



# Humanely Speaking

Bangor Humane Society Newsletter

Summer 2014

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## Our Mission

The Bangor Humane Society champions the humane treatment and adoption of companion animals, provides quality care for homeless pets, and promotes animal welfare through education and advocacy.

Bangor Humane Society  
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[www.bangorhumane.org](http://www.bangorhumane.org)

 Visit us on Facebook!  
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BHS is proud to feed our pets  
Hill's Science Diet food!

## The Emotional Lives of Shelter Animals

By: Renee Ordway & Stacey R. Coventry

**W**hether or not animals feel emotions similar to humans has long been the subject of scientific debate. Scientists like things they can quantify and emotions can be difficult to measure.

“Of course animals have emotions. Just look at them, listen to them and interact with them,” writes Marc Bekoff, Ph.D., a leading researcher and writer in Animal Behavior. “Look at their faces, tails, bodies, and most importantly, their eyes. What we see on the outside tells us a lot about what’s happening inside animals’ heads and hearts.”

Local veterinarian and owner of Kindred Spirits Veterinary Clinic, Dr. Mark Hanks, would agree. However, while he studied veterinary science, he was taught to believe otherwise. In veterinary school, Dr. Hanks learned that animals don’t have real emotions, but after more than two decades work-

ing hands-on in the field as a veterinarian, he has come to strongly disagree.

For Dr. Hanks, understanding the many levels and complexities of emotion in animals has been a long process that still continues today.

**“You should be here when we reunite a dog who has come to us as a stray with its owner. Wow. That is the most joyful thing you will ever see!”**

While the degree to which various species of animals possess the capability of experiencing and showing emotions differs, Bekoff’s research illustrates that all mammals have neurological structures present in their brain that are important for the development and expression of emotions, such as: empathy, grief, fear, love, and gratitude.

Surely, those pet owners who are greeted by wagging tails and sloppy kisses when they get home at the end of the day would probably concur with both Bekoff and Dr. Hanks.

While the majority of us can offer our own anecdotal experience that proves animals do indeed experience emotions, most of us tend to easily dismiss their feelings when it comes to making life-altering human decisions. Often that is the case when a pet is surrendered to the local shelter albeit one is moving and can’t take the pet with them, can no longer afford its care, or sometimes quite simply, the pet just isn’t a match for one’s lifestyle any longer.

Shelters are a stressful environment for animals and only compound the array of emotions they experience when they are



*Animals communicate their emotions through their faces and body language.*

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## From the Director



Summer is the time of year where the reality of animal sheltering comes into clear view. Our kennels are full with cats and dogs that are unclaimed strays, or were surrendered because of unrealistic expectations, their owners are moving to a place that doesn't allow pets, or due to lack of spaying and neutering, the number of pets in a household has become too much of a burden. In addition to our normal intake flow, we have become a place where people bring their pets in hopes we can repair and rehabilitate the array of serious medical or behavioral issues that the owners cannot afford to take care of themselves. They bring them to us hoping we can and will do the right thing.

Doing the right thing is at the core of the BHS philosophy and guides the decision-making process of our staff every single day. But doing the right thing is expensive and can quickly deplete our financial resources. In just the last two months we have provided care to several dogs with a severe case of sarcoptic mange, provided specialized surgeries to remove dozens of tumors, repaired torn cruciates, and diagnosed and treated neurological conditions. Simultaneously, we have dozens of litters of kittens being born in our foster homes, cats needing treatment for respiratory infections because of living in stressed environments (home or shelter), a growing waiting list of dogs in need of re-homing, and animals abandoned at our door needing care, love, and a second chance.

Every day we try to prepare for the unexpected and our staff is ready and willing to save lives. Whether our intake hits double digits for the day, a starving dog at death's door needs emergency medical care, or an onsite surgery results in a complication, staff brace for the impact of a day in the life of animal sheltering. In addition to managing the unexpected, they need to balance their daily duties of cleaning kennels, walking dogs, evaluating and processing new arrivals, while also adopting current residents into new homes. Our work is a balancing act that isn't always "balanced."

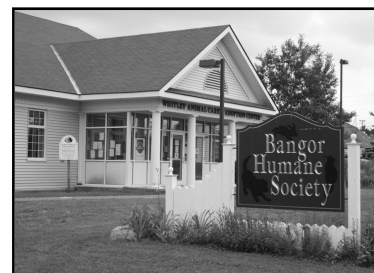
Our staff rises to the occasion every single day, but in order to save as many lives as humanely possible, we need your help. This is the time of year where the generosity of our donors wanes, but our expenses skyrocket. We rely on your support to help us through our busiest time and some of our hardest cases of the year.

