the clinic.

"I don't want to put her out in the barn right now. It's too cold." Steve was excited. "We can bed her down in the garage, then move her to the barn later."

"Whoa," I said. "Slow down. She's not even out of the woods yet. Let's see if she survives."

"Survive? Of course she will," Steve insisted. "I am not going to let her die."

The fawn bleated softly and licked Steve's cheek.

"Congratulations, guys," my assistant said with a laugh. "It's a girl!"

FINDING HER PLACE

Steve decided on the fawn's name after she stumbled into a patch of daffodils outside our house. Indoors,

Dillie claimed a spot on the right side of our sectional. When Steve and I left to run errands, we'd put her in her corral in the garage. She slept there at night and seemed more comfortable than in other parts of the house.

One day, when Dillie was around seven months old and just an inch or two taller than our black standard poodle, Lady, we came home to find the garage empty.

"Where the heck could she have gone?" Steve asked.

"She's got to be here somewhere," I said. "A deer can't just disappear!" Had she tried to go upstairs?

Dillie, whose vision had improved but was still impaired, routinely climbed out of our pool, but it had only three steps and the water served as a buffer if she fell. The bedrooms were up a long, steep flight of steps.

At the top of the staircase I turned the corner and there, in our bedroom, stood one very proud, 80-pound fawn, right in the middle of our bed. Eventually, Dillie chose to sleep in our guest bedroom, otherwise known as our cat Spazz's room. She still visited us many nights, though, turning on the light with her lips and laying her head on Steve's chest before returning to her room.

NIGHT GAMES

Once we awoke to the sounds of things falling into the bathtub. We found Dillie standing in the tub having a bubble bath, shampoo and soap bottles around her, the faucet on full blast. She often head-butted



the shower or cabinet doors. "Dillie's playing the drums again," Steve would mutter.

Her nightly routine also included visits to the kitchen. She deftly used her lips to open cupboard and pantry doors in search of snacks. Steve always left out a tray of fruits and salads and a big box of fresh timothy hay for her, but she preferred a treasure hunt. Finally, Steve cleared out a cupboard and stashed granola bars there just for this purpose.

MAKING IT BIG

After I won a video contest about how I use a GPS tracking collar for Dillie, we were featured on the six o'clock news. Dillie's story went viral. People all over the world now knew Dillie, and they wanted to see more of her. The DillieCam, a webcam we set up in her bedroom, registered more than a thousand hits a day, and hundreds of people friended Dillie on her Facebook page. Steve and I met animal lovers from around the globe because of our deer. It didn't matter that these people came from different professions, social circles or countries.



Melanie serves up Dillie's favorite spaghetti.

Love was the universal language, and Dillie was fluent in love.

BY MY SIDE

I felt more fatigued than usual by the end of 2011. I had a dull but persistent pain in my lower right abdomen. I knew it was cancer. I didn't know what else could cause abdominal pain that never goes away.

My doctor had been a family friend for two decades. We discussed my lab reports, and I discovered that he was no better at giving bad news than most doctors. He said, "Well, kid, you have cancer."

That night, I lay in bed, trying to find goodness and grace in my battle with cancer but feeling only dread. Dillie jumped on the bed at that moment, as she used to when she was younger. She plunked down between me and Steve and laid her head on my shoulder. She always seemed to know when I was struggling. I put my arm around her. Tonight, Dillie was with me, and I wasn't letting go.

I had my first surgery in 2012. I was laid up for about a month. Dillie lay next to the bed or the recliner I sat in.

If I wasn't feeling well, Lady and Dillie were always within arm's reach, to offer comfort. With my animal support group, I recuperated well and was glad to get back to work.

In October, about a month after completing the radiation protocol, I felt a familiar pain in my gut. I knew the cancer was back.

The surgeon told me that the latest scans brought worse news: The cancer had spread. There were tumors in my kidneys, liver, lungs and bones.

This knocked the air right out of me. I managed to say that my oncologist had made the arrangements for chemotherapy.

"Good," the surgeon said. "Go home and get your affairs in order."

TELLING DILLIE'S STORY

Pets are so in tune with their human companions. They know when we are happy or afraid. They know when our world is crumbling around us. Dillie lay down at my feet next to Lady. A few minutes later, Spazz joined us. I decided to write my obituary, not because I am a control freak, but because I felt an overwhelming need to put my life on paper. I needed to see that I had left a mark.

"Is this all there is?" I said out loud to a Creator I thought would not answer me. "I'm just here, and then poof, I'm gone?"

When I had no more tears to cry, I reached down to stroke Dillie's head. I thought about the day she'd come



Dillie navigates stairs without any trouble.

to the clinic, how fragile her life had been. Then I thought about the thousands of letters of love we had received about Dillie. She affected more lives than I could if I worked as a vet for a hundred years.

I trashed the draft of my obituary and found a file entitled “Dillie.” It was the first draft of a book I had begun to write when Dillie became a celebrity two years earlier. So many people were doing stories on her. I had thought at the time, *I know Dillie better than anyone. I should write a book about her.*

With Dillie, Lady, and Spazz lounging around me, I began to put my affairs in order. I started to write *Dillie the Deer: Love on Hooves*.

Christmas Eve 2012, my 52nd, was not magical. My radiation oncologist had planned my day. My procedure began in the CT machine. As I lay there with my arms up over my head, my eyes closed, I could feel my shoulders being held down against the table. I was inside the tube. How could the nurse be holding

down my shoulders? It was physically impossible for anyone to stand behind me. When the doctor was finished, the invisible hands released their grip.

I had been questioning my beliefs since my diagnosis. What happened on the scan table...was it a sign? Could my scientific mind be wrong? Was there a bridge under my feet even though I could not see, feel or measure it?

I’d always wondered why Mr. Glick brought Dillie to me instead of letting nature take its course. I asked him about it, and he had no explanation. What had been so special about the dying fawn that made him take extraordinary measures to save her? When I slipped the IV into her vein, I set off a chain reaction that affected the rest of my life.

