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Pets and Low-Income Owners Have an Essential Bond

By Nicole Kiser

There have been many **headlines** written about how adoption rates skyrocketed during the pandemic. White-collar workers from all over the country, who no longer had to be at work all day, every day, looked for companionship, and found it with furry friends. “There was a huge surge in interest in fostering and adopting pets...Fostering interest was at an all-time high,” says Andra Adams, vice president of animal operations at **Dallas Pets Alive!**

But the past year hasn't been so kind to everyone. Many Dallas families lived on the edge before the pandemic. In 2019, **half of Dallas's households were unable to afford basic needs**. At **18.9%**, poverty levels in Dallas were already significantly above the **national average of 10.5%** before the pandemic. In April 2020, Texas's unemployment rate hit a **record high of 12.9%**. Though that number has dropped to 6.7% as of April 2021, the rate is still almost double pre-pandemic levels.

And the effects of the economic downturn have reached beyond just the human populace. **As stated by the ASPCA**: “Whether you own a pet or not, everyone knows that the lives of pets and their owners are deeply linked. What happens to one — whether a happy or grave circum-

stance — significantly affects the other.”

In 2020, the ASPCA estimated that more than **4.2 million pets** were going to enter poverty and **19.2 million pets** were at risk of eviction or foreclosure due to the pandemic. “Since COVID, there have been a lot more folks that have lost jobs...and are a more at-risk population,” says Adams. Adams has noticed an increase in requests during the pandemic for help from pet owners who are low-income or from vulnerable populations. But the effects of poverty have been felt by pets for years.

According to Amanda Arrington and Michael Markarian in **an article from American University**: “Most people are aware of how poverty and structural inequality create challenges and barriers to accessing healthy food, education, jobs, health care, and housing. There is less awareness of how limited affordable veterinary and pet wellness services create similar obstacles and how that lack of access disadvantages millions of people and their pets across the United States.”

South Dallas is a **documented food desert**. Divided by highways with an average income less than half of the Dallas average, South Dallas residents spend more money to get less



Dallas Animal Services works with other organizations to provide free or affordable pet services to those in need. Courtesy of Maddie Nutt.

nutritious foods, or have to travel further to reach grocery stores. The pandemic has only worsened the effect — COVID-19 increases the risk of long rides on public transportation, and the effects on the supply chain have caused **grocery prices to soar**.

South Dallas's status as a food desert makes getting pet food from grocery stores difficult, but access to food isn't the only thing that South Dallas lacks. South Dallas is also a **pet care desert**; pet stores and vet clinics are

rarely found south of Interstate 30. Without access to pet supplies, food or medical care, those in South Dal-

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WHAT SHOULD WE COVER NEXT? FILL OUT OUR SURVEY AT:
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STREET *Zine*

STREET *Zine* is a program of The Stewpot.



The STREET *Zine* is a monthly newspaper published by The Stewpot, a ministry of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas. The Stewpot provides services and resources for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of being homeless. The organization also offers opportunities for a new life.

As part of this ministry, the STREET *Zine* seeks to raise awareness about the issues surrounding homelessness and poverty. At the same time, the monthly publication offers financial opportunity for homeless clients who sell the paper to Dallas residents. Vendors are able to move towards economic self-sufficiency by using the money they receive from selling copies to purchase bus passes, food, and necessary living expenses. Clients also receive stipends for contributing articles to STREET *Zine*.

The content in STREET *Zine* does not necessarily reflect the views or endorsement of its publisher, editors, contributors, sponsors, or advertisers. To learn more about this publication, contact Betty Heckman, Director of Enrichment, 1835 Young Street, Dallas, Texas 75201 or BettyH@thestewpot.org. And to read more about STREET *Zine*, a member of the International Network of Street Papers, go to www.thestewpot.org/streetzine.

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A Letter from the Executive Director

By Brenda Snitzer

Pets are great friends! They comfort us, entertain us and give us a loving family member to care for and someone other than ourselves to focus on.

This has been absolutely true during the pandemic. In fact, when we talk about essential workers, I would say that the dogs and cats in our lives are essential workers.

If you haven't had a special pet in your life, you may not understand that point. But, interestingly, the number of people who **adopted** dogs and cats as the pandemic unfolded was exponential. From being a buddy to spend those long days and nights of the unending lockdown with to a fun friend to take walks and love on, our pets have helped so many people stave off depression and loneliness. I can't imagine what it would have been like for our family without our dogs, Jack and King. They always understand me when no one else in the family does.

I know that my son and daughter-in-law, who married just before the lockdown started, adopted a dog to add to their family. (They also have a cat.) It eased the transition to married life and as they each worked from home.

This *STREETZine* issue about pets shares how those experiencing homelessness are no different. If anything, they may need their furry friends more. Life on the streets is harsh. It's nice to have someone to share your struggles with and to give you unconditional love when so many people are not accepting or don't take time to understand your story.

I'm grateful to The Bridge for having a kennel for folks to house their dogs. (Of course, there are never enough spots, but having limited space is better than having none at all.) I wish more shelters could accommodate pets. I also wish more apartment units were not so cost-prohibitive for people experiencing homelessness to

have a pet. It would make their transition to being housed so much better and less scary.

For many people who remain unsheltered, not being able to take their dog or cat into a shelter or housing may cause them to refuse housing or shelter. Even during freezing temperatures, people do not try to find shelter because they cannot take their pets with them. We should fight for this need at shelters and apartment units.

Sadly, with COVID restrictions being lifted and more people working at their employers' offices, animal shelters are saying that some people are **returning** their pets to shelters. I hope this trend doesn't continue. After all, pets are what pull so many people through a difficult time. If finances are an issue for food or other items, please see the article on page 11 about our partnership with Dallas Animal Services and how they are supplying food and other items through The Stewpot.

Here's to our "essential workers" — our beloved pets!

Brenda Snitzer is executive director of The Stewpot.



