



FOTAS News

FOTAS IS A RECIPIENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF S.C. ANGEL AWARD-ONE OF 10, OUT OF 14,000 ORGANIZATIONS, RECOGNIZED AS REPRESENTING THE MOST EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE CHARITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA.



1. WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO? 13 Abandoned Puppies Saved

This summer these thirteen puppies (left) were dumped on the road and luckily spotted by an Aiken County driver. Thankfully the driver stopped and put them in the back of his truck and brought them to the shelter.

They were hot, hungry and dehydrated. We posted their pictures immediately on social media hoping that we could find foster homes. Many people stepped up to foster them. Now happily, all thirteen are in their forever homes like the two on the right.



Jax is living the good life thanks to teamwork & social media

Jax, a nine-year-old stray dog arrived at the County Shelter in bad shape. He was starving and looked like a walking skeleton. He also had an old back leg injury, likely from being hit by a car, which caused him to limp. Fly bites had scarred his ears and he was full of fleas. Jax had the saddest eyes, but they brightened when people greeted him.

Jax found his forever home thanks to the power of social media and a network of fosters, volunteers and FOTAS friends. Debbie Roland, a local realtor, saw Jax online and shared his photo and story with her uncle Dennis in Pennsylvania. His dog had recently passed away and Jax was just the kind of dog he was looking for! FOTAS arranged Jax's transport to Dennis and the sweet dog is now living his best life.



2. HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO? Group play helps dogs become more adoptable

Group play enriches our shelter dogs' quality of life while they wait to be adopted. It provides them with exercise and interaction they can't get from a simple leash walk. FOTAS follows the nationally renowned Dogs Playing for Life program at the shelter, resulting in the dogs becoming more adoptable. Trained shelter staff work with volunteers to run the daily play groups each morning. It is a top priority at the shelter because we've seen the positive effect it has on so many dogs. Dogs that have been labeled as unsocial or shut down can become model pets in a short time just by gaining confidence and happiness through group play and interaction.





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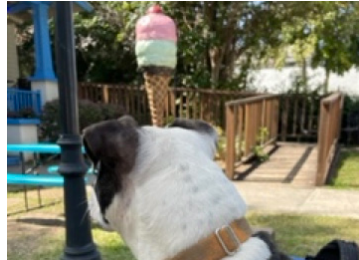
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FOTAS is a recipient of the Secretary of State of SC Angel Award – one of 10, out of 14,000 organizations, recognized as representing the most efficient and effective charities in SC.

Doggie Days Out program helps de-stress shelter residents

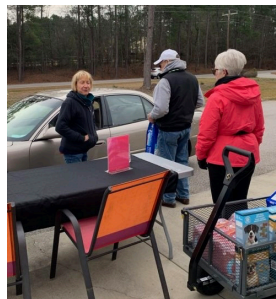


The FOTAS Doggie Day Out program allows citizens to take shelter dogs out for an hour, afternoon or even overnight. These outings help shelter dogs manage kennel stress, explore new things, and get more exposure in the community. We encourage folks to go for a walk in the park or a stroll in the city with a shelter canine sidekick, or just enjoy some “cuddle time and TLC” with a dog who desperately needs it.

If you are interested in participating in the Doggie Day Out program, please email FOTAS at info@fotasaiken.org or stop by the Aiken County Animal Shelter at 333 Wire Rd in Aiken.

3. WHAT ELSE DO WE DO?

Pet food drive-thru program is in high demand



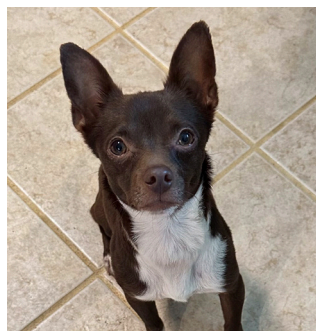
FOTAS holds monthly Community Pet Food Drive-Thru events and for each one, the line of cars gets longer. We purchase dog and cat food and give to Aiken County residents in need so that they can properly feed their pets and not feel pressured to surrender them to the Aiken County Animal Shelter. We estimate that our last Drive-Thru event helped feed close to 300 local pets. FOTAS also donates food to Aiken Senior Services that they distribute through their Meals on Wheels program.