Whether you adopt, drop off toys, litter, blankets, or make a monetary donation, we rely on you. We know summer is a busy time for families filled with barbecues and summer vacations, but our work does not stop. This is the time of year where the homeless, abandoned, and surrendered animals need us more than ever. And the magnitude of the care which they need is steadily increasing. Last year we spent nearly \$200,000 on veterinary care alone. *That is the reality.*

Please make a financial contribution today and help us save more lives. Whether you join us in saving lives by becoming a sponsor for Paws on Parade, make an additional monetary gift online or otherwise, join our newly formed Golden Paw Society for major gifts, or remember or honor a beloved pet through a kennel sponsorship, every dollar matters. Your gift will directly save lives. Your generosity makes it possible for us to meet the demands of our daily reality and to help us do the right thing for each pet that arrives at our door because that is what they deserve.

Thank you in advance for any contribution you can afford.

Sincerely,



## Hours of Operation

Monday — Friday: 12:00 p.m.— 6:00 p.m.  
Saturday 10:00 a.m.— 6:00 p.m.

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## Our Staff

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*Shelter Operations Manager*  
Chris Young

*Director of Development & Public Relations*  
Stacey R. Coventry

*Office Manager & Bookkeeper*  
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*Volunteer Coordinator*  
Brittney Littlefield

## Who Rescued Who?

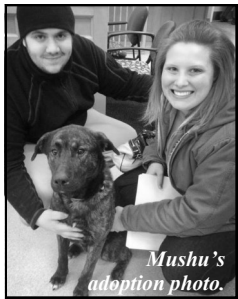
By: Stacey R. Coventry

Most of the time we share shelter success stories with you that demonstrate the extreme measures that are sometimes required for us to save lives and the happy endings that result from those extraordinary efforts. But this is the story of Mushu, a one-year-old Labrador/Shepherd mix, that came to the shelter in January as a stray. After his seven day hold and no owner to claim him, he went up for adoption. A well-mannered, sweet-tempered dog that did well with kids of all ages as well as other animals, he got adopted quickly. There were no great challenges or extreme efforts surrounding his story. Quite simply, his adoption story was pretty ordinary. Except for one thing, this rescue dog rescued his human.

Nicholas LaBate and his girlfriend, Becky Suzenski, had been frequent visitors to the shelter in search of a canine companion. Nicholas suffers from some anxiety and it was recommended he adopt a dog to help ease his symptoms. Emotional – support pets are often suggested by doctors to help alleviate symptoms caused by social disorders.

However, as renters, they struggled to find a dog that met the standards of their landlord. Even though Nicholas' doctor prescribed him an emotional-support dog, landlords do not have to follow doctor's orders.

Unlike service dogs, emotional-support dogs do not complete specific training or formal certification that recognizes that the dog serves a vital "job" role, such as navigating for a blind person or assisting a person with disabilities. While the law requires landlords or business owners to allow service dogs in their rentals or business, they are not required to do so with therapy or emotional-support pets.



Even though landlords and business owners are not required by the law, many are willing to openly accept registered therapy dogs because they are also required to complete specific training and pass an evaluation that approves them to visit people in organized public settings with a human handler. Since emotional-support dogs do not have to pass any formal training or certification

process and are simply recognized as fulfilling an emotional need in their human, they can easily and often be rejected by landlords and public business owners.

During their search for an emotional-support dog, Nicholas and Becky visited with several dogs at BHS. As one of the dog trainers at Petco, Becky already had an understanding of dog behavior and she and Nicholas were committed to meeting any training needs for each dog they met. They fell in love with several dogs, but each adoption was denied landlord approval because of the dog's breed or behavioral background. After a couple months, they began to get discouraged. Then one day, during one of their regular visits to BHS, they met Mushu who was hanging out behind the desk. He was an ideal match and once again they fell in love. And this time, their landlord finally agreed and approved the match!



Now, three months later, Nicholas and Becky say that Mushu, now Odin, is the perfect addition to their family.

"Odin and our cat have become best friends," says Suzenski. "They snuggle and play all the time. Odin was just what Nicholas needed. He makes it easier for Nicholas to leave the house and gives him the confidence to interact in social settings more comfortably."