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The Pastor's Letter: God the Procrastinator

By The Rev. Amos Disasa

It is 5:33 p.m. on Tuesday, May 25. The significance of the time and date to this essay is that it's eight hours past due. Well, actually it is more complicated than that. The deadline referenced above is the second one I missed since the original due date this weekend. If you are reading this, Bill the Editor was in a good mood or desperate when he received this piece. I think he likes me and feels sorry for me since I've yet to meet one of his deadlines while writing for *STREETZine*.

The already tragic situation described above managed to get worse. Prior to putting pen to paper, I lost an hour in a last-minute flurry of procrastination. I find it easy to make time pass when a due date is waiting like a blind date you aren't sure you are prepared to attend.

I determined that the early bird might get a worm, but it's likely that there are other worms available for all the birds.

In one hour, I cleaned my office and stared at the blank wall above my desk, wondering which piece of framed art on the adjacent wall should be shifted over. I refilled my fountain pen, dumped the trash can, cleaned my mouse (unfold a paper-clip to get between the grooves) and reconfigured the haphazard stack of books on my desk to prevent it from collapsing and interrupting my writing, which I planned to start next.

I didn't start. Next, I cleaned out my money clip with thoroughness and urgency. Receipts, random business cards and an expired museum pass were trashed with pleasure. Have you ever tried to write an essay with an overstuffed money clip weighing down your leg?

My right pocket thanked me for the breathing room and my sense of accomplishment was further heightened by the discovery of four unused stamps — hooray for me. Between each unnecessary task, I paused for a break to strategize about my essay. I knew the tardiness of this piece would only be justified by an extraordinary bit of writing, as if it demanded an extra 30 days of writing.

I am a serial procrastinator. I'm good at it, one of the best ever. I spent a few hours last week scouring the internet to see if there is a top 10 list of living procrastinators. I wasn't on it, but I should have been.

The last assignment I recall finishing early was a book report on an Abraham Lincoln biography in third grade. I delivered it one week early to my teacher. She didn't even pat me on the back and say good job. I hoped for a balloon or, better yet, a sticker big enough for my classmates to see. Instead, she just nodded and haphazardly stacked my exceptionally early book report on a pile of unexceptional papers that she was probably late in grading. Since the disappointment of that day, I determined that the early bird might get a worm, but it's likely that there are other worms available for all the birds. And yes, deconstructing the old adage makes me feel better about how far I've fallen since third grade.

One reason I'm not concerned about my epic feats of procrastination is that I'm convinced I was made in God's image. Which must mean God also procrastinates. God is always miss-

ing our deadlines, putting off the work we anticipate God will deliver on our schedule. Sometimes God chooses to ignore our detailed instructions and does a different assignment altogether — one that we never wanted.

God is always missing our deadlines, putting off the work we anticipate God will deliver on our schedule.

These are usually turned in on time, but we throw them on a haphazard stack of unidentified answers to our prayers. Relative to our expectations about how long it will take to transform, recreate and resurrect the stuff we need fixed ASAP, God's workflow can seem more like a bottleneck instead of flowing river. More than one of my assignments sent to God is still incomplete. What is God doing? I need this done before I can move forward!

I doubt God is killing time cleaning, making coffee or refilling fountain pens. Unlike me, God the procrastinator is doing something related to our request. And when God is silent, we might consider that doing nothing is the something we are still waiting to receive. It's hard to believe, but God is such a bad procrastinator that on occasion God just says, "No! I'm not going to do it."

The Rev. Amos Disasa is senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas.

Note from the managing editor, Nicole Kiser: For various reasons, this issue's publication was actually delayed. Rev. Disasa probably could have spent a few more days procrastinating, but we would never dream of excluding his insightful pieces.



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A View from the Street: Bubba and I Rescued Each Other

By Darrell Plunkett

When I think of my ginger cat named Bubba, I imagine the Odd Couple theme music from the '70s sitcom playing in the background. After last year's pandemic and shutdown, we spent a lot of time together. Not to mention the year before, when I was dealing with cancer and radiation treatments. But let me begin at the beginning.

Every time I went, I noticed a ginger cat. I picked this cat, or rather he picked me by meowing at me one day. I knew it was a match. We ended up rescuing each other.

I lived in Arlington for 16 years. That's where my addictions took over my life and left me homeless and desperate for a change. I moved to Dallas in 2008 and continued my battle with addiction and homelessness. After a few years on the streets, and in and out of numerous shelters, I became familiar with other people in the same situation. They faced as many obstacles as I had to overcome homelessness.

Every summer, I would see people on the streets with their pets. I always would wish that I had a



Darrell Plunkett's cat, Bubba. Courtesy of Darrell Plunkett.

pet, but I would realize that it wasn't the right time. Plus, I felt sorry for the animals that people dragged around. They were as thirsty and hungry as their masters. The summer heat also was a problem. It didn't seem right subjecting an animal to such abuse.

In 2014, I finally received my housing and moved into an apartment. My addiction soon followed me, and I was up to my old hijinks. I ended up in the emergency room with alcohol poisoning. With the help of my caseworker, I entered outpatient rehab and was soon on my way to recovery.

They say that you're not allowed any relationships in the first year of recovery. But I did keep a plant alive during that year. So, by 2016, I was ready for a pet cat. I always had a cat in the past, so I was eager to get a new one.

I worked near a pet shop and often visited the place before work to look around. Every time I went, I noticed a ginger cat. I picked this cat, or rather he picked me by meowing at me one day. I knew it was a match. We ended up rescuing each other.

I came up with the name "Bubba" because he began getting a belly. And being a ginger, I decided he was a Bubba. It took us a while to form a bond. But he soon was happy to see me come home from work, although I couldn't tell if that really was because he knew that I would feed him!

Bubba is unlike any cat I have known. He doesn't act like a normal cat — he behaves more like a dog. The "good mornings" from him are the best, even if I'm not ready for "good morning" greetings!

