

# Flagstaff-Sedona Dog magazine

Also Serving Camp Verde, Cottonwood, Jerome, & NAZ

April/May 2026  
FlagstaffSedonaDog.com



## Tucker's Take

Meet S.A.R.A.

Say 'I Do'!

Must Love Dogs

Who Needs A Trainer?

Introducing Our Cover Dog ~ Lily

TO A GOOD HOME  
**FREE**  
ALWAYS



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# The Territorial K9 Stroll

and Adopt-A-Thon

## Saturday April 25th 2026 9AM-1PM

Memory Park 1020 West Palomino Chino Valley, AZ  
Check In at 9AM Stroll starts @ 10AM



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Hi! I'm Officer Sirius from the Chino Valley K-9 Unit. My Handler Officer Sellers and I will be leading the walk!  
You and your canine friends should join us!



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*\$25 Registration fee will be collected by cash or check only.  
Check-in begins at 9AM*

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100% of walk proceeds go to the Chino Valley Police K9 Unit



# Flagstaff-Sedona Dog

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### **FLAGSTAFF-SEDONA DOG MAGAZINE**

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Stacey Wittig





## It's easy to enter your furry best friend!

- 1) Choose a backdrop for your picture. Set your camera on large or high and capture a quality shot of your canine pal.
- 2) Send your picture to:

**INFO@REDDOGPUBLISHING.NET**

**Please include your name, dog's name, address and phone with your entry. Entries without owners info will not be accepted.**

### Winner receive:



- 1) A \$50. Gift Certificate
- 2) 50 copies of Flagstaff Sedona Dog
- 3) A personalized social media post congratulating your dog as the winner and an electronic copy of the printed cover



**All entries are judged for the edition submitted..**

You can enter for EVERY edition! One entry per dog, per edition.

**Deadline Dates - 1/1, 3/1, 5/1, 7/1, 9/1 and 11/1**

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CONTENT



NEVER MISS ANOTHER DOG!

**Flagstaff-Sedona  Dog magazine**



## Lily, Our Cover Dog

**Name:** I'm Lilly.

**Who took your picture?** My sister, Everleigh.

**Hometown:** I live in beautiful Flagstaff.

**Age:** I'm 6.

**Favorite brand of kibble:** Natural Balance Salmon and Brown Rice and Pumpkin.

**Favorite people food:** Carrot cake and steak.

**Favorite toy:** My mom's socks.

**Favorite outdoor activity:** Going for walks in the woods and checking on my mole holes along the walking path

**Favorite indoor activity:** Playing bitey-hands with Dad.

**Favorite nap spot:** My favorite nap spot is on the recliner footrest.

**Fitness regimen:** Mom and I walk three miles a day to and from school with Everleigh.

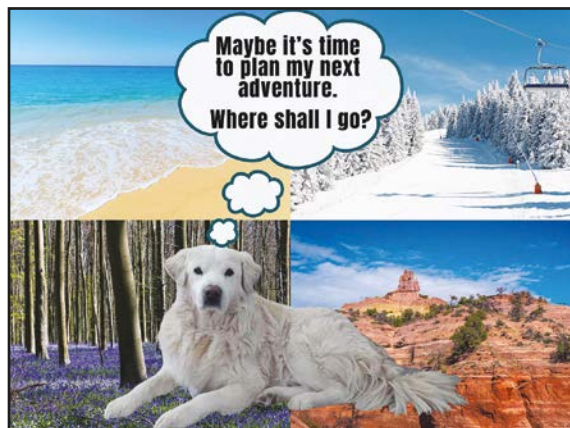
**Describe your perfect canine pal:** I like dogs who like to wrestle and chase.

**Describe your perfect day:** Going for my morning walk in the woods and coming home to my milk-bone. Then I wait for Everleigh to get out of school so I can go get her. Then I eat my dinner and take a nap until my people are ready for my after dinner walk.

I get my schmorgus board of a variety of treats, and when it's time to go to bed I patrol the backyard to see if there are any new smells. Then I go snuggle Mom and Dad.



# Tucker's Take



## Shocking Developments

I don't know what it's like in the two-legged world, but for me, coming home after a vacation sometimes makes me want to turn right back to the truck with the leash in my mouth and hit the road for a while longer.

I barely got into the house when Hazel had to relate every single thing that had crossed her mind since I'd been gone. She yammered at me while Dad removed my travel vest and collar. Pru and Keira were too busy checking every new scent on me and my gear... and on Dad.

Disengaging from the scrum in the foyer, the first order of business was doing my business outside and checking the overall state of the backyard—with Hazel still chattering away direct on my heels even while I paced from one end of the yard to the other to find today's perfect spot. While trying to concentrate on the impending matter at hand I kindly, but firmly requested Hazel take a minute and figure out the most pressing thing she wanted me to know. The welcomed silence helped, and while I was walking away from a job well done, Hazel blurted out, "I think I created a monster."

"What monster would that be Haze?" I asked.

"Pru. She's going to help me with my column, or take it over I think, and she has gone off the rails with crazy impossible storylines and I don't know if all this was a good idea or not and it's so good to have you back to fix this before my work is all ruined forever by Prudence."

There was only one pertinent question I could think of to get a handle on what was really going on here. "Does Mom know about this situation, Haze?"

"Yes, Mom knows and actually it was her idea to begin with."

"Then it will all work out," I said, "and I can assure you all your work will not get ruined. Is there anything else I should know at the moment?"

Hazel sat and thought for a minute and whispered, "I saw Mom put a big pack of tortillas in the fridge."

Along with any food Hazel has ever know or heard about (barring the evil dill pickle), tortillas are an object of intense desire for her.

"Thanks for the update, Haze, now let me un-

wind from my trip."

She paddled off, satisfied for the moment. Before I could get back into the house to find a comfortable spot in front of the floor fan or on the bed, Keira came trotting out.

She stopped about three lengths away and stared at me. Whenever Keira is silent it means she has something to say. If she is chatting away, I'm sad to say this, but it means she really doesn't have much to say of note.

"Yes Keira?"

"Mom said."

"Mom said what, Keira?"

"Pru says I can't."

"Can't what, Keira?"

"Pru says there's no light in my attic."

My patience started to wear thin. "Deputy Keira. What did Mom say that Pru said you can't?"

"I probably said too much and spoke out of turn." And with that Keira headed back into the house.

Well, now maybe I can get a nap. Except Pru is standing in the doorway with the short fur on her hind quarters standing on end. She has discovered that if she rolls on her back on the wool rug for long enough, she builds up a strong static charge and promptly looks for the nearest pack member to share it with.

"I'm in no mood to be zapped Pru. Step aside."

"If I step outside, I'll discharge. I'll be right back, Tuck."

Pru disappeared inside for a moment and I heard Dad way off in the house, "Hey Pru. Ouch, knock it off!"

Pru reappeared in the doorway, grinning.

Curiosity outweighed the desire to nap for the moment. I thought I'd try to unravel Keira's riddle she left me with.

"Pru, do you have any idea about what Mom told Keira to do?"



Pru (L) and Keira (R)

Pru snorted, "You mean like, 'Give me that dryer ball, get off the bed I'm trying to change it, quit whining, give me back that dish towel, stop barking at the neighbor, move over you're hogging the bed?'"

"Well, not so much that stuff. Maybe more like something Mom said that you think Keira can't do."

The smart-aleck smile faded from Pru's muzzle, and she drew closer. "Mom thinks you're old enough to maybe think about retiring, and possibly Keira could help you and eventually take over."

"Wait, what?" I wasn't ready to hear something like that, especially from an upstart like Pru.

"Look, old man, you got plenty of fire in the belly. You just keep at it as long as you want because, in my opinion, Keira's not ready and no one wants to read endless columns on how Golden's are the best breed evah and how beautiful she is and how she's Mom's bestest buddy and all that stuff."

I barely heard what Pru said, as it was occurring to me that maybe Mom was on to something. It is getting harder for me to do certain things. Recovery time is taking longer. My mind does get lost sometimes, and I'm finding that just hanging with my senior sister through the day is satisfying enough on most days.

The urge to rest returned, and I was sure Dad may have gotten a headstart. Heavy thoughts and decisions could wait while heavy eyelids took precedence.

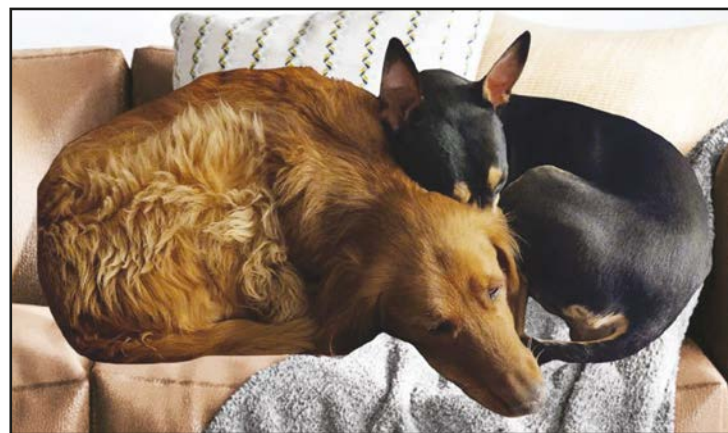
I walked through the kitchen to slake my thirst and, during grateful laps, I heard Pru wiggling behind me on the wool rug. Before I could locate Dad, Pru had raced past me to find snoring Dad in bed and planted her current voltage in Dad's ear with her wet nose.