Would it have mattered if Dillie had died on the farm? The universe would not have skipped a beat, but the Creator had other plans for this abandoned deer and for me. As I marveled at all that had come to me because of Dillie, I began to see that in saving her life and touching the lives of so many people, I had saved my own. It was a revelation that gave me the sense that my path was not yet at an end. I was no longer afraid to stare into the unknown. 🐾

Find out more about Dillie, including how to order the book, at dilliedeer.com. For more photos, visit guideposts.org/dillie.

Creature Comforts

THIS STUBBORN PNEUMONIA. I'd been laid up in my apartment for several days already, and instead of getting better, I was getting sicker. I do have allergies and asthma, but I couldn't remember ever feeling this bad. I was so weak, I could barely get out of bed, let alone take care of my pet guinea pig, Snickers. Not that he needed much maintenance, as I'd told the allergists who'd urged me to get rid of him, but right now I didn't even have the strength to clean his cage. All I wanted to do was sleep. My eyes shut slowly.

"SQUEAK!" Snickers shrieked at the top of his lungs. You'd never think this adorable little creature could make such an ear-splitting sound.

"Please be quiet, Snickers," I groaned. "I need to rest."
"SQUEAK!"

I tried to ignore him, but every time I closed my eyes, he started up again, like an alarm clock that wouldn't stop ringing.

"SQUEAK!"

"All right!" I exclaimed, mustering every last bit of energy to pull myself from under the covers. "I'll clean your cage. Is that what's bothering you?" Snickers just stared at me. At least he'd stopped shrieking.

But I couldn't clean it. Now that I was on my feet, I knew something was really wrong. I needed to go to the ER...right away. I called the pet sitter, threw some things into an overnight bag and took a taxi to the hospital.

The ER staff was shocked that I had made it there alone. It turned out I'd contracted sepsis in addition to the pneumonia. I was only hours away from going into septic shock. If it weren't for Snickers, I could have died.

It's a good thing I never listened to the doctors who told me to get rid of Snickers because of my asthma and allergies. Some guardian angels sound their trumpets. Mine sounded the alarm with a shriek I couldn't ignore. I made sure to give him lots of cuddles when I got home.

—Amy Benton, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

second chances for seniors

“A world where no old dog dies alone and afraid”—
how the folks at the Grey Muzzle Organization are
making their inspiring vision a reality

By **Alina Larson**, Contributing Editor

The majority of people adopting dogs at shelters are drawn to young pups that probably have many years ahead of them. But there’s a whole other set of companions in need that are often overlooked: senior dogs.

The Grey Muzzle Organization is working hard to clear up the misconceptions about adopting an older dog. Over the past decade, executive director Lisa Lunghofer and her colleagues at Grey Muzzle have provided more than \$1 million in grants to programs that help at-risk senior dogs. Here, she shares why she’s dedicated to the cause—and what she really wants you to know about saving an older dog’s life.

How did you get involved with Grey Muzzle?

Grey Muzzle was founded in 2008. It was a grassroots organization and, until two years ago, all volunteers. We experienced so much growth that I started as part-time executive director in 2015. We still rely heavily on volunteers, and our eight volunteer board members play a large role.

Is your background in animal rescue?

Actually, it’s in research and evaluation of programs aimed at helping children and families, but I did grant writing and other work for animal organizations too.

You must be a dog lover....

I’ve always loved animals. I became

a dog lover through my husband. He had a six-month-old Labrador puppy when we met. Now we have three dogs: Lab mixes Hercules and Paterno, who are both 15, and Cameron, a hound mix, who will be eight.

What is Grey Muzzle’s mission?

Our focus is improving the lives of senior dogs by helping animal welfare organizations throughout the country. In 2017 we awarded \$300,000 in grants to 50 animal welfare organizations in 25 states, one of which was Lab Rescue of the L.R.C.P. in Annandale, Virginia. Recently, I visited 12-year-old Dixie [pictured at right], a black Lab whose

Lisa Lunghofer of Grey Muzzle has Dixie’s back.



owner passed away. Lab Rescue placed her with a foster family that will love and care for her as she's awaiting her forever home. She's just one example of the older dogs we're trying to help.

How do you get funding?

Funding comes from donations—some from corporations, but mostly from individuals. The amount we give in grants is proportionate to the amount we raise. We have various campaigns throughout the year. Often we'll get donations from people who want to honor a deceased pet. We recently promoted a campaign called Summer Smile, which raised money for dental care for senior dogs. Dental care is a real challenge for animal welfare organizations because it's so costly. Our supporters got to upload pictures of their senior dogs as part of Summer Smile; we'll be choosing our favorites to include in our annual calendar.

What other programs do you support?

Hospice care for senior dogs. Seniors for Seniors—adoption programs that place senior dogs with senior people. Some programs are intensive in terms of ongoing support and home check-ins, which help ensure that both the dog and the owner are comfortable with the situation; others are simpler. We also give grants for medical care and physical therapy. Many senior dogs come in needing blood work, and providing a blood panel is important in



helping a dog get adopted. Families committing to caring for these dogs will know the animals are healthy or what issues they'll have to face. We supply orthopedic beds to old dogs in shelters and fund programs that deliver free dog food to low-income pet owners.

How about raising awareness?

In addition to grants, we focus on providing resources to the general public on the care of older dogs. We raise awareness of best practices for animal welfare agencies. And we're trying to get information back from our grantees to find out what's working and where they have challenges. We want to be the go-to for best practices of what is sustainable and help build our grantees' capacity so their senior dog programs continue long after our grant funding ends.

Why do senior dogs end up in shelters?

Older dogs end up in shelters for different reasons. Some are the same as with younger dogs: The family moves, allergies develop or life circumstances change. Some dogs

Elizabeth Hess (left) is Dixie's foster mom.

have medical issues that their owners can't address. Sometimes the owner passes away, like Dixie's.

