



Seniors *for* Pets

GAZETTE

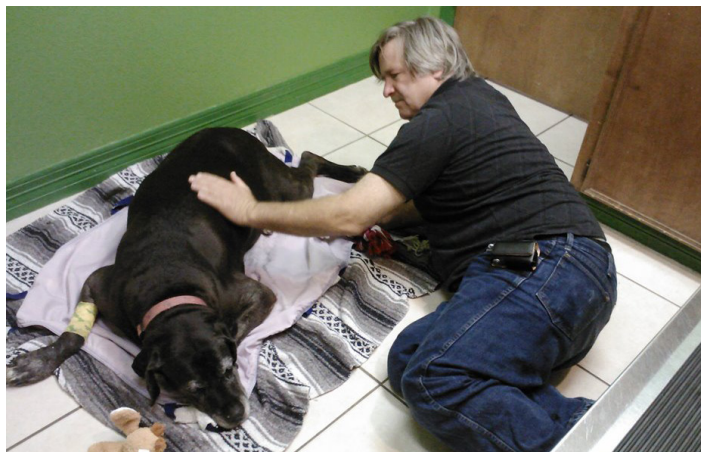
serving senior citizens—both human and four-legged

Paying It Forward

Earlier in the summer, a post on my Facebook page told the story of Sarah Manns of Texas who passed a man pulling his very large dog in a wagon. The dog's gray muzzle indicated its advanced age. It was a hot day, and the dog was covered with a wet towel for protection from the heat. There was even a container of water in the wagon for the dog.

Sarah stopped her car to ask the man if everything was ok or if they needed help. The man, Bill, was quite upset. His nine-year-old dog was very ill and couldn't stand up. Bill told Sarah that his truck had broken down and he had walked to a nearby store to buy the wagon for "Big Girl" so he could pull her to a nearby veterinary clinic. The vet was unable to treat the dog but he charged Bill for the visit anyway. Bill is on disability and his funds were low, but he was willing to spend it all to help his best friend.

Sarah Manns was so touched by Bill's devotion to his dog that she bundled both of them into her car and drove them to her veterinary clinic for treatment. Dr. Johnson of Scott's Veterinary Clinic tried valiantly to save Big Girl.



Bill stayed by his dog's side for 4 days, praying she would recover. Sadly, she could not be saved. Sarah post the story of Big Girl and Bill on her Facebook page and the outpouring of sympathy and offers of help came rolling in. The clinic fielded an amazing number of calls offering donations to pay for Big Girl's treatment. Thanks to all those donations, the hospital treatment, surgery and cremation will be paid, and Big Girl's remains will go home to Bill.

Bill doesn't have Internet and wasn't familiar with Facebook, so Sarah printed out the messages from well-wishers from all over the world and gave them to him. Sarah knew that Bill would be lonely without his companion, so she searched for the

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(Photo by Sarah Manns)

From the Editor Carol North

Hello Readers,

Jim and I eagerly anticipate the various changes that occur in our lives. This year, we will celebrate our 50th anniversary on September 1, and in December, we'll welcome our first great-grandchild. I really don't believe we are this old, but we look forward to each of these events. Our pets don't adapt as easily to changes in their lives, even if they are good ones. Read my article on page 7 about helping dogs and cats deal with the life changes that occur with aging..

The "Read the Label" column this month on page 3 takes on the rendering industry which is part of the pet food manufacturing business. Because this newsletter is animal-oriented, I can't give the space needed to explain how rendered materials are used in so many products we take for granted. Think deodorants, toothpaste, cosmetics and so many more! Try researching "rendered materials in toothpaste, cosmetics" and see what you find. It won't be a "happy" moment, nor will pet food made with rendered materials make your pet's digestive system happy.

On page 4, we welcome back Chris Mucklow Meyer, our Kentucky photo-journalist friend, with another story about life on the farm with Grandma and the animals. Chris is a multi-talented lady. Along with the many hats she wears, she is the photographer for "Cooking and Such," a fantastic magazine edited by Sarasota's Sherry Gore.

Our cover story this month came about as a result of a story I found on Facebook about a man and his dog. Bill's love for his dog touched my heart and I hope you will agree that it was worthy of sharing with all of you. Thank you, Sarah Manns for allowing me to run Bill's story and use your photos.

Carol



Choosing a Cat Breed

Cats are known to be finicky, demanding creatures, but some breeds are more so than others. Just because a breed of cat is popular or especially beautiful, that doesn't mean it would be a good choice for a family of rowdy youngsters or someone who works all the time or a home with a resident dog. Before you bring home a kitty, do a little research to pick one that will fit well with your lifestyle.