Retirement home residents enjoy visits from shelter pets



When we bring shelter pets to local retirement homes, the residents get a lot of joy out of interacting with them. For our most recent visit to Cumberland Hills Assisted Living, we brought kitten Sonny and dog Sampson with us. These two loved spending time with residents and received a lot of affection and attention during the visit. Both Sonny and Sampson have since been adopted.

Home to Home website helps citizens promote & rehome their pets



Home to Home is a program that allows county citizens to rehome their pets for free through our website. This leaves County Shelter resources available for stray and abused animals, which is a win-win for everyone. In the four years we've had the Home to Home program, we've been able to rehome more than 900 animals who otherwise would have likely been surrendered. See the picture of Sammy in his new home. (left)



FOTAS provides a free training session to every dog adopter

When you adopt a puppy or dog from the Aiken County Animal Shelter, you receive a free training session for your new pet with Certified Professional Dog Trainer Karen DeCamp.

Free Microchipping Day for local pets



FOTAS and the Aiken County Shelter held its second Free Pet Microchipping Event for Aiken County residents in October. County residents brought their dogs and cats to the County Animal Shelter to get them microchipped for no charge! The shelter staff even registered their information, gave participants an ID tag and took care of all the paperwork.



The TNR program is making a difference

Cats and kittens are getting spayed and neutered in Aiken County because residents are taking advantage of our free TNR (Trap, Neuter & Return) program. In 2022, more than 1,300 community cats were fixed through TNR.

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO?

A. VOLUNTEER:

Our volunteers mean everything to us. They are our lifeblood. If these special folks did not give us their time to benefit the homeless pets at the shelter, we'd be lost. Volunteers help us in many ways. They walk dogs, socialize cats, greet visitors, assist adoption counselors, escort dogs to events, post adoptable pets on social media, assist with administrative matters, work on fundraisers, and foster dogs, cats and litters. We would love to help you find a place where your time and efforts will save even more animals in the future. To volunteer, please email FOTAS at info@fotasaiken.org. We'll get you started right away!



B. DONATE:

With your support, look at just some of the milestones we've been able to achieve together:

- For the past several years, every adoptable animal at the shelter was saved, and we are on track this year to do the same.
- FOTAS funds the transporting of thousands of dogs and cats that got adopted at established out of state shelters.
- FOTAS and Aiken County fund spay/neuter pet surgeries for folks in financial need.
- FOTAS and Aiken County fund Trap-Neuter-Return surgeries for our community cats.
- FOTAS continues to save heartworm-positive dogs through providing free treatment.
- FOTAS distributes pet food to county pet owners in need.
- FOTAS supplements adoption fees for active military personnel and veterans.
- FOTAS helps Aiken County Animal Control take dogs off the chain by funding humane runners.
- FOTAS also funds the costs of flea medication, toys, leashes and pet food supplements, as well as subsidizing equipment and extraordinary medical needs at the shelter.



C. CREATE YOUR LEGACY DONATION:

The FOTAS Eternal Circle helps donors create legacy donations to support the Aiken County Animal Shelter.

The Eternal Circle recognizes contributors who include a provision for FOTAS Aiken in their estate plans. A bequest provision in a will, living trust, life insurance policy, or retirement plan all qualify a donor for membership in the Eternal Circle. If you have a permanent fund at a community foundation and make provisions for FOTAS Aiken to receive a gift(s) after your death, this qualifies you as a member.

Please contact Frank Townsend at legacy@fotasaiken.org for more information. Thank you.

5. What Does The Real World Look Like?

Now more than ever, the Aiken County Animal Shelter needs our help because of the huge increase of animals received. There are a combination of factors including a veterinarian shortage, higher pet food prices, higher pet deposits for renters, and a longer breeding season. Therefore, every dollar, every donation, and every adoption matters.



6. Why Is The Future Bright?

Education is everything



The future of FOTAS lies in future generations. That is why it is so important for us to work with and educate young people about what we do for the shelter animals -- and show them how they can help our cause. In 2023, we continued to expand the list of local schools and colleges we partner with by reaching out to them through our programs coordinator, Kathy Cagle.

Participants in all of our programs now include students from local elementary, middle and high schools. This year we have added students from the University of South Carolina Aiken, the Aiken Technical College, and the Dental College of Augusta. FOTAS conducts training programs with the students in our new PAWS building. The students then spread our message throughout the community.



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