The couple has plans to work with Odin and get him formally registered as a therapy dog to expand the public places and opportunities where he and Nicholas can interact together.

As many lives as we save and whose stories we are proud to share, Odin's (Mushu) story illustrates that sometimes our BHS dogs save our adopters. Animals are true healers. They come into our lives and help us, providing us with unconditional love, loyalty, companionship, and perseverance. And those times when BHS can serve as a platform to help a human and canine rescue each other, then that really is the greatest gift. ■

We are proud to introduce our Golden Paw Society to honor our major donors who make an annual gift of \$1,000 or more!

Thank you to all of our donors. Your generosity makes it possible for us to save more lives!

To learn more about The Bangor Humane Society Golden Paw Society contact us at 207.942.8902 ext 103.

To make your annual donation online visit [www.bangorhumane.org](http://www.bangorhumane.org)



## Ask the Vet

**Q: How can I protect my pet from bothersome fleas and ticks?**

**A:** The best way to protect your pet is through prevention. Talk with your veterinarian to discuss what flea/tick preventatives are best for your pet. Be aware that many former flea/tick products that were once a trusted source of protection are no longer effective. Inexpensive products that look like reputable brands sold in discount stores are not legitimate and are useless in protecting your pet. Be sure to buy your products from a trusted source, like your veterinarian or local shelter.



In addition to protecting your pet against fleas and ticks, heartworm prevention is also important. Schedule an annual wellness check with your veterinarian to

ensure your pet is heartworm free and then discuss how to prevent heartworm from

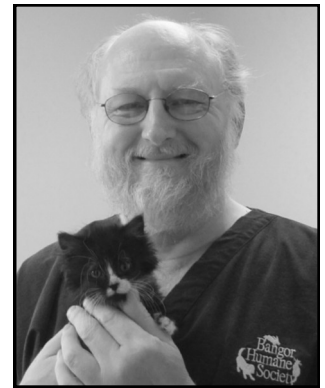
affecting your pet.

**Q: What are some tips to keep my pet happy and healthy this summer?**

**A:** First, on hot humid days, don't take your dog for long walks. Make sure they have access to shelter that is cool or shaded, and that they have plenty of water.

NEVER leave your pet in a hot car. Even on a 60 degree day, your car can quickly heat to over 100 degrees, which can cause severe brain damage and even death to your pet. Law officers have the right to remove pets that appear to be suffering from hot vehicles and bring them to a local shelter. Excessive panting and lethargy are signs your pet is suffering from the heat and needs to cool down.

Also, during crowded festivities with lots of activity and loud noises, like festivals, firework displays, and barbecues, please leave your pets home. Even for the most social and tolerant pets, these environments can cause unnecessary stress for your pet. ■



**Dr. Benson, Broadway Veterinary Clinic**

## Paws for Thought

**YOU can help reduce pet over population by spaying and neutering your own pets!**

## Shelter Highlights



*Photo courtesy of Bell's Furry Photography*

Thank you to everyone who made our **2014 Kitten Shower** a huge success! We raised over \$500 and collected a room full of much needed supplies for our foster care program. The event also was a wonderful opportunity to engage new foster volunteers and to place 35 kittens into new homes in five hours!



Thank you to **Broadway Veterinary Clinic** and the community who partnered with us to host a **Rabies and Microchip Clinic** in June. Over 70 animals were vaccinated and chipped!



Thank you to **OmLand Yoga** for raising \$338 from their Community Classes to help our animals. Namaste!

## Upcoming Events:



**July 19: Charity Bike Ride** sponsored by **4Points BBQ** and **Blackstream Cycles**. Contact 223-9929 for ticket information.



**August 22: Ride for the Wet Noses** sponsored by **Matthew Gross**. To make a donation send a check payable to BHS and credit Matthew in the memo.



**October 4: 21st Annual Paws on Parade** on the Bangor Waterfront. Register at BHS or online at: [www.pawsonparade.kintera.org](http://www.pawsonparade.kintera.org).

**Coming Soon!** Check out our new website make-over. Thank you **Sutherland and Weston!**

# The Healing Power of Reiki

## Reducing shelter stress in animals through holistic therapy

By: Stacey R. Coventry



**D**ue to the highly developed nature of an animal's senses, they are often very sensitive to changes in energy. Coming into a shelter environment is stressful and it impacts every animal differently. For some it causes hyperactivity or they can become withdrawn or timid, and for others they pace or become anxious.

