The Cat that Brought our Community Together

You found a Kitten! Now What?

A Dog with an Owner’s Manual

Plus:
Loving Br’er Fox, Farewell to a Fond Friend, and more!
Kitten Season Begins

As the weather warms, not only do more flowers appear, but also litters of unwanted kittens during a period called “Kitten Season.” Shelters and rescue groups prepare to receive hundreds of kittens, some with their mother and others without — orphaned and in need of extra attention. Raising neonatal kittens is an onerous task, requiring 24-hour attention and bottle feedings every 3-5 hours depending on age.

What do you do if you find a nest of kittens or a single kitten outside? The first thing to remember is to wait and watch, take note of their condition and then take action. Survival of kittens, especially nursing ones, is highly dependent on the care provided by their mother. A common mistake is to take the kittens away prematurely without considering the following questions.

Let Sleeping Cats Lie

Are the kittens clean and quiet or sleeping? If so, a mom most likely cares for them, and you should leave them alone. The mother may be out searching for food or in the process of moving them to a different location. Note, the mother may not return if she senses a human near her nest. Here is a trick, create a large circle with flour around the area and leave. Return in a couple of hours to check for paw prints in the flour and reassess the kittens’ condition. If it is determined that the mother is caring for her kittens and the area is relatively safe, you may provide a shelter and regular food for the mom, but keep the food at a distance. The mother may not accept your shelter if food is nearby since it may attract other cats to her nest location. Once her kittens are weaned, around 4-6 weeks of age, contact your local animal control services to ask about trapping all of them to be spayed/neutered. A mother cat can become pregnant even while still nursing!

Cold, Hungry and Alone

Are the kittens dirty, crying and cold? Neonatal kittens are more at risk of hypothermia than they are of starvation. It is safer to wait and see if a mother returns in the warmer summer months than in colder temperatures. If you determine that they appear neglected, hungry or in immediate danger, it is important to take action fast. Are you prepared to bottle feed and care for them until they are old enough to be spayed/neutered and adopted? If so, contact the Humane Society of Utah Foster Care Department for additional information and resources. Otherwise, place the kittens in a box with a blanket, preferably with a low-heat heating pad under the blanket, and take them to your local animal shelter.

Become a Foster Parent

The Humane Society of Utah receives hundreds of kittens with and without their mother each Kitten Season and is always in need of dependable foster volunteers to help. Are you willing to bottle feed, wean, socialize and provide medical care to ensure each kitten can find a home of his or her own? Read more about fostering and apply to become a foster volunteer on our website at www.utahhumane.org/foster.
As a testimony of appreciation for the generosity of so many people, the Humane Society of Utah extends a heartfelt “Thank you” to everyone touched by the story of a cat named Sage and who took action by offering sympathy and support.

When a tragedy occurs, we are left struggling to comprehend how and why it happened. We battle feelings of sorrow, anger, and helplessness. We want to understand the situation in order to gain a sense of control and prevent anything similar from happening in the future. These feelings are compounded when children or pets are involved because of their helpless dependency on us to care for and protect them. Who could betray their trusting nature and cause them injury, pain or death?

Sage, a 6-year-old domestic cat, belonging to the Cassel family in Clearfield, Utah, suffered inconceivable pain and suffering at the hands of someone who betrayed this trust. Sage passed away from numerous injuries March 9, 2017 despite best efforts from the dedicated veterinarians and staff of Advanced Veterinary Care in Salt Lake City.

The notion that a member of our society could deliberately inflict brutal, torturous harm on a small pet cat for no imaginable reason sparked a flame that caught the public’s attention worldwide. People who heard Sage’s story were deeply affected. Desperately wanting to offer support to Sage’s family and assistance to the police in hopes of finding this monster, ordinary people from across the country and as far away as Australia and England donated to the reward offered, and shared Sage’s story.

