

A Foster Home For Every Pet



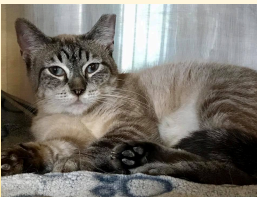
Innovative Foster Programs for Shelter Pets

Kristen Auerbach

Director – Pima Animal Care Center, Tucson, Arizona



Bitsy's Story



"She hadn't had much attention from people in her life, so she finds them a little scary... she's definitely getting to be more tolerant as she learns that people mean treats and softly spoken words, but she's still not all that into people.

She's looking for a home where she can sit in the window - or not. Bathe in sun puddles - or not. Look pretty on the couch - or not. A home where she can basically do whatever she likes - a home where she can be a cat.

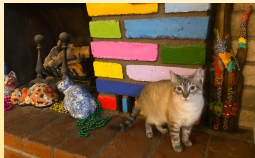
She may not ever become a lap cat, but we've been surprised before. Besides - who has time to sit around with a cat on their lap anyway?"

Bitsy at home



Questions emerge

- What if Bitsy had been fast-tracked to a foster home the day she arrived?
- How much money would we have saved if Bitsy had gone straight to a foster home instead of sitting in a small kennel for eight months?
- How many more pets could we have saved with that empty kennel?
- How much more humane could we have been to Bitsy?



Austin, Texas

From 15,000 deaths per year, to fewer than 500



Austin Animal Center 2016

- 96.4% raw save rate
- 17,000 animals taken in
- 8,000 adoptions
- 2,500 pets sent to foster homes
- 4,700 pets sent to rescue partners
- 3,500 lost pets sent home

Foster by the numbers at AAC

- 1,100 active foster families
- 3,000 pets go to foster each year
- More than 50% are adopted directly from foster
- 500 adult dogs go to foster each year
- AAC has one, full-time foster coordinator
- Foster provide their own food and supplies
- Capacity doubled through foster



Part 1.

The Behavioral Foster Study, 2013 to 2015

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/innovative-fostering-saving-more-dogs-with-behavioral-challenges.htm>

A screenshot of a webpage from Maddie's Fund. The page title is "Innovative Fostering: Saving More Dogs with Behavioral Challenges" by Kristen Auerbach. The content discusses a behavioral foster study in Fairfax County, Virginia, where 52 medium and large dogs at risk of euthanasia were placed in foster homes. The text highlights that researchers followed up with these dogs' adopters six to eight months after adoption, and the study results will change how behavioral assessments are done to save more lives. A "REGISTER FOR THE FREE WEBCAST HERE" button is visible. On the right, there is a "Suggested Links" sidebar with items like "Aurora Animal Center", "Fostering Handbook", "2015 AAHA Article - Foster Study", "Animal Shelter Foster and Volunteer Feedback Group", "Dog Foster Profile", "Fostering Dogs: Guidelines", "Foster Agreement", "Foster Program Manual", "Marketing Dogs from Foster Care", "Medium and Large Adult Dog Foster Manual", and "Short-Term Dog Foster Manual".

Fairfax County, Virginia 2012

- Killing for space and time limits for adoption
- 'Pit bull' adoption restrictions with 80% of 'pit bull' dogs killed
- Killing dogs for common behavioral challenges
- Dogs killed for 'failing' SAFER evaluation
- 25% overall death rate for dogs

Reason	Imposed Date	Leave Date	Status	Justification	
ACIMP-2015-03432	Stray - Other	07/16/2015	06/05/2015	Euthanized	Aggressive to humans or other animals
ACIMP-2015-03482	Stray - Other	07/18/2015	07/29/2015	Euthanized	Aggressive to humans or other animals
ACIMP-2015-03025	Owner/Given Up - Other	07/27/2015	06/05/2015	Adopted	
ACIMP-2015-03721	Stray - Other	07/31/2015	06/05/2015	Euthanized	Overall poor health, several existing conditions
ACIMP-2015-03732	Owner/Given Up - Abandoned	07/31/2015	06/05/2015	Euthanized	Feral/undersocialized/fearful
ACIMP-2015-03748	Stray - Other	08/01/2015	08/19/2015	Euthanized	Feral/undersocialized/fearful
ACIMP-2015-03846	Stray - Other	08/05/2015	08/10/2015	Euthanized	Feral/undersocialized/fearful
ACIMP-2015-03885	Owner/Given Up - Other	08/08/2015	06/08/2015	Euthanized	Aggressive to humans or other animals
ACIMP-2015-03888	Stray - Other	08/08/2015	08/19/2015	Euthanized	Feral/undersocialized/fearful
ACIMP-2015-03997	Stray - Other	08/12/2015	08/22/2015	Adopted	