He always wants attention and playtime. This cat has so many toys to enjoy. He seems to like the ones with feathers on them. He loves racing from one room to the other, chasing his toys. Every time I go to the grocery store or pet store, I will browse the toy section to see if there is something new that he would enjoy chasing. But with all those toys, he loves a simple string to play with and bite, which costs nothing, just like our affection costs nothing.

I am a restless sleeper, so ol' Bubba realized that sleeping on the bed with me might not be restful sleep for him. He will sleep on the bed until I fall asleep, and then relocate to the couch in the living room or to one of his many beds placed around the apartment.

In 2019, I had surgery to remove a tumor in my neck and started my radiation treatment after healing from the surgery. I was off work for three



Darrell Plunkett with a painting he created of his cat, Bubba. Courtesy of Darrell Plunkett.

weeks and Bubba seemed to know that I was not in good health. He never left my side and laid right next to me.

Then came the pandemic, where I didn't work for a little over a year and was home 24/7. Sometimes, when Bubba looked at me, it seemed that he was wondering when I was going back to work.

We really got to know each other during that time. He seemed to want treats more, and now weighs at least 20 pounds and snores. I was so concerned that I purchased a harness to take him on walks for exercise.

But with all those toys, he loves a simple string to play with and bite, which costs nothing, just like our affection costs nothing.

I have yet to try to introduce him to this concept. It takes me back to when I first brought him home and put a collar on him. He dramatically fell to the floor like I had put a heavy weight around his neck. Yet sometimes I catch him looking out the window at the grassy park below and wonder if he really wants to go down there and run around. Guess there is nothing to do but wait and see.

Darrell Plunkett is a server at a restaurant in Dallas and a Stewpot artist.

Finding Companionship in Pets

By Sarah Disasa

Nicole Nash has always loved having pets. When she was a little girl, her pets were like siblings to her because she was an only child. “Animals and I,” she said, “have always been closer than people.” Nicole estimates that she has had 25 to 30 pets over the course of her life. However, there was a stretch of about 10 years when Nicole, a Stewpot artist, was homeless. That was the only time in her life that she did not have a pet.

When Nicole got housing, about 12 years ago, she had a serendipitous thing happen on her first day at her new apartment. As she was moving in and unloading her belongings, a calico cat arrived on the scene. This calico cat was a welcoming presence to Nicole. “It’s like God gave her to me,” she said. Callie, named because of her calico coat, was Nicole’s companion and roommate for 13 years. “We were side by side for all of those years,” she reflected, “We had a strong bond.”

After having to put Callie down about a month ago, Nicole is comforted by her current pets: Sam

and Allie. When she spoke of Sam, her cat, she said, “I adopted him. Or he adopted me.”

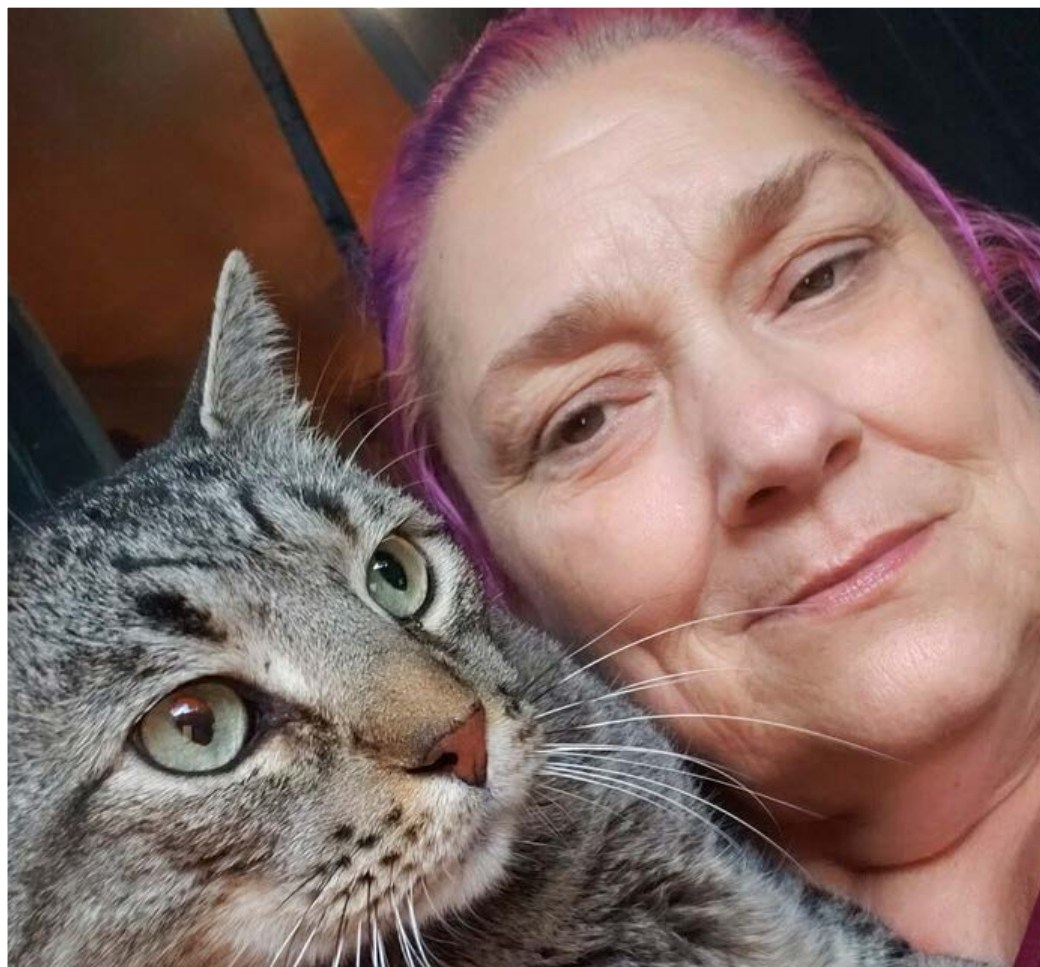
Nicole is not only a companion of animals, but she is also an advocate for animal rights. While pursuing her bachelor’s degree, Nicole enrolled in a public speaking class. She was tasked with the assignment to give a speech about something she was passionate about. Although nervous about the actual speaking aspect of the assignment, Nicole was confident about her position on animal rights.