Beautiful, exotic Siamese, Aunt Bea, shares her life with Tom & Elaine Smith of Punta Gorda

If you already own a dog and are considering adding a cat to your life, there are several breeds that are particularly tolerant of dogs. Siamese cats are extremely intelligent and friendly. Most, if raised well, enjoy co-existing with a dog. I have found that my Siamese-mix cats are instigators and often start a game that ends with a dog in trouble. It's impossible to be angry with a dog that has just knocked something off a table when I see Lucy swishing her tail and walking away with a self-satisfied expression.

Other cat breeds that usually adapt well to dogs include the Burmese, Ragdoll, Balinese, and Maine Coon. Those breeds are also likely to tolerate children.

Remember than many cat breeds need human companionship to thrive, so be sure the breed you choose fits your lifestyle.

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The Importance of Pets to Seniors

Just what are pets to senior citizens? Are they social support, companion, physical support, emotional support? The human-animal bond fits all sorts of theories. How, you may ask, can a dog or cat meet all of those support goals? According to Dr. Alan Beck, Director of the Center for Human-Animal Bond at Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, the first major evidence of improvement in human health that was tied to pets occurred in 1980 with a “landmark study that found pet owners experienced increased

one-year survival rates after discharge from coronary care units.” A later study in the 1990’s found that pet owners’ one-year survival rates following a heart attack were also higher. Other studies have since shown that pet owners have lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

In our work in Florida with animals and senior citizens, we have seen evidence of what pets do for their older owners. When older people lose their longtime partners, an empty house is almost unbearable at times. A pet provides company,

someone to talk to – even when “that someone” can’t talk back. Eating dinner alone, night after night, is lonely. A companion helps break up the monotony, even if it is a begging dog or curious cat. A dog encourages a senior to get out and exercise. The dog needs the daily walk or two and the human certainly needs to get out in the neighborhood and visit with other people, as well as getting needed exercise.

In short, a pet to walk or feed and clean up after gives a person a reason to get out of bed each morning. If you



Nina Gragg With Abby

know someone who has lost a loved-one, check on them frequently. If they don’t own a pet, talk to them about the possibility of doing so. Some seniors prefer to be free to travel, but many are lonely and would benefit from the company of an animal companion.

Improving Fido’s Fur

The condition of your dog’s fur coat is often an indication of his overall health. Is it shiny and thick, clean and brushed? Or is it dry, matted, dull and showing some hair loss? If it’s the latter, it’s time to improve the condition of Fido’s fur.

If your veterinarian has not examined your dog for physical problems, begin there. Once any physical problems are ruled out, consider his diet. Read the label on the pet food package to be sure it contains no artificial flavorings or colorings or chemical additives. Corn may not bother some animals but if there is a problem with Fido’s fur, skin or digestive system, eliminating corn is the first thing I would try.

Even discount stores, such as Walmart or Target, carry healthy pet foods that won’t break the budget. Learn how to read those labels, and you’ll be able to shop anywhere, knowing you won’t be fooled by food that could potentially harm your pet.

Some ideas for improving your dog’s coat include adding fish oil or raw eggs to his diet. Oils

from cod, salmon or sardines are good for Fido’s skin. You can purchase these oils in liquid form or in capsules, which can be opened and added to pet food.

When my Great Danes were puppies, I mixed one raw egg with ½ cup of cottage cheese and placed that on top of their kibble each morning. This tip came from a well-known breeder of Meistersinger Danes and worked well for my puppies. I recently read that it is best not to feed raw eggs more than twice a week to your dog, but that would be a question for your veterinarian.

Many years ago, I bathed my Yorkie with a mild dog shampoo and finished with a spritzing of my daughter’s “No More Tangles” conditioner. It made Timmy’s fur easy to comb and very silky.

With all the good products on the market today and numerous health pet foods, it should not be difficult to find the solution to any problem with your dog’s fur.

The Whisper of a Horse

by Chris Mucklow Meyer

The last several months at the Meyer Farm have been a whirlwind. My 94-year-old Grandpa passed away in April, leaving me to continue caring for my 93-year-old Grandma. The weeks after Grandpa's passing were difficult for us, dealing with Grandma's dementia. She would wake often with nightmares or sleep-walking, and getting her used to a new routine without her husband of 73 years was an experience I wish upon no one!