She raced past me with a mischievous smile while Dad stood in the hallway reiterating that certain behaviors were *not* to be repeated by certain four-leggeds.

Keira stood next to Dad and full-body wagged, as hearing Pru being read the riot act was one of her favorite activities.

I paddled past the two of them and made it to the foot of the bed. As I found the best comfortable position and closed my eyes, I knew it would all work out somehow. Even with this oddball pack.

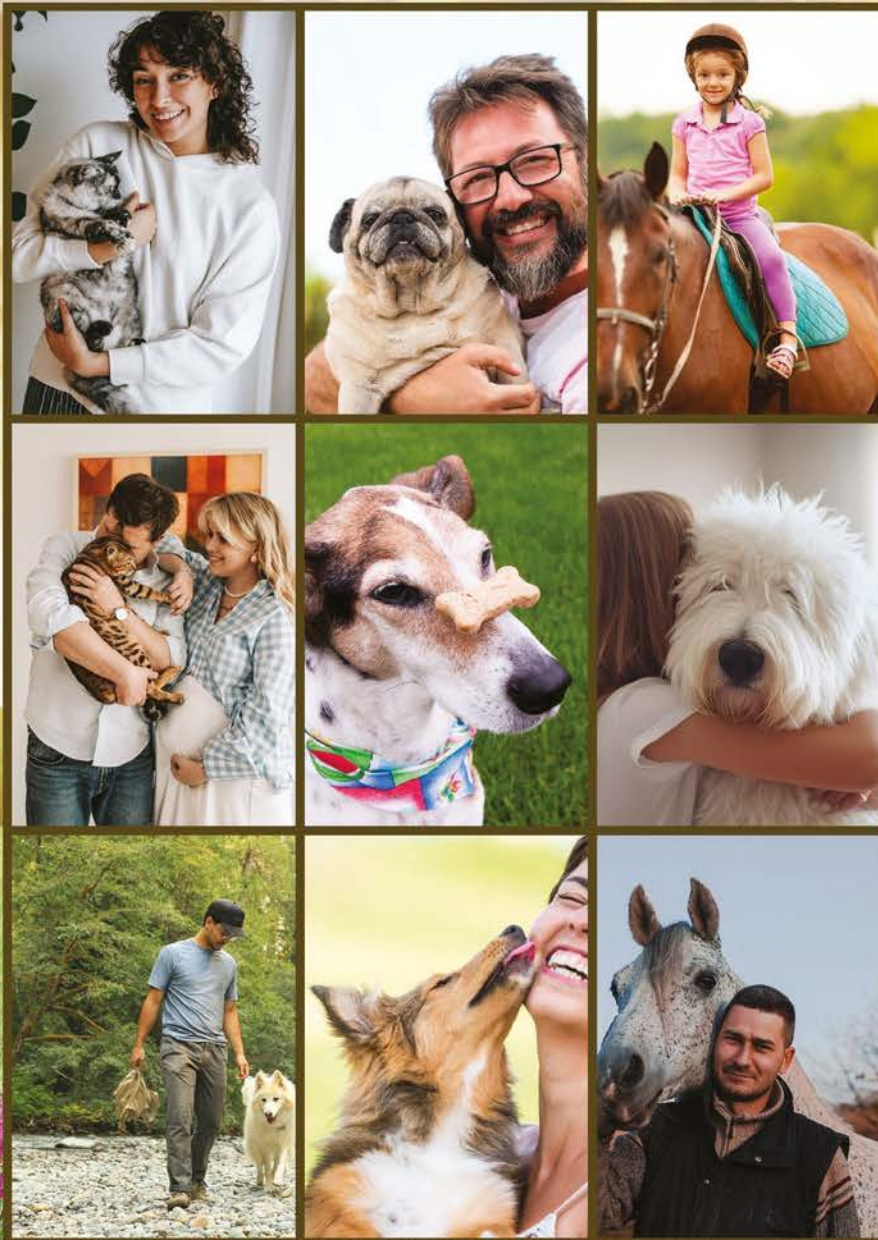
~Tucker Oso



Keira (L) and Pru (R)

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# CALENDAR

**Events are subject to change. Please contact the event sponsor to confirm date and details.**

## ONGOING ADOPTIONS & EVENTS

### HIGH COUNTRY HUMANE

- Low Cost Vaccination Clinic. 1st Sat every month, 8a-10a. 11665 N US Hwy 89, Flagstaff. No appt necessary; 1st come/1st served; up to 40 cats/dogs total each clinic. Info: [tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4](http://tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4) (click on the calendar event); [highcountryhumane.org](http://highcountryhumane.org), 928-526-0742.
- Monthly Dog Adoption Event—1st Sat every month, 11a-2p. Corner of Babbitt's Backcountry Outfitters, 12 E Aspen Ave, Flagstaff. Meet, play, adopt.
- Monthly Dog Adoption Event—2nd Sat every month, 10a-2p., Flagstaff

Mall (inside by fireplace), 4650 US-89. Meet, play, adopt.

- Monthly Dog Adoption Event—Check calendar for dates/times: [tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4](http://tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4). Dark Sky Brewing Co., 103 W Birch Ave, Flagstaff. Meet, play, adopt.
- Pints and Poses—Puppy Yoga: monthly dog adoption event. Info & register: [tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4](http://tinyurl.com/2wp6yxf4). Dark Sky Brewing Co., 103 W Birch Ave, Flagstaff. All ages. Relaxed yoga session w/wagging tails. All puppies are looking for their forever homes. 50% ticket proceeds benefit High Country Humane.

### YAVAPAI HUMANE SOCIETY (YHS)

Onsite Adoptions and Lost & Found Department M-F Noon-5:30 by appt. Sat 11:30-4:30. 1625 Sundog Ranch Rd., Prescott. Please call for additional details or info 928-445-2666.

### YAVAPAI HUMANE SOCIETY THRIFT STORE

Tue-Sat 9-4. Donations accepted Wed-Sat 9-2. Every Tue is 25% OFF for Veterans & Active Duty Military. Every Wed is 25% OFF for Seniors (55 & over). 1601 Iron Springs Road, Prescott 928-445-5668

## APRIL & MAY EVENTS

### HERITAGE PARK ZOO

#### APRIL

- Apr 5 Eggstravaganza
- Apr 11 Breakfast with Ambassador Animals
- Apr 18 Behind the Scenes Photo Tour
- Apr 25 Community Appreciation Day (FREE Day)

#### MAY

- May 1 Zoo by Moonlight
- May 2 Evening with Wolves
- May 9 Breakfast with Eagles & Raptor Friends
- May 16 Walk on the Wild Side
- May 23 After Dark at the Park (Adult)
- May 30 ZooLittles
- May 30 Sip & Paint (Adult)
- May 31 Zoo by Moonlight

### PAWSOME PET FAIR CELEBRATING ALL THINGS ANIMAL

May 15 & 16, The Center on Rosser, FREE ADMISSION. Local shelters, demonstrations, Pups on the Patio, & more. Meet local shelters, enjoy demonstrations, visit Pups on the Patio, and more.

### CHINO VALLEY EQUESTRIAN PARK EVENTS

For further info or to register online, visit [cvequestrianpark.org](http://cvequestrianpark.org)

**OBSTACLE CLINIC & CHALLENGE**  
April 18-19, w/ Trainer Megan Bennett of Sunset Ranch at Horses with Heart. Register: Megan at 602.565.1514.

### ALL-BREED OPEN SCHOOLING HORSE SHOW

May 2. Info/register: [events@cvequestrianpark.org](mailto:events@cvequestrianpark.org)/2025openschoolingshow

### MINIATURE HORSE ASSOCIATION FUN SHOW

May 16. Info: [events@cvequestrianpark.org](mailto:events@cvequestrianpark.org)

### OBSTACLE CLINIC & CHALLENGE

May 23-24, w/ Trainer Megan Bennett of Sunset Ranch at Horses with Heart. Register: Megan at 602.565.1514.