A collaboration between the Humane Society of Utah (HSU), the Humane Society of Northern Utah (HSNU) and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) resulted to increase the reward and maximize exposure and impact. At the time this letter was written, the reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible for the torture and death of Sage had reached $61,850, thanks to many compassionate, generous individual contributions from people like you. Some people may think this is an incredible amount to offer for the death of a cat; however, we see it as a message to would-be abusers that animal abuse is not acceptable. There is no price too high for the protection of our children, pets, or any other innocent and defenseless member of society.

The Humane Society of Utah’s mission is to eliminate pain, fear, and suffering in all animals, so when we heard about this egregious act of animal torture, we knew the person responsible needed to be apprehended and held accountable to prevent any further harm to another pet or person. As Sage’s story spread, information about the serious nature of animal abuse and its relationship to other anti-social behavior, cruelty, and crime was shared. Sage’s story became more than another case of animal abuse; it represented a tipping point in our society where thousands of people stood up and said, “No more.” We will not tolerate animal abuse knowing that perpetrators will continue their behavior and intensify it. We understand an animal abuser is five times more likely to abuse a person, and we cannot ignore the warning signs and sit idly by while a person capable of this evil continues to walk freely, risking the safety of children, pets, and families.

Donations to HSU went toward the reward as well as a newly-created emergency care fund called Sage’s Friends Memorial Fund to help future animals in need. All voluntary donations to HSU and HSNU are tax-deductible, and if the reward is not claimed, monies will be responsibly applied toward the life-saving programs and services offered to other deserving animals in need by both nonprofit organizations. The Humane Society of Utah will continue to follow Sage’s case and offer support to Davis County Animal Services as they diligently work through the hundreds of tips they have received.

Many pet owners consider their furry companions as members of the family, receiving all the nurturing love and attention that would be bestowed upon their own flesh and blood. The grief felt when a pet is tragically taken from us cannot be measured or compared. Sage and his story will not be forgotten; neither will the compassion and generosity of our community and friends abroad. Thank you for standing up for Sage and seeking justice for him and all victims of animal abuse. Thank you for helping send the message of love, hope, and support during a time of fear and anger. We know Sage’s family and friends are grateful to every individual donation that has been made on behalf of Sage, and we will continue to fight on behalf of all animals to change their world for the better. 

As I see things

The Cat that Brought Our Community Together

— by Gene Baierschmidt
HSU Executive Director
A Dog with an Owner’s Manual

Rhino Lightning, a 3-year-old male Boxer mix, was brought to HSU by a family who recognized that their home was not an ideal place for him. The family’s youngest child lovingly composed instructions handwritten in pencil on a small 2-inch x 4-inch, spiral-bound notebook for Rhino Lightning’s new family. “Hi, if you are reading this you must own Rhino now. He was my puppy, I really hope he is in a good environment [sic]. I really miss him.”

This heartbreaking notebook was attached to a chain around Rhino’s neck as he bounced into the receiving lobby. Our staff could not hold back the tears after reading the first page. This child loved her dog and wanted us to help find a good home for him. “Rhino needs lots of attention [sic] he loves people.”

Additional pages included instructions not to allow Rhino to play with tennis balls since he destroys them in a day and to bathe him at least once a month. The young author also requested that his name remains unchanged, “His full name is Rhino Lightning then your last name, please don’t rename him.”

The story of Rhino Lightning and his notebook of instructions left by this caring child touched hearts across the country. His story went viral and was featured in media outlets including People.com, Buzzfeed, the Today Show, and other news stations from Los Angeles to New York. Everyone eagerly waited for Rhino to find a new home and assure his young friend that he would be taken care of. After three days in the HSU Adoption Center, Rhino made a connection with a new family who tearfully read each word in the notebook and vowed to abide by the child’s requests. They even kept his name. Rhino’s story was more than a heartwarming tale that attracted media attention nationwide; it was a tool to carry a bigger message. We cannot criminalize people who surrender their pet to a shelter because in most cases they are doing what is in the best interest of that animal if they feel they cannot provide what that animal needs. Not all animals at the Humane Society of Utah are unwanted, neglected animals that were dumped by uncaring people. The majority are great pets who were loved by someone and deserve a second chance at happiness. Rhino is happy in his new home, and we hope that someday, the other family will adopt a pet that is a better fit for them and will benefit from the love this young child has to offer.

