

# Nelson SPCA

## 2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER



### A Letter from the President

In 2008, I moved to the area to coach at the University of Virginia. I adopted my first shelter kitten and named her Kirby, after my all-time favorite baseball player. Little did I know that one "gateway kitty" would eventually lead me to heading up an animal welfare organization. Kirby was energetic, and she constantly wanted to play, so I decided to foster two more kittens for the CASPCA. As often happens, one of them, Gizmo, became a foster failure. I was hooked. Dr. Jessica Ligon at LVH recommended I contact the Nelson SPCA, which was just down the road from my new home. She mentioned they were seeking new board members and connected me with the indomitable Bette Grahame, who had been leading the charge within the organization for over 30 years. I was so fortunate to be able to learn from her about the history of the organization, how it currently functioned, and to start forming ideas for the future. For 7 years, I ran the spay and neuter program, going from pen-and-paper

registration forms and cash/check payments to online forms and payments, which has allowed us to double and sometimes triple the number of animals receiving surgery through our pet and TNR programs while spending far less time processing customers.

When Deena Hambusch decided to depart the board presidency early this year, she suggested to the group that I would be a suitable replacement. I agreed to take the reins only if remaining board members were 100% committed to taking on more responsibilities, given my busy work life. We are forming an absolute Dream Team, inclusive of incredibly talented & dedicated board members, a new shelter manager, new dog/cat leads, and devoted employees, who have been instrumental in keeping the shelter functioning at a high level through tough times in animal welfare. All of us continue to learn best practices in shelter administration on all levels.

In 2025, Nelson SPCA will focus on deepening connection with our local community & businesses, which we began working on with the 20th Anniversary Bash. We will also launch a new capital campaign and recruit more board members and volunteers. We can't wait to show you what we're doing next for the animals - we'd love to have you join us!

Sincerely,  
Heidi Freitager, President Nelson SPCA  
[president@nelsonspca.org](mailto:president@nelsonspca.org)

Kirby, the very best shelter-adopted cat, never knew a Temptations treat she didn't like, a lap she didn't want to lay on, or a box and blanket that were not hers for the taking. Kirby passed in October at the age of 16.



**Shelter Manager**  
Rose Fariss

**Board of Directors**  
Heidi Freitager - President  
Denise Merricks - Vice President  
Ginger Germani - Treasurer  
Astrid Brock  
Amy Eastlack  
Michael Wood  
Ron Cote  
Sarah Landon



### 2024 Holiday Campaign Match!

The incredible generosity of our donors makes it possible for your donations to go twice as far! Our Holiday Matchers will double up to \$50,000 in total donations received in December, or postmarked by December 31, 2024. General donations, honoraria, memorials, and memberships all qualify. More info on last page!



## BY THE NUMBERS



January 1-October 1, 2024

### **ANIMALS BROUGHT IN:** **395**

STRAYS AND SURRENDERS:  
156 CATS & 36 DOGS

TAKEN FROM ANIMAL CONTROL:  
34 CATS & 21 DOGS

ADOPTION RETURNS:  
2 CATS AND 10 DOGS



### **ANIMALS OUT:** **392**

ADOPTIONS:  
115 CATS & 48 DOGS

LOST PETS FOUND:  
2 CATS & 3 DOGS

TRANSFERS:  
34 CATS & 27 DOGS

DIED IN SHELTER:  
5 CATS & 4 DOGS



**Over 500 animals have been  
spayed or neutered**

## News, Notes, and Appreciations

This year Nelson SPCA reached a huge milestone — our shelter's 20th Anniversary! We celebrated in style at the incomparable Blue Toad Cidery with sponsors, volunteers, staff and shelter supporters. A huge thank you to all who made the inaugural Anniversary Bash spectacular! We look forward to hosting this fun-filled event for many years to come.

We are thrilled to introduce our digital redesign, which includes our new logo and re-imagined website at [nelsonspca.org](https://nelsonspca.org)! Along with these modernizations, we have officially shortened our name to Nelson SPCA—a small change that reflects our evolving identity.

These achievements are possible because of tremendous community support. Thanks to generous donations and partnerships with local businesses, and unwavering gifts of time and talent from our steadfast volunteers, our community continues to demonstrate how deeply it cares for our animals by supporting Nelson SPCA's lifesaving mission.

Finally, we can't say it often enough. We are grateful to the heartbeat of Almost Home, Rose Farris, our invincible Shelter Manager, as well as our amazing staff! Marissa Shaner and Erin Ezzyk lead our incredible cat and dog staff. New shelter personnel Kaylee White, Madison Booysen, Perla Barrios-Vega, Monique Bolden, Cole Johnson and McKenzie Powell join Tammy Goolsby, Holly Martin, Sigrid Mirabella and Gerri Simpson in ensuring every animal receives the very best care, attention and love.



