

Spring 2016

FREE!

Dog Cruces

Information

for the

& Lover!



Cruelty and Grace

Who could do that to an animal? Sadly, the answer is: people right here in Doña Ana County.

Page 19

Encouraging Numbers

There's good news— but more to do— at the Animal Services Center.

Page 12

Cat in the Habitat

I will not keep my cat inside.
I will not make her run and hide.
I do not want a pudgy cat.
I'll build an outdoor habitat!

Page 29



LOST + FOUND

Page 14

Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue K-9s answer the call when lives are on the line.

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Search & Rescue Redux

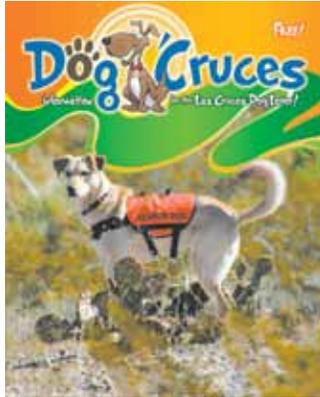
We spend a lot of time in our magazine focusing on humans who rescue dogs—and we'll never stop highlighting the folks who do so, because it's *their* spirit that first inspired us to start this publication. But we can't forget about those dogs who rescue *people*—a subject near and dear to my heart.

Our very first issue of *Dog'Cruces* (almost five years ago!) featured a cover story about the Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue Dog Team. Nancy Chanover's dog *Trixie*, who graced our Summer 2011 cover, returns as this issue's spokesmodel. It's a nod to the continuity of our very dedicated Dog Team members—but also because *Trixie* is just so darn photogenic!

As Phyllis and I began working on this spring's feature story, it hit me that I've been part of MVSAR for more than 19 years and have served as president for at least 10 years (I can't convince Steve to do it). This has been a huge and important part of my life for almost two decades, during which time I've trained some wonderful dogs to work alongside me.

Zimba was the one that started my wife and me on this path—both in K9-SAR work and with Golden Retrievers! But we didn't start training *Zimba* until she was six, and she passed away

from cancer just a few years later. Her career was short, but this first experience taught us a lot about training and working with dogs. *Coda* came next and then *Zoe*, who had a true gift for SAR work. I remember clearly a summer day when she found a 5-year-old autistic boy who had been missing for a couple days—it was the height of her game. Sadly, soon after that "find" she became ill and passed away at a very young age. Our current girls, *Ruby* and *Star*, were next up for SAR work, and both of them, like *Zoe*, have a gift for it. Their drive is amazing, and I hope their enthusiasm rubs off on *Scout*, the newest member of our team.



I honestly don't even know how many searches I've been on, but certainly well over 200. After almost 20 years, I've had to admit to

myself I'm not a kid any more, and I've actually had to start my own training regimen in order to keep up with the dogs in the field! My goal is to continue this volunteer work for many years to come—it's incredibly rewarding, and the bond we develop with our working dogs is truly special. I hope you enjoy reading about what we do!

Unfortunately, I can pretty-much guarantee you *won't* enjoy reading about a horrific case of neglect in Doña Ana County that came to Carla Baker's attention last Thanksgiving Eve. Carla's organization, Cherished K-9 All-Breed Rescue, was alerted to the situation and rushed to the location in an attempt to save *Grace*. Carla

relates her experience in our "Working Like a Dog" section. If you share her frustration, we've included contact information for local officials who are in positions to do something about this case and others.

The rest of this issue is loaded, as always—Jess provides a by-the-numbers look at the progress made by the Animal Services Center over the past few years, Dr. Pirtle digs deep into the topic of canine oral hygiene, *Walter* keeps his nose to the grindstone in search of tasty treats, and Connie Jimenez reports on February's Golden Hearts Gala benefitting the Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso. Kat also describes the benefits of creating an outdoor enclosure for your feline friends—it's the perfect time of year to tackle any animal-related home improvement projects you've been thinking about!

Go explore the great outdoors with your doggies this spring. But be safe—I'd much rather see you at Yappy Hour than on official MVSAR business!

Vic Villalobos

Mayor of Dog'Cruces

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151 S. Solano, Suite E
Las Cruces, NM 88001

or email us at:
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Doggie

RECURRING & ONGOING EVENTS SPRING 2016

Red Brick Pizza Twice-Monthly Fundraisers for HSSNM

Thursday, April 14th & 28th
Thursday, May 12th & 26th
Thursday, June 9th & 23rd
Thursday, July 7th & 21st

Red Brick Pizza, 2808 N. Telshor, from 11am-9pm. Social hour at 6pm. Must Mention "HSSNM" when placing your take-out or dine-in order, and 15% of the proceeds will be donated to HSSNM programs servicing animals.

Low-Cost Microchip Events from HSSNM

Thursday, April 14th & 28th
Thursday, May 12th & 26th
Thursday, June 9th & 23rd
Thursday, July 7th & 21st

PetSmart, 2200 E. Lohman (next to Old Navy), from 6pm to 8pm. Cost is \$6.35 per chip. For information, please call HSSNM at 575-523-8020 or mail@hssnm.org.



AKC's Canine Good Citizen Program

Saturday, May 7th
Saturday, June 4

Horse 'N' Hound Feed 'N' Supply, 991 W. Amador Ave, 9am. The AKC's Canine Good Citizen program is recognized as the gold standard for dog behavior. Dogs who pass the 10-step CGC test can earn a certificate and/or the official AKC CGC title. Dogs with the CGC title have the suffix, "CGC" after their names. A local CGC Tester will be on site to test dogs. It's \$10, and no pre-registration is required. For more info, call 575-523-8790.

Hot Dog/Ice Cream Social Fundraisers at Better Life

Sunday, April 10th
Sunday, May 15th
Sunday, June 12th
Sunday, July 31st (National Mutt Day!!)

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 315 Telshor Ste. C., from 11am to 4pm. For info, 575-556-9117. Proceeds benefit local rescues and non-profits.

For a complete calendar of events, visit

DogCruces.com

List is updated as events are announced

APA Dog Washes at Better Life

Sunday, April 17th
Sunday, May 22nd
Sunday, June 12th
Sunday, July 17th

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 315 Telshor Suite C. from 11am-3pm. Proceeds benefit APA.

Cherished K-9 Adoption Events

Saturday, April 16th & 30th 12noon-4pm
Saturday, May 14th & 28th 12noon-4pm
Saturday, June 11th & 25th 10am-2pm
Saturday, July 9th & 23rd 10am-2pm

Pet Barn, 1600 S. Valley Dr. For more information go to www.cherishedk-9.com.

APRIL

Saturday, April 30th
Adoption Event for Safe Haven
 Wild Birds Unlimited, 2001 E. Lohman Ave #130, Las Cruces from 11am-3pm.

MAY

Sunday, May 1st
2016 Twilight 5K Fun Run—2nd Annual
 Red Hawk Golf Club. Starts at 3pm. Runners & walkers of all ages, plus DOGS are welcome! The run will be around 9 holes of the golf course. Post-run fun, food & drink specials, live

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Saturday, May 7th

SHAS Dog Wash at Better Life

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 315 Telshor Suite C. from 10am-3pm. Proceeds benefit SHAS.

Wednesday, May 18th

Yappy Hour

St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla, from 6pm to 8pm. Games, door prizes, music and free goodies for four-legged attendees. Food & drink, including beer & wine available from the menu. \$5 donation at the door benefits DACHS and SNAP. Call 575-642-2648 for information.

Thursday, May 19th

6th Annual Wineing for the Animals

Amaro Winery, 402 S. Melendres, Las Cruces, from 5:30 to 8pm. There will be a silent auction. Every ticket comes with complimentary hors d'oeuvres, a glass of wine and live music. For more info go to shaspet.com or call Robin at 575-522-1044. Proceeds benefit Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary.

Saturday, May 28th

SHAS Adoption Event

Horse N Hound, 991 W. Amador Dr., from 11am-3pm.