Nicole’s biggest challenge with owning pets is having the financial means to care and provide for them. Luckily, her extended family is also passionate about animals, and they help Nicole with vet bills when needed. “They are happy to help me with it,” she said, “I don’t even survive on what I make.”

Even when having to pay a large bill, Nicole knows that her pets are worth it to her. After paying a significant vet bill recently, Nicole said, “I looked down at my little guy (Sam) and said, ‘Okay, you’re worth it.’”

She went on to explain that her pets are with her every day. “They just bring me more love than anybody,” she said. “No matter what kind of mood I’m in, they’re just right there, trying to make me happy.”

Nicole is now searching for a new apartment. “My current lease is up. So right now, I’m in limbo,”



Nicole Nash with one of her current cats, Sam. Courtesy of Nicole Nash.

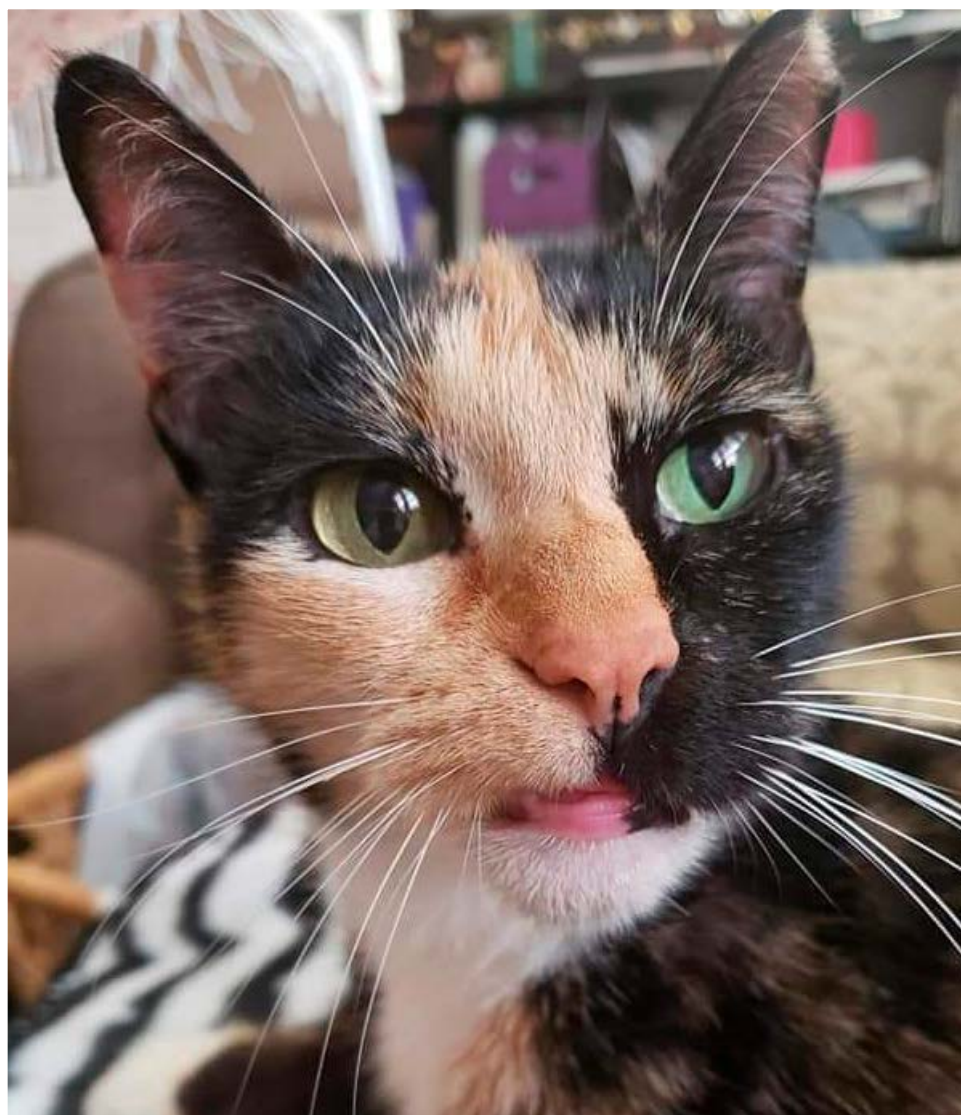
she said. “I’m looking really hard for an apartment,” said Nicole, noting that “a lot of them won’t take pets.”

Obstacles for finding housing include securing an apartment that takes pets, paying a pet deposit and finding rent that falls within her budget. Nicole was excited when she found an apartment recently that she really liked. However, that excitement did not last long. “They didn’t accept pets, period,” she said.

“My pets, they really help me,” Nicole explained. When it comes to owning pets and finding housing, she said, “I’ve made it work because it’s important to me.”

Although she is between leases and battling depression, Nicole is comforted by her companions Sam and Allie. “My pets, they really help me,” she explained. When it comes to owning pets and finding housing, she said, “I’ve made it work because it’s important to me.”

Sarah Disasa is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and the STREETZine Editorial Advisory Board.



Nicole Nash’s previous cat, Callie. Courtesy of Nicole Nash.

10 Things to Know about People Experiencing Homelessness and Their Pets

1. No official data exists, but an estimated 10% of people experiencing homelessness have pets.

Source: *National Alliance to End Homelessness and PetSmart Charities*

2. People experiencing homelessness rarely part with their pets when seeking shelter or housing.

Source: *National Alliance to End Homelessness and PetSmart Charities*

3. Pet owners report less frequency of depression and isolation than non-pet owners.

Source: *Harmony Rhoades, PhD., School of Social Work, University of Southern California*

4. In a study of Los Angeles youth experiencing homelessness, 23% of respondents owned pets. The top three reasons cited were for companionship, love and safety.