### COWBOY CHALLENGE/ EXCA RACE SERIES

May 30-31. Presented by High Plain Tumblers. Info/register: [events@cvequestrianpark.org](mailto:events@cvequestrianpark.org)



# Rescue Resources

For an expanded view of Rescue Resources, visit [PrescottDog.com](http://PrescottDog.com) & [FlagstaffSedonaDog.com](http://FlagstaffSedonaDog.com)



<b>AARF ANIMAL RESCUE</b> 6639 S. Country Rd., Mayer <a href="mailto:aarfanimalrescue@gmail.com">aarfanimalrescue@gmail.com</a> 928-925-7219, <a href="http://aarfrescue.net">aarfrescue.net</a>	<b>CIRCLE L RANCH ANIMAL RESCUE &amp; SANCTUARY</b> Daytime 928-925-1926, Prescott Valley	<b>HUMANE SOCIETY OF WICKENBURG</b> 4000 Industrial Rd, Wickenburg 928-684-8801 <a href="http://wickenburghumane.com">wickenburghumane.com</a>	<b>SUNRISE SANCTUARY &amp; RESCUE</b> Prescott, <a href="http://sunrisesanctuaryrescue.org">sunrisesanctuaryrescue.org</a> <a href="mailto:sunrisesanctuaryrescue@gmail.com">sunrisesanctuaryrescue@gmail.com</a>
<b>ARIZONA BORDER COLLIE RESCUE</b> Tempe, 480-422-5366 <a href="http://azbcr.org">azbcr.org</a>	<b>COCONINO HUMANE ASSOCIATION</b> 3501 E Butler Ave, Flagstaff 928-526-1076, <a href="http://coconinohumane.org">coconinohumane.org</a>	<b>LITTLE ORPHAN ANIMALS</b> Mayer, 678-206-7505 <a href="mailto:orphananimals@aol.com">orphananimals@aol.com</a>	<b>TUBA CITY HUMANE SOCIETY</b> 928-793-2364, <a href="http://tubacityhumanesociety.org">tubacityhumanesociety.org</a>
<b>ARK CAT SANCTUARY</b> Parks, 928-635-5909 <a href="http://arkcatsanctuary.org">arkcatsanctuary.org</a>	<b>DESERT LABRADOR RETRIEVER RESCUE</b> Glendale, 480-899-5227 <a href="http://dlrraz.org">dlrraz.org</a>	<b>MISS KITTY'S CAT HOUSE</b> 928-445-5411 <a href="http://misskittyscathouse.org">misskittyscathouse.org</a>	<b>UNDERDOG ANIMAL RESCUE &amp; REHAB</b> Moab, 435-260-8033 <a href="http://underdogrescuemoab.org">underdogrescuemoab.org</a> <a href="mailto:info@underdogrescuemoab.org">info@underdogrescuemoab.org</a>
<b>BARB'S DOG RESCUE</b> Puerto Penasco, MX <a href="http://barbsdogrescue.org">barbsdogrescue.org</a> , 928-899-1426 <a href="mailto:barbsdogrescue@gmail.com">barbsdogrescue@gmail.com</a>	<b>DOGTREE PINES SENIOR DOG SANCTUARY</b> 1525 S Dogtree Lane, Prescott <a href="mailto:olddogs@dogtreepines.com">olddogs@dogtreepines.com</a> 667-364-8733, <a href="http://dogtreepines.com">dogtreepines.com</a>	<b>PEOPLE FOR PAWS AZ RESCUE</b> <a href="http://peopleforpawsaz.org">peopleforpawsaz.org</a> <a href="mailto:Info@peopleforpawsaz.org">Info@peopleforpawsaz.org</a>	<b>UNITED ANIMAL FRIENDS</b> Prescott, 928-778-2924 <a href="http://unitedanimalfriends.org">unitedanimalfriends.org</a>
<b>BLACKHAT HUMANE SOCIETY</b> Native American Reservation Animals 928-899-3942 <a href="mailto:blackhathumane@gmail.com">blackhathumane@gmail.com</a>	<b>FREEDOM FRENCHIE RESCUE</b> Mesa, (630) 345-0493 <a href="http://freedomfrenchierescue.org">freedomfrenchierescue.org</a>	<b>PETEY'S PLAYGROUND</b> 22448 State Highway 89, Yarnell <a href="mailto:peteysplayground@gmail.com">peteysplayground@gmail.com</a> 928-713-1375, <a href="http://peteysplayground.org">peteysplayground.org</a>	<b>VERDE VALLEY HUMANE SOCIETY</b> 1520 W. Mingus Ave, Cottonwood 928-634-7387 <a href="http://VerdeValleyHumaneSociety.org">VerdeValleyHumaneSociety.org</a>
<b>BLUE MOON RESCUE &amp; SANCTUARY</b> 1851 E Perkinsville Rd, Chino Valley 928-925-7724, <a href="http://bluemoonrescue.org">bluemoonrescue.org</a>	<b>HEELING HEELERS HEARTS</b> Surprise, 623-226-2749 <a href="http://azblueheeler.com">azblueheeler.com</a>	<b>RED ROSE INSPIRATION FOR ANIMALS</b> Thriftique: 31 Bell Rock Plaza, Sedona <a href="mailto:info@redroseinspiration.org">info@redroseinspiration.org</a> 928-282-5278, <a href="http://redroseinspiration.org">redroseinspiration.org</a>	<b>YAVAPAI HUMANE SOCIETY</b> 1625 Sundog Ranch Rd, Prescott 928-445-2666 <a href="http://yavapaihumane.org">yavapaihumane.org</a>
<b>CATTY SHACK RESCUE</b> Prescott, (928) 778-6951 <a href="http://cattyshackrescue.org">cattyshackrescue.org</a>	<b>HIGH COUNTRY HUMANE</b> 11665 N, US-89, Flagstaff 928-526-0742 <a href="http://highcountryhumane.org">highcountryhumane.org</a>	<b>RESCUE A GOLDEN OF ARIZONA</b> Phoenix, 602-404-9663 <a href="http://golden-retriever.org">golden-retriever.org</a>	<b>YAVAPAI HUMANE SOCIETY EQUINE CENTER</b> (928) 515-4947, Chino Valley <a href="http://yavapaihumane.org">yavapaihumane.org</a>
<b>CHINO VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER</b> 1904 Voss Drive, Chino Valley <a href="mailto:cvas@chinoaz.net">cvas@chinoaz.net</a> , 928-636-4223 x7 <a href="http://chinoaz.net/164/Dog-Adoption">chinoaz.net/164/Dog-Adoption</a>	<b>HUMANE SOCIETY OF SEDONA</b> 2115 Shelby Dr 928-282-4679 <a href="http://humanesocietyofsedona.org">humanesocietyofsedona.org</a>	<b>SAVING PAWS RESCUE SHEPHERDS &amp; MALINOIS</b> Glendale, 480-737-6089 <a href="http://savingpawsrescueaz.org">savingpawsrescueaz.org</a>	<b>YAVAPAI HUMANE TRAPPERS ANIMAL RESCUE</b> Chino Valley <a href="http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org">yavapaihumanetrappers.org</a>



**AREA DOG PARKS**  
**FLAGSTAFF DOG PARKS**  
Thorpe Park – 788 N Thorpe Road, Flagstaff  
Bushmaster Park – 3150 N Alta Vista Dr, Flagstaff

**SEDONA DOG PARK**  
April 1 thru Oct 1: 6am-8pm • Oct. 1 thru April 1: 7am- 7pm  
Turn north on Soldier's Pass Road off State Route 89A, Sedona.

**COTTONWOOD DOG PARK AT RIVERFRONT PARK**  
Dawn to Dusk  
Riverfront Park Drive & N 10th St, Cottonwood

# Loving With Awareness: Everyday Commitment to the Human-Animal Bond

By Jennifer Baker

A woman once told me she felt silly for grieving her dog while he was still alive. He was slowing down, sleeping more, his face whitening with age. "Nothing has happened yet," she said, "but my heart already hurts." What she was feeling has a name: anticipatory grief.

When we hear the word grief, we often think of what comes after loss. But grief can also arrive earlier, while our companion is still with us. This is a natural response to loving deeply and sensing that time is precious.

Loving an animal companion asks us to open our hearts in ways we don't always name. Animals share our homes, our routines, and milestones. They greet us at the door, sit beside us through life's ups and downs, and witness the quiet rhythms of our days.

As an animal chaplain, part of my work is helping people recognize that these feelings are a normal part of love. Anticipatory grief is not a failure to stay positive, but the heart acknowledging how deeply attached we are.

When people are given permission to name this feeling, something softens. Instead of pushing fear away, they can turn toward their animals with greater presence, appreciating the days they have.

I sit with people and help slow things down, supporting them in creating small, personal practices that fit naturally into their daily routines. Caring with intention rather than reacting can be empowering for people.

Being an animal's guardian is not about perfection. It's about presence and intention. It means learning their preferences, noticing subtle changes, and doing our best to support their well-being as their needs evolve. The relationship is built on responsibility, but also on deep companionship and mutual trust.

Ritual can be a gentle and powerful part of this relationship, and it doesn't have to be formal. Pausing for a moment of gratitude, silently thanking them for their companionship can mean so much. Celebrating adoption anniversaries or birthdays with a special walk or a quiet mo-



*Paws...for Compassion LLC*

ment of reflection can bring meaning to ordinary time.

