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POWERED BY YAHOO!

Local foster families nurture animals in need

BY AMY BOWEN • ABOWEN@STCLOUDTIMES.COM • FEBRUARY 6, 2010
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Suzie received a chance at a new life. The black and white poodle mix visibly shakes as Pamela Gerds cuddles the dog into her chest.

The dog still acts scared and confused but has made great strides since being rescued from a puppy mill, Gerds said.

Suzie was put into animal foster care more than a week ago after being brought to the Tri-County Humane Society. The humane society always looks for volunteer homes that can care for animals until they are ready for adoption, said Vicki Davis, humane society executive director.

Suzie is being fostered by Gerds, owner of Advanced Pet Care Hospital in Sartell. The small dog was one of seven brought to the humane society in St. Cloud from what they say was puppy mill. All required medical care, and some need socialization, Davis said.

Suzie came to Gerds with lice, bad teeth and no socialization. The dog will remain with the veterinarian until she's socialized and well enough to be put up for adoption.

"These dogs are going to think they're going to heaven," Davis said. "Just imagine going from that to sitting on someone's lap watching TV. It's one extreme to another."

Animal foster care is necessary for a variety of situations. The humane society has about 60 volunteer homes that will take animals requiring socialization and medical treatment, she said. During busy times, foster care homes take animals until there is enough room in the shelter.

Currently, 22 homes are fostering animals; potential foster care homes undergo an application process, according to Davis.

"We always seem to be looking for more," Davis said.


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TO HELP

The Tri-County Humane Society has many foster care applications. Call 252-444-4444 or visit www.tricountyhumanesociety.org

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Lisa Pederson of Sartell has fostered everything from rabbits to dogs since 2003. Her husband even built a foster-care cat room for her birthday last year. Pederson, a part-time humane society worker, usually has at least one foster animal.

“Sometimes it’s foster care or euthanization,” she said.

Foster care can range from a couple weeks to a couple months, Davis said. The humane society provides necessary items to care for the animals, such as food and litter boxes, she said. It also pays for necessary medical treatments.

The payoff can be huge, Pederson said. Pederson’s children learn about caring for others and giving back. It feels great to help the animals thrive and become adopted, she said.

It’s easy to become attached, Pederson said. Still, boundaries have to be set, she said.

“I can’t adopt everything,” Pederson said. “If I adopted everything, I couldn’t do foster care.”

Gerds, a first-time animal foster parent, already sees vast improvement in Suzie. At first, Suzie resisted leaving her crate. Now, she is learning how to sit and come, Gerds said.

The dog has made friends with Gerds’ two other dogs, Biwabik and Scout. Suzie now needs to work on potty training and be spayed.

Gerds feels no rush.

“I just wanted to have more time,” Gerds said. “I enjoy doing the training. It’s fun to see them come out of their shells.”

Suzie might have even found a new home. Would Gerds and her husband make Suzie a permanent member of their family?

The vet smiled.

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