Source: *Harmony Rhoades, PhD., school of Social Work, University of Southern California*

5. In the same Los Angeles study, 49% of respondents said

having a pet made it harder for them to stay in a shelter.
Source: *Harmony Rhoades, PhD., School of Social Work, University of Southern California*

6. 11% of participants in the Los Angeles study responded that having a pet made it harder for them to see a doctor.

Source: *Harmony Rhoades, PhD. School of Social Work, University of Southern California*

7. Within the unhoused population, pet ownership is more common among women and married people.

Source: *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*

8. People experiencing homelessness for the first time are more likely to have pets than those residing in emergency shelters and experiencing chronic homelessness.

Source: *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*

9. In a survey of academic literature on the relationship between people experiencing homelessness and their pets, participants most frequently cited companionship as the reason for having a pet.

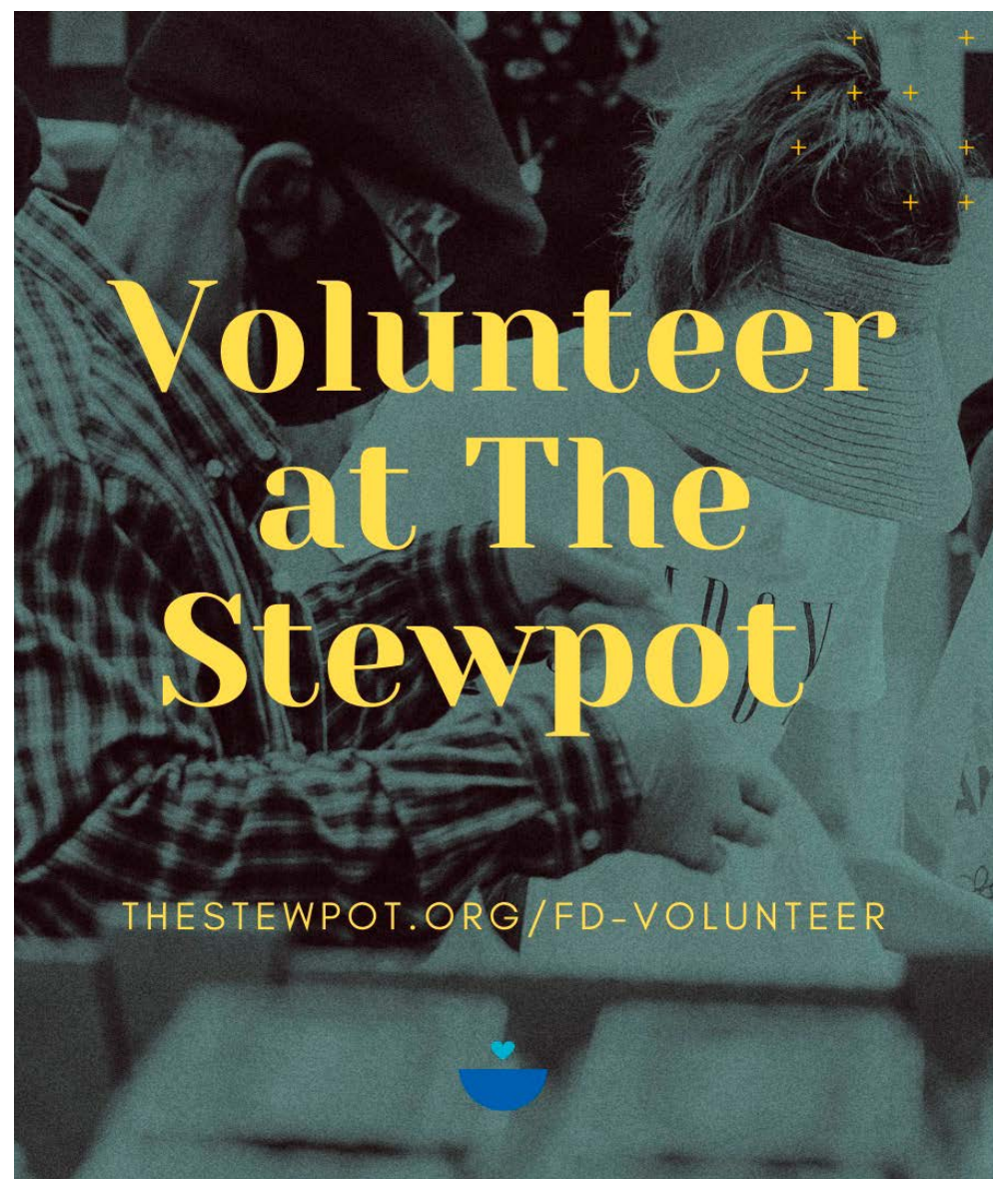
Source: *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*

10. In one academic study of people attempting to exit homelessness, 18% of respondents said they had been denied housing because of their pets.

Source: *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*



This is Crucial is a podcast with live and interactive recording sessions focused on healing justice and racial equity. It is an opportunity to learn from a rotating guest list of experts as they sit down to discuss these important, timely, and sometimes uncomfortable topics. This is Crucial is hosted by Rev. Amos J. Disasa (Senior Pastor of FPC Dallas) and Rev. Dr. Charlene Han Powell (Senior Pastor of FPC Berkeley).



Continued from page 1

las **face significant challenges** to supplying their pets basic needs, and may put off accessing medical care until it becomes urgent.

Despite all the challenges, those experiencing low income love their pets just as much as their higher-income counterparts. Carol Rains, a frontline assistant at The Stewpot, had her dog Skip for over three years. “Everybody...at The Stewpot loved him,” says Rains. When he passed, “we had him cremated, and they had a funeral for him at the church.”