JUNE

Saturday, June 4th

3rd Annual Paws 'n Claws Road Rally

All types of vehicles and motorcycles are welcome. Entry fee is \$10. Drivers will visit various stops around town, then will be treated to a cook-out, music and prizes. For information, to register or to sponsor, call 575-642-2648. Proceeds benefit Doña Ana County Humane Society.

June 5th-June 11th

Customer Appreciation Week at Better Life Pet Foods

Better Life Natural Pet Foods, 368 Avenida de Mesilla & 315 Telshor, Ste. C. Themed days with special discounts and activities at both locations.

Wednesday, June 15th

Yappy Hour

St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla, from 6pm to 8pm. Games, door prizes, music and free goodies for four-legged attend-

ees. Food & drink, including beer & wine available from the menu. \$5 donation at the door benefits DACHS and SNAP. Call 575-642-2648 for information.

Friday, June 24th

Take Your Dog To Work Day!

JULY

Saturday, July 2nd

Independence Day Photo Booth Event

SHAS Thrift Store, 840 El Paseo Rd. Bring your pet in for a 4th of July photo! Proceeds benefit Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary. Please bring dogs on leash. Information call 408-529-1065.

Friday, July 15th

National Pet Fire Safety Day

Wednesday, July 20th

Yappy Hour

St. Clair Winery & Bistro, 1720 Avenida de Mesilla, from 6pm to 8pm. Games, door prizes, music and free goodies for four-legged attendees. Food & drink, including beer & wine available from the menu. \$5 donation at the door benefits DACHS and SNAP. Call 575-642-2648 for information.



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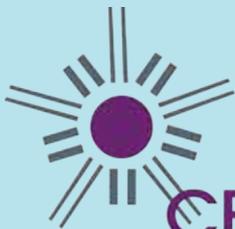
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The Whole Tooth About

Dogs are susceptible to numerous oral health conditions, such as broken teeth due to chewing on hard objects, misaligned teeth, oral tumors and (rarely) cavities. But the most common health condition I see every day in my practice is periodontal disease—inflammation and infection of the gums and teeth. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, periodontal disease is estimated to affect as many as 80% of dogs over two years of age!

Periodontal disease begins with mineral deposits (tartar), bacterial film (plaque), and inflamed gums (gingivitis). Unchecked, it will progress to gum recession and root exposure, as well as infection in the roots and surrounding bone of the jaw. Odor and tooth loss are common as periodontal disease progresses. In addition, bacteria and toxins entering the bloodstream from an infected mouth can contribute to the damage of internal organs such as the lungs, heart valves, kidneys and liver.

Many of us have bought into the idea that dry dogfood or biscuit snacks will remove and prevent tartar. There is some truth to the idea that a dry diet (including snacks) may have an abrasive effect on the teeth and could “scrub” some of the tartar away. However, in my experience the effect is rather minimal. I certainly see dogs every day that eat only dry food and treats, yet have significant tartar and periodontal disease.

Because the disease begins so early in a dog’s life, early intervention is the best preventative measure. Just like with humans, regular brushing of your dog’s teeth can remove some plaque and slow the accumulation of tartar and the progression of gum disease. Unfortunately, *regular* means *daily*—not once every six or eight weeks at the groomer, and not even once every week or two. There are numerous dog-specific toothpastes and brushes available to make the process easier. However, most of us find the task daunting, if not downright impossible. Getting your dog to cooperate on a daily basis can be a challenge. Many of us have multiple pets, so finding the time and energy to perform daily brushing can be difficult. I’m realistic about this. I readily confess that I don’t brush my dog’s teeth like I should, and know many of my clients are unable to as well.

An obvious choice to supplement daily brushing

is the use of dental chews. There is a tremendous variety of dental chews and toys available for our dogs—some are nothing more than extra calories, while others can be somewhat helpful. My advice when choosing a dental chew is to look for a seal of approval from the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). In order to receive this approval a product must meet significant criteria and undergo testing protocols to demonstrate effectiveness and prove that the product meets any claims made for usefulness in preventing and reducing plaque and tartar.

I have seen gastrointestinal obstructions caused by almost *anything* a dog can put in into its mouth. I would advise caution with products containing strands of fabric or string, as well as long, twisted pieces of rawhide. If swallowed, fabric and string

can become entangled in other debris and lodge in the stomach causing the development of a foreign body obstruction. Rawhide chews can become wet and unravel into long pieces which can occasionally cause a dog to choke.

Many of us have bought into the idea that dry dogfood or biscuit snacks will remove and prevent tartar . . . However, in my experience the effect is rather minimal.

Some dietary supplements and additives claim to aid in maintaining your dog’s oral health. Certain products are available that can be fed to your pet, or applied in the mouth to decrease inflammation of the gums. Numerous products are available to add to your pet’s drinking water with the idea that they will decrease bacteria, inflammation and periodontitis. Again, verify that these products carry the VOHC seal. My experience and information on most of these products suggest they have minimal effect on oral disease.

This brings us to the last and most controversial issue—dental cleaning.

The American Board of Veterinary Dentists has made a clear statement that proper dental cleaning and oral treatment requires general anesthesia and must be performed by and under the supervision of a veterinarian. Veterinary practice acts (laws) in most states do *not* allow for dental procedures to be performed by a layperson; however, this can vary from state to state. “Sedation-free” dentistry and groomers that offer their services to clean your dog’s teeth are *not* the same as the dental cleanings performed by a veterinarian.

It is important to understand that a dental procedure performed on the majority of my patients

The Vet's View

by
Dr. Scott Pirtle, DVM

Canine Dental Health

goes far beyond being a simple "cleaning" like we humans receive at the dentist. The vast majority of dental procedures performed in a veterinary clinic are on dogs with severe, advanced dental disease. This is "oral surgery"—not simply cleaning the teeth. In order for us to properly perform these procedures a pet must

be placed under general anesthesia—not only for immobilization, but also to prevent it from feeling what can be a very painful procedure. It is routine now for veterinarians to perform

full digital dental radiographs to determine the health of your dog's teeth, roots, and the bone of the jaw where these teeth are anchored. This allows us to fully evaluate our treatment options for each tooth in the dog's mouth, both above and below the gums.

It can be an expensive proposition to have oral surgery/professional dental cleaning performed on your dog, so it's important to understand what is involved in the dental procedure....

Your veterinarian will examine your dog and evaluate its overall health as well as the condition of its mouth. Bloodwork will be performed to assess organ function and other issues that could affect anesthesia protocols. An intravenous catheter and fluids will be administered to your dog (often there are adjunctive pain medications and antibiotics, as well). An endotracheal tube will be inserted, through which your dog will be given general anesthesia to the level needed for pain-free treatment.

Radiographs of the teeth will be obtained. Ultrasonic scaling and polishing of the teeth will be performed in a fashion

similar to the way our human teeth are cleaned.

Any fractured, decayed, exposed, and generally unhealthy teeth will be extracted as needed. This process can be tedious and time consuming in older dogs with advanced dental disease, and can be very challenging when working in a small mouth with tiny teeth!

... periodontal disease is estimated to affect as many as 80% of dogs over two years of age!

Roots associated with a dog's teeth are shockingly large when compared to the size of the teeth themselves, and are generally much larger than the roots of a human tooth. Many of these teeth have two or even three roots, but it only takes one infected, decayed root to make the entire tooth bad. Your veterinarian may need to cut these teeth into sections and remove each root individually. A decayed root may come out easily, but then there may be two roots which are tenaciously anchored into very solid bone. In some cases of severe periodontal disease your veterinarian might extract a dozen or more diseased, infected, unhealthy teeth. Don't worry—only painful and unhealthy teeth will be removed! After surgery your dog will be able to eat better than before the procedure.

If you are unable to perform daily dental prevention on your dog, having a professional dental cleaning done annually (or as needed based on your veterinarian's advice) might be a great idea to slow the inevitable progress of periodontal disease. We're all fighting the same battle. This is the most prevalent health problem in the dog population. One of my own dogs is on deck for a dental cleaning—and whatever else might be necessary once the radiographs and oral exam are done!