Since animals communicate through a different language from humans, it is up to us to adapt to their language in order to understand and help them. Animals respond to tone of voice, energy, and body language.

So for some BHS volunteers, like Vivian Axmacher, this is an opportunity to offer healing through her Reiki practice, which can help animals recover and find their new homes more quickly.

The term Reiki is usually translated as "Universal Life Energy." The practice of Reiki is intended to treat the whole being: physically, emotionally and spiritually.

"I felt there was a need to bring healing energy to the shelter animals for many reasons. If they aren't broken physically or emotionally, they can certainly become spiritually broken when they end up at a shelter," says Axmacher who has been practicing Reiki for four years and on shelter animals for two. "Not because the Humane Society doesn't offer them all the care they need to survive, but because suddenly they no longer belong to anyone in

the world and this can lead to depression and loneliness."

Vivian volunteers once a week with the most vulnerable shelter animals in need of healing. Her treatment starts with a walk around the shelter trails and then she offers each animal the opportunity to receive healing energy through her Reiki practice, which includes: setting a calm environment through deep breathing, meditations, and energy exchange through a hands-on-animal Reiki approach.

"Some dogs accept the energy right away and may fall asleep absorbing the positive healing energy I offer," says Axmacher. "Other dogs need more time to heal and therefore more sessions to become comfortable with the healing process, but with each exchange, they become more at peace and less fearful amid the activity at the shelter."

While every shelter animal that receives Reiki through Vivian responds differently, each experiences positive results such as eating and drinking more, decreased pacing in their kennel, appear happier and more relaxed, and are able to get more rest and relaxation in their kennel.

Animals, like humans, can become ill when emotional and physical matters aren't resolved. Reiki helps them to move forward with a lighter heart and adapt more easily to stressors in their environment. For this reason, Reiki can also benefit those animals with behavioral problems and abuse or neglect issues, according to Axmacher.

Reiki therapy is not intended to replace traditional veterinary care. On the contrary, it is meant to compliment the efforts of the local veterinarians trying to care, heal, and rehabilitate shelter animals physically by giving them a calm, nurturing environment to help them recover and heal faster, ultimately placing them in new homes more quickly.

"Reiki is literally a HUG full of positive healing energy," says Axmacher.

*To learn more about animal Reiki, contact Vivian at 992-6724. ■*

## From Purrs to Tail Wags

*Summer is the busiest time for the Bangor Humane Society and we go through a lot of supplies that we need in order to care for both the animals residing in our shelter and in our foster homes. Donations of the following items are much appreciated:*

- Kitten Milk Replacement (powdered)
- Wet cat food— pate style
- Wood pellets
- Cat beds
- Baby Wipes
- Scoopable Cat Litter
- Cat toys
- Baby Shampoo
- Soft dog treats
- Rawhide
- Rubber or plastic dog toys
- Rope toys and stuffies
- Hard chew toys/treats
- Hot dogs (not red hot dogs)
- Blankets, sheets, and towels
- Paper towels



*Continued from page 1*

entering or leaving our building. The notion that animals do in fact possess the ability to feel and express their emotions is in and of itself an amazing phenomenon, but their ability to rebound and start over with a new family, sometimes several times, is even more amazing. Therefore, understanding their emotions and expressions of them is vital in alleviating the negative impact of shelter stress on animals as well as re-homing them successfully. Because animals can't talk to us to tell us how they are feeling, it is up to us to learn their emotional language.



*Carlos grieves the loss of his owner while he waits to be adopted from his foster home.*

## Grieving Loss

Dr. Hanks sees very classic behaviors when an animal grieves.

“For a long time I sort of held the belief that animals did not really conceptualize death. If I had a pet owner talk to me about one pet grieving over another, I was sort of in the mindset that that was not the case. I think I was wrong about that,” said Hanks. “The surviving pet can get very clingy, they may go off food for a while and they may even appear to be searching the house,” he said.

The shelter is an already emotional place for humans and fur babies, so the ability to recognize those emotions and the behaviors they may trigger is a crucial component in rehabilitating and re-homing shelter pets.

Take Carlos for example.

Carlos, a Lab/Husky mix, has been adopted and re-homed several times through BHS and other shelters. He has spent the majority of his life as an outside dog and was not used to human contact.

Then, a woman with children and who was caring for her elderly father, adopted Carlos to be her dad's companion. Carlos and the elderly man bonded.