Raised training horses by the Grand Canyon, Rains has always had a fondness for animals. “I just love animals. I love animals better than people.” Her current puppy, Sassy, was a stray she and her husband adopted. “She started following my husband...It was on some street, and she was coming out of some grass, bushes, weeds — I’m not sure — and just started following him down the street.” But even an experienced pet owner like Rains has needed help to provide for her pets. “I know somebody; he helps me get my dogs to the veterinarian,” says Rains, a task that, without help, would be made longer and more expensive by the complications of navigating public transit with a pet.

Dallas Animal Services has also partnered with local food distribution organizations, including The Stewpot, Aunt Bette’s Community Pantry and Pleasant Grove Food Pantry, to provide pet food to families in need.

Without other options, low-income pet owners often look to surrender their pets because **they lack the resources to provide for their pets’ needs**. In a **study**, low-income pet owners said that affordable vet care or free or low-cost pet food could have prevented them from having to surrender their pet. Though pet organizations have traditionally focused on helping animals in shelters, they have begun to realize that **helping owners keep their pets can help pets from entering shelters in the first place**.

“In order to really give the pets really what they need, we have to take care of the people first,” says Paul Bady, a volunteer coordinator at **Dallas Animal Services**. In 2018, Dallas Animal Services started a community outreach campaign for a new mission: to have a release rate from its shelters exceeding 90% by finding positive outcomes for

all healthy and behaviorally sound pets. As a part of that mission, Dallas Animal Shelters has worked to increase resources that help support pet owners and to increase awareness and access to those resources.

In partnership with organizations like the **SPCA of Texas** and the **Spay Neuter Network**, Dallas Animal Services provides access to low-cost pet microchipping, low-cost vaccinations and low-cost spay and neuter services, all of which are required in Dallas by city ordinance. Dallas Animal Services has also partnered with local food distribution organizations, including **The Stewpot**, **Aunt Bette’s Community Pantry** and **Pleasant Grove Food Pantry**, to provide pet food to families in need. (For more information on the pet food distribution services, please see page 11).

Dallas Animal Shelters also works with Dallas Pets Alive! to provide multifaceted support to families struggling to provide for their pets. Through donations and grants, Dallas Pets Alive! is able to provide financial assistance to owners for their pets’ medical treatment and, in rare situations, temporary boarding.

Dallas Pets Alive! also has a housing guide for pet owners. “We have a list of pet-friendly housing that [doesn’t] have breed or size restrictions. If folks are looking to move, or having a hard time finding affordable housing that allows their type of pet, we have a list of resources for them,” says Adams.

And ultimately, if organizations like Dallas Animal Services and Dallas Pets Alive! can’t provide the resources necessary, they can help “rehome” the pets. “By far, our largest inquiry type is about rehoming,” says Adams. Dallas Pets Alive! can direct owners to rescues, no-kill shelters or resources to help the owner rehome their pet on their own.

Due to the pandemic, Dallas Animal Services is currently only accepting surrenders by appointment. The limited number of appointments has restricted intake, but it’s also allowed some pet owners to reconsider rehoming. “Sometimes it’s just a matter of time...Having to have an appointment a few



A small memorial for Carol Rains’s dog, Skip, at The Stewpot. Courtesy of Nicole Kiser.

weeks out gives them time” to work on training and allow the pet to decompress from a shelter environment, says Adams.

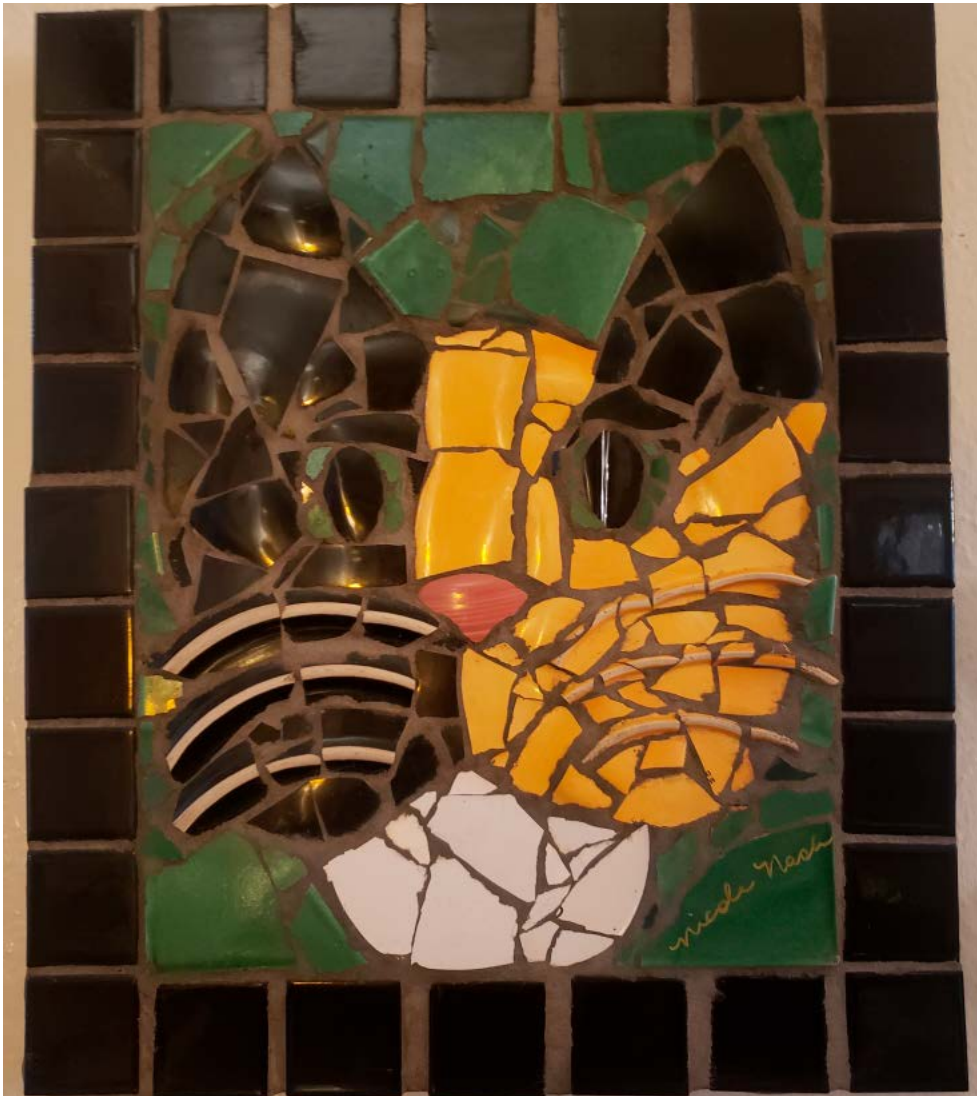
And the programs are working. Less than three years ago, Dallas faced a **feral dog problem** that was a regular source of fear for residents and resulted in at least one death. In comparison, Dallas Animal Services completed its first fiscal year with a **live release rate of over 90%** in September of 2020. By working with community partners to provide resources for pet care, organizations like Dallas Animal Services and Dallas Pets Alive! have helped provide positive outcomes for pets. And they have helped fight the negative stigma that surrounds low-income pet owners.

