

FRIENDS OF SITKA ANIMAL SHELTER



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HAPPY PAW-LIDAYS



from Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter



Dear Supporters of Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter,

Thank you for your incredible support, compassion, and generosity this year. After a very difficult 2024, this year brought a renewed sense of hope - hope that the Sitka Animal Shelter can once again serve as a safe, temporary home for the homeless pets in our community.






In February, FOSAS and the City of Sitka reached an agreement after five months of negotiations. The new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was unanimously approved by the Assembly and allowed volunteers to return to the shelter while establishing clear expectations for animal care moving forward.

That same month, the City hired a new Animal Control Officer, April Wheldon, after nearly six months without one. Since then, ACO Wheldon has made meaningful improvements at the shelter and ensured that animals receive high-quality, compassionate care during their stay.

In March, the City hosted a public meeting to gather community input on the future of the shelter and updates to Sitka General Code Title 8, "Animals." Building on that conversation, FOSAS conducted a community-wide survey to gather additional feedback on the future of the Sitka Animal Shelter and animal care and control services in Sitka.

While important conversations about the long-term future of the shelter are still ongoing, FOSAS is proud of where we are today. We are deeply grateful to the community members who continue to support our work, the volunteers who have stood by us through challenging times, and to ACO Wheldon for making the shelter a welcoming space for visitors, volunteers, and the animals in our care.

TOGETHER IN 2025, WE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH

-  **Rehomed 23 local pets**, connecting them with loving families and keeping them out of the shelter system.
-  Provided medical care and adoption services for **9 feral kittens** prior to the shelter's reopening in spring 2025.
-  Supported the Sitka Animal Shelter in adopting **60 animals (32 kittens, 22 adult cats, and 6 dogs)** from April through December 2025.
-  Offered financial assistance to **24 local families** through the **Compassionate Care Fund**, ensuring their pets received essential veterinary care and could remain healthy and at home.
-  Coordinated and sponsored shelter dog Freya's participation in the **Shelter Pet Obedience Training** program at the Seward Penitentiary, where she received daily one-on-one training to prepare her for adoption.

This progress is only possible because of you.



With deepest gratitude and warm wishes for the year ahead,

Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter Board of Directors
*Kristina Tirman, Rhea Ehresmann, Dusty Kidd, Susan Jones,
Claire Turner, Chris Kowalczewski, Courtney Lechrone*



WELCOME ACO APRIL WHELDON!

From Locked Doors to Open Arms

What a difference a year makes! This time last year there was no Animal Control Officer (ACO) in Sitka and volunteers were locked out of the animal shelter. Now we have an ACO who loves her job, does it well, and welcomes volunteers with open arms.



ACO April Wheldon is familiar to many Sitkans from her four years working as a veterinary technician at Pet's Choice Veterinary Hospital. Looking for a new challenge, she applied for the Animal Control Officer position and was hired in February 2025. From day one, April began making improvements at the shelter and everyone who walks through the doors agrees: it's never looked better.

April has utilized her knowledge of animals and animal care to ensure that all residents receive the best of care and are as happy and as healthy as they can be while at the shelter and before going into loving homes. It has not been just the environment for the animals that has improved. Volunteers - who continue to provide much of the daily care for the animals, including feeding, cleaning and socializing - are treated with respect and their contributions are genuinely valued.

There are improvements April would like to see at the shelter in the future. An outdoor run for the dogs and an inside play area are on the list. But her most immediate concerns are for an adequate budget for veterinary care and another staff member to share coverage of the shelter. Throughout the work day, April is often called out to deal with issues like loose dogs and feral cats, leaving no one at the shelter to help people coming by to adopt, or oversee the care of the resident animals. Until the extra staff position becomes a reality, April is happy to work with FOSAS on recruiting, training, and scheduling the volunteers who work three shifts a day, seven days a week.