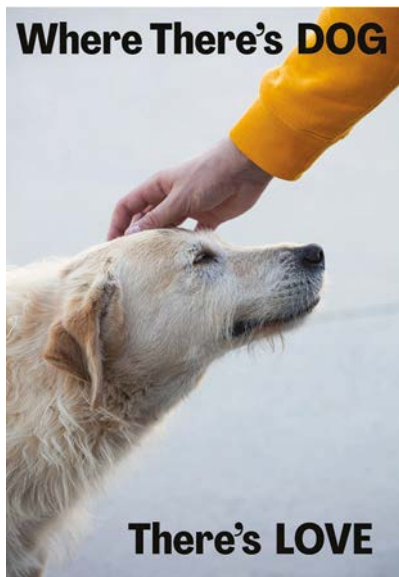
Daily connection practices—slow breaths together, a hand resting on their body, soft forehead kisses, gentle massage, or whispered blessings shift routine care into conscious connection.

These moments remind us we are nurturing a relationship, not just completing tasks.

As our companions age, rituals naturally adapt. Walks may become shorter but more mindful. Bedtime routines might include extra blankets and soothing words. These practices help us stay grounded in devotion rather than being swept away by anxiety.

Loss does not mean letting go of our companions; it means learning to carry love in a new way. The relationship doesn't end but can transform. Simple rituals of remembrance, meaningful keepsakes, or quiet moments of reflection can bring comfort and help us feel that connection still living on.

These mindful moments help us honor the bond we share, turning love into a lived, conscious commitment for as long as we are given the gift of their presence, and beyond.





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**LOVING WITH AWARENESS**



**Paws for Precious**

Precious was abandoned in December of 2025 at a Chapter House on the Navajo Nation, near the Utah and Arizona border. For about three weeks she survived by the kindness of strangers who gave her food and water. We're sure that each morning Precious woke up and hoped someone would take her home, or maybe her people would come back for her.



The one thing everyone noticed about this special pup was the way she was walking. She uses her front legs to pull herself forward, with her back legs somewhat supporting her hind end. Precious was missing the lower portion of her hind legs: where her paws should have been were only stumps. It looked like she was walking on the calloused end of her metatarsals bone. Everyone likely felt so sorry for her, but no one took her home.

Someone finally started calling several animal rescues, trying to get help for her. That's where Yavapai Humane Trappers (YHT) came into the picture. Katrina and her volunteers drove to Precious and rescued her. They brought her back to Prescott and took her to the Prescott Animal Hospital. There they took x-rays of her back legs and concluded she was probably born this way.

Although Precious can get around with her deformed hind legs, it's a struggle for her, and she is already developing arthritis in her hips. This is where the idea of prosthetics was born. With prosthetics on her hind legs, her spine and hips would be in the correct alignment, and she wouldn't be putting so much strain on her front legs.

Precious has been living with Laura, her foster Mom, for a while now. She is a sweet, eager to please Cattle Dog mix, about 1.5 years old. She is spayed and up to date on her vaccines. She loves people and would like to be friends with every-

one she meets. She now has a soft, warm and dry place to sleep, her own yard, and yummy food that just shows up in her bowl twice a day. The only thing missing is being able to walk without pain, and a permanent home.

We are in the process of taking Precious to a clinic in Tucson called A Loyal Companion. They are mobility specialists and will fit Precious with prosthetics. She had her first appointment by video last month; Kate, one of the Mobility Specialist and founders of A Loyal Companion, evaluated her. She watched her walk and was able to look at her hind legs up close. Kate feels Precious would benefit from being fitted with prosthetics.

Her next appointment involves a trip to Tucson to have molds/casts made of her hind legs. It's an expensive endeavor—about \$5,000 once everything is done, and the prosthetics are fitted. Precious is worth it, and we are going to make this happen, but we need your help.

We have started a GoFundMe page—PAWS FOR PRECIOUS—created by Donna. You can find it at [gofund.me/f6a8b27ed](https://gofund.me/f6a8b27ed)

If you're interested in learning more about Precious, please visit our Facebook page. There are several posts about her there, and you can also follow her progress.

We also have a website: [yavapai-humanetrappers.org](http://yavapai-humanetrappers.org). If you are interested in adopting Precious or one of the other many dogs we've rescued, you can fill out a pre-adoption form there. Thank you for taking the time to read Precious' story.



It probably started out like any other day for Husktina, a striking husky living deep on the reservation. Until, that is, she found herself shoved out of a vehicle near a busy highway and small shopping center. And while she had clearly been loved, as she was friendly and trusting, she was also pregnant. And puppies are an inconvenience.



A local animal lover and Blackhat (BH) volunteer watched her for a few days as Husktina chased cars out of the parking lot and onto the highway. She seemed to be thinking the cars might hold her people, and they didn't realize she had been left behind. It was only a matter of time before she got hit by a vehicle.

Finally, Winnie could stand it no longer. She approached the Husky, and Husktina bounded up to her with a happy smile. What could Winnie do but bring the lovely pup to her house. Of course, Winnie didn't realize Husktina was soon to give birth, since she was fluffy and recently well fed.

Two weeks later, Winnie went to the shopping center to pick up some grocery items, and she saw that Husktina was hanging out in her pen but looking restless. By 2:30, there were little squeaky sounds, and mom was a bit focused on her new task. By 8:00 pm, seven little balls of fluff were snuggled in and making chirps and grunts around her.

Husktina may have been surprised, as Winnie thinks this was probably the dog's first litter. But she took it in stride, and all seven babies are fat and content with no observed runts even two weeks in. Mom even lets Winnie carry her puppies inside at night in a big box so all of them—including Mom—can safe and warm. They already are developing cute, unique features with silly eyebrows and comical masks. By the time you read this, they will be looking for forever homes.

Sadly, this story happens time after time up on the reservation. Intact females are left behind once they become pregnant or give birth, and the mom and developing babies all lose a safe place to live. It's heartbreaking to watch, and the only answer is more accessible spay-neuter clinics.

Which brings us to some exciting

news to report. BH met with a newish organization—Rez Vet—out of Grand Junction, Colorado, and we're working on partnering with them for a wellness clinic and possibly spay-neuter services in the Ganado area this coming fall. Our Ganado/Chinle/Fort Defiance contingent is brainstorming ideas for buildings. The BH board agreed that we should put additional donation dollars to work on spay-neuter and vaccinations, two things that will really improve the health of the reservation dogs.

Do you love dogs but can't foster or adopt right now? Here's a perfect way to make a big impact and donate to this, or other reservation spay/neuter clinics, which are the only answer to the 'too much suffering and abandonment' crisis on the reservation. Mark your donation for the spay-neuter clinics, and we will put the money to good use.

Oh, and Husktina not only says thank you: she and her pups would love to meet you if you are ready for a fun new friend. Check us out on [blackhathumanesociety.org](http://blackhathumanesociety.org).



**A Long Wait for a Lifetime of Love**

When Bumble first bounded into the Humane Society of Sedona, we knew in our hearts his stay would be short. Those bright eyes, perky ears, pink nose, and impressive underbite was a winning combo in our book. What we knew in our hearts was... wrong.

Bumble was transferred to us from a shelter in the Phoenix area. He had been there since he was a puppy—a whole year. Everyone thought a change in his environment and a new location would be all he needed to be seen and saved by the right person. But despite his magnetic personality and delightfully expressive features, Bumble was not scooped up quickly. He was not whisked away into a happy life. He would, in fact, go on to spend another year of his life inside a kennel.

We didn't understand. Bumble was one of our happiest dogs. He



### A Letter from Your Newly Adopted Dog or Cat

Please be patient with me. These are our first hours... maybe our first days together... and I'm still trying to understand everything that's happening. You keep telling me that everything is okay and that I'm finally home. I want to believe you, I really do, but right now I'm still trying to make sense of it all.

I had a home once before. I thought it was my forever home. I thought I belonged there and that I was loved. But something changed, and suddenly my whole world turned upside down. I don't know what I did wrong. I don't know why things changed or why I had to leave. All I know is that everything familiar disappeared, and it's been confusing... and a little scary.

I might have an accident in your house while I'm learning where I'm supposed to go. I promise I'm not trying to be bad. I'm just nervous and still figuring things out. With a little time and routine, I'll learn.

This place is brand new to me. The rooms, the smells, the sounds... even the quiet moments feel different. I'm still learning about you too, your voice, your movements, your routines. I don't know your world yet, and you don't know my past. All I ask is that we take things slowly and learn about each other together.

I might not eat right away, or I might be unsure about the food you give me. At the shelter, I was used to certain things at certain times, and this new routine will take some getting used to. Don't worry, I'll adjust.

I may not be ready to play right away or curl up next to you on the couch. I might feel safest in the cozy bed you bought me, my crate, or even a quiet corner where I can just watch and listen. Everything around me is new, and I need a little time to feel secure.

And if I'm meeting new furry brothers or sisters, please remember that friendships take time. We may not become best friends overnight. Just like people, we need the chance to learn about each other slowly and build trust in our own way.

