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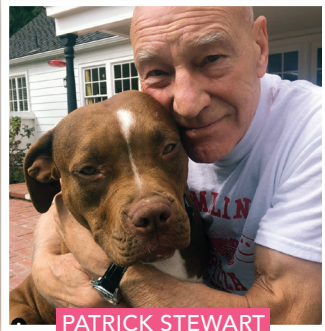
PLUS  
Summer's Best  
Pasta Salads, p. 14



EMMYLOU HARRIS



AMANDA SEYFRIED



PATRICK STEWART



GILLES MARINI

## Thank You for Saving My Life

MEET 10  
FOSTER PETS  
AND THEIR  
RESCUERS



# Banjo, Maisy & Ginger Thank You

Fostering a pet saves animal lives and is a way to do something good during troubled times. *By Nicole Pajer*

In July of 2019, a hound mix named Banjo with a severe leg injury wound up at Pet Adoption & Welfare Services in Rutherford County, Tenn. The facility didn't have the resources to fund the reconstructive surgery he required, and the 1-year-old pup was in danger of being euthanized. But Bonaparte's Retreat, an animal rescue founded by singer-songwriter Emmylou Harris, paid for Banjo's treatment and placed him in foster care. Nashville-based publicist Paula Erickson nursed him back to health until a family stepped up to adopt him. Without the fostering program, Banjo's story would not have had such a happy ending.

And Banjo is not alone. Nearly 6.5 million companion animals enter U.S. shelters every year. Senior, shy, stressed and injured dogs and cats are often the first to be ignored and, sadly, put down if space is limited. When the coronavirus pandemic struck, the picture became

even bleaker. Many rescue organizations were forced to close and found themselves scrambling to find homes for their animals.

That's where foster parents come into the picture—and drastically improve animals' chances of survival. We celebrate some of the bighearted people—including Patrick Stewart, Amanda Seyfried and Beth and Howard Stern—and the programs that are giving abandoned animals a chance at a new life with a loving family.

## PROGRAMS WITH HEART

Since 2004, Bonaparte's Retreat has been saving the most neglected dogs—seniors, large breeds or dogs that need surgery or medical care—at Metro Nashville Animal Care and

Control and at municipal shelters in the area. Harris has a staff that runs the daily operations at Bonaparte's, but she is responsible for meeting and naming all of the dogs. While writing song



**Patrick Stewart and his wife, Sunny: Pit Bull Fans**

The Stewarts got involved with fostering when craving the companionship of a dog. In 2017, Los Angeles-based Wags and Walks paired them with a pit bull named Ginger. "I was once one of those people who, if they saw a pit bull on a leash, would cross over to the other side of the street," Stewart (*Star Trek: Picard*) admits. But Ginger showered the actor with affection, going so far as to rush into the kitchen to lure his wife down the hall when he was in the bathroom one day feeling ill. Stewart now exclusively fosters pit bulls and floods his social media accounts with photos of the pups. "People stop me and they don't say, 'I love your work,' they say, 'How's Ginger?'" he jokes. Since then, Wags and Walks has seen a surge in requests for the breed. "If we had anything to do with that, it makes us happy," says Stewart.

lyrics can be pretty involved, Harris says there's more at stake when coming up with a name to pique the interest of a potential adopter. She named Banjo in tribute to her former bandmate and friend Rodney Crowell, who had a dog named Banjo. "I always thought that was a great name for a dog," Harris says.

New York City's PupStarz Rescue, which has successfully rehomed 2,300 dogs since 2015, is also foster-based. "All of the animals that come into our care are placed in foster homes," says co-founder Robyn O'Brien. Fosters care for pets until they are adopted, providing them with food, exercise "and, most importantly, love," she says.

Cat Town, a rescue in Oakland, Calif., that also runs the country's first cat café (patrons pay a fee to hang with cats; the money supports rescues), takes felines primarily from Oakland Animal Services and places them into foster homes. Since its 2011 founding, the organization has helped lower the area's euthanasia rate from 43 percent to 10 percent and has rehomed 3,500 cats, says development director Quinn White. "The cats we focus on are the shy, stressed, sick and seniors, because other organizations will walk right by those cages," says foster coordinator and deputy director Dawn Pieper. Since effective fostering comes down to pairing the right people with the right pets, "The biggest part of my job is matchmaking," she says. "I'm not going to take a very fractious, hissy, spitty cat and put it in a home with somebody who's never had a cat before."

More proof that fostering works: When the pandemic forced Friends of Oakland Animal Services to close its doors, foster coordinator Audra Farrell and her team posted a plea on social media and received 180 applications in return. "I've worked in the field for 10 years, and this was one of the most incredible things I have ever seen," she says.

## WHAT IT TAKES: TIME & PATIENCE

Organizations like North Shore Animal League America, in Port Washington, N.Y., provide volunteers with everything necessary to care for a pet: food, bedding, medications, medical treatment and toys. "We also give them markers to hit as they work with the animal to make sure that they're succeeding in

**"I've had an extraordinary life as a musician, but this gives me something that I could have never imagined, being able to save lives."**

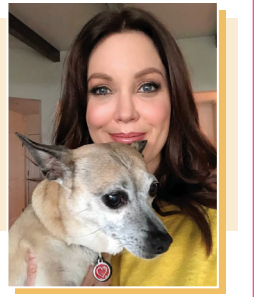
—Emmylou Harris

## THE RESCUERS

**Marie McGovern Fosters Pregnant Dogs** A biology professor at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, N.Y., McGovern has fostered more than 200 pets but has an affinity for pregnant dogs, something volunteers don't often sign up for. She's bottle-fed puppies between lectures, treated moms with low calcium levels and assisted with an emergency Chihuahua delivery in her car on the way to the vet. Her favorite part of fostering is "being part of that special moment when a family meets its new member. They're so excited!"