April loves working with the public and is always ready to provide advice or other assistance to Sitka's pet owners. She is knowledgeable, generous, and is a great asset to our community of animal lovers. FOSAS and the volunteers deeply appreciate her and are excited to continue working alongside her for years to come!

ADOPTABLE PETS

Find Your New Best Friend Today!



Mark - 7 year old neutered male. Mark is very sweet, loving and playful! He gets along with other cats and is overall very easy going. He would make a great addition to any home!



Monica - 4 year old spayed female. Monica is a little bit shy but so sweet and very playful! She would do best as the only cat in her new home.



Bluey and Muffin - 1 year old spayed female Jersey Wooley bunnies. They are sweet, fun and used to being handled by both kids and adults.



Shadow and Millie - spayed females about 1 year old.

Shadow and Millie came to the shelter around the same time but were trapped on opposite sides of town. They were not used to humans when they first came in (especially Shadow) but have grown into loving, sweet, playful cats. They have become the best of friends and are often found cuddling together. Shadow and Millie would love to be adopted together, but could also go on their own to the right home.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The Heart of the Shelter Returns!

After almost a year away, the Sitka Animal Shelter is once again filled with the familiar calls of “Here kitty, kitty!” and “Good boy!”, the steady rhythm of teamwork from morning to noon to evening shifts, and the gentle care that our volunteers bring. This winter, we’re celebrating the 28 dedicated community members who have returned to lend their hands and hearts to the animals once more.

From morning kennel cleaning and dog walking to socializing shy cats and caring for new kittens, the Sitka Animal Shelter volunteers have reignited the spirit that makes our shelter thrive. Many of them have been part of the shelter family for years, and their return marks a renewed sense of community and compassion within our walls.

“I really enjoy volunteering because it keeps me healthy and helps support our wonderful community,” said volunteer Shaleena Bott. Maggie’s favorite moments are “When a once untouchable feral cat becomes touchable.” Our youngest volunteer, Murphie Haseltine, said that volunteering “is her favorite part of the week, because she loves animals more than anything!” Volunteer Grace Brooks said “I loved the first time Shadow Dancer wouldn’t let me stop petting her. She pulled my hand back for more and I used to be leery of her.” For Evan O’Brien, the highlight of his shelter experience is adopting his kitten, Merino, which never would have happened if he hadn’t started volunteering.



Once feral, Shadow now happily accepts belly rubs.



The past year reminded us just how vital our volunteers are to the wellbeing of Sitka’s most vulnerable pets. Their time, energy, and love create the safe and nurturing environment every animal deserves. As we move into 2026, we’re filled with gratitude for everyone who spoke out, showed up, rolled up their sleeves, and made the shelter shine again.

To every volunteer who returned, and to those who recently joined our team, thank you for helping us rebuild our community of compassion, one paw at a time.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT, CONT.

The People Behind the Paws



Thank you to our current volunteers!

Alicia and Murphie Haseltine - Alaina Becker - Bella and Sarah Eddy - Brad Russell - Chris Kowalczewski - Craig and Sheri Powers - Francisco Xavier Aldana - Evan O'Brien - Grace Brooks - Hannah Blanke - Jessica Wells - Juliette Langley - Kate, Isabel and Amara Johnson - Kristina Tirman - Margaret Woodlin - Rhea Ehresmann - Sam Edinberg - Sarah Tobey - Sandra and Gia Fontaine - Shaleena Bott - Tabitha Sutton - Traci Gale

In Loving Memory of Meichen Plumhoff

We would like to take a moment to honor and remember one of our most dedicated volunteers, Meichen Plumhoff. Meichen began volunteering at the Sitka Animal Shelter in October 2023 and quickly became an integral part of our team. She was an all-star volunteer – always willing to take on the toughest or messiest jobs without hesitation. Despite working multiple jobs, Meichen faithfully showed up for her shifts, ensuring the animals received the care and attention they deserved. She was a blessing to the shelter and to the Sitka community. Her bright smile, warm personality, and enthusiasm for life left a lasting impact on everyone who knew her. We miss her very much.