Finally, board certified veterinary dentists are now available to perform advanced dental procedures on your pet. If the idea of removing a broken or diseased tooth distresses you, a veterinary dentist can perform procedures such as root canals and crowns. Consult with your veterinarian if you would like to seek advanced dental care for your dog.



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The Beat

Goes On

by Jess Williams



At the March 10th regular meeting of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley Board of Directors, the 2015 Annual Report was presented to the board by Dr. Beth.

For this edition of *Dog'Cruces*, I'm going to share some key facts and figures from that report. The numbers—each of which represents a beating heart, and you really have to remember that as you think this through—show an encouraging trend, but they also show that hard work remains to be done if we have any hope of becoming a community that never kills healthy, adoptable animals.

From 2014 to 2015, the overall number of animals impounded at the ASCMV dropped by 16.6 percent. That's good. But the percentage drop doesn't tell the whole story: the number of animals that were impounded in 2015 was still a staggering 9,884. That's a lot of beating hearts.

From 2014 to 2015, the overall euthanasia rate fell 5.8 percent. The bad news is that 32.6 percent of the animals that came in to the shel-

From 2014 to 2015, the overall euthanasia rate fell 5.8 percent. The bad news is that 32.6 percent of the animals that came in to the shelter — 3,224 beating hearts — were put down.

ter—3,224 beating hearts—were put down. Of those, many were neither healthy (animals hit by cars, animals with advanced or serious disease, etc.) nor adoptable (overly aggressive toward animals or people, completely

feral, etc.) But still . . . 3,224 beating hearts.

All of the numbers are meticulously broken down in the report. You can see the breakdown between dogs, cats and other kinds of animals. You can see exactly why each animal was euthanized. You can also see how many animals—mostly dogs—were transported out to other shelters and rescue organizations in places as far away as Oregon and Maine. If you love statistics and chart presentations, this report will make you drool like a Yorkie anticipating a rawhide treat.

What's really startling, however, is not just the 2015 numbers, but the progression across a range of measurable numbers from 2008—when Dr. Beth came on board as the shelter director—and the present. During that period of time, contemplate the following:

- Adoptions ranged from a low of 2,026 in 2015 to a high of 2,655 in 2012, with an average of 2,376 adoptions per year.
- Euthanization numbers fell from a high of 10,386 in 2008 to the aforementioned 3,224 in 2015. With the exception of a slight increase between 2010 and 2011, the number of euthanizations has continued a significant downward trend each year.
- Rescues ranged from a low of 248 in 2008 to a high of 1,934 in 2014,

with a trend of escalating transport rescues that shows how serious Dr. Beth and the shelter staff are about finding every possible avenue toward live outcomes for the shelter's burgeoning population. The number was slightly lower than projected in 2015 due to vehicle problems. Those problems are over, now that the shelter has taken ownership of two brand new, multi-cage vehicles, secured with legislative funding.

The report shows a continuing and aggressive push for live outcomes, coupled with community engagement and educational outreach. From weekly radio shows to paid advertising on

targeted television channels and direct involvement in classrooms throughout the county, Dr. Beth, her staff and her small army of volunteers are spreading the word about responsible pet ownership.

They also are aggressively pursuing offsite pet adoptions each weekend at both the Farmer's Market and up at PetCo on East Lohman. Dr. Beth also has introduced adoption specials that align with holidays and special events throughout the county.

The mission to help the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley meet its goals is being advanced by a number of outside agencies, entities and individuals who are pitching in with adoption events, foster care, microchip clinics, low-cost vaccination initiatives and affordable spay/neuter operations. I applaud the fine folks at Action Programs for Animals, the Coalition for Pets and People, the Doña Ana County Humane Society, the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico and SNAP for the ongoing work they're doing to help this community show that companion animals are valued, and that saving their lives is a goal around which we all can rally. (If I left off anyone's group, I apologize; I'm on deadline, and my brain is frazzled.)

There are too many individuals to name here, but local animal activists are working hard to continue the trends that will ultimately lead us to the day when no companion animal in Doña Ana County has to be put down for any reason other than temperament, terminal health or serious injury. I'm certain the many wonderful readers of *Dog'Cruces* are among those on the front lines of this effort.

I encourage all of you to visit the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley's website (www.ascmv.org) to view the 2015 Annual Report in its entirety, and soak up both the progress we've made and the work that still lies ahead.

Get involved at whatever level you can. Because together, we can do this. Toby told me so, and I believe him with all my heart.

Jess Williams is a non-voting member of the board of directors of the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley. Toby keeps him grounded. Dr. Beth keeps him inspired. The numbers give him hope.



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Navigator, handler, and dog maneuver through an assigned "search area," looking—and sniffing—for clues to help them locate a missing "subject."



Let's say you're out for an afternoon hike. The weather is lovely, so you don't check the forecast. You pull on some shorts, grab a bottle of water, and tell your family you're going to conquer the Dripping Springs Trail. Once you get there, though, you choose the La Cueva Trail, instead, and soon the lure of Filmore Canyon calls you up to the waterfall—and once you get there, it's still early, so you keep hiking, getting further and further off-trail. You're enjoying the freedom of the adventure, the crisp breeze, and the amazing photos! Until you trip—and fall—and roll—and land hard on rock—unconscious.

Your family is wondering how long it could possibly take to hike 2.7 miles. You think you hear your phone ring a couple of times as you fade in and out of consciousness—before the battery dies. And there you are: broken leg, lots of blood, cactus spines deep in your bare arms and legs, two sips of water, and an empty Snicker's wrapper. No phone, no jacket, no fire—and no one with any idea where you are.

Luckily, you hadn't changed your plans so drastically as to make it difficult to at least locate your vehicle. What if you'd decided on a completely different hike? What if you'd ended up in the Doña Ana or Robledos or Uvas Mountains? How long before your family and friends would think of every place you'd ever hiked? How long before someone reported an abandoned car?

At least, this time, search and rescue (SAR) teams can start at your car, the last point you were seen. Meanwhile, the temperature has plummeted, and you can't stay awake despite the cold and wrenching pain. You have a concussion. You know you're in some sort of arroyo or crevice covered in thorny brush. You can't see the night sky, and no one can see you.

What happens now? In brief, someone calls 911 to report a potentially "lost, stranded, entrapped or injured person." The operator calls the State Police, who make the decision to call Search and Rescue. The SAR Incident Commander on duty decides what resources will be most efficient.

In your case, options are limited. ATV searchers have no access, and you're a needle in a haystack to ground teams—skilled hikers, looking for tracks, trail junctions, places you could have been attracted off-trail. You hear them calling your name in the distance, but your gasping will never reach them. Even if a helicopter joined the search, it couldn't spot you under the brush. You're in big trouble.

Racing to the Rescue!



Then . . . you see eyes glowing in the darkness. A big cat? A mountain lion? *Really* big trouble! The eyes are coming closer—you can hear it breathing—pushing its way through the brush, running at you now, bringing certain death! This is it!

What? It's wearing a vest! It's a dog! You are discovered by a search and rescue K-9—off-trail, on your scent. The SAR K-9 doesn't need to see you, doesn't need to hear you, doesn't need light, and doesn't much care that the terrain is inhospitable. It will take several hours to extract you in a Stokes basket (rescue stretcher), but in the greatest of ironies, you know this is your lucky night.

Actually, it wasn't all luck. Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue (MVSAR), one of nine specialty K-9 teams in New Mexico, invests almost 100 hours a month training its ten K-9 searchers as a team, in addition to the hours each K-9 spends training at home and the hours handlers spend training with the rest of the team, as a whole.

Bob Rodgers, the New Mexico State Search and Rescue Coordinator, talks about well-trained SAR dogs as “another good tool in the toolbox,” and Mesilla Valley SAR has a big toolbox.