Loving Br’er Fox

Br’er Fox came to the Humane Society of Utah with a rough past. He was very scared of most people, especially men. Growling and snapping at everyone who got near him, Br’er was considered far from adoptable in his current state. Our foster care department took on Br’er as a special behavior case. They reached out to a couple who had fostered some bad behavior cases in the past.

When Br’er first arrived at Amanda and Gary Trentham’s home, he was filled with fear. With black eyes and barred white teeth from the back seat of their car, Br’er challenged the couple’s patience at every turn. It took them hours to get the snarling little dog out of the car and into the backyard and hours more to get him onto their deck. Getting him into the house was quickly becoming a nearly impossible task, but this is exactly why we had picked the Trenthams for Br’er. Exhausted but not defeated, the couple had an ingenious idea. They grabbed their lovable Aussie, Lilah, to sit near the door where Br’er could see them and began to hug, pet and kiss her with wild abandon as if to say, “See, this dog likes us. So should you!”

And it worked! Suddenly, Br’er seemed interested in what these humans had to offer and he slowly, timidly walked into the house. Within days, Br’er allowed Gary to touch him, and within two weeks, he had transformed into the cuddliest dog they had ever had. The journey had been long and hard, but it had bonded them, and they had fallen in love. Not only had Br’er become adoptable, Gary and Amanda chose to adopt him themselves. Now, months later, Br’er enjoys everything life has to offer, running free on the beach with a large smile on his face. Amanda and Gary want everyone to know, “This is what can happen if more people took the time to love a dog that has been left at a shelter... even the ‘worst’ dogs.”

Farewell to a Fond Friend

As we announced in our Winter 2017 issue, Katharine Brant — a beloved employee and longtime voice of over 100 issues of the Humane Society of Utah’s Speaking of Animals newsletter — was deservedly heading into retirement after over 30 years of service. In that announcement, Katharine wrote a touching farewell to the thousands of dedicated readers who have grown to love her stories and articles. “If anything I have written has made even one single person’s attitude toward the living beings with whom we share this planet more compassionate, more tender, more understanding of the struggles and trials that they endure, and more empathy in general toward the living beings with whom we share this planet more compassionately, more tenderly, more understanding of the struggles and trials that they endure, and more empathy in general, then I have written for nothing.”

Katharine’s work saved the lives of thousands of animals for many years, and her voice will never be forgotten at the Humane Society of Utah.” Thank YOU, Katharine, for giving your best years for the animals, and for making the HSU a much brighter place for all of us to come to everyday. You will be missed.
Meet Beau, HSU’s mascot for the 2017 Love UT Give UT campaign. Earlier this year, we transferred Beau, a 4-year-old Bulldog mix, to HSU from a local animal control shelter. Beau had medical issues that put him at risk of euthanasia in the smaller shelter — his right hind leg had a complete rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) causing him pain and trouble walking. We transferred Beau to our shelter to surgically repair his leg and ensure his chances of adoption. Currently, Beau continues to recover from his surgery and will remain in a foster care home for a few more weeks.

Now in its fifth year, Love UT Give UT is a statewide charity event organized by the Community Foundation of Utah for the purpose of raising awareness of and encouraging public support for nonprofit organizations whose services benefit the state of Utah. And words can’t fully express how extremely grateful, humbled and excited we are to announce that we won second place in the Love UT Give UT “Caring for our Friends & Places” category this year!

We raised $23,986 from 772 donors, plus another $14,610 in matching grants from local businesses and families. This funding allowed us to claim the #2 spot and earn an additional $2,500 in grant money from the Community Foundation of Utah. All of the funds raised will be put to good use saving animals’ lives and making their world a better place!

We would also like to acknowledge that there were many other amazing nonprofit organizations serving Utah that participated, and we humbly thank everyone who chose to donate to the Humane Society of Utah. We applaud the charitable nature of all Utahns and their support of so many wonderful and deserving groups, and we are honored to be part of such a generous, loving community.