Recognizing Volunteer Extraordinaire Trish Durham

Celebrating 30 Years of Shelter Service!



In June 1997, a Coast Guard wife answered an ad in the Sitka Sentinel seeking volunteers to staff the newly-constructed animal shelter on Jarvis Street. The place was soon swarming with cats and dogs who needed forever homes.

They lucked out.

Trish Durham signed up, and for almost three decades the animals (and pet families) were treated to the grace and care of a volunteer who watched over sick animals, nursed kittens, walked dogs, cleaned kennels, washed dishes and laundry, and did a dozen other tasks that come with operating a shelter that is just that – a shelter for animals with no home and no family.

Thousands of animals benefited. So did the six Animal Control Officers working for the Sitka Police Department during her tenure. And not only animals at the shelter. Trish took in street cats and cared for them, too. When family matters called her permanently back to Florida this past summer, she brought her own 11 cats into the shelter for adoption. The current crop of FOSAS volunteers, working with ACO April Wheldon, got all of those animals adopted into forever homes, too.

“One of my favorite memories is when ACO Ken Buxton arranged (with the help of Harris Air) for the transportation of 14 dogs from Ketchikan,” Trish remembers. “Several of us volunteers showed up at the airport to transport them to the shelter. They received medical care from the veterinarian and tender loving care from Ken and the volunteers. And all found loving forever homes.”

It's hard to pick a favorite shelter animal from the many she cared for, but she supposes Jezebel is at the top of the list. “She was a feral cat who arrived at the shelter pregnant, and scared. Her kittens were all adopted, she was spayed and continued to live in the shelter for many years,” Trish recalls. “Even though she was spayed, she nursed many litters of orphaned kittens. She wasn't fond of humans but she took care of many kittens.” Jezebel passed away about 12 years ago.

Trish always had a strong dislike of euthanasia, and because cats often stayed at the shelter for long stretches, she adopted some, especially black cats who have trouble finding forever homes. “Thankfully, I had a big house and a very compassionate husband who felt the same way I did about animals,” she says, adding the mantra for FOSAS volunteers: “We regarded them as family”.



Some of the animals in Trish's care over the years.

THE PAW-SITIVE RECAP

Highlights From Our Latest FOSAS Gatherings

PAW-LIDAY PORTRAIT FUNDRAISER

This year's **Paw-liday Portrait Fundraiser** was a big success, thanks to our generous hosts at Harbor Mountain Brewing Co.! Moving the event indoors was a welcome change from November's rainy, windy weather and made for a cozy, festive atmosphere.

For a \$20 suggested donation, the talented Bobbi Jordan generously volunteered her time to capture holiday portraits. From playful pups and cuddly cats to Claire Turner's adorable ferret sporting a tiny green Santa hat, the room was full of happy chaos, laughter, and plenty of perfect photo moments.

The event raised both funds and awareness for Friends of the Sitka Animal Shelter. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Bobbi Jordan of BJordan Photography and to Zach and Emerald at Harbor Mountain Brewing Co. for their invaluable support. And a huge thank you to everyone who signed up and participated - we couldn't have done it without you!



GIMME SHELTER COMMUNITY EVENT



Gimme Shelter was a lively community event that celebrated the opportunity for Sitkans to share their input on the future of the Sitka Animal Shelter. Mean Queen generously treated attendees to pizza as a thank-you for the community's continued support.

The event took place in May and marked the launch of the Future of the Sitka Animal Shelter survey, giving community members a chance to share their ideas and priorities for animal care in Sitka moving forward. Guests enjoyed a raffle featuring more than 20 fantastic prizes donated by local businesses and supporters. With full bellies, great music from Pointy and the Birds and Maia Carter, and prizes being won throughout the afternoon, the event was both fun and memorable.

Be sure to check out the survey results on page 10!

Salt of the Earth

A Local Business with a Big Heart for Shelter Animals

“Everything.”

