

**Sunday Column – Nobody's Perfect**

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Black Friday was a whirlwind of activity at PAWS Humane. We received a Share the Love grant from Subaru to subsidize free adoptions all weekend. On Black Friday alone we adopted out 70 dogs, cats and rabbits. Total animals placed during the three day period was 105, a record for PAWS. My favorite part of an event like this is when I get to walk around the shelter after everyone has gone home and there is so much possibility for new lifesaving in front of us.

There are those who think we shouldn't give animals away for free because adopters will not value them. According to the ASPCA, who studies such things, the amount of the adoption or purchase fee does not correlate to the bond a person develops with his or her pet. It is not predictive of the level of commitment one has for a pet or of how long human and pet will be together.

We've seen this demonstrated here at PAWS Humane when someone who paid as much as \$3,000 for a purebred dog surrenders her within the first year, a not uncommon occurrence. On the flip side, we see weekly Facebook posts of alumni adopted years ago by humans who still beam with pride for their beloved pets.

I hope that one day dogs and cats will be as hard to come by in the Southeast as they are in the Northeast. It seems like an uphill battle right now but one day we are going to reach the tipping point in birthrate and pet overpopulation will be a thing of the past. Until then, I make no apology for free adoptions. It is a chance at a good life and it beats certain death in an animal control shelter.

This week we are slowly replenishing our dog kennels with some amazing animals. Ray Charles, a blind pit bull, is a current staff favorite. He is super sweet and loves both people and other dogs; you would never know he came out of an abusive home. We have learned that he was completely blind at birth and he does run into walls if he doesn't have a seeing-eye person to guide him. What this boy needs is a stable home where he can learn his way around and feel loved and safe.

Although pit bulls are a common find at animal control most of the dogs we've pulled this week are of varied breeds. One such dog we call Dilly Dilly, is a gorgeous young Husky. Colt looks like a Beagle/Catahoula mix and sports one blue eye. Some are mature six and seven year olds, others are under a year. They are all looking for a loving home to grow into the self-actualized dogs they are all meant to be.

Sitting next to me as I write is Sampson. He's a bit fearful and is going to be a tad more challenging to place. Rather than a kennel, Sampson is living in my office, a kind of Snoopy's dog house, with a small couch and soft chairs for my guests, humane and animals alike.

We hope this quiet home-like setting will help him feel safe and he will acclimate better when he goes to a real home. A steady stream of visitors come by each day to say "hi" so Sampson can practice his social skills and learn that a stranger is worth getting to know.

Sampson is highly intelligent. He revels in the many toys that have been dropped off over the past few days. His accuracy is nearly 100% when catching a tossed treat. He knows sit and shake and once he deems you're safe he can't wait to show you his tricks and snuggle up to you. Today was a good day and I'm feeling hopeful for Sampson that he will find just the right home.

This holiday season please consider how you can help a shelter animal. Donate, foster, volunteer, or even adopt. Any one of these provides a great return on investment.

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