How it all started

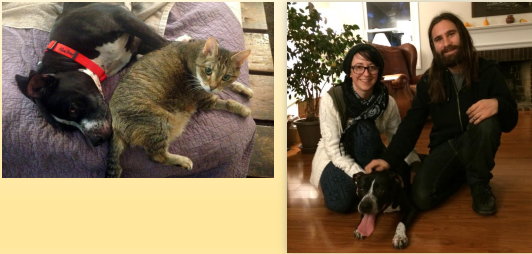


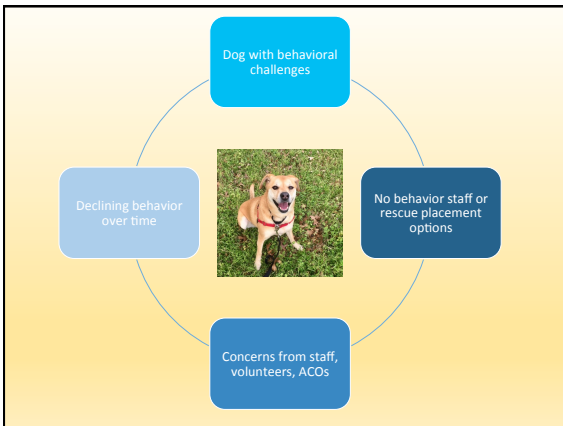
Patty's story

1. Biting feet
2. Jumping on people and clinging to them
3. Barrier reactive
4. Barked at everything
5. Scary to walk



Patty at home

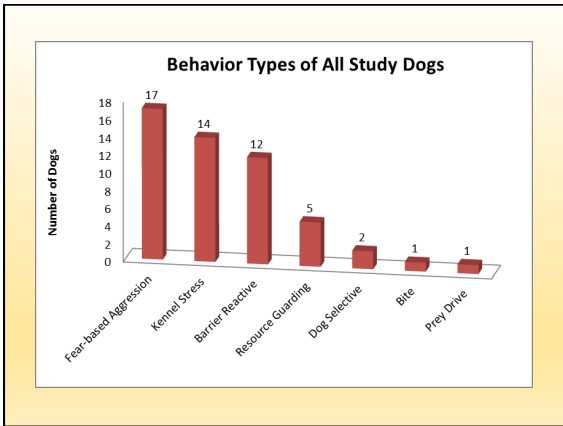


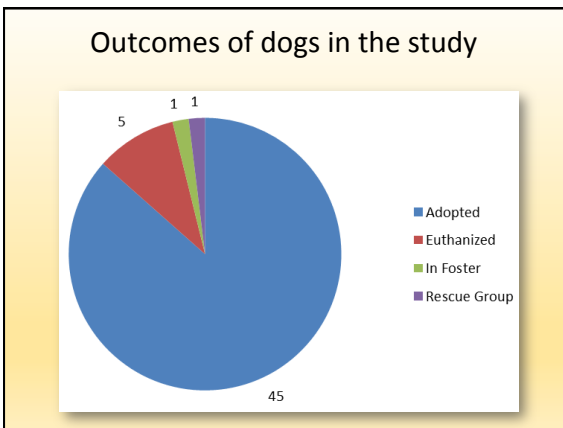


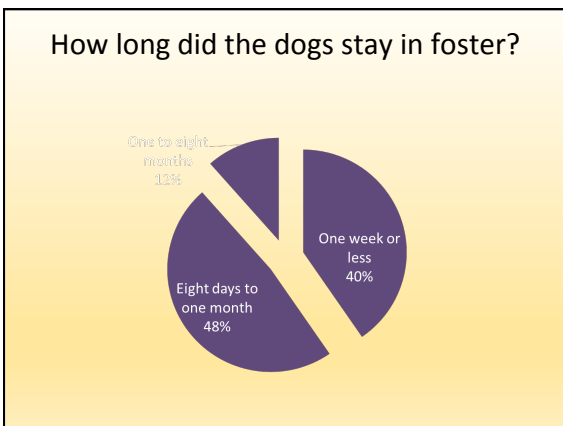
The behavioral foster study

- 52 dogs with behavioral challenges
- 16 'regular' foster families
- Dogs in foster one week to one month
- Three questions:
 - Would foster improve their behavior?
 - Could they eventually be adopted?
 - Could we do it safely?