In addition to our dog team, we have a 28-member ground team, a 9-member ATV team, a 4-member communications team, and a boat from which we can support NM State Police Divers. And that's just for starters, really, because many of our members are active on more than

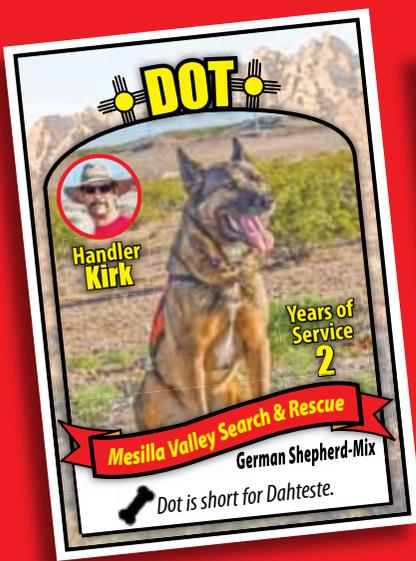
one resource team, so if an Incident Commander needs ground teams only, most of our ATV and dog team members are also hikers and will respond to the call-out without their ATVs and K-9s. Hikers can ride as spotters on our ATVs, and because each K-9 handler has a navigator in the field, our ATV and ground team members often serve in that capacity. That's a favorite switch-up, because everyone loves to hike with one of the dogs.

So, why one kind of resource instead of another? If there are trails on which ATVs are allowed, everyone else can go, too, if they're needed, and the ATVs might even be used to transport hikers and dogs closer to a search area. Our 6-wheel drive Polaris Ranger is fitted with a grate specially designed to protect our dogs, so that they, too, can ride safely to remote deployments and hit the ground fresh and ready to search. However, the Wilderness Act generally prohibits the use of motor vehicles in wilderness areas, except under very specific circumstances, so some searches will be up to ground and dog teams. The SAR Incident Commander and his/her Staff will have researched the search area and made clear determinations which assets will be the most efficient and effective.

Search dogs work especially well if they are introduced to the odor of the person for whom they're searching. Scientifically, an “odorprint,” is as distinctive as a fingerprint or a DNA sample. Anything with a person's signature odor is called a “scent article”—it can be a sock, a shirt, a tissue, or even the upholstery in a car. Once in the field, all sorts of K-9 and human issues come into focus. K-9 handlers, for instance, can wear snake gaiters during snake season, but their dogs, who are even more vulnerable, must rely on aversion training. Both handlers and K-9s face freezing ground in the Gila Wilderness winter and burning sand in the Chihuahuan Desert summer. Dog handlers must carry over twice the water weight of hikers, who are responsible only for their *own* hydration. Big dogs drink lots more water than medium-sized dogs. And they need more treats, too—more everything!

We don't see many little dogs in search and rescue because they have to take so many more steps per mile than larger dogs, not to mention dragging their tummies in snow and the difficulty of stream crossings and boulder climbing. Boulder scrambling, though, can be difficult





As complex as the circumstances can be, “search is an emergency,” so the fact that scent dogs “work very fast” according to Susannah Charleston, author of *The Scent of the Missing*, makes them exceedingly valuable resources. Grady Viramontes, a Type I Field Coordinator (often the Incident Commander for our district searches) agrees that “dogs allow us to search larger areas more effectively and usually much faster than a

SAR team.” I like the way our team member Kirk puts it, too—“dogs are a force multiplier.”

TEN THINGS the Dog’s Nose Knows

- 1 Dogs inhale and exhale about five times per second.
- 2 Dogs’ noses are wet because of lubrication glands, and the wetness helps to capture scents and hang on to them like glue.
- 3 Dogs have separate olfactory and respiratory routes in their noses so smelling is not affected by heavy breathing.
- 4 A dog’s nose moves odor molecules through the olfactory route to the olfactory bulb, and the odor is retained even after the dog exhales.
- 5 Dogs have forty times as much of their brains devoted to smell as humans do, though their brains are only one tenth the size of human brains.
- 6 A dog’s sense of smell is estimated to be 100,000 times better than a human’s—like being able to smell one bad apple in two billion barrels.
- 7 Humans’ olfactory receptors are the size of a postage stamp; dogs’ receptors can be as large as a handkerchief.
- 8 Dogs smell compound scents as individual elements. A human walks into a room and smells enchiladas. A dog smells cheese, beans, salsa, and tortillas—each scent distinctly.
- 9 Besides drugs, explosives, landmines, guns, etc. for law enforcement, dog noses can also detect mold, insects, toxins, the presence of cancerous tumors, changes in human blood glucose levels, and more.
- 10 Dogs can actually smell fear. Changes in heart rate and and blood flow push chemicals that are detected by dogs to the skin’s surface.

SAR Bonus: Dogs smell in stereo, so they better identify an individual’s *direction* of travel.

for really big dogs, too, whose maneuverability may be an issue.

So size does matter, both in a K-9’s body and a K-9’s nose. The ridge inside the nose that contains scent receptor cells varies according to the overall size of a dog’s nose. Dogs with longer and wider noses have more surface available than dogs with flat faces and short noses. For example, while a Dachshund has about 125 million receptor cells, a German Shepherd has roughly 225 million.

Most handlers will have considered these and several other attributes when choosing a breed for search and rescue or deciding whether their dog will be make a good search K-9. “The American Rescue Dog Association (AMRD) recommends choosing a dog with excellent scenting capability, strong drives (prey, pack, play), physical endurance/stamina, a high degree of intelligence, and a high degree of trainability.” According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), many sporting, working, and herding dogs have those characteristics.

MVSAR’s K-9 team currently includes three Golden Retrievers, two Border Collies, two Labrador Retrievers, a Belgian Malinois, a Blue Healer, and a German Shepherd-mix in various stages of training. Our certification processes parallel the National Search and Rescue (NASAR) Canine SARTECH Wilderness Air Scent Program requirements. Our dogs are “air scent” dogs, meaning that they work into the cone of the scent that wafts away from a subject, who is shedding 40,000 dead skin cells every *minute*. K-9 searchers and their handlers kind of have to be puzzle masters, too, as they work a scent that could eddy, loop, pool, and behave in a myriad of ways affected by humidity, temperature, elevation, and wind.

The dogs are ready! On training day, we place a “subject” (person for whom we’re searching) many hundreds of yards into a wilderness-like area. The advanced dogs head out one at a time with their handlers and navigators, as they would on a real search. Their search strategy is to walk in a pattern that cuts back and forth across the width of the area. Our dogs work off-leash, ranging away from their handlers in search of the scent. Different dogs range different distances, but they all check back with their handlers every few minutes. Handlers must decide how to work through the search area so the dogs are optimally positioned downwind to ensure the greatest chance of success.

Many dogs offer what Shannon calls the “tell-tail signs” that they are on the scent. “Star’s tail will start wagging,” for instance, but the **consistent, reliable determiner** that a dog has found a clue or subject is its “alert.” An alert is the dog’s way of communicating to the handler that it has made a find—it can be a bark, a sit, a paw, or any behavior that works for the human/K-9 partners. The handler says “show me,” and the dog returns to the clue or subject and then back to the handler with another alert, as many times as distance demands. Actually, handlers try, try, try to keep up with their dogs—that’s ideal—but some terrains make that more difficult than others. With every alert, the handler offers reinforcement, and when everybody gets to the subject, it’s a party! Both the handler and the subject offer lots of praise—and maybe a treat or a moment to play with a favorite toy. New SAR dogs practice with scent articles and “run-aways.” Nancy Chanover, our Dog Team Leader, describes run-aways as “exercises that are designed to build upon a dog’s natural prey



drive, encouraging them to want to go to people.” They build the “foundational behavior that going to the person is ALWAYS the right thing to do in the context of SAR.” A subject “runs away,” engaging the dog’s attention with lots of commotion as he or she hides nearby. When the dog follows, the subject reinforces its success with lots of praise and maybe some favorite treats. The handler will gradually increase the complexity of the exercise as the dog learns that finding people is its task.

