



NELSON SPCA

WINTER 2025
NEWSLETTER

RESCUE. REHAB. REHOME.

WE MAKE IT EASY TO FIND
YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND



DENNI

ADOPT
ME

Nelson SPCA operates the Almost Home Pet Adoption Center, where homeless Nelson County dogs and cats are cared for until they are adopted to their forever homes, and provides low-cost spay and neuter services to the community.

Without you, we couldn't do what we do!

29 Stagebridge Road
Lovingston, VA 22949

Call us: (434) 263-7722

Email us: pets@nelsonspca.org

Visit us: www.nelsonspca.org

Almost Home Pet Adoption Center is open
from **11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Sunday!**

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

SHELTER MANAGER

Rose Fariss

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denise Merricks - President

Ron Coté - Secretary

Jennifer Shingler - Treasurer

Michael Wood

Sarah Landon

Lauren Hunt - Newsletter Editor

Matt Stimart

MORE INSIDE!



FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we head into the final months of the year, I find myself reflecting on all that we've accomplished together—and feeling deeply grateful for the community that makes our work possible. Every adoption, every event, every animal that finds safety and love again happens because of your support.

This winter, we're preparing for our most important fundraiser of the year—our holiday matching campaign, which provides the majority of the funds that keep our shelter running. The SPCA of Nelson County receives no county, state, or national funding—we rely entirely on the generosity of donors like you. The incredible generosity of our "matching" donors makes it possible for your donations to go twice as far! Our Holiday Matchers will double up to \$100,000 in total contributions received now through December, or postmarked by December 31, 2025. General donations, honoraria, and memorials all qualify.

Thanks to your continued support, 2025 has been a year of growth, progress, and happy tails. So far this year, **50 dogs and more than 120 cats** have found their loving homes—including some who had been with us for more than 500 days. We've **expanded our presence in the community**, attending nearly 50 local events—from festivals to health fairs—to spread awareness and connect with our community.

Behind the scenes, **we've strengthened our volunteer and foster programs** with new training, handbooks, and orientations, and we're thrilled to invite more people to get involved! **Our business partnerships have also grown**, helping us build relationships that provide donations, sponsorships, and services that keep our shelter thriving.

We've made **important progress on the upkeep** of our 21-year-old Almost Home Pet Adoption Center, including septic system maintenance, updates to our cat areas, and extensive grounds and yard work. While some of the services associated with the projects are donated, there are costs associated with keeping our Adoption Center safe and welcoming. In the coming year, we hope to enclose our garage door, repair kennel fencing,

and create more usable indoor space for our animals. If you know (or are) a building contractor who would like to help us do this, please reach out!

As we look ahead, we're excited to continue expanding our spay/neuter programs, education initiatives, and community outreach. Together, **we're building a stronger, more compassionate Nelson County**—one where every adoptable animal has the chance for a safe and loving home.

From all of us at the SPCA of Nelson County, **thank you** for believing in our mission and helping us make such a difference this year. If you'd ever like to see our work firsthand, please reach out—we'd love to give you a tour and show you everything your support makes possible.

Sincerely,
Denise Merricks
Nelson SPCA President



NEWS, NOTES & APPRECIATIONS

THANK YOU to Familiar Studios and photographer Michael Tietgan for providing amazing photos of our shelter animals. and for letting us use them in our newsletter, on our website, and on social media!

THANK YOU to our volunteer vets Dr. Beth Luziach, Dr. Jennifer Magill, Dr. Robin Pullen and Dr. Charles Wood.

THANK YOU to our volunteers, who help us with everything from kennel cleaning to driving animals to and from vet offices and clinics to food pick-up.

THANK YOU to John Mayo, our volunteer maintenance man, who fixes anything and everything around the shelter that needs a tune-up.

THANK YOU to Matt Stimart and Word of Mouth Automotive in Charlottesville for the extraordinary work they do on our shelter van, keeping it safe and roadworthy.

THANK YOU to the Camp Merricks' team for all their support of our dogs and staff through training and socialization, as well as repairs to the shelter. A special thank you to Ops Manager, Earl Irving, who keeps Camp running smoothly so Denise Merricks can better support the shelter as President.