What are the misconceptions about caring for senior dogs?

People are concerned they won't have much time together. They're afraid of facing loss or don't want to take on medical expenses. But what people don't realize is, it depends on the dog. You could get a six-month-old puppy and a week later it has medical issues. Age is not a disease. Some senior dogs don't require more than the regular yearly checkup; others have more issues. At just seven years old a dog is considered a senior, when that really isn't old at all, especially for small dogs. As with people, dogs are individuals, so with respect to health and age, we can't make blanket statements.

Some people hear "senior dog" and think old, sick, on its last legs, and that's really not true. Plenty of these animals are joyful, rambunctious, eager to hike or go to the dog park. We hope people will be open-minded when they plan to adopt, realize that age is just a number and think about what dog qualities might be a good fit for their home.

What are the advantages of having a senior dog?

The dog's temperament and preferences are clear. With a puppy, you don't know how the personality will

evolve. With an older dog, you can get a pretty good picture. That gives people information about how the dog fits them and their lifestyle. We did a survey of our grantees last winter and discovered that adopters feel really good about giving back by adopting a senior dog who might have ended up homeless through no fault of its own.

How tough is the competition for your grants?

We put out a call for grant proposals in February and invite shelters and rescues to apply. In 2017 we got 220 applications and funded 50, so it's quite competitive. We're the only organization in the country providing grants specifically to support programs that help at-risk senior dogs, although we're seeing a growing number of rescues focused specifically on senior dogs.

What are your hopes for Grey Muzzle's future?

I hope we can continue to increase the number of grants we provide and keep raising awareness of why adopting senior dogs is a great thing. And I hope we can grow our resources via our website, webinars, and adopters and shelters that want to help more senior dogs. We do a lot of outreach, but there's a lot more to be done. 🐾

For more information on Grey Muzzle's efforts or how to apply for a grant, visit greymuzzle.org.



A Ferret Named Polo

Who would have thought he'd be an answer to prayer?

By April J. Miller, Newnan, Georgia

It was all going to be so perfect. For as long as I could remember, my father had talked about moving to Montana—Big Sky Country. We'd taken many a hike amid sun-washed stretches of green grass on our visits there. It was a long way from our home in Georgia, but Dad dreamed of buying a farm in Montana and getting into the burgeoning business of raising ferrets to sell as pets. "Everyone has them out there, April," Dad told me. "They're small and skinny with big raccoon eyes—really frisky and playful. We'll get a place with plenty of room for them to run around." No, it wasn't your standard white-picket-fence-and-a-dog American dream, but it didn't matter. I'd always loved animals, and this sounded like it would be a real hoot.

Dad quit his job and went to Montana to look for a farm. I gave him his first ferret, which he named Jake. "The little guy's a handful," Dad reported on the phone. "He won't let me get into my slippers. This morning we had a tug-of-war for 10 minutes." I laughed, wishing I were already there with him. I gave notice at the executive recruitment firm where I worked, looking forward to trading cubicles and reports for wide-open spaces and frolicking ferrets. Mom

and I planned to sell our home and join Dad as soon as he found a place.

But within weeks Dad started suffering severe pain in his hips. He went to a doctor and was diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer. Mom and I rushed to Montana to be with him. Three months later he was dead.

THE NEW LIFE we'd prepared for was over before it had even started. Jake was given away, and Mom and I returned to Georgia. I couldn't understand why God would choose to take my father right when he was about to live his longtime dream.

Life held no magic after Dad was gone. It was much too painful to talk about, even to God. Mom and I would eat dinner in silence, with no plans for selling our house and running a farm to discuss, no excited phone calls from Dad. Sometimes I would stop by the pet store and watch the ferrets scurry around their pens, imagining my dad wrangling over his slippers with Jake. I could see the bemused smile on Dad's face, hear him telling "the little guy" to let go and felt the bitter pain of what might have been.

When I went to church, I missed God's presence too. For the first time in my life I didn't feel that he was with me.

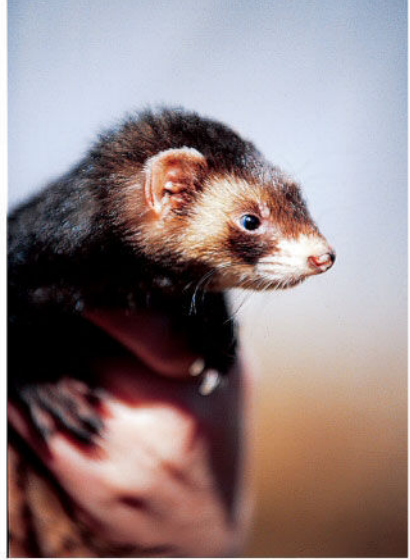
The irrepressible Polo strikes a pose.

I couldn't go back to my normal routine as if everything were okay. Longing to hold onto some of the thrill of anticipation I'd gotten every time I'd thought of life on a Montana farm, I looked for a job related to animals. A position opened up at a petting zoo, and I grabbed the opportunity. At last I'd get the chance to be outside with animals every day, the way I would have been on the farm with Dad.

The petting zoo had every kind of animal, from llamas to deer to foxes. But of course, I was drawn to the ferrets. There were two of them, and their antics made them popular with the kids who visited. Still, even though I loved the ferrets, the little creatures were a constant reminder of what I'd lost.

SOON A THIRD FERRET ARRIVED. He was sable-colored and particularly small, and his name was Polo. Each time I tried to introduce Polo to the two resident ferrets, they all started fighting. "I guess we'll have to find a special place just for you," I said to Polo as I peered into his deep black eyes. "Don't worry, little guy, I'm going to take very good care of you."