Keeping Grandma busy with the animals was, of course, the best therapy I could give her. The Hospice grief counselor came out after the first week, and Grandma thought that if I called a counselor, she must be causing me a problem. So, back to square one. I had to think of different ways to get her through the day and learn a new routine. The day my Grandpa passed away his new dog, Louie, a rescued Chihuahua who joined our family only a month earlier, switched laps and became Grandma's protector.

Day after day, we would get up, do a few tasks in the house and then head outside to the patio. Louie would be on her lap for hours while she enjoyed the fresh air. Layla, our Bernese Mountain Dog would lay at Grandma's feet. I would work outside on the garden and bring Grandma around the house on the golf cart where I was working, while Louie napped happily on her lap.

Grandma enjoys her daily routine with the dogs. One of our cats sleeps by her side each night, taking the place of her husband. Sophie rolls up behind the curve Grandma's legs in the bed and doesn't move until morning. Sophie really misses Grandpa, as he always showered her with more treats than any cat needs in one day. I often find her asleep in Pop's dining room chair during the day.

The best day came about a month after his passing. I drove Grandma in the cart around to the front pasture while I weeded a garden in front of the house. I sat her just outside the gate and immediately, my mare Jules sauntered over to check her out. I ran inside to get my camera. Jules was used to the Old Grumps bringing her wrapped peppermint treats. This lady didn't have



Evelyn Mucklow With Jules

any, but Jules didn't care. She nibbled at Grandma's hair, sniffed her hands, and whispered in her ear, making Grandma giggle like she was 13 years old.

Jules is one of my personal favorites on my Farm. She is a big, soft angel who knows how to make anyone feel better. I really believe Jules has "the gift." If she didn't weigh 1,000 lbs, I'd drive her around to nursing homes and hospitals to do her magic with people.

Just look at Grandma's face in the photo above with Jules! The image speaks for itself. That was the first day that Grandma didn't ask me to repeat the date of Grandpa's passing over 100 times. Once we returned to the house, it seemed like a new calmness had filled her brain, and she was content with what she remembered. Before that afternoon, Grandma spent every waking moment asking me to remind her of the date and time of Grandpa's death, his birthday, and their anniversary. Since her visit with Jules, that information is no longer necessary to her. I don't know how we would all get along without the comfort of our intuitive animals.

Spay-Neuter Myths

Myth: My pet will get fat and lazy, if she's spayed.

Fact: She will only get fat and lazy if she's fed too much and not exercised enough.

Myth: I don't want Fido to feel less of a man.

Fact: Dogs don't understand sexual identity. Neutering won't change his personality and will help him live longer.

Paying It Forward

Continued from Page 1

perfect dog for him and found Spirit, just waiting to be rescued. Bill had made it clear that he would only want a dog that needed to be rescued. Spirit won't replace Big Girl, but she will find her own place in Bill's heart.



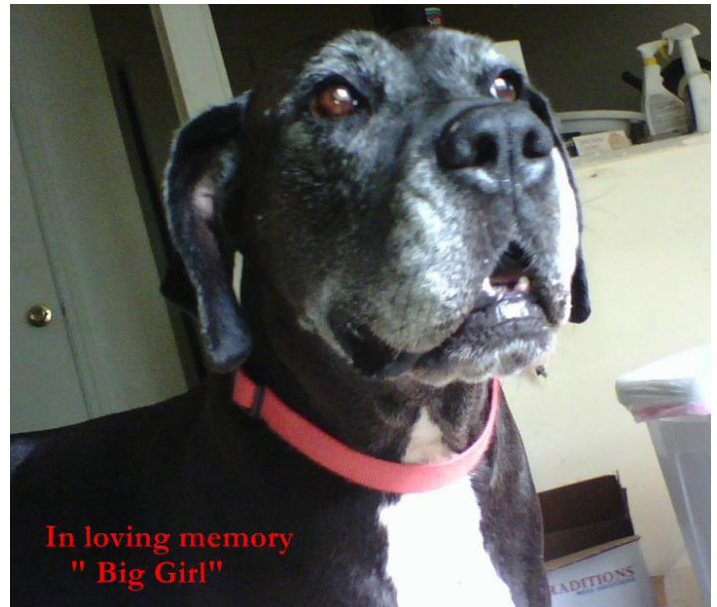
Bill with Spirit, his newly rescued friend

Sarah Manns was surprised to find that so many people felt the same sadness and concern that she did. "My hope is that more people will stop to help someone in need. Foster a companion animal. Save a life by adopting a sweet face that needs to be rescued."

To add to Sarah's "hope," there is a lesson here for all of us. I wonder how many of us would have stopped that day in Bacliff, Texas, to inquire of a stranger about the dog in the wagon.