We're just beginning this journey together, and while I may be a little

nervous, I'm also hopeful. More than anything, I want this to be my forever home. I want to belong here. I want to love you and be loved in return.

They may have told you about the 3-3-3 Rule when you adopted me. It's good advice. If we follow it and give each other the time we need, I know we can build something wonderful together.

So please be patient with me. Because one day, when I finally understand that I'm safe here... when I realize you're not leaving and that this really is my forever home... something amazing will happen. My tail will wag a little easier. My



eyes will look for you in every room. And my heart—the one that's been a little broken—will finally start to trust and love again.

And when that day comes, you won't just have adopted a pet. You'll have changed my life. And I will spend every single day trying to thank you for it.

### Serenity House: When It's Time to Say Final Goodbyes

Saying goodbye to a beloved pet is one of the hardest moments any of us will ever face. They are never



just a pet; they are family, constant companions, and hold giant pieces of our hearts. Recognizing this deep bond, and the need for compassion during life's most difficult moments, Yavapai Humane Society (YHS) is honored to be there for our community when it matters most.

That's why we created Serenity House, a first-of-its-kind sanctuary designed to bring peace, comfort, and dignity to families and their cherished companions in their final moments together. Serenity House was built with one purpose in mind: to offer a tranquil, home-like space where families can slow down, breathe, and simply be present.

Every detail, from the soft lighting and calming décor to the private room and peaceful garden view, has been thoughtfully designed to create a comforting environment for reflection, remembrance, and gentle goodbyes. Because saying goodbye should not feel clinical or rushed. It should feel like love.

This unique facility provides our community with an affordable way to ensure their pets' final moments are handled with compassion and respect. YHS offers end-of-life services that give families a sense of closure and the opportunity to honor their pet's life in a way that

feels personal and heartfelt. In these moments, we stand beside our community, offering not just a service, but

support, understanding, and a quiet presence when words are hard to find.

Serenity House is not just a building. It is a place where love lingers, where gratitude is spoken, and where the bond between people and their pets is honored in the most meaningful way.

"Serenity House is the soft place to land that every family deserves," said Rich McClish, Executive Director of Yavapai Humane Society. "In this gentle, home-like space, we can slow down, hold our pets close, and honor the love they have given us. It is about kindness at the hardest moment, a peaceful goodbye wrapped in compassion, dignity, and gratitude for a lifetime of companionship."

Through Serenity House, YHS continues its mission to promote and protect the welfare of companion animals, not only throughout their lives, but in the tender, loving moments of goodbye. Because even in loss, no one in our community should have to walk that journey alone.

For more information about Serenity House and the services we provide, please contact Grace at 928-445-2666 x118.

got along well with all people and most other dogs. He loved to play in the park, he was affectionate and healthy, and a great size, too. We watched him have many meet-and-greets, but nothing ever seemed to stick.

Bumble didn't know a different way of life, so while it was hard for us to watch this perfect boy get overlooked, Bumble never lost his sparkle. He had hard days, grumpy days, sad days, but once he was able to get out of the kennel for his daily walks and playtime, his inner light returned.

We're so thankful that Bumble's light didn't dim. The day he finally met his new dad, it shone so brightly, his fate finally came into view. After two full years—his entire life—Bumble found his person.

The meeting was nothing short of magical. His dad knew they were meant to be together, and this time... he was right.

Bumble has now been out of the shelter for a month, and we get frequent and lovely updates. He goes to work with his dad every day and gets a lot of love and attention in the office. He's met some fun and playful doggy companions, and just went on his first camping trip. His new dad calls him his dream dog and says they are bonded for life.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who was a part of Bumble's journey. So many people have loved him, cared for him, and championed him over the past two years, and to see him so happy and free is the greatest gift.

If you're interested in adopting, fostering, or getting involved with the Humane Society of Sedona, so you too can be a part of these amazing animals' stories, please visit our website or give us a call.

humanesocietyofsedona.org  
(928) 282-4679

# As the Tails Turn: Littermates R Us

By Kay Luckett

Spring has sprung and it's time to tell a cat-dad tail. Meet Steve, a former Cali/Prescott guy now residing with Katie the Kat in Colorado. Katie doesn't just love spring; she loves anywhere that Steve is all year round. She follows him wherever he roams, or while tucked away in their cozy mountain home. This is the current situation. But first, let's meet Wookie, Butch, Maggie, Teddy and Sammy and, of course, Katie.



Butch and Maggie want pasta

Steve's cat story starts out sadly but ends gladly, as tails of woe often do. This cat-daddy's childhood traumas were caused by losing various pets. Some crossed the rainbow bridge; others were lost because the family moved around quite a bit due to their dad's profession. These losses affected little Steve, because he loved all animals, and letting go—as most know—is hard to do, especially for this little boy.

When he was all grown up and residing in Orange County, Steve and his daughter Gail adopted Roxy the dog who lived to be 16 years old - a happy experience for them both. But Steve and Gail wouldn't let Roxy's passing stop them; they continued to visit both dog and cat shelters. Steve says they did so because they got so much out of those friendly vibes—the purrs and the wagging tails created mutual joy. (Note: It's a scientific fact that cat and dog vibes are some of the highest joyful frequencies in the world.)

A new home gave birth to a clan of dogs and cats who grew up around Steve and his family. They always had two or three cats and a few dogs—including Wookie the dog, who was Steve's sidekick for over a decade. Many years later, after Wookie had crossed the Rainbow Bridge, Steve attended a celebration of life for Wookie and a cat named Tiggy hosted at the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah. The ceremony was sacred and fun, and it combined tears and laughter as attendees decorated a special rock-altar with shells and gems. This was followed by a vegetarian feast at the Sanctuary.

Wookie's absence, and a friendly divorce, left Steve with newly adopted kitties: littermates Butch and Maggie. They were the loves of his life, playful and very mischievous. They happily shared their home with Tiggy the cat.

Steve, as always, was ready for more fur babies, so when Butch crossed the Bridge, Steve was once again gifted with littermates Teddy and Sammy. Big tomcats, sweet as can be, except that Teddy teased Maggie and muscled her out of her comfort zone.

Maggie moved back to her original mom, Steve's ex (with visiting rights) and their nine-lives world just kept turning. Eventually, Steve and Sammy were the two left standing, and they moved to Colorado.

After they settled in, Steve continued to visit more cat shelters, and then adopted a senior tabby named Katie. Now, more adjustments had to be made for the two picky felines. Territory and sacred safe places became the paramount issue to be fairly worked out.

The situation was described by Steve as "peaceful co-existence", with Sammy sleeping with him under the covers and Katie sleeping on top.



Teddy and Sammy cuddling

Sammy lived to be 18, and as soon as he passed, little ole Katie perked up and took over the whole place. She was adopted at age 12 and is now a healthy 17 years young.

Steve says, "When Katie is hungry, she goes and sits by her plate and stares at me. If I don't start to get the food, she meows loud and then louder. Then, as I get the food, she meows softer and softer." Katie is said to really howl when Steve is out of the house for too long.

When asked about why he has become a cat lover, Steve replied, "You get no fake friendships from cats. They are their own person and generally know what they want and let you know they want it."

He admits to having an easier time with animals than with people and, "Katie is a good companion who keeps me from spending too much time thinking about myself." He adds, humorously, "She doesn't seem as grateful as I think she should be and acts like I am lucky to have her. I know that's the truth, so I tell her that every single day."

Steve still wants to adopt more cats, but with Katie the answer is always "NO." So, as an alternative, he donates adoption fees to some local shelters for seniors to adopt senior cats.

Senior cats are often overlooked because of their age. Donated adoption fees help seniors, who also can be overlooked and live on tight budgets. The end result is that the cats get to have forever homes, and the seniors are blessed to have loving companions.

Meow.