The dogs love training day! Joe reports that “on the dreaded [weekend] when training has been canceled . . . Biscuit just stands by the door looking dejected.” Gary says “as soon as *Aella* sees the backpack come out, she gets excited and is ready to go!” Ryan talks about how before they joined the team, *Fitzroy* was his “trail buddy—but he didn’t feel like he had a job to do that was more important than chewing everything he could get his paws on.”

I love the parallels between handlers and their dogs. Just as with the rest of us and our canine best friends, if a handler is a little high strung, so is the dog, and if a handler is laid-back, so is the dog. Neither search dogs nor search humans care, though, that their calls usually come at 2:00 AM. Whomever responds to a search will join the team caravan and hit the road.

MVSAR will respond anywhere in the state, though district teams often find subjects before more distant teams are needed. For us, “distant” means farther than the Gila Wilderness or the Cloudcroft/Ruidoso areas, where we’re seasoned for five or six-hour one-way trips. We try to conserve gas, so usually we pack several searchers into a vehicle elbow-to-elbow. Our dogs, though, have cushy rides—foam mattresses, their own bench seats, freedom to move around to get to whomever will pet them (everyone)—and snacks on demand.

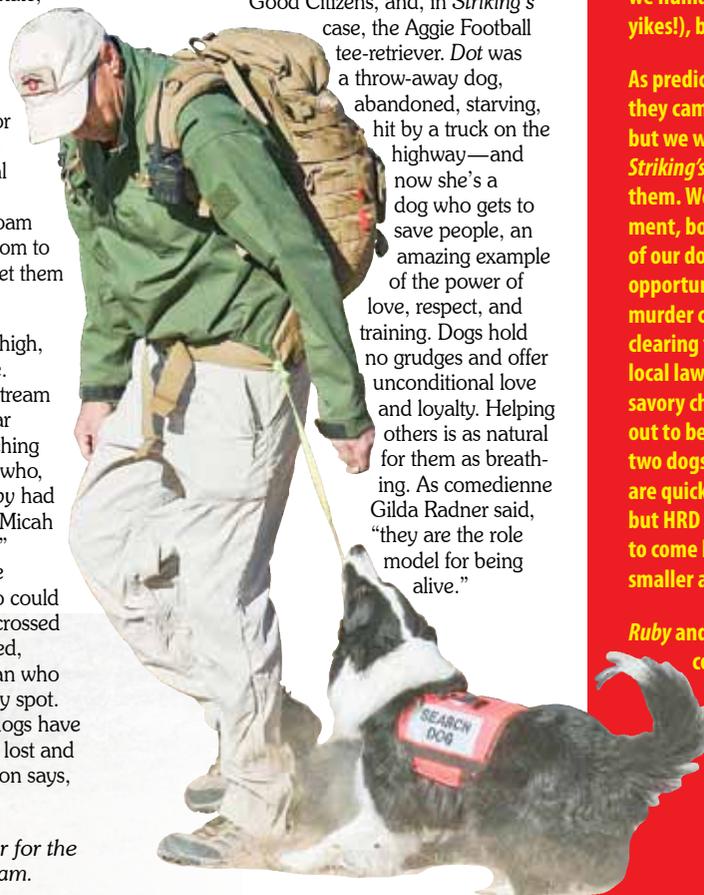
Once in the search area, the energy is high, and there are many ways to contribute. *Ruby* made more than 30 cold-water stream crossings in ten miles, for instance, near the Middle Fork of the Gila River searching for Micah True, the famed ultrarunner who, sadly, did not survive his final run. *Ruby* had been assigned an area far from where Micah was ultimately found, but she “cleared” her assigned area for searchers, a huge contribution in a search for a man who could run 100 miles. *Splash*, who has since crossed the Rainbow Bridge and is much missed, provided closure for the family of a man who took his own life in a remote and lonely spot. Sometimes, it’s a gentler ending; our dogs have twice found autistic children who were lost and wandering. And, as Susannah Charleson says,

Phyllis Wright is the Training Director for the Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue team.



“air-scent dogs are often successful in locating Alzheimer’s patients who have wandered away.” Even having dogs at Incident Base (search headquarters in the field) and among searchers provides the sort of calm that helps everyone deal with the urgency of the situation. And then there was the time one of our dogs retrieved an unexploded ordnance on a search—an incident which, thankfully, ended only as a good story.

We have lots of K-9 stories, stories with themes of danger and tragedy and joy, but the K-9 themes will always be the same—these are the dedicated, highly-trained, beloved family members of dedicated, highly-trained SAR volunteers. In their spare time, they are also, variously, therapy dogs, agility champions, Canine Good Citizens, and, in *Striking’s* case, the Aggie Football



tee-retriever. *Dot* was a throw-away dog, abandoned, starving, hit by a truck on the highway—and now she’s a dog who gets to save people, an amazing example of the power of love, respect, and training. Dogs hold no grudges and offer unconditional love and loyalty. Helping others is as natural for them as breathing. As comedienne Gilda Radner said, “they are the role model for being alive.”

We have added the HRD training to our weekly dog team trainings and continue to improve it. The training consists of many different types of material sources, and, yes, we do use real cadaver sources. Sometimes, we bury the source or mask it with other items. Other times, we use aged bones or cadaver-scented clothing. Most of the time we humans can’t smell anything (when we do . . . yikes!), but the dogs always pick it up.

As predicted, we built it (the HRD resource), and they came. We were training primarily for SAR, but we were and are willing to share *Ruby’s* and *Striking’s* skills with other agencies who need them. We started getting calls from law enforcement, both local and federal, requesting the use of our dogs. On one recent occasion we had the opportunity to work up near Reserve, NM on a murder case. Steve and *Striking* did a great job clearing the area while I stood guard along with local law enforcement keeping an eye out for unsavory characters. This type of training also turns out to be perfect for *Ruby*, who is the older of the two dogs. Her days of long wilderness searches are quickly coming to an end because of her age, but HRD work will allow her to continue for years to come because the work usually unfolds in smaller areas and is less stressful to her body.

Ruby and *Striking* use their skills for SAR, of course, but several of our other MVSAR K-9s handlers are interested in training their own dogs for HRD, and we look forward to the continued growth of our HRD program.

If you build it they will come. No, not an awesome baseball field in the middle of the desert—people who need your services.

A few years back, a fellow K-9 handler from the northern part of the state asked why we didn’t have an HRD (human remains detection) K-9 on our SAR team. “Honestly, we don’t have a lot of need in our area,” I told her. She said “if you build it . . .” And she was right.

We decided to take two of our more seasoned dogs, *Striking* and *Ruby*, and train them for HRD work. We did our research, talked with other teams, and, most importantly, started working with the folks that pretty much wrote the book on HRD training, the Border Patrol. We’ve had the opportunity to see how they train and observe them working, plus have our dogs work alongside them.

Vic Villalobos is President of MVSAR and reigning Mayor of DogCruces.

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Workin' Like a Dog



Saving Grace

Have you ever been so hungry that you've had to eat leaves, bugs or whatever filth is on the ground within reach? So dehydrated that your organs started to shut down? Ever been chained up to prevent you from even foraging for food or water, then left to die? Of course not. Human beings don't do that to other living creatures—do they? Sadly, sometimes the horrifying answer is “yes, they do.” Carla Baker, Director of Cherished K-9 All-Breed Rescue, was alerted to a case of inhuman neglect last fall and met a desperate soul of quiet grace who was almost out of time....

When you see this picture, what goes through your mind? When I first saw this dog (whom we later named Grace), I was filled with anger, sadness and urgency. No living being should have to endure what she went through—all at the hands of her owners.

On November 25th, when everyone was busy getting ready for their Thanksgiving feast, we were called to help a dog that was literally starving to death! We were told by a relative that the owner had gone out of state for 10 days and had left the dog chained up without food or water.