THANK YOU to all of our local partners who helped us celebrate our volunteers at our recent Volunteer Celebration Dinner:

Wintergreen Property Owners
Mac's Country Store
Chicken Coop
Vitos
Nelson Scoops
Black Bear Creamery
Maunsells
Sweet Bliss
El Mariachi
Blue Ridge Pig
Colleen Exxon

BY THE NUMBERS

**JANUARY 1, 2025 TO
SEPTEMBER 30, 2025**

DOGS

30 SURRENDERS
12 ANIMAL CONTROL TRANSFERS
3 PUPPIES FROM DDBBR

CATS

129 SURRENDERS
7 TRANSFERS
6 BORN IN CUSTODY

ADOPTIONS

47 DOGS
128 CATS
175 TOTAL SO FAR THIS YEAR!

COSTS

\$968 PER DOG (INTAKE, SPAY/NEUTER)
\$1,128 PER PUPPY (INTAKE, SPAY/NEUTER)
\$685 PER CAT (INTAKE, SPAY/NEUTER)
**THESE ARE THE AVERAGE COSTS TO GET ANIMALS VETTED AND IN OUR SHELTER.*

NUMBER OF DOGS SPAYED/NEUTERED

95 COMMUNITY DOGS
(AVG COST \$245, INCLUDES RABIES)
32 SHELTER DOGS
(AVG COST \$184, INCLUDES 4DX, RABIES & MICROCHIP)

NUMBER OF CATS SPAYED/NEUTERED

137 COMMUNITY CATS
(AVG COST \$120, INCLUDES RABIES)
99 TRAP/NEUTER/RELEASE CATS
(AVG COST \$55)
117 SHELTER CATS
(AVG COST \$130, HW, FIV, LEUKEMIA TESTING, RABIES & MICROCHIP)

FUND BREAKDOWN OF SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM

~\$66,258 TOTAL SPENT ON SPAYS/NEUTERS AS OF SEPT. 30.
~\$45,160 SPENT ON SPAYS/NEUTERS OF NONSHELTER ANIMALS AS OF SEPT. 30.
~\$10,000 PAID INTO SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM BY COMMUNITY AS OF SEPT. 30.
~\$35,160 DEFICIT - PAID BY NSPCA

WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN EXPAND THIS PROGRAM!

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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We have updated our payment systems and reporting, so if we missed anyone this go around, please let us know so we can properly thank you! We need every one of our "village" to do the work we do.

**WE CAN'T DO IT
WITHOUT YOU!**

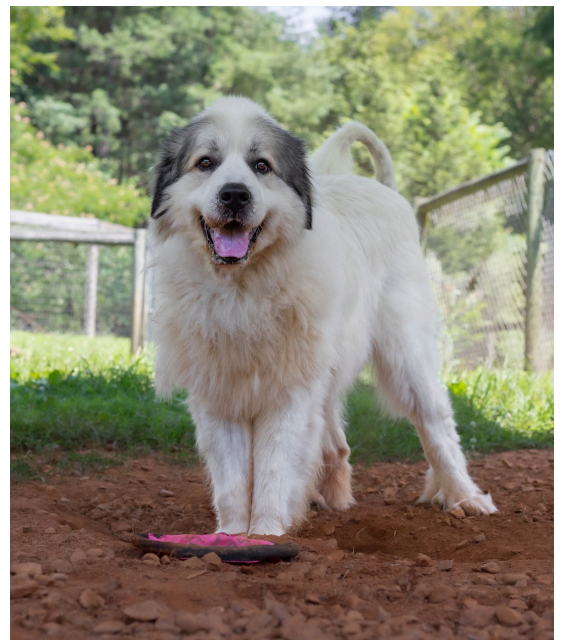


NIMBUS



**THANK YOU TO
EVERYONE WHO
DONATED TO MY
HEART WORM
TREATMENT!**

**(I'VE BEEN
ADOPTED!)**



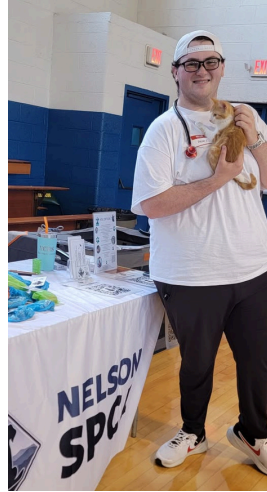
ALMOST HOME OUT & ABOUT

Our team has been busy this year bringing the SPCA to events all across Nelson County!