Hank's Story



"Hank is a once-in-a-lifetime dog. We have such a connection. He's the best thing that's happened to me in the last 20 years. And he's so smart! When I tell him we're going on a walk, he goes and gets his leash. He's not like a dog; he's like a human. I don't know what I'd do without this dog. He sleeps with his arms around me. And he snores so loudly!"



What word did foster caregivers use more than any other to describe their dogs?



The Maddie's Fund Adult Dog Foster Study

Over a one-year period, animal shelters place 30 medium and large, adult dogs in foster homes, measuring behavior, length-of-stay and outcomes versus a control group of 30 dogs who stay in shelter.

- Louisville
- Austin
- New York City
- Los Angeles
- Tucson
- Kansas City
- Ventura County



Preliminary results of study:



- Dogs in foster for seven days are significantly more: Happy, content, pleased, confident, sure, assertive, fearless, relaxed, calm and easygoing.
- Dogs in foster for seven days are less anxious, worried and show less of the following behaviors: panting, shaking/trembling, circling, jumping.

Part 2.

We don't know what we don't know - questioning our assumptions

Traditional foster programs

- Focus primarily on young animals or pets recovering from illness or injury.
- Few resources dedicated to fostering
- Only a few, select pets made available
- Lengthy training and onboarding excludes potential fosters



Recognizing the stress of confinement



Foster is the solution

1. Cheap (or free)
2. Safe for pets and people
3. Humane
4. Increases adoptions, decreases length of stay
5. Builds capacity and engagement



Guy's story



Comes out quickly for food but then hisses and retreats if you get near. Ears always back and hissing. jkuhar
feral type behavior continues - not able to handle, not adoption candidate - jen jlungk
Have emailed TNR trappers to see if they recognize this cat. anovot
This cat was growling, hissing, and lunging at me thru the feral box. I was able to put her in the box, but she continued to growl, hiss, and lunge at me. -LC ecombs
Comes out to eat then hisses and runs away when you approach

Guy in a foster home

"Likes the dogs. Wants to be petted all the time. Last night, we had about 15 people over. He's been great with us, but I wasn't sure how he would do with strangers. I expected him to stay in the bedroom all night, but to our surprise, he spent most of the evening walking from guest to guest, soliciting attention and sitting on their laps. He was the life of the party."



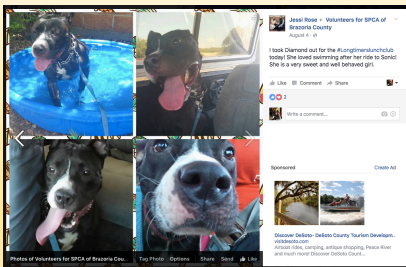
Part 3.

Foster programs for adult dogs and cats

Power hour and field trip fostering (maybe the most important program)



The Longtimers Lunch Club (SPCA of Brazoria County)