This story resonated with me, because it typifies what Seniors for Pets is all about – helping others. Sarah's open heart and generous spirit has resulted in huge numbers of people wanting to help Bill. Offers of gift cards to pet stores and grocery stores, and dog food abound. One lady and her husband ordered the parts to repair Bill's truck and according to a post on Sarah's Facebook page, they were heading to Bacliff to repair the truck.

Animals seem to bring out the humanity in us.



In Loving Memory of Big Girl

Bill said it best: "It is animals that teach us humans how to really love."

Look around your own area. Connect with the seniors who live near you and offer help if they need it. Sometimes, just someone to talk to will make a difference in a person's life. Reach out! Follow Sarah Mann's example and extend a hand to someone who needs you.

As writer Penny Elms of "Dog News Examiner" in Washington wrote about Bill and his dog, "This story is the ultimate 'pay it forward' tale."



(All photos courtesy of Sarah Mann)

Meet the Johnsons

Sondra and Larry Johnson have supported Seniors for Pets since its inception almost 3 years ago, and they understand the value that owning pets brings to older people. The Johnsons share their own lives with four beautiful felines.

When they married, Larry brought a cat and Sondra brought a dog into their new family. Both pets eventually retired to the Rainbow Bridge.

In January, 2001, a friend out walking her dog discovered a little black ball of fur. Because of her allergies, she was unable to keep the kitten. At the same time, Sondra was wondering what to get Larry for his upcoming 60th birthday. The friend asked Sondra if she knew someone who would take an all-black kitten, and Larry received the best birthday gift ever! Sondra named her Pasha and although the title resides in Larry's name, if you want to find Pasha, you only have to find Sondra.

After their second cat Ringo died, Pasha was depressed, and the Johnsons became very worried about her. When a friend asked if they wanted a stray cat found on her property, they agreed. The tuxedo cat escaped before she could be delivered, but they did find her tiny kitten, possibly 8 weeks old. The friend lived in Indio Hills, California, in the Coachella Valley, so the new baby was named "Indie." Indie's mama was finally captured and "Shonie" joined the growing Johnson household. Pasha did not like Shonie when she arrived and still doesn't like her, but Indie loved having 2 mommies.

Larry is a Civil Engineer who retired from private practice in California. Sondra retired from her position as Assistant Engineer for the City of Palm Desert, California, in 2004. At the end of that year, they moved to Cave Creek, Arizona.

The family of five settled in to their new retirement in Arizona and then they received a phone call from a neighbor who had found a stray cat roaming the neighborhood. They trapped the handsome gray cat and asked Sondra and Larry to take him. "Smokey" arrived to live with the Johnsons four years ago. He hasn't been well-received by Shonie and Indie, but Pasha likes her new friend.

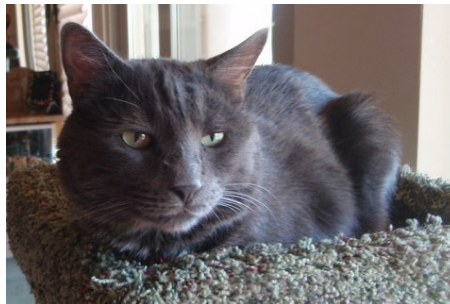
According to Sondra, "We can't imagine life without our precious cats, and we treasure each of them." Seniors for Pets was delighted to deliver a special pet gift basket to the Johnsons for their special kitties.



Enjoying all the new toys.



Larry Johnson With Pasha



Handsome Smokey



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Living With Your Aging Dog

Gator, our Weimaraner, turned 9 years old in July. He is slowing down, and his age is showing. Much of his day is spent napping. This wonderful dog who suffers from severe separation anxiety and never left my side when I was home, now prefers to nap in the peace and quiet of our bedroom – alone. He used to enjoy the dog park. Now, the presence of the other dogs just irritates him. He struggles with various digestive issues, and he can be quite snarky with Maggie, our Bulldog.

When dogs age, everything about them seems to slow down and/or change. If they have received regular exercise all of their lives, they will probably continue some form of that activity level, but some adjustments may be necessary. The daily walk may need to be shortened. If your dog is a swimmer, that's wonderful exercise for an older pet. It builds muscle strength but doesn't put unnecessary stress on the dog's joints.

Cesar Millan suggests you tailor your activities to fit your older dog's abilities. He even says that "room service" is acceptable at this stage of a dog's life. "It's ok to bring your dog's meals to him instead of making him walk to the kitchen."