Separately, twenty minutes apart, that’s exactly how Jim and Darcy Michener each answered the same question, “what does support for the Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter mean to you?”

Though they were raised in very different surroundings – Darcy in rural Montana riding horses and tending to cows, chickens, cats and dogs, Jim in the suburbs of Seattle with only dogs – both were raised with the ethic that animals deserve care and love.



The owner-founders of Alaska Pure Sea Salt Company in Sitka have been constant supporters of FOSAS, especially by giving over prime real estate in their Lincoln Street store for a FOSAS kiosk selling bandanas, mugs and magnets. **“How we treat our animals is how we are as a society,”** Jim declares. “It says who we are.”

The idea to support FOSAS grew out of a fundraising conversation with FOSAS president Kristina Tirman, which morphed into “why don’t we sell some of your swag in our store?” In effect the arrangement is what they consider a “microloan,” a means of supplying financial aid that generates larger follow-on successes. Jim and Darcy buy the FOSAS premiums from suppliers and pay FOSAS directly for the retail costs of the goods.

“There is the altruistic side, and financial side,” he says. “We don’t have to do the complicated accounting. It’s clean and easy.” Customers often pay more than the value of the FOSAS purchases, as a donation, and that goes to the Friends, too.

Their love of animals is obvious in how they operate their business, and how they support their own pets. In each of the three retail spaces where they have operated, the leases were amended to allow dogs. Scarlett, the vivacious Golden Doodle of staffer Todd Ryan, is a constant fixture in the store. Another of their team, Madison, has rescue cats.

Salt of the Earth, Cont.

A Local Business with a Big Heart for Shelter Animals

In fact, when Jim and Darcy looked to adopt a rescue, after an initial attempt to get a lab/hound mix out of Indiana, they found one at a Texas shelter which was among a bunch of puppies brought up to Seattle. They flew down, claimed Hazel, and headed home with a malnourished “super mutt” (lab/hound plus elements of 13 other breeds) that had parasites and giardia. Hazel is a fine and healthy eight-month-old ball of energy now. Scarlett is teaching her the ropes at the store.

Bandanas are the biggest seller, and have Christmas themes, which Jim reckons will also sell during tourist season as stocking stuffers. Their hope is that support for FOSAS and the shelter will help translate into community and Assembly support for a permanent, funded and staffed shelter that provides a safe and caring place for animals to be housed until they can find forever homes.



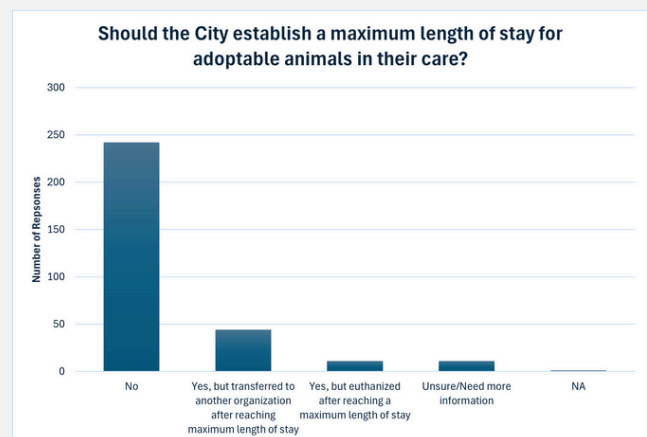
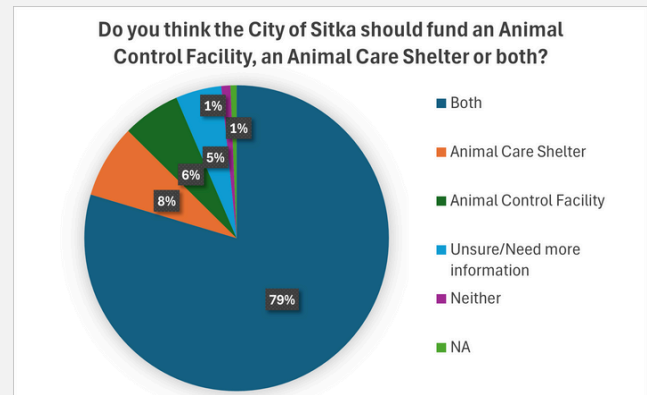
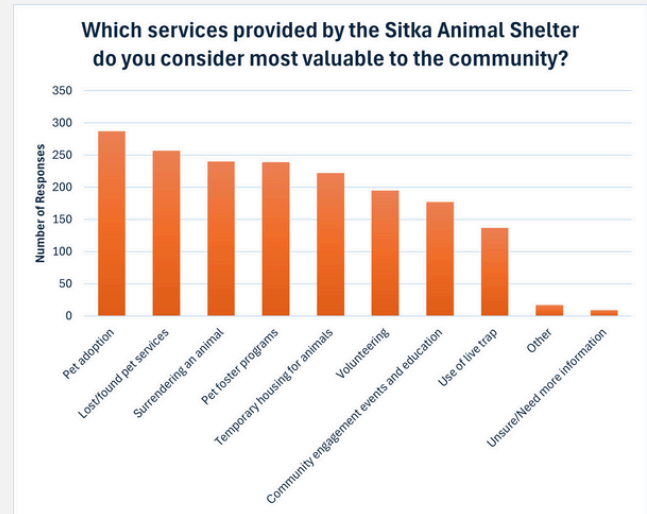
Community Survey Results