I put Polo in a separate pen. He was sickly, so I had to take special care to feed him right, and I spent lots of one-on-one time playing with him to keep him from getting too lonely. I felt at ease with Polo, despite his characteristic ferret hyper behav-



ior. Taking care of him became my reason for getting up in the morning. One afternoon the zoo director told me she thought two ferrets were enough. "Could you find a home for Polo?" she asked. Could I!

That evening I brought Polo home and introduced him to Mom. She reluctantly agreed to let Polo join our household—if he stayed in my room.

My bedroom became the ferret's romping ground. He never sat still. He'd chase me around, then hide behind a piece of furniture before jumping out at me. When I finally collapsed on my bed exhausted, he'd curl up under my chin and nap with me. One morning I awoke to find him chewing on my slippers. "If only Dad could see you," I said to him, recalling my father talking about the ferret I'd given him. Again the keen pain of loss struck me. I picked up Polo. Stroking his soft fur, I felt a warmth and love that reminded me of Dad. I could almost imagine him reaching down to pet the little ferret too.

One day when I thought Polo was asleep, I opened my bedroom door. Before I knew it, a fur ball whizzed by my legs into the hallway. "Mom, look

out!” I called. “Polo’s on the loose.” But he was chasing Mom around the living room. I started chasing Polo, and the three of us ran around the room, Mom shrieking, Polo chucking, and me laughing until we all fell on the couch.

Then Polo hunched his back, leaped into the air and scampered away. Mom giggled. “Guess he’s made himself at home,” she said.

MOM GAVE POLO FREE RUN of the house after that. He developed a taste for caramel corn, and many evenings he entertained us with spontaneous games of tag and aerial acrobatics, which we nicknamed the “weasel war dance.” I felt alert again, tuned in—waiting to see what Polo would do next.

After dinner one evening, Mom and I sat watching Polo dash around the house, scattering papers and knocking over knickknacks. “I don’t think your father had any idea what he was getting himself into,” she said with a quiet chuckle. I laughed too. I could picture Dad methodically putting things in Polo’s wake back in place over and over.

I came home one evening to find Polo retching. Soon after, he started losing weight and got too sick even to nibble on caramel corn. I could feel every rib in his tiny body when I held him. I took him to the vet for tests. Later that day the vet called back and told me Polo had a tumor. It could be removed, but the operation would cost more than I could possibly pay.

“I can’t afford it. I’m sorry. I guess you’ll have to put him to sleep,” I said, unable to hold back my tears until I hung up.

I didn’t go to say good-bye to Polo because I couldn’t bear the thought of losing him. Instead, I went into my room, where I threw myself onto the bed.

When Mom came home and I told her the news, we hugged each other for a long time. It almost felt as if I was losing Dad all over again.

I finally managed to get to sleep and was still in bed the next day when the phone rang. It was the vet. “Good afternoon, Miss Miller,” he said. “Polo made it through the surgery with flying colors.”

“What?” I said. “But I thought he was gone.”

“One of my technicians fell in love with Polo and wanted to keep him, so she covered the cost of the operation. She says you can visit him anytime.”

“Polo’s alive,” I said quietly. But he was no longer mine. “Thank you, doctor, and thank your technician.”

I knew I couldn’t visit Polo, only to have to go through the heartbreak of leaving him behind. Whether dead or alive, he was still lost to me.

For days I ate little, slept a lot and didn’t answer phone calls. One night while lying awake, I could take no more. *God, I miss my father, I prayed. I miss Polo. And I miss you.*

I went to church more, desperately seeking comfort. I started, little by little, to talk to others about my father and Polo, to let them pray for me.

And I found myself mentioning Dad more in conversations with Mom.

One morning I decided to tidy up the post-Polo household. Everywhere there were reminders of the lively little creature—ferret fur all over the sofa cushions, caramel corn stuck in the carpet and his favorite hiding places.

Other memories came back, like Dad saying, “We’ll need a big place where they have plenty of room to run around—just us, the ferrets, and the big Montana sky.” I could still see the way his eyes lit up when he talked about it. It wasn’t so much the idea as it was his enthusiasm for it that made it special. That, and how much I loved him.

All at once I was overwhelmed with gratefulness to God, not only for the love he had put in my heart for my father but also for Polo, who had given me hope that there could be joy in life even after the worst thing in the world had happened.

That afternoon I got a phone call. It was the vet’s technician who had stepped in to save Polo’s life. “I’ve gotten a couple of other ferrets now, so if you’d like, you can have Polo,” she said. “He’s in great shape.”

I was on my way to her house in a heartbeat. I picked up Polo and brought him back home. “Now you be careful,” I said. “I just cleaned this place up.”

With that, Polo scampered across the floor, launched into his weasel war dance and headed for the caramel corn. 🐾

ferret facts

- The word *ferret* comes from the Latin word *furittus*, meaning “little thief.” Any ferret owner whose keys have suddenly gone missing knows how apt that description is.
- Ferrets have been domesticated for thousands of years. The slinky creatures were used in ancient Egypt, medieval Europe and colonial America to control rodent populations. Hunters used them to flush rabbits and other small game from their burrows, hence the term *to ferret out*, meaning “to search out, discover or bring to light.”
- It is now illegal to use ferrets for hunting in North America. But thanks to the animals’ ability to fit into seemingly impossible spaces, people have found new work for them. One ferret helped run wires through a 40-foot-long conduit at the U.S. Space Command’s missile-warning center in Colorado.
- Though ferrets are now common household pets, they are illegal in California, Hawaii, New York City and Washington, D.C. To find out if they’re legal to own where you live, contact your local Wildlife or Fish and Game Department or the Humane Society.
- Ferrets can be playful companions, but these animals are not for everyone. They need a special diet, expensive medical care and constant attention when outside their cages. For more, go to ferret.org.

Their Mysterious Ways

I MOVED 800 MILES AWAY from my family to start my first job after college. I loved my work. But coming home to the emptiness of the apartment I'd rented—that was no fun!