Don't punish your dog if his bladder control isn't what it used to be. Talk to your veterinarian. There are medications to help with bladder issues in older dogs.

Companionship is important. Gator still loves car rides and if that is mentioned, the old boy will beat us to the door. Even a short ride to the bank makes him happy, and he loves to stop in at Starbuck's. One of the baristas knows him by name and always has a treat for him. It's those "little things" in life that mean so much to an older pet.

Feed him a nutritious diet suitable for his age and give him lots of love. Enjoy his final years and treasure the memories you have built with your furry best friend.

"I am spending my summer learning how to build a money-making website. Feeding Fido and Fluffy will soon be ready to launch, and I'm excited to share the news with all of you! This process involves bringing ads to the site. Clicks on those ads will pay money to me, which will benefit Seniors for Pets. Next month, I'll be asking all of you to look at the site, click on various pages, spending just a few minutes with it. No purchases – just a few minutes of your time. More come on this unique new way to help Seniors for Pets at no cost to you."

ZOONOTICS BEWARE: Demodectic Mange

When I was a child, the sight of a wandering neighborhood dog with any kind of skin problem struck fear in the hearts of all the Mamas. It was common to hear: "Don't you dare touch that dog. I think he has mange." Children were taught to steer clear of anything that could possibly be that dreaded skin condition. Of course, none of us knew a thing about mange except that it was usually a death sentence for the unlucky dog.

We talked about Sarcoptic Mange in an earlier issue. This month we will concentrate on Demodectic Mange. It is treatable with shampoos, lotions, dips, and a high-quality diet. Aggressive cases require more aggressive treatment, although studies show that 30-50% of dogs with a generalized, aggressive form of Demodectic Mange will recover on their own without treatment.

Demodectic Mange, also known as red mange, generally affects young dogs. It is caused by the mite, *demodex canis*, which lives on bodies of nearly all adult dogs without causing any problems. Young dogs with poorly-developed immune systems are most likely to be negatively affected. The mite is transferred from virtually every mother dog soon after birth by direct contact. Most puppies are immune to the effects of the mite and will never develop a case of mange.

Symptoms of Demodectic Mange are lesions – or sores – on the dog's body that develop after 4 months of age. They are crusty, red, and cause hair loss and are first noticeable around the head and legs. It is important that dogs with Demodectic Mange be spayed or neutered, because the animal's suppressed immune system can be passed on to the puppies.

If mange appears in older dogs, vets will look for an underlying condition, such as Cushing's Disease, cancer or heartworm disease. Humans cannot contract Demodectic Mange from dogs. Because there is some confusion about this, I chose to write about it in this Zoonotics Beware column. Sarcoptic Mange is highly contagious to humans. My research shows that humans can be infected with Demodectic Mange but not from dogs and it is rare. I know someone from the animal welfare arena who swears she caught Demodectic Mange from a bear, but that is a story for another day.

Sarasota Humane Animals Need Your Help!



CROSBY

Meet Crosby, a Beagle-mix weighing about 33 lbs. Crosby is a cool dog with many great qualities. He knows how to sit, lie down and shake on command. He's an outgoing, playful dog that likes to have fun. Loves to play ball! He's terrific for children aged 5 and up. Head down to HSSC and meet this wonderful boy!



CHARLIE

Hi, my name is Charlie! I may look like a grumpy old man, but I'm really quite a love. As you can see, I'm a very handsome Persian cat. Due to my family's allergies, they made a difficult decision to find me a new home. I am mellow, friendly, a couch potato and capable of living with other cats and dogs. If you want a couch potato to lay around with, please come and get me (Front and back declawed!)

Probiotics & Prebiotics

Probiotics are essentially the good bacteria that help your gastrointestinal tract ward off bad bacteria. When you feed your dog dry food containing probiotics, you are helping Fido's digestive tract to operate efficiently.

Probiotics protect the dog from infection, with the digestion of food, regulate hormone levels, remove toxins from the body, and reduce inflammation. It's certainly something to consider if your dog's immune system is compromised by chronic illness, pregnancy or old age. You can find probiotics in several commercial dog foods.

Prebiotics are "non-digestible food ingredients that stimulate the growth and activity of digestive system bacteria that are beneficial to your dog's health." (www.iams.com) To be sure you are getting the best prebiotic, check the ingredients label on pet food and look for "fructooligosaccharides" or FOS on it. Prebiotics support the immune system, appear to reduce inflammation, and possibly ward off skin allergies in puppies.

Larry & Sondra Johnson

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Larry Johnson
with Smokey
& Pasha



Sondra Johnson with Indie