Community Voices Shaping the Future of Animal Care in Sitka

Thank you to the 309 Sitkans who participated in our recent community survey on the future of the Sitka Animal Shelter! Your feedback will help shape the future of animal care and control services in Sitka.

Here's what we learned:

- 84% of respondents are pet owners, averaging two pets per household, mostly dogs and cats.
- 30% of respondents adopted their pets from the Sitka Animal Shelter or FOSAS.
- 65% have used Sitka Animal Shelter services, most commonly for adoption, lost/found pets, and fostering.
- The community ranked pet adoption, lost/found pet services, surrendering an animal, and fostering programs as the most valuable.
- Nearly everyone rated both Animal Control and Animal Care services as "very important" to Sitka.
- 80% believe the City should fund both an Animal Control Facility and an Animal Care Shelter, ideally managed by a nonprofit like FOSAS or another department under the City of Sitka.
- 78% oppose time limits for animals in care, favoring decisions based on individual welfare.
- Most respondents voted for some combination of trained professionals who should determine if an animal at the shelter is suitable for adoption or a candidate for euthanasia.
- Adoption fee expectations generally ranged from \$50–\$150 for cats and \$100–\$200 for dogs.
- 72% of respondents support spay/neuter, vaccinations, parasite control, and veterinary health screening before adoption.



Key takeaway: Sitkans strongly support a humane, transparent, and community-driven shelter system, with FOSAS and volunteers playing a central role. Sitkans are also very pleased with the new ACO and the changes she's implemented this year.



Tribute Gifts

In memory of **Olivia the dog**, from
*Grace Brooks, Toby Campbell, and
Cindy Edwards*

In memory of **Maureen Fredrickson**,
from *Bill Peters*



Olivia

A donation in memory
or honor of a person or
pet is a wonderful way
to show you care while
making a difference in
the lives of Sitka's
animals.

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

Where would you like your donation to go? We have two separate funds you can choose from.

FOSAS General Animal Care Fund: Donations to the General Animal Care Fund cover a wide range of activities and services, all benefiting the lives of the animals at the shelter. Here are a few of the ways these funds are used:

- Covering the cost of medical care for shelter pets that goes above and beyond the basic vaccinations and spay/neuter covered by the City of Sitka. This includes diagnostic testing such as x-rays and blood tests, care and treatment for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, and surgeries.
- Renovating and improving shelter spaces to make them more enriching, vibrant and suitable for shelter animals while they await their forever home.
- Sponsoring travel for shelter dogs to attend the Shelter Pet Obedience Training Program in Seward, Alaska where they are matched with an inmate and rehabilitated until they are adoptable. These are dogs that would otherwise be euthanized due to behavioral problems.