Early one morning I was awakened by what could only be the meowing of a cat, and it was close by. I got up to investigate. In the kitchen, I found the back door open—I was certain I'd locked it the night before—and, to my amazement, there was a tattered green-eyed tiger cat striding imperiously around the room. I quickly searched my apartment. Nothing was missing; nothing had been tampered with. Reassured but puzzled, I knelt to pet the cat. She nuzzled against me, purring contentedly.

A few days passed and no one in the neighborhood claimed her or advertised for a lost cat. By that time it would have been hard to give her up—we clearly enjoyed each other's company.

"I guess it's safe to name you, my friend," I told her. "I'm going to call you Theodora."

That night, during my weekly phone call home, I told my mother about my new four-footed roommate.

"I'm glad you have a pet, JoLynne!" she said. "I've been worried about you being lonely. In fact, I've been praying about it every day." And then she chuckled. "Wherever did you get that name—Theodora?"

"I don't know, Mom. It just came to me out of nowhere—the way she did."

What neither of us knew then—but what I learned later—was the derivation of the name. It's from the Greek: *theos*, for "God," and *doron*, for "gift." Theodora the cat—like her name, God's gift!

—JoLynne Walz
Atlanta, Georgia

Encounter in Bethlehem

A couple, a veteran and a dog come together at Christmastime

By **Stephanie and Marty Phelan**, East Norriton, Pennsylvania,
and **Harold Siegfried**, Allentown, Pennsylvania

STEPHANIE: Christmas City Village! I'd been dreaming of coming to this fabulous arts and crafts festival in downtown Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for years. But December was always busy, and Bethlehem is a 90-minute drive from where we live. Marty and I had been particularly busy in 2016. Still, we planned a little getaway and finally made the trip.

MARTY: The SteelStacks building, once the heart of the Bethlehem Steel mill and now an arts center, was aglow with lights. The holiday spirit was all around. Yet Christmastime has been bittersweet ever since I lost my brother Mark in 2004. A lieutenant colonel in the Army, he'd been killed in Mosul, Iraq, a city he had taken pride in helping to rebuild. He was just 11 months older than me, and growing up, the two of us were as close as twins. Mark was a big guy with a goofy sense of humor and a heart of gold. As adults, we'd never had enough time together, especially after his Army career took him far from home. Twelve years after his death, I still missed him every single day. At the holidays it hurt all the more.

STEPHANIE: I think Marty needed this getaway as much as I did. He'd gone through a lot the last several years. We strolled hand in hand through the rows of vendors at Christmas City Village. Marty bought me a gorgeous snowflake brooch. So romantic!

MARTY: After an hour or so we went to use the restrooms at the visitor center in the SteelStacks building. Just inside the center's door sat two volunteers, a woman and a man, checking hand stamps to make sure people had paid admission. My eyes went to the big black dog lying at the man's feet.

STEPHANIE: Marty and I love dogs. "What kind of dog is that?" I asked. "Is it okay if we pet him?" The dog was wearing a red service vest, so I knew to ask first.

HAROLD: "He's a mix," I said. "Black Lab, Great Dane and bull mastiff." People were always asking me about my dog. I'd had him for six months, and I couldn't stop talking about him. "Go ahead, he loves to be petted."

Harold and his loyal companion, Phelan



Harold (left), Phelan, Marty and Stephanie, reunited again at a fund-raiser for Tails of Valor in September 2017

MARTY: I bent down, stroking his fur. Funny, Mark had owned the same three breeds of dogs when he'd died. That was one of his passions, taking in rescue dogs. He was always trying to make the world a better place.

HAROLD: "This dog saved my life," I said. Somehow I felt as if I needed to tell this couple my story. "I joined the military out of high school. Never saw action, but those eight years were the best of my life. When I got out, I bought a truck and became a long-haul driver. I did well for myself. Then nine years ago I was driving through Ohio when I got a call. My dad had been in a motorcycle accident back in Pennsylvania. It didn't look like he was going to make it."

STEPHANIE: Our hearts really went out to him. I nodded, encouraging him to go on.

HAROLD: I told them more. "Dad lingered in the hospital for a year in a coma. Finally I made the decision to take him off life support. His wife fought me, said I'd killed him. The guilt ate at me. Then my truck died. I'd exhausted my savings on Dad's medical bills and couldn't fix it. I lost my job, my house. I tried to kill myself. I mean, what did I have to live for anymore? Two years ago, I moved back to Allentown. I was angry at God, angry at everyone.



A doctor diagnosed me with bipolar disorder and PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], and I went into therapy at the VA clinic. A homeless shelter took me in. They had a rule: You had to volunteer 10 hours a week. So I got involved with the arts center here. One day a woman came to give a talk. She was from Tails of Valor, an organization that places service dogs with vets struggling with PTSD."

MARTY: "That's how this guy came into my life," the man at the visitor center said. His dog lifted his head as if he knew we'd come to his part in the story.

HAROLD: I told the couple about the first night my dog came home with me. I was having a nightmare when I felt him snuggling close, hugging me, like he was putting himself between me and my demons. I opened my eyes and the guilt and sadness had lifted.

“Tails of Valor is an amazing program,” I said. “They name all their dogs after soldiers killed in action. Phelan means the world to me.”

STEPHANIE: “What?” I blurted. I was sure I’d misunderstood.

HAROLD: “Phelan. That’s my dog’s name,” I said. “The lieutenant colonel, the soldier he’s named after, was really something. A hero. He spearheaded the rebuilding of Mosul.”

MARTY: It was like I was dreaming. Phelan? Who names a dog Phelan? Then it hit me. He was talking about Mark! My brother! I stood, tears streaming down my cheeks. All of a sudden, Phelan leaped up too. Standing on his hind legs, he put his front paws around my neck and hugged me tight. I wrapped my arms around Phelan and hugged him back. In that moment, I felt so loved—it was as if my brother was there with me again.