Waiting for Katie to smile



Maggie and Steve



**CHIEF:** A senior short-coated white male Chihuahua. A gentle senior pup with wise eyes and a heart full of quiet love. He hopes to spend his golden years with a warm and caring forever home! Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**GUMBO:** A 2-year-old red male, the perfect combination of sweet, smart, and snuggly. Affectionate and people loving. Knows basic commands. Loves fetch, cuddles, and naps. High Country Humane 928-526-0742



**BRYCE:** A 4-month-old golden male mixed breed puppy. Beautiful, playful, bubbly, brave, and lovable. Enjoys playing with toys. He has lots of puppy energy and curiosity too. Loves cuddles and hugs. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**CHARLIE:** A 3-year-old male. He LOVES his toys and is usually pretty good about bringing them back for you to throw again! Fetch KING! He is very treat & food motivated. High Country Humane 928-526-0742



**SAMPSON:** A 5-year-old male German Shepherd mix. Happy, curious, loving, intelligent, loyal, and gentle. He enjoys walking and running on trails. Good with kids. Adoption is sponsored. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**CHAD:** A 4-year-old male. He is a sweet and shy dog who came from a rough past, and he's just now learning humans can be kind. Has been making progress at the shelter. Very food motivated. High Country Humane 928-526-0742



**BARNEY:** 1yo brindle mixed breed male w/beautiful kind face & big dark eyes. Playful, smart, friendly, and healthy. Looking for a kind family to help channel puppy energy. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**AUDREY:** A 4-year-old female. A sweet girl who came from a rough past, so she's just now learning that humans are safe & kind. Very food motivated. Gets along with some other dogs. High Country Humane 928-526-0742



**BLAZE:** A 9-year-old red and white male hound mix. He's pleasant, happy, funny, calm, and approachable. Loves people, walks, and fetch. Knows basic commands. Adoption is sponsored. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**DETECTIVE:** 1yo tricolor male w/a nose for discovery. Investigating new scents or examining his surroundings, he takes his job seriously—sniff first, ask questions later. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**JASPER:** A 4-year-old merle male. A sweet, active guy who loves adventure and a good nap. Hikes well, would make an awesome sidekick to outdoor activities. High Country Humane 928-526-0742



**HERCULES:** 2yo male bundle of love and energy. Goofy, joyful. Will happily entertain you with his playful spirit, then it's cuddle time. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387

*Airpark Animal Hospital*



**Dr. Celeste Flannery**  
**515 Airpark Rd., Suite #103**  
**Cottonwood, AZ 86326**  
**(928) 649-8387 • [www.AirparkAnimalHospital.com](http://www.AirparkAnimalHospital.com)**



**BOXTER:** A 1-year-old large male. This high-powered sports dog is adorable in the looks department, a little shy with new people but a bundle of fun when he gets to know you. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**LILLY:** Female puppy with the Aussie/Shepherd personality. Confident and true-blue already at her young age. She just forges ahead and embraces life. Black Hat Humane Society/foster mom Toby at 928-899-3942



**BRUNO:** A 7-year-old male Chihuahua. He's sweet as pie, and happiest when he's the star of the show (aka your one and only). Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**CYRUS:** A 1-year-old Australian Cattle Dog mix. He is active and athletic. He is friendly, curious, and calm. Good with other dogs and cats. Splendid agility prospect. Black Hat Humane Society/foster Toby 928-899-3942



**GAVIN:** 3yo male w/one blue eye. Young, fun and energetic. He's looking for adopters who match his love of adventure and exercise. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**MEREDITH:** 8wo mixed-breed girl. She wants to be friends with everybody. Loves kisses and cuddles. Gets along great with dogs and cats. Yavapai Humane Trappers at [yavapaihumanetrappers.org](http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org)



**JINGLE:** Male puppy born mid-October 2025. May be some lab mixed in with cattle dog, judging by his warm caramel coloring and soft eyes. He is a friendly, playful boy. Black Hat Humane Society/foster Toby 928-899-3942



**STEWIE:** A 3-year-old female Dachshund/Chihuahua mix. She is small, under 25 pounds. For more information, please contact Yavapai Humane Trappers at [yavapaihumanetrappers.org](http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org)



**JANGLE:** Male puppy born mid-October 2025. Friendly, loyal, curious, loving, smart. Good with dogs and cats. Black Hat Humane Society/foster Toby 928-899-3942



**ACE:** A 1-year-old Cattle Dog. He's smart, athletic, ready to work and play. High energy dog. Loves hiking, running, training, and agility. Eager to learn. He's a partner, a project, and a loyal best friend. [yavapaihumanetrappers.org](http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org)



**MINNIE WINNIE:** 3mo maybe Terrier/Heeler mix. A little spitfire learning quickly to walk on a leash, come when called, & sleep in a crate. Started house training. Black Hat Humane Society/foster [elmorromaynes@gmail.com](mailto:elmorromaynes@gmail.com)



**TEDDY:** A 1-year-old Poodle mix, weighing 13 pounds. He is sweet, walks well on a leash. He is housebroken and dog door trained. Gets along well with other dogs. Yavapai Humane Trappers at [yavapaihumanetrappers.org](http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org)



**WILLOW:** 2yo Cattle Dog/Chihuahua mix. Athletic, playful, smart, affectionate, couch potato. Good on a leash and in a car. Black Hat Humane Society/foster Deana at [annatsosie55@yahoo.com](mailto:annatsosie55@yahoo.com)



**BUD:** 6mo male terrier mix weighing around 40 lbs. Goofy personality, lots of love. Extremely playful but calm and affectionate with people. Yavapai Humane Trappers at [yavapaihumanetrappers.org](http://yavapaihumanetrappers.org)



**TWINKLE STAR:** 2yo tuxedo gentleman with elegant white whiskers. Elegant, independent: prefers adult-only home. He enjoys gentle affection on his own terms. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**TYSON:** A most handsome brown tabby with white trim and big golden eyes. He is a fun-loving charmer. For more information, please contact the High Country Humane Society 928-526-0742



**PEPPER:** A 6-week-old female classic brown tabby. A tiny kitten with a dash of spice and a whole lot of sweetness. Loves toys and is happy to curl up close and purr like a tiny motor. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



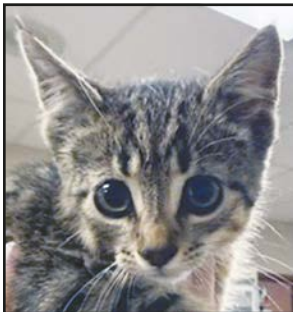
**LARRY:** A fine brown tabby male with golden eyes and a reputation of being an excellent mouser. For further information, please contact the High Country Humane Society at 928-526-0742



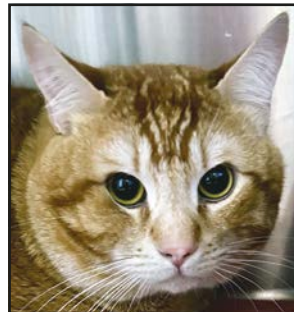
**SALEM:** A slightly nervous 6-week-old black female kitten. At first, she may watch from a safe distance, but gentle voices and patient hearts help her be brave. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**JESSE:** A lovely silver-grey female looking for a loving barn or outbuilding to call her own. Jesse would be better off in a new and loving home where she will be loved and cherished. High Country Humane Society 928-526-0742



**GABBY:** A tiny 6-week-old tabby female kitten with a big personality and even bigger heart! She is talkative, slightly shy, playful, and curious. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**PEBBLES:** An adult shy and handsome orange fellow. He's looking for a peaceful home where he can take his time to feel comfortable. This sweet guy is sure to bring joy to your life. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**LUNA:** A gentle 6-week-old tabby female kitten gentle little kitten. She is learning to trust, but with patience and kindness, she gets braver and more trusting. Humane Society of Sedona 928-282-4679



**RUFFIO:** A goofy boy who will melt your heart and have you laughing with his playful antics. He will ask you for pets and belly rubs! What a sweetheart. Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**ALEXANDER:** A 2-year-old male cream point shorthair with big blue eyes. He is friendly and has a gentle personality and gets along well with other cats. High Country Humane Society 928-526-0742



**LAMBO:** A most handsome silver-gray adult with golden eyes. For more information, please contact the Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387



**GLORIA:** A beautiful 2-year-old dilute tortoiseshell female with big golden eyes. She is a sweet and gentle petite lady. She is good with other cats. High Country Humane Society 928-526-0742



**IVY:** An adult female longhaired lady with green eyes. For further information, please contact the Verde Valley Humane Society 928-634-7387

# Say 'I Do' to the Perfect Pet Partnership

By Njeri Dean



It's time to say I do to a partnership that is loving, caring, and kind. Most people want a relationship that reflects their core values, and the way they want to be treated.

A partnership doesn't necessarily have to be a romantic one. A partnership can be with a friend, co-worker, or even a family member if one chooses to do so. Did you ever think that pets make the perfect partnership?

Think about it. Animals are very loyal in general. They look out for one another, they have empathy for another, and they show love and respect for one another as well.

It's been well documented on different media such as TV, publications, and the internet, that when people get an animal for companionship, the animal they receive usually forms a tight bond with their owner. Over time, they learn to respect and even protect their owner too.

The great thing about relationships with pet and owners is that there is no paper that you need to sign to show that you are committed to each other, no witnesses at a wedding to prove that you love each other.

People just know that you have a tight bond because they see how happy you are with your pet.

Pets show unconditional love to their owners. Pets know how to make their owners happy because they are invested in their happiness.

If your pet sees you sad and upset, they will most likely try to comfort

you by being near you. You don't have to say a word.

Animals are truly great at reading emotions of other animals and people around them. Nobody wants to feel upset. Being upset can bring out the worst in people. Being bothered and agitated can lead to a person lashing out, or even worse, a physical altercation.

Sometimes knowing that an animal can't argue with you over what is bothering you is comforting. You can't exchange hurtful words with your pets or get them upset about anything.

It's nice to know that pets love you for you, and they are always willing to embrace you, even if you are not feeling ok at the moment.