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.



A photo of Carol Rains’s dog, Skip, that is still displayed at The Stewpot. Courtesy of Nicole Kiser.

Stewpot Artists



Mosaic of Callie
Nicole Nash



Best Friend (detail)
Luis Arispe

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Paws Everything! The Pets Keeping Curbside Vendors Company in Lockdown

By Nathan Poppe

Homelessness is often isolating and full of loss, but that doesn't mean someone has to go it alone. Pets are lifelines both during traumatic events — like the current worldwide pandemic — and in everyday life.

“Their pets are well fed, cared for, groomed, are often well trained, and very obviously adored,” photographer Kathy Martin said. “As a photographer, while I was trying with all my skills and tools to get their attention, I could see in the animals' behavior where their trust and security is. It's definitely in their human. If everybody cared for their animals the way these pet owners do, then we wouldn't need animal shelters.”

Lauren and Tippy

Before Tippy, Lauren McCaffrey-Washa used to consider herself broken.

Triggers sparked by PTSD or anxiety would remind her that too much in life wasn't going as planned. Lauren, her husband and Tippy have experienced homelessness together, but the Curbside vendor credits Tippy's unyielding devotion for keeping things under control and reminding her that cracks can be repaired.



Erick's dog, Blue. Courtesy of Kathy Martin.

“Maybe I'm not broken at all,” Lauren says. “Maybe I just need that support to glue me back together. It's really because of her that I can go into crowds and not freak out. It makes selling Curbside possible [...] She's my super glue to the end. She's stuck on me, and I'm stuck on her.”

As a service dog, Tippy offers Lauren both emotional reassurance and a sense of security. She's a furry, four-year-old sidekick who can sense when Lauren's narcolepsy kicks in. If that happens at an inconvenient time — at say, the bus stop — then Tippy leans into Lauren's legs to keep her alert. It's not easy for Lauren to feel grounded, but this Labrador Retriever mix has that power.

Erick and Blue

Erick tells me that words can't come close to describing the importance of a dog's companionship in his life. No matter what, Blue has his back. For a year, Erick has been experiencing homelessness, and lately he's been sleeping outside in a tent. A dog's protection — and more importantly their reliability — make a huge difference when you're facing a terrible situation, Erick says. He's less upset now that he has Blue in his corner.

“They mean everything,” the Curbside vendor says. “Blue is my best friend. He's essentially my child. If it comes down to only one of us eating, then he's gonna eat nine times out of 10.”

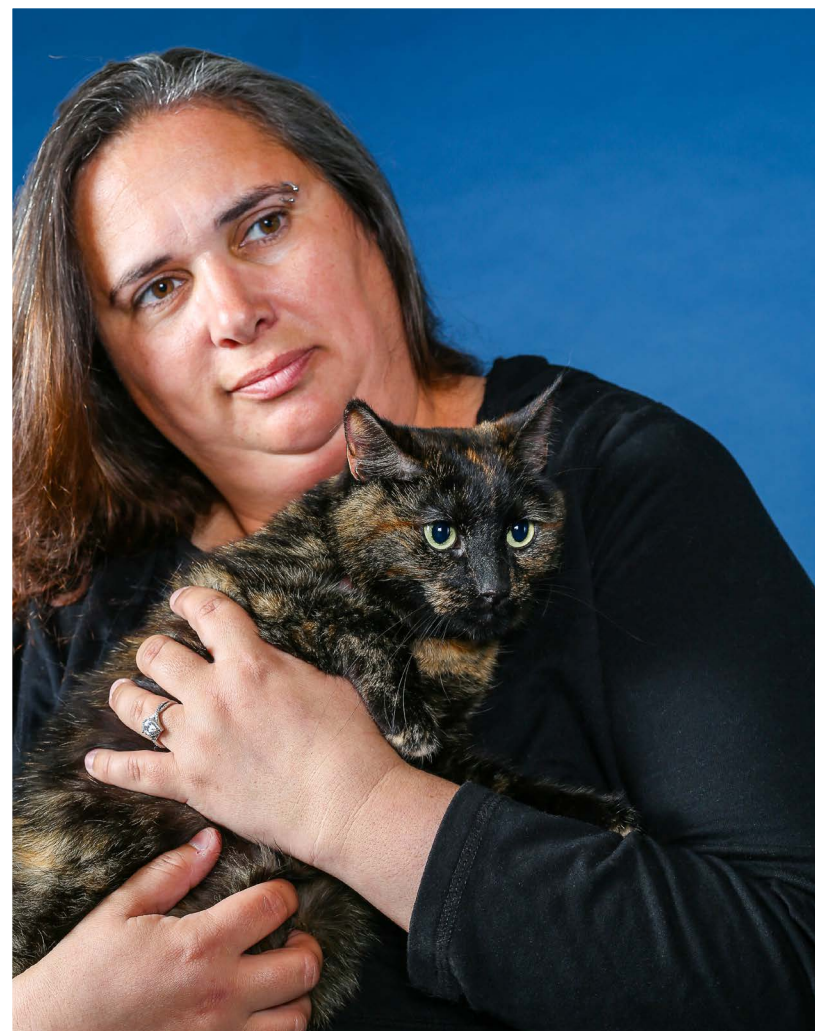
These feelings made losing Blue especially hard on Erick. In February, just a week after this photo was taken for this article, Erick visited Penn Square Mall with Blue. He tied the dog to a tree outside of Dillard's. Blue was gone after Erick made a quick visit inside to replace his cellphone. Erick was heartbroken. He had no luck locating the dog until mid-March, when Blue was discovered through the Oklahoma Humane Society. Erick has already planned a reunion to celebrate.