STEPHANIE: “Mark Phelan?” I said. “That’s Marty’s brother. He was killed in Mosul, his convoy targeted, blown up just before he was to take on a new assignment in Baghdad. Wow! We had no idea he’d been honored like this.” I read the volunteer’s name tag. “I’m so glad we ran into you, Harold.”

HAROLD: You could have knocked me over with a feather. Off and on I’d thought about trying to connect with Lt. Col. Mark Phelan’s family, but I hadn’t known where to start. “The

thing is, I never work this location,” I said. “I’m only here to help a new volunteer. I wasn’t even supposed to be working tonight.”

MARTY: Our meeting was no coincidence. That much I’m sure of. Stephanie and I spent the next hour talking with Harold, and we’ve stayed in touch since. I don’t have a logical explanation for it, but every time we get together, Phelan rushes to greet me. Harold says he doesn’t do that with anyone else. There are lots of plaques, even some buildings, that memorialize Mark, but I have to say Phelan, and the connection we share, is the honor that means the most to me.

HAROLD: In the year since we met, Stephanie and Marty have joined me in supporting Tails of Valor, sharing their story at benefits and educational programs around the region. I sometimes think about how alone I felt those years after my dad died, how my life seemed to have no purpose. But God had a plan all along.

STEPHANIE: After Mark passed, we were given a dog tag engraved with his silhouette and a statement about the difference his life had made. We never knew quite what to do with it until that December evening in Bethlehem. Now Phelan wears the tag as he serves his mission to help Harold. Some things are just meant to be. 🐾

To learn more about Tails of Valor, go to tailsofvalor.org.



Is This for Real?

Check it out: We aren't the only creatures who love touch screen technology

By **Alina Larson**, Contributing Editor

If you think getting a tech-savvy 12-year-old to tear his eyes away from an iPad is tough, imagine taking one from a wolf, a gorilla or a black bear. There's actually a wide range of creatures—big and small, domestic and wild, furry and fowl—that are enthusiastic gamers. While sometimes done for fun, introducing animals to tablets benefits them in different ways and allows people to learn from—and better care for—the animal world.

Scientists have used touch screens with animals for a number of years. Jennifer Vonk, a psychology professor at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, has used this technology in zoos and loves its convenience. Stimuli presented on a touch screen can be

easily altered to fit a study's needs, and the system stores all the collected data. On top of that, "the animals I've tested seem to enjoy it," Vonk says. "And it's relatively easy to get them to understand it."

Vonk, whose focus is comparative cognition, has conducted studies using touch screens with bears, great apes (orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas) and ring-tailed lemurs. "Bears were the fastest to learn the association between their responses and rewards," she says, "probably because they're so motivated by food." In one study to determine if bears could distinguish between animals and nonanimals, the bears were shown pairs of pictures, with one picture representing the animal



From left: Newsom the penguin gets a game break; a wolf chooses a symbol with a nose tap.

category and the other representing nonanimal objects, and the bears were quite accurate. Even though they like their earned treats, Vonk thinks that the intellectual stimulation itself is attractive to the bears—they would run indoors from their preferred outdoor habitat when they saw her with the tablet.

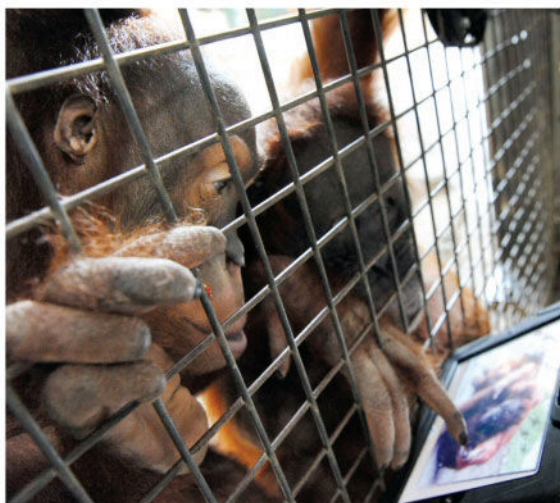
Vonk now works with the Detroit Zoo, using touch screens to gather data on gorillas' emotional states. Her goal is to understand how they feel about their indoor and outdoor zoo environments, as well as the crowds. Like the bears, the gorillas are trained through rewards to understand what's being asked. "It's a lot of trial and error to see what they pay attention to," says Vonk, who admits that within a single species there is a wide variety of response. "You really see how individual they are, just like us."

CAN'T PICTURE a bear swiping a screen with one of its massive paws? How about

a wolf using its nose? That's what Lina Oberliessen, a Ph.D. student at the Wolf Science Center in Austria, is used to seeing. Since January 2017, Oberliessen has used a tablet to study wolves' fairness preferences by observing how they choose to distribute food rewards among themselves and their peers. With different symbols representing the amounts of treats dispensed, the wolves decide who gets how much by tapping the screen.

Oberliessen realized that for some wolves, just touching the screen is a reward in itself. "I had one wolf, Shima, who often chose the wrong symbol, where no food reward was given, but she just continued working," she says. Another wolf, Tala, "used her paws when she realized that her nose touch wasn't strong enough to activate the screen. She was really motivated to get the right results."

The wrong choice—instances when the wolves tapped the empty side of the screen instead of a symbol—also elicited



An orangutan looks at images of other apes; animals may select meals on-screen in the future.