When we arrived on the scene we were met by family members, who led us onto the property. As I walked up to the dog, I dropped to my knees and petted her and told her that we were there to help. She was too weak to lift her head, but she wagged her tail.

After getting information from the family, I called Doña Ana County Central Dispatch, gave them the information and emphasized that this dog was in critical condition. The dispatcher told me she could not give me an estimated time when an Animal Control officer would be able to respond—they had several calls ahead of ours and had to respond in order. About 20 minutes later I called again. After receiving the same response from another dispatcher, I told them Grace was probably going to die while waiting for Animal Control to arrive. I asked Grace's family to sign a relinquishment form so that we could take her. As I carried her severely emaciated body to my car, the owner's daughter stopped me and asked for her collar back so they could use it for another dog they might get. We requested the rabies tag off Grace's collar and were allowed to remove it.

As I was carrying Grace to my car I asked the daughter about a small six-pound dog they had chained to another tree. She told me he was a stray. Upon further questioning I was informed

that he had been there over a month—long enough for him to be legally theirs. I asked if we could take him also. As I was carrying him to my car I asked when he had last eaten. I was shocked by the answer. As if it were completely normal, she said, “Oh, we don't feed him. He eats bugs.”

Once we were off the property, I called a veterinarian clinic and told them we were on our way with a critical dog. Grace's body trembled for a while, but then she rested “comfortably” as the 20-minute drive seemed like an eternity. Upon arrival, technicians met us at the car and carried her frail body into the clinic. The staff went to work trying to save Grace's life! She was hooked up to a warming machine, and as her body temperature rose, she began to vomit. There was nothing in her vomit except bile and a single bug.

The next day was Thanksgiving. A day to reflect and give thanks for our blessings, but I could not get Grace out of my mind. Then the call came with the sad news that Grace had passed away. Her body was not strong enough to recover from the horrible abuse and neglect she had suffered.

If we had not been tipped off, Grace would have died cold and alone that night, under the tree where she was lying when we showed up to help her. The family would probably just have disposed of her body and continued on with their lives—starting the cycle of abuse all over again with a new dog in no time at all.

New Mexico is one of the three worst states in the nation for animal abuse. The Animal Legal Defense Fund cites “New Mexico's inadequate felony provision for animal neglect and lack of any such provisions for abandonment” as reasons why the state ranks among the nation's worst. Offenders are not required to undergo mental health evaluations (so are unlikely to receive treatment that might stop the cycle of abuse)—and peace officers are not even obligated to enforce animal welfare laws! In Grace's case, the crime was



reported, but no charges have been filed (as of publication). Why is our Sheriff's Department ignoring this? I encourage everyone to call the Doña Ana Sheriff's Department and demand answers. Let your County Commissioner know our laws are inadequate to protect the precious lives of companion animals. Together we can begin to affect change.

In the meantime, if you see an animal living in horrible conditions, being abused or abandoned, please don't look the other way! Each of us has the power and responsibility to report animal abuse and neglect. Call Animal Control—more than once, if you have to. Or contact one of the area rescue groups to enlist their efforts to save innocent animal lives.

Grace's death was preventable—please don't let it have been in vain. Be the voice of the voiceless!

Las Cruces Central Dispatch: 575-528-4100

Doña Ana County Central Dispatch: 575-526-0795

Doña Ana Sheriff's Department: 575-525-1911

For more information on your County Commissioner, go to: donaanacounty.org/commissioners

Though unable to save Grace, Cherished K-9 and other dedicated animal organizations continue to work tirelessly to locate, rescue, heal, socialize and find new homes for abused, neglected and abandoned animals in the Mesilla Valley. They can use all the help they can get. Find out more about their work at:

CherishedK-9.com

facebook.com/CherishedK-9AllBreedRescue



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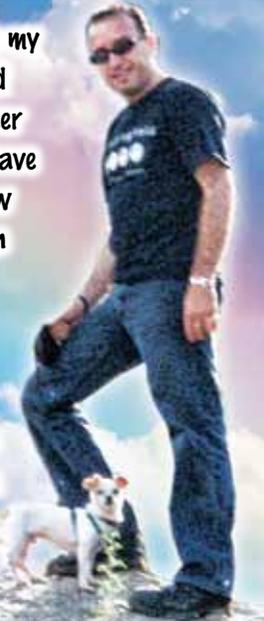
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Farewell, My Furry Friend.

In the Fall 2015 Edition of Dog Cruces my short article called "My Old Dog," ended with the following line: "One day, sooner than I care to imagine, I know I will have to bid Cosmo a loving farewell. For now though, we will be two grumpy old men cursing time for aging us." I'm sad to report that on February 9th, Cosmo crossed The Rainbow Bridge. He passed away while sleeping in his pup tent - It was his favorite place in the house unless there was a sunbeam available. He was a great friend to both The Boy and me and he will be missed very much.



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The percentage of animals put to death in 2014 decreased, but we still need community support to keep the momentum going! Help us with the over-population in Doña Ana County by spaying and neutering your pets and putting a stop to unwanted litters!



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Some Enchanted Evening!



Former Army Captain Luis Carlos Montalván was Keynote Speaker at the Golden Hearts Gala banquet in February. He and his service dog, Tuesday, signed their NY Times bestselling books and visited with Gala guests.

On the night of February 6, 2016, El Paso's Marriot Hotel was the place to be for dog lovers throughout the borderland. Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso's first Golden Hearts Gala banquet was a resounding success—thanks to everyone who sponsored, volunteered, supported, and/or attended the event.

Former Army Captain Luis Carlos Montalván (with service dog, Tuesday, by his side) was the keynote speaker—and the duo did not disappoint. Captain Montalván is a 17-year U.S. Army Veteran who served multiple tours of duty abroad and has received numerous decorations, including two Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal for Valor, and the Combat Action Badge. Tuesday, his faithful Golden Retriever, is a recipient of the 2013-14 American Kennel Club (AKC) and Humane Fund Award for Canine Excellence (ACE). Captain Montalván's relationship with Tuesday inspired him to become a motivational speaker, as well as a New York Times bestselling author of two books: *Until Tuesday*, and *Tuesday Tucks Me In*.

Captain Montalván spoke of war, trauma, recovery and the unbreakable bond between himself and Tuesday that has helped him to heal and makes everyday life easier. His story is compelling and inspirational—he and Tuesday exemplify how important dogs and humans are in each other's lives.

National studies show that contact with animals provides many emotional and psychological benefits. Pets lower blood pressure, decrease cholesterol levels, reduce anxiety, boost immune systems, decrease aggression, and increase socialization and communication. Some dogs can sniff out cancers, alert people to seizures, find lost people, protect soldiers abroad from explosives, and a whole lot more! Golden Retrievers, like Tuesday, top the list of life-saving dogs. Yet, so many of these great dogs with so much potential to keep us healthy and happy are dying every day.

Since 2009, GRREP has rescued over 600

Golden Retrievers, Golden mixes and other breeds of dogs who have been abandoned, surrendered to kill shelters, or are found living feral on the streets of Las Cruces, El Paso and Juarez.

GRREP is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit rescue organization, and the proceeds from the Golden Hearts Gala in February have helped provide critical veterinary care, food, transportation, rehabilitation, behavioral training, foster care, boarding (as needed) and grooming services. Additionally, a network of dedicated volunteers helps transport rescued dogs to veterinary appointments and foster homes, while providing love, nurturing, training and vital socialization skills—all with the goal of eventually finding loving homes and second chances at life.



Mayor Vic served as auctioneer at the Golden Hearts Gala.

Fundraising efforts are ongoing, and tax-deductible donations from generous individuals have helped rescue dogs like Buddy, a sweet, two-year-old Golden who was

rescued by GRREP after his owner left him at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley. Buddy was in very poor condition—his coat was matted, he was dirty, scared, and severely malnourished. He also proved to be heartworm positive. Buddy has undergone a long and slow treatment to get rid of his heartworms and through it all he has shown nothing but love for his two- and four-legged foster family. He's ready for his forever home!