Overnights and weekends



Long stay foster placement



Foster for fearful cats



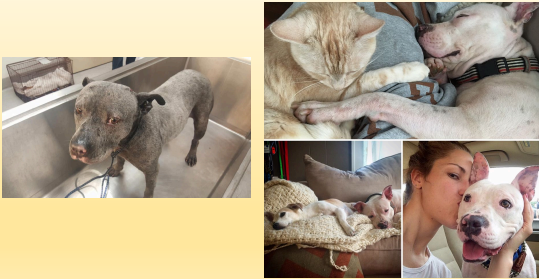
Foster for dogs with known histories



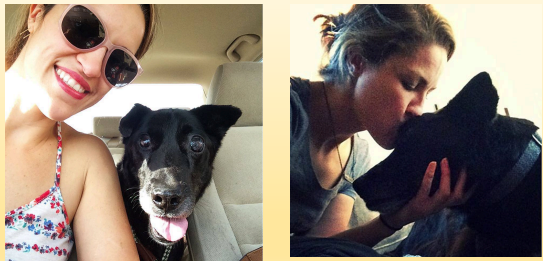
Fostering during space crises



Rehabilitative foster



Fospice




Volunteer-led foster programs



The image contains three logos. On the left is the 'HOUNDS' logo featuring a brown dog's head inside a black circular frame with the words 'HARDSHIP' and 'LUCK' at the top and 'HOUNDS' in red below. In the center is the 'Desperate Housecats' logo with a white cat silhouette and the text 'Desperate Housecats' and 'There is a home for every DESPERATE HOUSECAT!'. On the right is the 'DOGS OUT Loud' logo with a dog's face and the text 'DOGS OUT Loud' and 'www.dogsoutloud.org'.

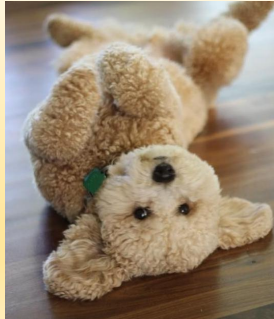
Part 4.
Starting and running your adult pet foster program

What is a 'behavior' animal?



The image contains two side-by-side images. The left image shows a white dog with a black face mask being held by a person, with the caption 'Known history of behavior?'. The right image is a promotional flyer for 'Fall in Love with a new Best Friend' featuring a dog's face and the text '\$20 to adopt all ready-to-go dogs now through Friday, October 16!'.

The teddy bear phenomenon



1. Know your data



- what group has longest LOS?
- what pets at risk for behavior?
- What animals are being euthanized due to lack of space?

2. Get rid of barriers

What are your barriers to sending adult dogs and cats to foster homes?

Are they internal or external?

Common barriers include:

- Background checks
- Home visits
- Long waits
- Training
- Limiting the pets who can go to foster
- Not letting fosters adopt
- Too many rules
- Time limits



3. Find your fosters everywhere!



How to find fosters:

- Make all your volunteers fosters
- Power hours, field trips and lunch club
- On-the-spot processing
- Social media
- Talk to trainers



4. Make it easy to foster



5. Be honest, open and transparent



6. Create a pro-foster culture





7. Commit to marketing and counseling as separate processes



Dalton is an energetic young dog with a heart of gold who has really cute ears! He has 'happy tail' which means his tail is bleeding because he wags it so hard in the kennel! He loves people and loves to play but he's becoming barrier reactive in the shelter. Dalton has a skin problem but it can be managed with a special diet! Dalton is looking for a family with no small children and may do okay with another dog with a slow introduction.

Dalton marketed via foster

Fairfax County Animal Shelter shared 2 new photos
 4 months ago · 27 likes · 0 comments

Here's what Dalton's foster mom had to say about her amazingly intelligent little dog:

"We've been hearing a lot about Dalton during the stay here, and I'm now positive that one major reason he had such a hard time in the shelter is his intelligence. Dalton is not merely smart; he is *block your socks off*, almost barrier intelligent. The evidence: not much the commands sit, down, stay, and paw, and he actually pulled over for Aries the other day. He lets us know when he doesn't have enough space left by whing the door and bringing it to us. His training technique could be improved, as the remaining 10 pups did over the hour, but only."

The other day I was observing, so my son was hanging out with the dogs in another room. The door had a screen around back and opened inward so it needed to be pulled, not pushed. He opened the door twice. He most amazing part of was on the inside, when I was getting ready to walk the dogs. I started putting on my boots, he instantly got excited and started whining at me. So he wanted me to hurry up. Then he intelligently ran from the room. I heard noises down the hall, so I went to investigate. Dalton was standing there, holding my coat in his mouth! Then he looked at me and shook the coat. I can't believe that he was able to go into the closet, select my coat from the 15 or so that are in there, and get it out!

Dalton is available for adoption. E-mail us at adoption@fairfaxcounty.gov to learn more!

15,056 people reached

Like Comment Share

A recap of the seven guidelines...

1. Know your data
2. Get rid of barriers (most important!)
3. Find your fosters everywhere
4. Make it easy to foster
5. Be honest, open and transparent
6. Create a pro-foster culture
7. Commit to both marketing and counseling for fosters but keep them separate

If you only remember one thing...