**Bellamy Young: Scarves for Shelter Dogs** The *Scandal* star has found homes for several of her foster dogs. "I made a cute little kerchief that said 'Adopt Me' in felt letters and would tie it on the back of my dog," she says, revealing that the maneuver "had a 100 percent success rate."



**Padrick Anderson and Prasad Ganesan Love Cats** Through Cat Town in Oakland, Calif., the spouses have fostered cats like Maisy, whom they treated for IBS-induced complications for over a year. "We helped her put on weight, and she became more outgoing, happier and eventually found a home," says Ganesan, adding that they prefer senior cats. "You play with them for five minutes, they get tired and want to sit on your lap and cuddle. The vast majority of the job is keeping a pet entertained."

**Rose Coffield: A Quarantine Cat Rescuer** During the pandemic, the Bay Area preschool teacher and first-time foster "parent" applied to take in a cat. It's been the perfect companion for her during self-isolation. "I have documented the fostering process with pictures and am writing a series of short stories for my preschool kids," she says.



**Howard and Beth Stern: Cats R Us** The Sterns are so devoted to the fostering cause, the radio host and his wife have an entire section of their home designated for the visiting animals. And Beth still gets emotional whenever she finds a pet a home. "I cry every time," she says. "I have fostered over 1,200 cats and kittens over the years. That's a lot of tears!"

COVER CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: LEFT: PET FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY; COURTESY PATRICK STEWART; BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY; RIGHT: BETH AND HOWARD STERN; COURTESY BETH STERN; FEATURE: BANJO FAMILY BY BONAPARTE'S RETREAT; HARRIS BY BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY

THE STERNS BY COURTESY BETH STERN

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the home,” says senior volunteer manager Victoria Gravina. Volunteers also are given contacts for behaviorists and veterinarians.

The biggest commitment from fosters is time. Julie Castle, CEO of Best Friends Animal Society, headquartered in Kanab, Utah, says pets stay with a foster anywhere from “several weeks to a few months, depending on the needs of the pet and a foster’s ability to care for him or her.” Kittens are typically a one- to seven-week commitment, while adult cats need a month to decompress. And pets with more complicated medical issues may require longer healing times. Says Pieper, “Patience is key.”

## **WHY DO IT?**

Fostering gets an animal out of the shelter, where a dog or cat may be severely out of its element, says Harris. “Imagine being in a home or on the street, and all of a sudden you find yourself basically in jail,” she says. “Animals need time and a place where they can become the pet that they really are. And a foster home is the best possible place for that.”

The truth is, says Farrell, “When you foster, you’re saving two lives—the life of the one that’s in your home and the life of the animal that can take the space that opens up in the shelter.”

You’re also part of some very happy endings. “It feels good to know we saved a dog. And he’s given us a lot in return,” says Barry Yarbrough, who, with his wife, Anne, adopted Banjo in November 2019. When Erickson visited her former foster dog in his new home, she said, “It was the most gratifying thing you could imagine!”

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## THE RESCUERS

### **Alison Pill, Gilles Marini and Amanda Seyfried: Friends to Kitties**

These stars have all helped Best Friends Animal Society tackle the influx

of kittens that occurs during the April-through-October breeding season. "Since neonatal kittens need extra care, most shelters do not have the ability to care for them, which is where fostering becomes a crucial component to lifesaving," says the Society's CEO, Julie Castle. Pill (*The Newsroom*) says it was "a joy to be covered in kittens and to send them back a little more ready for the world." Marini (*Days of Our Lives*) had a friend adopt his foster cat—"It was purrfect!" And Seyfried (*Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*), who fostered a mother and her six kittens, says it was "more fulfilling than anything."



**Rachel Jacobson: Animals Have Special Needs Too** The psychiatric social worker in Merrick, N.Y., has taken on everything from one-eyed cats to pups with neurological conditions. Her

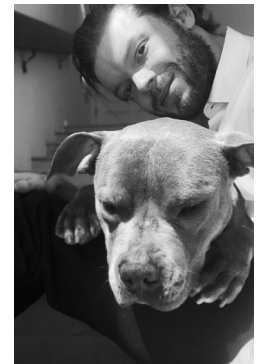


foster-affirming moment came after rehoming a furless Yorkshire terrier with a bad eye infection who wouldn't let anyone touch her. Over time, the pup allowed Jacobson to get close enough to administer eye drops and eventually came out of her shell. "I realized I really changed her life!" says Jacobson, who has fostered more than 100 animals. "It's an addiction," she admits, adding that nothing is better than "the moment

when the adopter comes and you know that a dog from the streets is finally being paired with a family."

### **Cameron Monaghan: A First-Time Foster**

The actor, from the Chicago-set Showtime series *Shameless*, took in his first foster during the COVID-19 outbreak, a 1-year-old pit bull named Neil, who was recovering from being neutered. "I'm going to do my best to find him a home, but I've been growing quite attached," Monaghan says. In the fostering world, that's very welcomed. "We celebrate when a foster falls in love with a dog and they get adopted," says Marta Kenar, founder of the Chicago-based MCP Rescue + Outreach, where Monaghan got Neil.



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