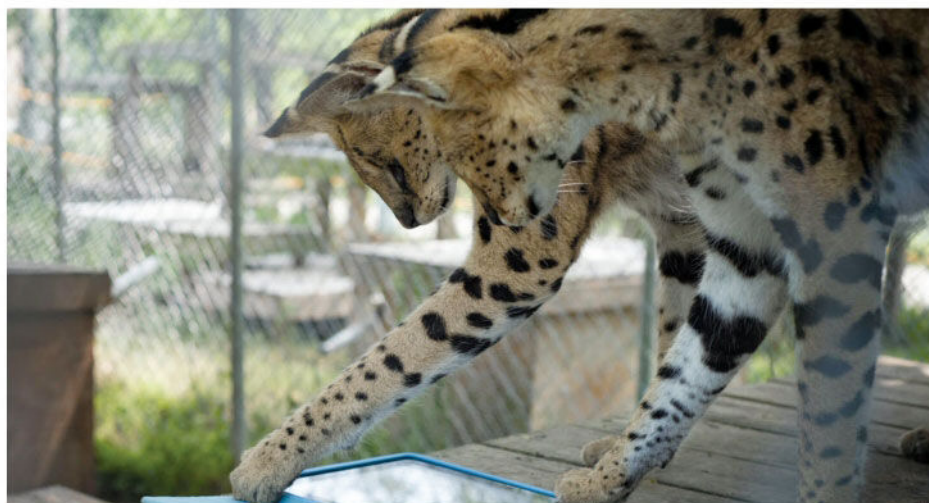
strong reactions. “They try to quickly tap the correct answer to compensate for their error,” Oberliessen says. “Some of them keep touching it again and again, so it seems to be quite important for them to be successful.”

MAMMALS AREN'T the only animals that have been trained with touch screens. Red-footed tortoises have gotten into the game too, transferring what they learn on-screen to real-life situations, according to Anna Wilkinson, an animal cognition specialist at the University of Lincoln in England. After being asked to consistently peck a blue circle on a particular side of the screen to receive a strawberry, the tortoises also chose a blue bowl placed on the same side of a room as the on-screen circles. They like using the tablet so much they're literally willing to stick their necks out so that they can touch it, an indication that they feel excited and comfortable. Wilkinson also discovered that the tortoises remembered what they had learned on the tablet for as long as three

months, a surprising outcome considering they lack a hippocampus, the part of the brain associated with memory and spatial awareness.

Music was the focus of Sarah Ritvo's study. Using touch screens, the doctoral candidate in comparative cognition at York University in Canada found that orangutans preferred silence to songs. The great apes displayed antagonistic behavior—blowing raspberries, scratching their torsos—when they listened to music samples played on the tablet, and they exhibited calm behavior when the tunes were paused.

One of Ritvo's colleagues unexpectedly learned that orangutans have a follow-the-leader streak. When testing whether they prefer images of their own species or other apes, the dominant male used a stick to tap the screen to avoid touching a photo of another male. After that, the other orangutans all insisted on using a stick too. Regardless of their tools, they're happy to have a challenge, and the cognitive stimulation helps them thrive in captivity.



Servals at the Conservators Center enjoy chasing the digital mouse in the game *Paint for Cats*.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT research, though. Kim Barker, a volunteer at the Conservators Center in Burlington, North Carolina, offered some mental stimulation to servals—African wildcats—with an iPad game called *Paint for Cats*, in which a mouse runs across the screen and splatters paint and squeaks when touched. “Servals want to catch things that move,” Barker says, “so they like seeing a digital mouse run and hearing it squeak. You can see it on their faces.”

Adina Olivares, a nurse in Manteca, California, who rescued a pigeon that had been attacked by a hawk, employed the tablet as a healing tool. Using an iPad game designed for cats, she got the pigeon—which was walking and eating erratically—to peck at the screen and walk around it to “catch” her prey. After a few months, her appetite and condition had vastly improved. “She’s still the messiest eater you’ve ever seen,” Olivares says. “But now she’s loving life.” The nurse emailed the game’s creator, TJ Fuller, to thank him.

Fuller, an animation and graphics

expert, didn’t own a cat but happened to see some YouTube videos of cats swatting at human iPad games. *Why not games for cats?* he thought. After beta testing at an animal shelter, he launched *Game for Cats*, featuring a laser dot, a mouse and a butterfly for a cat to chase on-screen. Since then, Fuller has received thank-you letters from all over, including one from Sara Mandel, an aviculturist at Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California.

Mandel’s cats loved *Game for Cats*, so she tried it with the aquarium’s penguins. “Penguins are very visual hunters and have amazing eyesight,” Mandel wrote. “It’s not that surprising they took to it so quickly, because our birds are so curious and love to explore different textures.” Screen time has a practical purpose for Mandel, too. While the birds are focused on the game, she’s able to examine their bodies to make sure they’re healthy and to slide a scale under them to take their weight. Granting screen time in order to get work done? Sounds like a familiar concept. 🐾

coping with your pet's diagnosis

How to navigate this
difficult time

By **Peggy Frezon**, Contributing Editor



One summer day my husband stroked our golden retriever Ernest's side, the same way we both had many times before. But this time he felt a bump, no bigger than a mosquito bite. Our vet's biopsy showed that it was a malignant mast cell tumor. Cancer. One moment we thought our eight-year-old dog was perfectly healthy; the next, we knew that he had a potentially fatal disease.

How did it happen? Could we have prevented it? Sometimes there's no explaining why a pet becomes ill. You may feel scared, distraught or confused. There is no wrong reaction. It's okay to cry—your pet is a beloved part of the family. Here are four steps you can take to cope with a difficult diagnosis and give your pet the best care possible.

1 Gather information.

To make sure we don't miss anything and that our questions and concerns about our dogs are addressed, my husband and I go to the vet's office together. Or you can bring along a friend or other family member. I always take notes. One friend records the conversation on her phone so she can go over the details later.

If you look up your pet's condition online, beware of inaccurate and conflicting information. Check that you're consulting a reliable

source (I like Petmd.com and Amva.org), then confirm the information with your vet.

2 Connect with other pet parents.

After the diagnosis, you may be bombarded with tests, medications and additional veterinary appointments. Overwhelming, right? That's why it helps to share the news with others who understand.