“Blue loves pizza,” Erick grins. “When I get him back, we're going to get pizza.”

Jamie and Jazzy

Jamie has been trying to get a good picture of her cat for the better part of eight years.

It can be difficult to get this house cat to sit still.



Jamie and her cat, Jazzy. Courtesy of Kathy Martin.

Jazzy plays by her own rules and will lick at unguarded Blow Pop suckers if you're not careful. But despite her feisty nature, she's a sweet, furry friend with a brilliant white spot at the end of her tail. She was almost named Paintbrush because of this distinctive mark. Jamie grew up surrounded by cats for much of her life, but Jazzy is one of a kind. Being an anxiety reducer is one of her most special talents.

“At night, she'll lay on my left side — it's always my left side — and just cuddle,” Jamie says. “It makes me feel secure even though I know it's making her feel secure, too. She can sense when someone's upset [...] She's very loving and caring. She's my fur baby.”

Jazzy was rescued from a Midwest City shelter several years ago and given to Jamie as a gift. The cat reminds her of a late, dear friend. After nearly a decade, there are lots of memories and emotions tied to Jazzy. Just the thought of giving this cat up makes Jamie tear up. The two were separated for a few weeks last year, but they were united after Jamie found a new apartment. The Curbside vendor feels lucky to have Jazzy back by her side — on her left side, to be exact.

Courtesy of The Curbside Chronicle / INSP. ngo

Stewpot Artists



Left Top:
Don't Mess with Mama
Mystery

Right Top:
Best Friend
Charles William

Left Middle:
A Groovy Dog's Life
Mystery

Right Bottom:
Getting Ready
(detail)
Charles William

Left Bottom:
Sampson
Cornelious Brackens, Jr.

Around The Stewpot: Pet Support

By Nicole Kiser

On May 5, STREETZine spoke with Paul Bady, the volunteer coordinator at Dallas Animal Services, about the services that Dallas Animal Services is providing in partnership with The Stewpot.

From its start as a soup kitchen in 1975, The Stewpot has worked to distribute food to those in need. The Stewpot works with The Bridge to provide three meals a day, 365 days a year, to clients experiencing homelessness, and for years The Stewpot has coordinated food distribution services to families experiencing food insecurity.

In April 2020, when the pandemic caused job losses and economic uncertainty, The Stewpot stepped up its food recovery to provide even more food to agencies assisting those in need. The Stewpot's food distribution program grew to include an increased number of families — sometimes causing cars to be lined around the block in anticipation of groceries.

But what about the furry family members? With **many in Dallas having trouble making ends meet**

before the pandemic, the economic downturn was forcing some families to make difficult decisions about how to afford to feed their pets.

Dallas Animal Services stepped in with a solution. In line with its **Dallas90 campaign** to have a live release rate over 90% from its shelter population, Dallas Animal Services has worked hard to help families be able to keep their pets, no matter their financial circumstances.

“We realize at Dallas Animal Services that, in order to really give the pets what they need, we have to take care of the people first,” says Paul Bady, the volunteer coordinator at Dallas Animal Services. “The pet food pantry is something we’re just starting to get off the ground. ... We were looking at trying to come up with a way to help people keep their pets.”

In April, Dallas Animal Services launched its pet food distribution program by partnering with The Stewpot. In the first month of pet food distribution, approximately 575 pounds of dog food and 115 pounds of cat food were given out. According to Bady, the distribution “fed up to 187 dogs and 68 cats...And as [the program continues], that number is going to go way up.”

Dallas Animal Services is also partnering with other organizations to distribute pet food. “Right now, we are working with another food pantry called **Aunt Bette's** [Community] Pantry,” says Bady. “We’re go-



The Stewpot and Dallas Animal Services worked together to distribute over 600 pounds of pet food. Courtesy of Maddie Nutt.

ing to be starting...in May, working at **Pleasant Grove Food Pantry**. We’re going to be partnering up with them to do the same thing we’re doing at The Stewpot.”

Currently, Dallas Animal Services partners with The Stewpot at least one Friday a month for pet food distribution. “As we continue to get more food and more volunteers, we’re hoping to increase the amount of times we’re able to be at The Stewpot, and the other places as well. And based on the way things are going, that’ll happen hopefully sooner rather than later,” says Bady.

Of course, food distribution is just one of the services that Dallas Animal Services provides. For a deeper look into the pet resources available from Dallas Animal Services and other organizations, please see our cover story.

Nicole Kiser is managing editor of STREETZine.



[inspiring journalism]

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What is STREETZine?

STREETZine is a nonprofit newspaper published by The Stewpot of First Presbyterian Church for the benefit of people living in poverty. It includes news, particularly about issues important to those experiencing homelessness. STREETZine creates direct economic opportunity. New vendors receive ten free papers. After the first ten, vendors pay twenty-five cents for a paper to be distributed for a one-dollar or more donation. Vendors typically profit seventy-five cents from each paper. Vendors are self-employed and set their own hours. Distributing STREETZine is protected by the First Amendment.

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- Exterior public pay phones;
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- Self service gas pumps;
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