A quiet and simple environment was exactly what Carlos needed and he provided comforting companionship in return. Unfortunately Carlos' companion passed away and Carlos has been returned once again.

“He exhibits some stress behaviors, and now, at 9 years old, he just needs someone to embrace him for who he is,” said Stacey Coventry, director of development and public relations for BHS.

“When I've taken Carlos to events, he immediately picks out and focuses on each elderly gentleman in the group and wants to follow him. It's almost like he's wondering, ‘hey, are you my person?’” Coventry said, “He definitely misses and is searching for his person.”

Carlos is grieving.

## Showing Empathy

The notion that animals experience empathy has also long been acknowledged. Most of us can remember a time when our own pet has sensed our own grief or suffering and offers us comfort by laying their head on our lap.

Staff at BHS just recently witnessed one animal's display of empathy. Rosie, a two-year-old long-haired feline, had just been weaned from a litter of kittens. Staff decided to give her some time and quiet space in the shelter to adjust and recuperate before getting spayed and adopted herself. Then, an abandoned litter of underage, orphaned kittens came into the shelter. Staff immediately tried to bottle feed and care for the kittens but, they refused to eat and were on the verge of a severe upper respiratory disease. The staff created a space to see if Rosie would willingly embrace the new litter, which she did. She immediately began grooming, nursing, and caring for the orphan babies.

Rosie is empathetic.



*Animals feel loss, love, and empathy.*

*Continued on pg. 8*

## Fostering to Save Lives



*Photo courtesy of Bell's Furry Photography*



Our foster care program has been growing for over 15 years.

We have a current network of 30 foster families.



Our foster families directly help us save more lives .

Over 300 animals are given a second chance every year because of our foster care program.



We provide all the supplies and veterinary care you need.

Newborn kittens need to be bottle fed every two hours, a daily task that is not feasible for staff.



Our biggest need is for underage kittens, pregnant and nursing mom cats, and puppies.

If you already have a pet, you can foster!



If you have a spare room, a lot of heart, and a little time, you are a great candidate to be a foster parent!

**If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, stop in or go online at [www.bangorhumane.org](http://www.bangorhumane.org) to complete an application. Then, our staff will contact you for training and to enroll you as an official foster parent!**



© 2014, Bell's Furry Photography, www.bellsfurry.com

*Photo courtesy of Bell's Furry Photography*



Continued from pg. 6

## Unconditional Love and Steadfast Loyalty

According to Coventry, anyone who doubts that an animal experiences love and loyalty, the proof lies in each time a lost pet is successfully reunited with its owner.

“You should be here when we reunite a dog who has been brought to us as a stray with its owner,” Coventry said. “Wow. That is the most joyful thing you will see.”

Every single lost stray dog that reunites with their owner in our lobby undoubtedly shows love and loyalty.

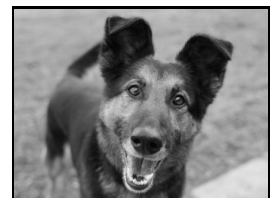
**W**hile it is emotionally difficult when pets are brought to a shelter for the first time, it’s even more difficult if they are adopted into the wrong home and returned; therefore, having to go through the process again.

“Some of our animals do have emotional baggage, just like people do, and it is up to us (staff) to recognize it, consider it when making recommendations for a specific pet, and then try to help guide the adoption process accordingly. Most people are good-hearted and they think ‘I can save this dog or cat and give it what it needs.’ The intent is there, but unfortunately sometimes the reality of what that consists of is more than they realize,” she said.

As scientists continue to debate whether animals have true emotions, most pet owners, the BHS staff, Mark Bekoff, and Dr. Hanks (people who are with and study them everyday) are pretty sure they know the answer. ■

## Our Guiding Principles

- **Treat** all animals and people with respect, dignity and integrity.
- **Work** diligently to end companion animal overpopulation by increasing awareness of spay and neuter programs.
- **Promote adoption** of physically and mentally healthy companion animals.
- **Educate and train caretakers** to develop fulfilling and lifelong relationships with their companion animals.
- **Serve as responsible stewards** of our resources.
- **Hold ourselves to the highest standards** of safety, care and cleanliness.
- **Raise public awareness** with regard to the humane treatment of all animals.
- **Use euthanasia** only as a last humane option when in the best interest of an animal.



Comet thanks you for your support!