We are excited to introduce Chip, NSPCA's mascot for 2025. Thank you to the Gore family for loving Chip and supporting our work in his honor.



# A Letter from the Secretary

Three years ago, I joined the board of Nelson SPCA. Initially, I fell in love with the dogs but soon thereafter I was charmed by the shelter's "can-do" attitude. The post-pandemic years have been especially challenging for animal shelters nationwide, who continue to grapple with an overwhelming number of homeless cats and dogs. Nelson SPCA is no different. A 2023 survey of 400 shelters revealed that over 50% of them have seen an increase in euthanasia rates. For larger, municipal-run shelters, that number jumps to 70%.

It is a simple but alarming statistic: the intake of animals has exceeded the outturn rate by 4%. With 3.3 million cats and 3.2 million dogs entering shelters in 2023 alone, this small percentage gap translates to hundreds of thousands of additional animals with neither a home nor a spot in a shelter. When people face challenging times, their pets feel it first. Financial hardship affects both human and pet care. Housing instability often means pets lose their homes. Lack of funds often translates into pets not receiving proper medical care, including spaying and neutering.

Through this Nelson SPCA has worked tirelessly. Our shelter is always full, and there are always animals in need of support. Shelter Manager Rose Fariss has done amazing work. Rose has leveraged a combination of patience, perseverance, and personal connections to move 72 cats and 27 dogs into partner shelters with high adoption rates to make space at Almost Home available. These shelters face a constant barrage of requests from rural organizations and have not been able to take in as many transferred animals as they once did, so it takes a tremendous amount of effort to foster these relationships. These transports are critical to our ability to help save more of Nelson County's cats and dogs.

As I embark on my international adventure, I will miss this tenacious little shelter and the incredibly generous community standing behind it.

-Andrew Cotter, outgoing board Secretary



Nelson SPCA Board of Directors. L to R: Sarah Landon, Michael Wood, Denise Merricks, Ron Cote, Ginger Germani, Astrid Brock, Heidi Freitager, Andrew Cotter. (Not pictured: Amy Eastlack.)



## NELSON SPCA NEEDS YOU!

Have you always wanted to get involved in animal welfare? Do you have special talents you'd like to put to use, such as a passion for accounting or a deep love of financial data? Do you enjoy hanging out at the local breweries, cideries and vineyards with great dogs who deserve loving homes? Have you always dreamt of driving a van full of cats out of state? Do you have a love of layout and a knack for wordsmithing? Have you been just waiting for an opportunity to flex your grant-writing skills? Are you a fundraiser extraordinaire? Have you ever wondered how much fun it would be to serve on a working board?

Please get in touch with us! We always need good, capable folks, and we are a fun place to volunteer. Let us know what you are interested in doing and we will find a place for you!

## Adoptable Cats and Dogs



### RAVEN

Raven is a darling kitten, full of personality and self-assurance. She is ready for her next adventure to be with you!



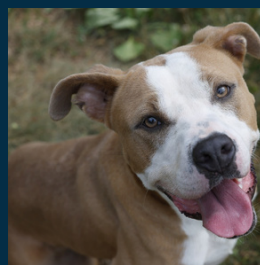
### FELIX

Felix is a big love with hound charm. He has spent several months at Camp Merricks and is ready to learn how to be a house hound.



### MOE

Moe is everyone's favorite giant tripod. This hunk of kitty has so much personality. Snuggle alert!



### BARLOC

Barloc aka Barley is adorable. He loves to give kisses and go for hikes. A real sweetheart! Calling all PITY LOVERS!



### BOO

Boo is a beautiful tuxedo. She is lively and fun. Boo likes other cats and humans. She is very affectionate.

# Thank you to the amazing sponsors of our 20th Anniversary Bash!

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LAURA BATTLE

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Email us: [pets@nelsonspca.org](mailto:pets@nelsonspca.org)  
Visit us: [www.nelsonspca.org](http://www.nelsonspca.org)

Almost Home Pet Adoption Center is open from 1-4pm, daily.



The incredible generosity of our donors makes it possible for your donations to go twice as far! Our Holiday Matchers will double up to **\$50,000** in total donations received in December, or postmarked by December 31, 2024. General donations, honoraria, memorials, and memberships all qualify.

Donations can be sent to:

**Humane Society/SPCA  
of Nelson County  
29 Stagebridge Road  
Lovington, VA 22949-2446**

Or donate online via QR code (right)  
under the 'Donations' button on  
[www.nelsonspca.org](http://www.nelsonspca.org)



Nelson SPCA operates the Almost Home Pet Adoption Center, where stray and surrendered companion animals are cared for until they are adopted to their forever homes, and provides low-cost spay/neuter services to the community.