We are honored to announce that HSU has been named the 2017 Official Charity by Salt Lake Comic Con and Wasatch Front Subaru Retailers! Salt Lake Comic Con hosts multi-genre fan conventions with comic creators, celebrities, photo ops, autographs, authors, cosplayers, panels, merchandise, workshops, special events and more. The Salt Lake Comic Con FanXperience sponsored by Subaru of America was held March 17-18, 2017, at the Salt Palace Convention Center. To view FanX photos of adoptable animals with celebrities and photos from our special “Pawsplay” adoption event held at HSU, visit www.UtahHumane.org/FanX.

Discounted FanX tickets were offered to our members, and 15% of ticket proceeds were donated to the Humane Society of Utah in return. Check our website and social media networks for ticket sale opportunities for the upcoming Salt Lake Comic Con Sept. 21-23. Don’t miss it!

Jason Momoa enjoyed our adoptable pets between autographs and photo op sessions. Momoa plays Aquaman in the upcoming DC Universe film. We named this puppy Drogo after his character on Game of Thrones.

Bonnie Wright played the lovable Ginny Weasley in the Harry Potter film series. Here she is cuddling with a puppy named Weasley. A Salt Lake Comic Con staff member adopted Weasley later that day.

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Our Fifth Annual Wags to Wishes Gala, presented by the American Dog Rescue Foundation and Arthur E. Benjamin Foundation, is Saturday, June 17! And back by popular demand, our premiere fundraiser for the animals will be held on our beautifully transformed shelter grounds. The festive summer evening will include live entertainment, gourmet meal and open bar, live and silent auctions, and don’t forget your dancing shoes for music under the stars.

Tickets and tables are on sale NOW at www.utahhumane.org/gala. Early Bird ticket and table pricing is available until May 15.

For questions about the event, please contact Jessica Linville at (801) 506-2410 or JessicaL@utahhumane.org.

Dog Days (and Cats) of Summer Adoption Event

Stay tuned for information about our annual Dog Days (and Cats) of Summer Adoption Event to be held June 16-18 at the Salt Lake City Petsmart located at 389 West 1830 South. Our shelter will be closed Saturday, June 17 for our 5th Annual Wags to Wishes Gala, and we do not want any pets to miss their chance to find a home while we prepare our facility for our grand fundraiser. This three-day event will feature amazing specials on the over one hundred dogs and cats available for adoption. Keep an eye out on our Facebook page and emails for more details!

Subaru Free Microchip Clinics

Wasatch Front Subaru Retailers is sponsoring free pet microchip clinics at each of their five locations May 20, 2017. Nothing is scarier than losing your pet, and unexpected circumstances can arise where your pet may become lost or misplaced. In those situations, the chance of being reunited is drastically improved if your pet has a microchip that can be scanned by a vet or animal shelter and linked to your current contact information.

Visit our website and register to receive your free pet microchip, courtesy of the Wasatch Front Subaru Retailers and Banfield Pet Hospital. Select your desired time and location at either Nate Wade Subaru, Young Subaru, Doug Smith Subaru, Mark Miller Subaru Midtown or Mark Miller Subaru South Towne. Availability is limited, one microchip per household for dogs or cats only. Read more at www.UtahHumane.org/microchip.

Memorial Day Adoption Special

This Memorial Day, the Humane Society of Utah is holding an amazing adoption special to honor those who have served our country in the armed forces. From Friday, May 26 through Monday, May 29, the Humane Society of Utah and 29 other shelters around the country have partnered with the Animals for Armed Forces Foundation. The mission of the Animals for Armed Forces Foundation is to save abandoned shelter animals by finding them safe and loving homes, and to thank the heroes of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families with the gift of a pet.

For these four days, the Foundation is generously covering 100% of adoption fees to military members and their immediate family. This fee-waived adoption special applies to active duty, reserve, and Veterans of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and National Guard. To receive the adoption discount, a photo ID and ONE of the following is required: military ID, dependent ID, DD-214 and Driver’s License, or NGB Form 22.