Seek out pet parents who have been in similar situations. A friend of a friend whose dog had mast cell tumors offered Ernest her dog's

Happy together: Peggy Frezon and golden retriever Ernest

leftover Chinese herbal medications (which our vet approved). When our spaniel Kelly had a spinal injury, someone advised us about a treatment that had helped her dog. Turned out, it helped Kelly too.

If you can't find a support group locally, look online. Kelly was diagnosed with dementia later in life, and we found it comforting to connect with others in a canine cognitive dysfunction group on Facebook.

2 Evaluate decisions.

Which treatments are best? Is surgery advisable? Are the benefits worth the risks? There are no right answers that fit every pet. Do your research, ask for advice and talk to your vet. But ultimately, you know your pet and your own situation best.

A useful tool is veterinarian Alice Villalobos's "Quality of Life Scale" on Pawspice.com, which helps you evaluate your pet using factors like level of pain, ability to take in nourishment, mobility and happiness.

Personal finances are another factor in determining a pet's treatments. A blood test can cost from \$30 to \$250. An ultrasound may cost upward of \$400. And surgery can run into the thousands of dollars. Discuss the options with your vet. In some cases, ours was able to suggest less expensive treatments. If you can't afford the surgery or lifesaving treatment, organizations like Diabetic Cats in Need or the Magic Bullet Fund may be able to help.

Find comfort.

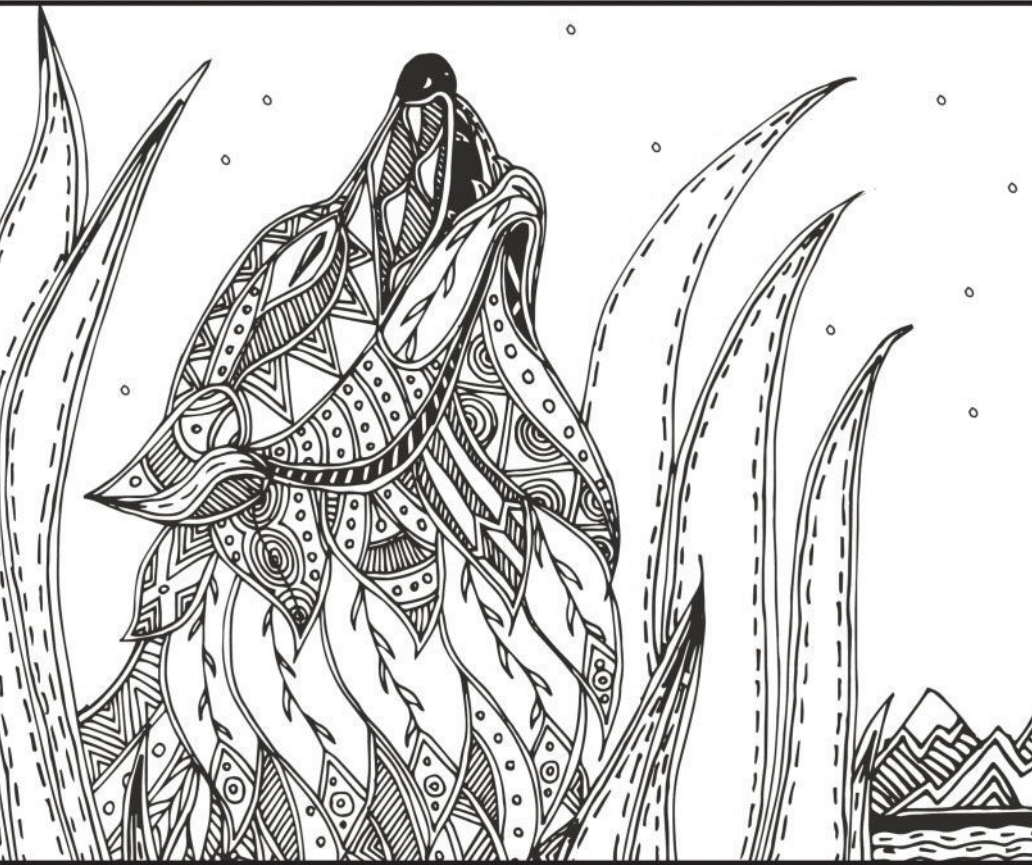
Most important, don't make every day about the illness. My husband and I love looking at photos of our pets when they were young and healthy. One friend notes positive moments in a journal and has found the good days outnumber the bad.

Do what makes your pet happy. Even after 16-year-old Kelly had become blind and deaf, we took her up to the mountains where she had played for many summers. Kelly couldn't see or hear, but she still enjoyed smelling ferns near the cabin and chipmunks along the trail.

Turn to your faith. My husband and I put our hands on the place where Ernest's tumor was removed and pray for the cancer to be gone. One friend rubbed healing oils on her dog, and another brought his cat to a Blessing of the Animals service. Not long after Ernest's diagnosis, our friend Lori slid a note that read "Ernest the dog" into a crack between stones of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a centuries-old Jewish custom to bring prayer requests before God. We were so touched—and strengthened—by her prayer. 🐾

PEGGY FREZON is the author of *Faithfully Yours: The Amazing Bond Between Us and the Animals We Love* and other books about pets. Connect with her on her blog, peggyfrezon.blogspot.com; on Twitter [@peggyfrezon](https://twitter.com/peggyfrezon); and at facebook.com/peggyfrezonbooks.

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FUN FACTS: A lone wolf howls to get its pack's attention, while communal howls may be sending territorial messages. If the tone of the howls is varied rapidly enough, two wolves can sound like a pack. In his memoirs, Ulysses S. Grant recounted hearing "the most unearthly howling of wolves" while traveling through Texas early in his military career. He thought there were about 20 of the animals, "enough of them to devour our party, horses and all, at a single meal." But when he reached the wolves, he saw there were "just two of them...[that] had made all the noise."

Send Us Your Wolf: Remove the back cover and mail your finished coloring to *All Creatures*, 110 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038.