GRREP is grateful for any and all donations to assist its efforts to rescue these wonderful companion animals!



Excellent table manners were expected of all who attended the banquet.



Golden Retriever Buddy was severely malnourished and had heartworms when GRREP rescued him. Now, he's the picture of health and looking for a forever home.





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Traveling With Your Best Friends

by Vic Villalobos

The Ultimate Dogmobile

As I sat down to write my column, I realized we still haven't had the opportunity to take a road trip with the dogs. But don't worry—spring is in the air and we are ready to go... somewhere... *anywhere*, for even just a few days!

In the last issue I introduced *Scout*, the unexpected addition to our pack, and described some of the modifications we had to make to our vehicle to (barely) fit four dogs—three big dogs and the gigantic *Scout*, who we think surely was crossbred with a Great Dane or a Lion! Well, since then, we've converted our old Suburban back to a humans-only transport vehicle—but have created a new *Ultimate Dogmobile* to take its place!

About a month ago I got a call from a friend of mine... Jim. He's a car expert. Jim told me he had the "opportunity" to buy two ¾-ton Chevy Suburbans (one for me, one for him) at an *amazing* price. Over the years I've learned that when Jim says buy... well, you buy. So I did. After a little "discussion" at home about how I could possibly have agreed to this without consulting my better half first, the Suburban was ours. Mine. I should mention, in my defense, that I've wanted a ¾-ton Suburban for many, many years. It has great towing capability, lots of room for humans, dogs, and stuff, and is perfect for our Search and Rescue work. So, it really was a smart—and completely justifiable—purchase. *Really*.

My wife and I have been a part of Mesilla Valley Search and Rescue for 19 years and have trained our dogs to be air scenting dogs. We use our vehicles to transport dogs and gear to and from trainings and missions. We train pretty much every Sunday with the rest of the MVSAR Dog Team and on our own whenever we can. Two of our dogs are mission-ready—meaning they can be called out to go look for a lost person. *Scout* is in training; he'll be our third. He showed the necessary drive to succeed at SAR work, which is the biggest reason

we ended up adopting him from Golden Retriever Rescue of El Paso. Well, that and the fact that we kind of fell in love with him.

I started the transformation of my new toy—I mean work vehicle—by removing all but three seats. Basically, we can now accommodate only the two of us and one additional human—the rest of the area is for gear and dogs! *Scout* has the whole back area all to himself—separated from his sisters by a metal grate. I made a carpeted, memory foam topper (thanks for the foam, Andrea!) in the middle section of the Suburban for our three girls to lie on, then removed the center console so *Ruby* can squeeze in between the two front seats and ride up with us like the queen she is. Next, I added a sliding cargo box to the rear (*Scout's* space), that would hold most of our SAR gear. I put more memory foam on top of the cargo box then carpeted it to match the back of the Suburban. Now *Scout* has a big, fancy, elevated bed that provides him a window view!

We still didn't have quite enough storage space for all our gear, so I added a cargo bin to the pet barrier that separates *Scout's* area. It's perfect for holding some odds and ends like collapsible water bowls, spare leashes, flashlights, doggie poop bags,

a light jacket and my brand new walking stick with a chewed-up handle (*Scout* ate it) that I got for my birthday. I had broken my other one on a search mission in Alamogordo in Dog Canyon. Yeah, I should have known better than to leave *anything* in the back with *Scout* other than a deer antler for him to chew on. He even ate the temporary license plate we had on the inside back window while we were attending a team meeting. *Scout* has also shredded every bed we've bought him, which is why the foam on top of the cargo box is a "secret" bed hidden by the carpet that covers it (don't tell him!).

We know the dangers of dogs overheating and dying in hot vehicles and have done what we can to keep our dogs cool when we train in summer months. Auto Trim will be applying some heat-reducing window tint to the Dogmobile before it gets really hot. And we have a portable 12-volt A/C system, along with a reflective metal vehicle cover, that we and our teammates use to keep our dogs cool while they're at Dog Team practice. Someone said our vehicles look like baked potatoes wrapped

in foil, but the reflective material can drop a car's temperature by around 10 degrees—so it's worth looking silly to keep cool and safe.

To finish off the outside and add some doggie "flair," one of our DogCruces graphic artists created a unique paw-print graphic for the Dogmobile's sides. Now my whole pack can ride in style and comfort, whether we're embarking (get it?) on a family vacation, or heading out to do the serious work of finding lost souls so they can make it home again.

See... a smart, completely justified purchase. *Really*.



Ruby assumes her rightful position—up front with the humans!



Scout has the back of the Dogmobile all to himself—so it's his job to guard the search and rescue gear stored under his padded bed.

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Penny for your Thoughts

by Jennifer Woods

Catch a Falling Star...

Parents: though this is a mostly-happy story, there is a dark area you may not want your children to read. Please decide for yourselves whether you find it age-appropriate for your little ones.

Those of you who are regular readers of *DogCruces* may recall my fond farewell to the colorful neighborhood surrounding our old office on Valley Drive. Equally memorable was the eclectic parade of characters we encountered strolling along Vagrant Lane, lounging on Bum Plaza, and even frequenting Poo Alley. They—and we—were mostly harmless, predominantly sane, and generally uninterested in establishing any kind of contact.

But there was an exception, and it was because of a dog.

Penny noticed them first—a large man, a tiny woman and a medium-size shepherd-mix relaxing in some shade across the parking lot. The dogs were alert and curious—we humans...not so much. But we kept seeing each other day after day, and when the little group established a camp behind the building (where *Penny* and I walked), the dogs were determined to meet each other.

“They really want to play—is that OK?” The pups approached each other (on-leash) and danced, wiggled, and wrestled— instant BFFs.

“What’s your dog’s name?” the woman asked. I told her, and she offered, “This is *Falling Star*.” I laughed and replied, “Mine is actually *SHINY Penny*, but I never use her full name.” So we had two things in common—puppies and adjectives—and our girls had a standing “play date” for the foreseeable future.

It took a few weeks for us to exchange human names—I’ll call them Faith and Michael—and by then the dogs were frolicking off-leash, and I was taking food and treats out back on a regular basis to *Falling Star* and her people. They had transformed Bum Plaza with furniture, a tent and a fire pit—and they seemed content in their environs. In many ways, it was nicer than our old office.

Michael was a big, silent, happy guy (perpetually stoned, I think) who left after a month or so, but Faith stayed on. She was sharp and articulate. I didn’t want to approach the “so how’d you end

up homeless?” topic, so we mostly chatted about our dogs. I could tell *Falling Star* was devoted to Faith, but the pup was wary of me, at first. *Penny* must have convinced her I was OK, because eventually she overcame her shyness and let me pet her. The treats helped, no doubt.

I was familiar with shy dogs, of course, having one of my own, so the fact that *Penny* seemed so normal around these new people gave me hope. This was long before *Summer* had arrived to help *Penny* open up and cope with her issues. I mentioned to Faith that *Penny* was terrified of most humans, and speculated that her joy of being with other dogs must be so intense that it could override her fear of strangers.

Faith asked if *Penny* had been abused, and I gave my standard answer: “I don’t know. I hope not, but whatever happened before, she’ll be safe and loved from now on.”

Faith nodded, and I asked if she knew *Falling Star*’s history. “I took her from a meth house when she was just a few weeks old. She was starving and had been kicked around and beaten. Then I found out they were gang-raping her, and I just grabbed her and ran.”

“She wouldn’t stop crying and shaking, so I held her in my arms—day and night—for about two weeks, until she started to trust me. Now she won’t let me out of her sight.”

She said it all so matter-of-factly that I wasn’t sure I’d understood. But she assured me I had, and we left it at that. I didn’t ask Faith why she’d been at the meth house. I believe she was there to rescue that puppy.

Mayor Vic, Charissa and I offered to pay for *Falling Star* to see a vet and get her vaccinations—but Faith had already taken her to a low-cost clinic and seen to her medical needs. She was a good Dog Mom.