Compassionate Care Fund, in honor of Burgess Bauder: The Compassionate Care Fund was created by two Sitkans, Tim and Julie Doggett, as a way to help low income families cover the cost of vet care. Funds approved for dispersal can cover everything from vaccinations and spays/neuters to euthanasia or helping offset the cost of emergency visits. The Fund was named in honor of Burgess Bauder, one of Sitka's local veterinarians who has provided low-cost services to families for many years. Pet owners can apply by emailing sitkaanimalfriends@gmail.com.

Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. All donations are tax-deductible and directly benefit the community of Sitka and the animals that reside at the shelter. To make a donation, visit our [website](#) or send a check to PO Box 972, Sitka, AK 99835.

You can also donate supplies by visiting our [Amazon Wishlist](#)!



THANK YOU!

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible individuals and organizations that made a significant impact on the Friends of Sitka Animal Shelter in 2025.

Tim and Julie Doggett for creating and donating to the Compassionate Care Fund, allowing low income families to have access to financial support for vet care.

The SPOT program for giving shelter dogs from Sitka (Freya in 2025) a second chance by accepting them into their training program and working with them until they are adoptable.

Sitka Food Co-op for selecting FOSAS as the recipient of the “round up at the register” program.

New Start Pets for donating food and supplies to the shelter and FOSAS.

Lisa Teas with Flying Ravens Art for donating a portion of profits made from holiday calendar sales to FOSAS.

The Cellar for donating funds raised from their Ladies Night to FOSAS.

Mean Queen for hosting the Gimme Shelter event and donating pizza and the space.

Maia Carter and Pointy and the Birds for playing music during the Gimme Shelter event.

Bobbi Jordan for donating her time and expertise as the photographer for the Paw-liday Portrait fundraiser.

Harbor Mountain Brewing Co. for hosting the Paw-liday Portrait fundraiser.

Alaska Pure Sea Salt Co. for allowing us to sell our merchandise and donating 100% of proceeds to FOSAS. Be sure to check it out!

Outer Coast students for spending time socializing the shelter cats on a weekly basis.

Sitka Public Library for hosting the Lend a Paw donation program in November and December.

The American Legion for hosting a smash burger fundraiser benefiting FOSAS.

Fortress of the Bear for selecting FOSAS as the beneficiary of their Community Bear Hug Program.

Sitka All-Terrain Riders for donating kitten food and supplies to the shelter.

Lisa Busch for leading our strategic planning session.

Jim and Laura Rogers for opening up their home to foster animals.

Pick.Click.Give. supporters for choosing to make a contribution to FOSAS!



THANK YOU!

The incredible local veterinary clinics who offer discounted services to shelter pets and generously provide expertise and input on shelter medicine - Dr. Nicole Caraway with Pet's Choice Veterinary Medicine and Dr. Toccoa Wolf with Sitka Animal Hospital.

All of the community members who participated in public meetings and who completed the Future of Sitka Animal Shelter survey to help shape animal care and control services in Sitka.

Each and every donor who has contributed to FOSAS. Every donation, big or small, makes a difference and helps us fulfill our mission of providing care to animals in need.

The wonderful group of 28 volunteers who provide quality care to the animals that reside at the shelter. Thank you SO much for your compassion, dedication, time, and patience.

ACO April Wheldon for making the shelter a welcoming and safe place for animals and volunteers.



Charlie - adopted!



Sigrid - adopted!



Dozer - adopted!



Vassy - adopted!



Dude and Diamond - adopted as the new clinic cats at Pet's Choice Veterinary Hospital!



Mango - adopted!



Merino - adopted!



Freya - sent to SPOT program and adopted after several weeks of 1-1 training.