From local festivals to farmers markets and health fairs, we love getting our adoptable animals out to meet new friends. These events help us spread the word about our mission, connect with supporters, and—best of all—find more loving homes for the cats and dogs in our care. Here are a few snapshots from our adventures this year!



NELSON NIGHT OUT



HEALTH FAIR



OUTLANDER EXPO



BARKS AT THE BARN



COP CAMP



TUCKAHOE YARD SALE



**ANIMAL CONNECTIONS
EASTER EGG HUNT**



**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EVENT**



BATESMINSTER DOG SHOW

WHY WE LOVE OUR PAID STAFF!

Historically, our shelter operated with lots of volunteers and a small, part-time staff. We were blessed with many people who were willing to spend their time and energy helping keep the shelter running. Today, fewer people are able to volunteer for as many hours as are needed to keep an animal shelter running smoothly and in compliance.

Additionally, the animal welfare environment has evolved and more legislative, insurance, and veterinary requirements are present. Having a permanent staff ensures retention of education and experience to keep us compliant with the

ever-changing requirements of operating an animal shelter in Virginia. Our staff have attended conferences, worked with veterinary and training professionals, and taken online courses to improve their skills and abilities. Staff are also able to assist our much-needed and much-loved volunteers.

Their dedication to the animals in our care, and to our community, is clear when you walk into our shelter or see us at community events. Beginning with this edition of the newsletter we will spotlight one of our staff members so you can get to know them better.

ADOPTABLE FRIENDS



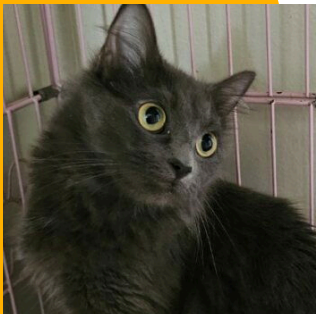
DESTINY



JACK



DR. PEPPER



FAITH



OLIVER



JASPER

**FIND MORE FRIENDS AND INFORMATION
AT [NELSONSPCA.ORG](https://nelsonspca.org)!**

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

When Rose Fariss joined Almost Home in 2014, it wasn't just the start of a new job—it was the beginning of a calling. After stepping away from a management position in the convenience store industry, she was looking for a part-time role where she could make a difference. An initial interview with the Amherst Humane Society led, through a serendipitous recommendation, to Almost Home.

"I called every two days for three weeks," she laughs. "When I finally got the chance to visit, I was immediately struck by the need of the dogs. They needed care and love. Looking into those big doggie eyes, I knew I was exactly where I was meant to be."

In the ten years (11, come November!) since she first stepped into the kennels, Almost Home has undergone incredible transformation. "The shelter today is truly a team," she says proudly. "We have a supportive board, a dedicated staff, and volunteers who all work side-by-side for the animals."

Almost Home is now fully staffed, equipped with training manuals, handbooks, and standard operating procedures that ensure consistent, compassionate care. Communication tools like Google Workspace have streamlined operations, while a beautiful new website makes connecting with adopters and supporters easier than ever.

The shelter has also expanded its community presence through partnerships with local businesses and organizations. Events with Devil's Backbone, Subaru, the Nelson County Sheriff's Department, and countless local restaurants and businesses have brought both adoptions and awareness. Programs like TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) and the Community Food Program have flourished thanks to generous community partners—including Gleaning for the World, the Amazon Warehouse Pet Program, and local residents who volunteer their time and effort.

Rose sees the shelter's biggest success as the people: "Our team, from the board to the staff to volunteers, is our greatest achievement. We've built a professional, welcoming shelter that people want to visit, support, and adopt from."



**"LOOKING INTO
THOSE BIG DOGGIE
EYES, I KNEW I WAS
EXACTLY WHERE I
WAS MEANT TO BE."**

For Rose, community shelters are essential. "We don't just care for homeless animals—we help owned pets, too," she says. "Whether it's food support, spay or neuter assistance, or education, shelters like ours keep families and pets together."