Eventually, the “improvements” Faith and Michael had made to Bum Plaza caught the attention of our building manager, and the next day the woman and her dog were gone. I never saw them again.

I have no idea where Faith and *Falling Star* are now. But wherever they’ve been and wherever they’re headed, I know they’re still together—a travelling testament to the resilience of living beings and the redemptive power of unconditional love.

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Walter's Lunchbox

by Walter Dubbin
(as told to Margaret Dubbin)



More Handsome than Magnum, P.I.

Hello peeps, *Wingman P.I.* here. Sniffin' out the best treat ingredients around is my business. Like those brave Search & Rescue pups in this issue, I, too, use both air scenting and ground tracking methods in my daily investigative work. Only difference is, I'm on the job 24/7. It's a smelly job but somepuppy's gotta do it!

For those of you who may not know, I am deaf—so my nose is extra-attuned to the various scents in my world. Two in particular will wake me bolt upright from a sound sleep! Those smells are:

- 1. MOM.** The slightest waft of her walking past while I'm sleeping will awaken me in a sheer panic because she is leaving the room for some reason!
- 2. FOOD.** The minute the 'fridge or pantry door opens and I catch a whiff of the contents, I'm up! Ready to taste whatever savory morsels might be hiding behind those doors....

Anyhoo, I was snoozing the day away, dreaming of tasty treats, when my nap was interrupted by the sweet vanilla and cherry blossom scent of Mom (She said I had to tell you she smells like vanilla and cherry blossoms, but between you and me, she smells like garlic and sweat most of the time). Through groggy, boogery eyes I scanned the room but couldn't see her!

Oh no! Mom's missing! Frantic, I started sniffing around where I last knew her to be—the kitchen, of course. Nose to the ground, I sniffed out her footsteps, gathering clues. Around the kitchen island, to the trash can, back to the island...then I picked up a recent trail heading down the hallway.

As I tracked her scent past the pantry, I stopped dead in my tracks. Sniff, sniff, sniff...kibble...biscuits...sniff...dried fish skins from Honest Kitchen...I crammed my snout as far under the pantry door as it would go. Wait, what was I doing? Oh, yeah! Where's Mom?

I shook off the distraction of hidden delicacies and continued tracking Mom's footsteps down the hall to the bottom of the stairs. Did she go upstairs? Sniff, sniff. The nose said "no."

Even though the floor is ceramic tile, I could still smell where dad had set his hunting boots last season, where *Butthead* had vomited up a leg from my octopus toy he ate last week, and where Mom had dropped a bottle of wine bringing in groceries last month. These spots had been cleaned thoroughly and mopped repeatedly, but the scents of daily life remain for an expert tracker like me!

Aha! Fresh Mom-scent! Back to the task at hand.

Nose to the ground, I sped down the hall towards the little room at the bottom of the stairs. Smack! Ouch! Why is that door closed?

Hmm, I sniffed the door knob. Yep, the scent was fresh. But I still didn't have a visual. I was able to nudge the door open and peek my head inside. There was Mom! Sitting atop the porcelain water bowl and motioning to me to go away. Huff! Some gratitude! I courageously searched and successfully rescued her, and that's the thanks I get? Talk about moody. Oh well, just another day on the job, I guess. I laid down in the doorway so she couldn't go missing again. Probably have to do it all over again tomorrow....

Blueberry Carob Chip Muffins

- 2C Brown Rice Flour
- 1C Flax Seed Meal
- 1C Gluten Free Rolled Oats
- ¼ C Shredded Coconut Flakes (unsweetened)
- ½ C Carob Chips
- 2C Water • 2 Eggs
- 2 Ripe Bananas
- 1C Fresh Blueberries
- ¼ C Chunky Natural Peanut Butter
- 3T Raw Honey or Agave Nectar
- 1T Coconut Oil (melted) • ⅛ t Vanilla Extract



Preheat oven to 375°F. Combine all dry ingredients. In a large bowl, mix together water, egg, honey, peanut butter, vanilla, coconut oil, and mashed bananas. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients and mix thoroughly. Fold in Carob Chips and Blueberries. Fill lined muffin tin ¾ full with batter. Bake for 30 minutes, until firm and golden brown.

Sweet Potato Blueberry Oatmeal Biscuits

- 8C Brown Rice Flour
- 8 T Dry Milk Powder
- 1C Flax Seed Meal
- 1C Gluten Free Oats
- 8 Eggs • 1C Fresh Blueberries
- 2C Sweet Potato Puree (approx. 1 can)



Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, mix together wet ingredients until thoroughly blended. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix until mixture forms a stiff dough. Knead dough until all ingredients are thoroughly distributed. Divide and roll out sections to approximately ¼" thickness, between pieces of parchment paper. Using a cookie cutter, cut desired shapes and place onto parchment lined cookie sheets. Bake 30-45 minutes, until center of cookie is firm. Leaving cookies in the oven, turn off oven and allow cookies to completely cool.





Kat's Korner

by Kat Lacy

Please, Fence Me In!

Many cat owners allow their kitties to roam free, although most people don't realize there is a leash law for cats within the Las Cruces city limits. This means you could face fines or have your cat picked up by Animal Control if kitty is caught on the prowl outdoors. If you live outside the city limits, it's even worse—you stand a good chance of losing your beloved feline family members to natural predators like coyotes and owls. And let's not forget about traffic, regardless of where you live! It's not just kitty's life in danger, either—your backyard bird and lizard population may be declining every time your feline buddy goes hunting. For their sake and your cat's sake, I urge you to consider building a "cat enclosure" to protect your cats from the dangers they face outdoors and the dangers they pose to local wildlife—all while abiding by local leash laws.

An enclosure will save animal lives and provide your cats with their very own safe haven of fun and fitness! Outdoor enclosures offer you and your cat the best of both worlds. Normally-indoor cats can escape the confines of their houses or apartments, while outdoor cats are contained in a safe environment close to home. Fresh air, grass and sunshine are beneficial to kitty's overall health and well-being. Your cats get to watch birds without capturing or killing them (so, no more unwelcome "presents" for you!). Stray cats cannot fight your kitties in their enclosure, AND...no more pooping in the neighbors' yards. Cat enclosures could usher in a new era of world peace!

The size and complexity of your enclosure will depend on your needs and budget. As always, do-it-yourselfers will have a monetary advantage, but there are options available for every cat owner. There are products that can surround your whole yard, as well as products that provide kitty just his own little corner of paradise.

Your cat can gain access through a window in your house or off a patio or garage. Enclosures can cost from a couple hundred to thousands of dollars—but if you adore your cats, you will love having an enclosure for them as much as they love having it.

Once you have an outdoor enclosure there is no turning back—you'll be hooked because kitty is so happy! A 2" x 2" or 2" x 4" wire mesh is the safest, keeping most birds out while letting in unwanted mice (wanted by your cat). A cat door or small dog door installed in a window or door leading into the house gives your cats access to the indoors if something frightens them. Make sure there are lots of climbing features and hiding places inside the enclosure. Of course, shade—or even a shade tree—is a must.

The coolest thing you can add is a water feature such as a fountain or a pond with waterfall. It will add beauty, fun, and opportunity for your cat to drink more water. If you're thinking, "My cat stays indoors all day, so I don't need an outside enclosure"—think again! Indoor cats can overeat due to boredom and get fat from lack of exercise, which could lead to diabetes and other health issues. They throw up in your house because they're not getting enough grass to eat. Indoor cats can develop litter box issues and may pee on your bed, couch, or floor. They may climb your drapes and tear at your screen doors and windows. They can claw your furniture and tear up toilet tissue rolls. They may yowl in the middle of the night for no particular reason. They may beg you relentlessly for affection or food when all they really need is to be outside for a bit.

Here are a couple of websites that will help you decide what kind of cat enclosure is right for you and your cat: purrfectfence.com and just4cats.com. You can also stop by Better Life for custom-built design ideas and estimates.

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