With most relationships with people, if someone gets upset, hurtful words are exchanged, and it might lead to the end of the relationship. Whereas with a relationship with your pet you have less of a chance of getting hurt.

The relationship with your pet is less complicated in general. Knowing your pet has unconditional love for you makes your relationship with your pet comforting and trustworthy.

All relationships are built on trust. When that trust is broken for whatever reason, it could lead to a person feeling insecure and guarded.

So many people may have experienced a relationship with another human being that is not trustworthy. Luckily, when a human being gets a pet, they don't have to look over their

shoulders. You don't have to get into an argument or worry your pet will not be loyal to you.

Animals, in many peoples' experience, are loyal companions to the very end. No need to check if your pet's loyalty is genuine. Usually, animals and pets in general practice what they preach and prove themselves with their actions rather than their words.

Animals are truly unique companions and even great partners for that matter. Animals are very easy to commit to, knowing their history of being loyal and nonjudgemental.

Knowing that you can say anything to your pet and knowing that they will keep your secrets safe is an added bonus to having a relationship

with your pet. Not only will your pet comfort you in times of need, keep you safe, and embrace you, they will be there for you no matter what.

If you want loyalty and stability in a relationship, bringing home a pet is the perfect solution. Not all relationships are perfect, but having a relationship with your furry friend comes close to perfection in so many ways.

Yes, people want a partnership, but it doesn't have to be a romantic one. It's up to you to decide what partnership is right for you and your well-being.

Saying I do in a relationship is the pinnacle of commitment for the majority of people out there in the world. Say I do to a relationship that is right for you.

## BENEFITS OF ADOPTING A DOG

You'll be supporting a good cause

Adopting a dog from an animal shelter or rescue organization supports a non-profit cause that relies on donations. It provides a loving home for a dog and makes a difference in the lives of animals

You'll get a great companion

Dogs are loyal and make great companions for various activities, including hiking, running, and cuddling. They provide constant support and are always there for their humans

They'll make you happier

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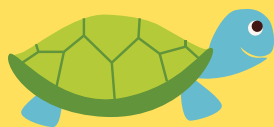
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# Must Love Dogs: Canine Intuition and the Wild World of Dating in Your 40's

By Solana Kline, Dog-rescue advocate, honorary four-legger, and hopeful romantic

Yes indeed, these are the days of miracle and wonder as Mr. Paul Simon once crooned. But these are also the days of Cat Dad.

Cat Dad is an unfortunately common phrase found on dating profiles of men in their forties. I had hoped I left this behind when I moved from the Pacific Northwest, assuming it was a Portland Hipster fad, but no, Cat Dad persists. Now, this is nothing against the cats themselves, of course. Cats ain't no canine, but they are miraculous creatures, too.

The rub with Cat Dad lies more in the type of man that proudly proclaims himself as such in the online dating world. He usually sports some sort of ironic tie-dye t-shirt with a unicorn blazoned across the front, or dons an old ugly Christmas sweater sourced from the nearest over-priced thrift store. Both tend to be paired with an ironic mullet and mustache duo.

Cat Dad symbolically represents all of the unbelievable strange of dating in your forties with our current technologies: endless online marketplaces to shop for your mate, people catfishing and ghosting one another, assuming their date miraculously won't notice they are seven inches shorter, fifteen years older, and fifty pounds heavier than their profile, avoidance to actually meet in real life, or (heaven forbid) speak on the telephone instead of texting.

Jeesh, I'm exhausted just thinking about it.

Now, you might be asking yourself, what in the world does this have to do with four-leggers? Well, after many years trudging through the sea of divorced-dads-finding-themselves, I have come to the conclusion that my dogs are definitely the best Chuck Woolery I could hope for!

The wise older feller in the movie, *Must Love Dogs* said: "Why one human being is attracted to another is one of the great mysteries of the world". (You know, the film with Diane Lane and John Cusack.) Lane's character wrote "Must love dogs" in her first online dating profile, and Cusack's character pretended he had a dog to curry favor. Lane's dog likes Cusack right off the bat and she trusts her pup's judgement and intuition, even more than her own.

I consider it a legitimate scientific experiment now, after many rigorous trials. I send Betty and Mickey over to greet my date before I even meet them. And boy, do they read the room right. It's definitely a curiosity to see men interacting with new dogs and the pups reacting to their energy, actions, vocal patterns, and scent. And, while I like to think that I am a fairly good read on character, the dogs have pointed out red flags in the first thirty seconds of meeting someone that would have taken me months to weed out.

Our pack has seen it all: The man who is offended that Mickey won't come say hi; the man that the dogs pile on top of for snuggles immediately; the man that both dogs listen to the first time he calls them; the man that the pups are alert and on edge around; and, of course, the man who is so grounded and present that the pups play in the same relaxed joy as if he'd been in our pack for years.

A small part of it, of course is me knowing these hounds so dang well, being familiar with their behaviors and reactions. But the rest is all them. They allow themselves to be fully in tune with their instincts and real-time observations.

While humans are preoccupied with the physical attractiveness of their prospective mate, or daydreams of love at first sight, or lost in the oxytocin highs, our pups remain



*Pups keeping an eye on the horizon while I cheese our family photo*

vigilant to their instincts—sniffing out all of the juicy realities of this new human.

Canine intuition with new humans is very similar to how they read other dogs: they use their senses, past experiences, and the setting to guide their interpretations. Their senses are acutely attuned to the visual bodily cues, scents, movement patterns, energy states, and sounds of a new animal they encounter. They are experts at reading body language of their own species as well as that of humans.

Pack animals (dogs and humans alike) survive because we can read each other in these ways.

Have you seen your pup react to another doggoe that's bristled and on high alert? Or interpret the slightest of growl from a packmate when they get too close to their new knucklebone?

Aside from what they are hearing from their fellow canines, their sense of smell is particularly interesting in that all animals emit varied scents depending on the which emotion they are feeling, and this happens nearly immediately when their mood changes—with humans being a particularly odiferous bunch due to our external sweating mechanisms, like armpits.

Our pups combine these sensory inputs with their own past experiences to make a judgement on this new animal in their presence and determine how they are going to inter-



*Shy-Boy Mickey fully relaxed and happy with his calm-demeanored Uncle Nate*



*The pack enjoying time off judging people with a milk shake*

act with them. When they are with us, they also sense our emotional state when a new human or other animal comes into our pack's sphere.

If you're the pack leader, they'll usually adopt the energy that you're feeling, demonstrating the emotional intelligence and awareness far superior to most humans, I reckon.

When they're gauging the trustworthiness of new humans specifically, canines are particularly adept at reading facial expressions and seeing if those match the energy state and vocal tones that the human is enacting. If a human is feeling anxious and scared but is trying to convince their pup that everything is okay by smiling and speaking in a high tone, the dogs won't fall for it—they can smell you.

Essentially, they can sense the regulation or dysregulation of a human's nervous system—that is, whether a person is calm and predictable, or high-strung and unpredictable. And they behave accordingly.

Notice the next time your pup is around a new person, how much distance do they keep from that human? What does their body language tell you? Are their ears and tails in a relaxed position or perked in alert or emergency modes?

Depending on our doggoes' past experiences with different types of humans and other animals, they'll act and react in a myriad of ways based on their intuitive read on any new person you bring into their world. If you're in tune with your specific pup's behaviors and body language, they'll tell you everything you need to know about a person in your presence.

In the dating world, this really is the ace-up-your-sleeve. I have seen my shy-boy Mickey immediately lay on top of one of my first dates that had the kindest energy. And the ever-vigilant warrior Betty walking or standing between me and a new date that had anxious mannerisms and tones.

In every dating scenario, the pups' interpretations of these new people were dog-gone spot-on with my gut reactions (even if I didn't listen to them right away because he may have been a particularly good lookin' cowboy).

Needless to say, I now make all of my first dates dog walks.

So, when you're out there looking for love, remember to bring your four-leggers and learn to tune back into our own animal instincts by learning from our tail-ed pack-mates and trusting our guts again.

Until next time, keep on spreading the love and good vibes with happy tails and happy trails.



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# Does Your Dog Need a Trainer... or Do You?

By Stacey Dexter

I have a friend back East who has never trained her dog. To do anything. I love dogs to pieces but when visiting my friend, her (big) dog jumps on me, barks incessantly, and has no concept of manners. It's a little annoying. But I also know it's not the dog's fault.

How often have we heard how difficult a dog is to train? How often have we seen any consistency on the guardians' end? We are trying to fit these pets into our world, so wouldn't it make sense that we're the ones to show them how it works?

Unfortunately, most humans blame the dog for any adverse behaviors instead of looking at what we're doing to cause them. The most underutilized tool is consistency. Working on one issue at a time is also best.

Patience and consistency are so important when it comes to training a dog and securing their trust. Dogs who trust their guardians are much more motivated to please them than a petrified one.