At the end of the day, it always comes back to the animals. "They're my heart," she says. "There's not a day that goes by I don't stop to snuggle a cat or play with a dog. And when things get stressful, I go back to my roots—I grab a scrub brush, clean a kennel, and find peace in knowing we're making a difference."

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Almost Home Pet Adoption Center and the Nelson SPCA! Our incredible staff and board of directors count on them every day to keep the shelter thriving, care for our furry friends, raise vital funds, and spread the word about animal welfare across Nelson County.

Two of our incredible volunteers are Andi and her son Tad, who have been contributing their time and talents for several years. After retiring (twice!) from a career in Special Education, Andi sought a meaningful way to spend her time. When a very wise person suggested that Andi volunteer to walk dogs at the shelter, she embraced the idea wholeheartedly.

Andi's love for dogs runs deep. When she was younger, she frequently drew dogs and included them in her school projects, and even now, bringing joy to pups remains her main passion. She spends quality time with the dogs, giving them love, attention, and basic obedience training to help them shine as future

family members. She knows each dog's quirks and personality, making her a fantastic advocate when it's time to find them a new home.

Tad, who has special needs, shares Andi's affection for dogs. He also adores the people at Almost Home. He's a helping hand and a ray of sunshine—tackling chores, hauling supplies, and bringing joy. Tad offers warm hugs to everyone he meets. He uplifts both humans and animals alike at Almost Home.

Together, Andi and Tad participate in community events, taking dogs into public spaces to give them a break from shelter life and raise awareness about the Nelson SPCA. Andi's insight into each dog's personality helps match them with the perfect home.

We're beyond grateful to Andi and Tad for their dedication, warmth, and the joy they bring to Almost Home. Their compassion and time make a lasting impact on our animals and our people.

NELSON SPCA NEEDS YOU!

Do you love planning events and bringing people together? Have you always wanted to get involved in animal welfare and make a real difference in your community? The SPCA of Nelson County is looking for a volunteer Event Coordinator to help organize and promote our outreach and fundraising events throughout the year!

From local festivals and brewery gatherings to adoption events and fundraisers, we need help connecting our animals with the community. If you're organized, creative, and enjoy working with both people and pets, this could be the perfect role for you.

Learn more and sign up to volunteer at:
nelsonspca.org/get-involved/volunteer



WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

We're currently looking for **volunteers** to help with **animal transport** and **support at adoption events**. Whether you can drive a pet to a vet appointment or lend a hand setting up and chatting with visitors at an event, your time makes a big difference.

Flexible scheduling and all supplies are provided—we just need your helping hands (and big hearts)! If you're interested in volunteering, please reach out to us or stop by to learn more.

nelsonspca.org/get-involved/volunteer

STAFF
MEMBER
RISSA &
KITTENS



PRIORITY NEEDS



**RELIABLE
TRANSPORT
VEHICLE**



**WET & DRY
CAT FOOD**
(UNOPENED AND
NOT EXPIRED)



**CAT &
DOG TOYS**



**PRINTER
INK**
(HP 218 A LASER
JET CMYK)



**PLASTIC
CRATES**
(CALL FOR
DETAILS)

**ACCESS OUR
AMAZON AND
CHEWY
WISHLISTS**



**CONTACT US FOR
MORE DETAILS!**



SUCCESS STORY!

After an incredible 571 days in our care, our beautiful girl Thelma finally found her forever home!

Thelma was such a big part of life here at Almost Home – a gentle soul with a heart full of love who was just waiting for the right family to come along. And now, her patience has paid off!

A huge thank you to everyone who supported, shared, and cheered Thelma on during her journey – it's because of this community that stories like hers become possible.

THELMA



**(I'VE BEEN
ADOPTED!)**

29 Stagebridge Road
Lovingston, VA 22949

Call us: (434) 263-7722

Email us: pets@nelsonspca.org

Visit us: www.nelsonspca.org

Almost Home Pet Adoption
Center is open from 11 a.m. to
6 p.m. daily.

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage Paid
Charlottesville, VA
Permit No. 232



**NELSON
SPCA**

NALA



Donations can be sent to:

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

Or donate online via QR code (right)
or under the 'Donations' button on
www.nelsonspca.org



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