Striking a dog to get it to behave is absolutely not okay and does nothing to teach your dog what you want from them. Dogs are like kids when it comes to behavioral training: repetition and positive reinforcement are key, not violence and fear.

Humans nowadays are fortunate to have multiple, dedicated television channels for all things animal. *Lucky Dog* with Brandon McMillian, *The Dog Whisperer* with Cesar Milan, and *Dr. Chris, Pet Vet* (based in Australia) are three I like best. I enjoy learning new ways to deal with dogs' anxieties, aggressions, fears, and idiosyncrasies.

With *Dr. Chris, Pet Vet*, we are invited behind the veterinarian's waiting room doors to see how injured or sick pets are managed, and the vet's approach not only to the pets' health, but the care taken in collaborating with the guardians to obtain the best possible results. I learn something every time.

According to veteran dog trainer McMillian of

the television series *Lucky Dog*, each dog should be taught seven fundamental commands for good behavior:

- Sit
- Stay
- Come
- Down
- Off
- Heel
- No

I love these but can honestly say that none of my dogs have ever mastered all seven commands. I don't think I've tried teaching them any of them beyond Come, Sit, and No.

My commands are questions; "Who wants a treat/cookie?" "You wanna eat?" "You wanna go for a walk?" "Who's mama's good boy/girl?" "Wanna go for a ride?" These are important questions.

I have been fortunate enough to have dogs throughout my life who were not a handful in the manners department, rarely jumped on people, and were not aggressive.

I've had Husky mixes, Tibetan Spaniel mixes, and Shepard mixes. The mutts are the best, though rescuing ex-racing greyhounds are the most fun to observe as they experience the joy of a real home with luxuriously soft beds instead of a cement cage 23 hours a day.

Now that I'm occasionally fostering dogs for the Verde Valley Humane Society in Cottonwood, Arizona, I've been brushing up on any skills I DO have and trying to pick up more of them along the way.

Some dogs I've had the pleasure of fostering needed to be taught not to jump up onto the kitchen counters, to control barking urges, how to navigate stairs, approach strangers, engage with other dogs in a positive manner, ride in a car, eat slower, and enjoy walks.

I've always known in my heart that all dogs are good dogs. Bad dogs are usually the result of improper or no training, damaging human interactions, overbreeding, negative experiences with other dogs, abuse, and neglect.

When watching *The Dog Whisperer*, I appreciate Cesar Millan's belief that we should strive to obtain a Calm-Assertive energy when training our dogs.

Millan is all about the energy we emit. When humans are in a state of anxiety, exuding negativity and fear during training, our dogs pick up this ener-



Go for a ride?



Who wants to eat?



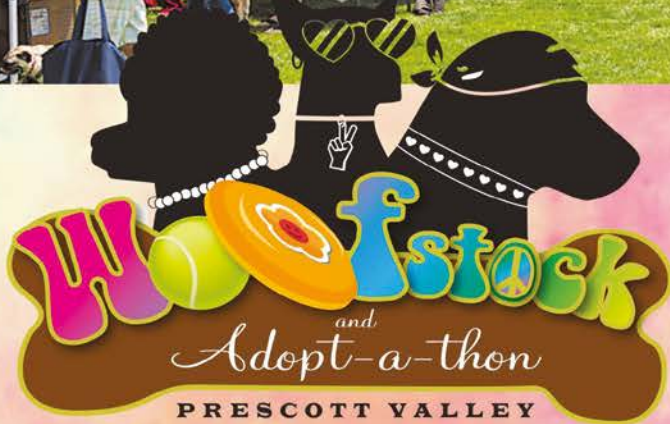
Sit.

gy and things don't go as well. He encourages humans to become the pack leader and guide the dog into a Calm-Submissive state. He knows what he's doing, and dogs seem to understand that he is there to help them. Millan's philosophy is, "I rehabilitate dogs. I train humans."

I'm usually intrigued with the creative ways each trainer achieves an outcome. I know it's television and situations could be altered. I know that there have been a complaints over the years against some of them. But given their shows' longevity and results, I feel confident gleaning some info from them. I use my best judgement and whenever in doubt, look for another opinion or approach.

Meanwhile, I'll keep learning and when I'm unsure, I'll inquire with an expert and do some research. No trainer is perfect and not all training techniques fit every animal. However, if we strive to try humane teachable commands, it will make our lives better, the dog's life more routine and predictable, and will foster a sense of calm—something humans and pets alike can benefit from each and every day.

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# SARA Could Be Your New Best Hiking Buddy

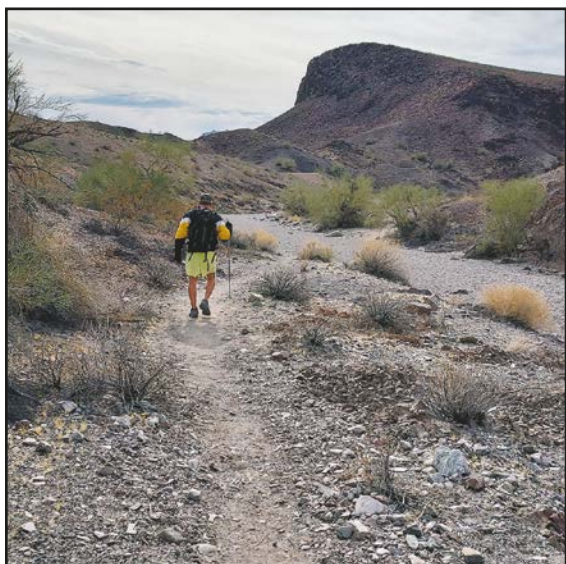
Story and photos by Cheryl and Myron Hartz



The trail starts easy on loose rock and sand.



Rugged terrain contains winding trails.



Just call her SARA: the Special Activities and Recreation Area is a regional county-leased park just five miles south of Lake Havasu City. We love exploring here as a sideline to camping expeditions at Lake Havasu, Cattail Cove, River Island or Buckskin Mountain State Parks.

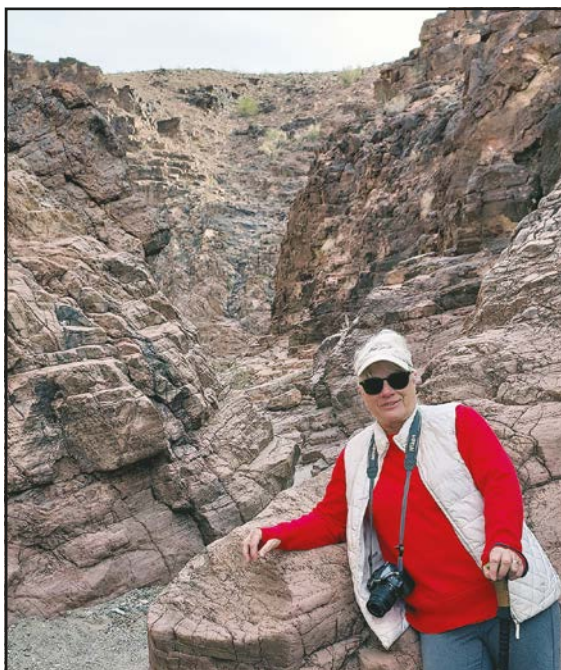
That's because SARA is a generously sized lady who has it all. Her softball and baseball fields, covered playground, rodeo grounds, picnic areas, motocross course, BMX track, r/c vehicle track, an area to fly model planes, shooting and archery ranges, dog park—and even a motor speedway—cover 1,100 acres. Whew!

Because we visited on a weekday in early December while school was in session, we missed all of that busyness. But the many parts we saw appeared well-maintained and a wonderful offering for the locals and tourists alike.

Oh, yes, SARA has several miles of hiking trails, too, over a variety of desert terrain. You can hike in soft dirt, loose rock, smooth rock plates, over and between boulders, up and down mountains and all the way to the cool blue Colorado River.

The Crack in the Wall Trail is a 5-mile round trip which starts out easy and becomes more strenuous as it takes you through a slot canyon that is arguably one of the most famous on the Lower Colorado. We weren't prepared for a long hike the day we chose to explore for the first time, especially with the boulder climbing we were starting to do. So we didn't make it all the way to the river and its scenic cove featuring Balance Rock.

Some day we will hike to that monster rock balanced precariously on a slender and eroding pillar. We've



The author takes a break.



A vigorous hike requires a lunch break.

seen photos of the spectacular river view at trail's end and think it will be well worth the effort.

We did experience several of the desert landscapes and found a pleasant spot for a picnic while exploring a side trail on the return hike.

Several people were hiking with their dogs. One hapless gentleman had a toy poodle that couldn't quite manage areas of the boulders. Since we had turned around already, we gently warned him it got worse. He conceded to the inevitable, picked her up and turned around also.

Did I mention there are no admission or parking fees? There is plenty of parking, along with decent restrooms. Take plenty of water and sunblock as you explore this surprising park.

Happy hiking with SARA!



The trail narrows dramatically into a slot canyon and becomes steep over boulders.



Lizard Peak Trail is a fun offshoot.

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