



# Humanely Speaking

Bangor Humane Society Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2015

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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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 Visit us on Facebook!  
[www.facebook.com/BangorHumane](http://www.facebook.com/BangorHumane)



BHS is proud to feed our pets  
Hill's Science Diet food!

## The Journey Home

*An in-depth look at what it really takes to save lives*

*By: Stacey R. Coventry*

According to Dr. Emily Weiss, Ph.D., Senior Director of Shelter Research & Development at the ASPCA, animal welfare professionals have been coming together over the last two decades on a national scale to begin shifting people's perception of rescuing animals. Animal shelters are no longer places where unwanted animals are simply discarded, but are becoming progressive animal adoption facilities that invite their communities to become a part of solving the pet overpopulation problem.

"The reality is animals are more at risk in a shelter than in the vast majority of homes," says Dr. Weiss. "If cruelty is not there, and the five freedoms are met: freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury or disease; freedom to express normal behavior; and freedom from fear and distress, then they are better off going home."

National research has shown that creating conversation-based (or open) adoptions, implementing creative marketing programs that

include fee-waived adoptions, and building relationships with adopters to help keep animals in homes does not increase the return rate of adopted pets or the risk that shelter pets would be sent into harmful environments. Instead, it is actually helping save lives.

Animal shelters across the country decided to join the movement. In 2010, the Bangor Humane Society became one of them.

"Animals in our shelter are not our residents and this is not their home," says Suzan Bell, BHS executive director. "They are our guests, and it is our job to do everything reasonably possible to place them into new homes."

Through education, spay/neuter initiatives, creative marketing, and open adoption principles, BHS has been steadily increasing its adoption rate over the last four years. Increased resources have been dedicated to rehabilitating shelter pets, medically or behaviorally, and finding more homes by build-

*Continued on page 6*

*Long-term resident, Lacey, spends lots of time socializing with staff outdoors to help decrease stress while she waits to be adopted. Photo courtesy: Karen Littlefield*



## From the Director



In our spring 2011 newsletter, we set a public goal to increase our adoption rate to a sustainable 85%. I am proud to say that less than four years later we have not only reached our goal, but have successfully sustained this rate over the last two years.

Making such a shift in such a short period of time required a strong commitment to changing the culture around the sheltering philosophy both within our own shelter walls and in our community at large.

In order to create a culture of saving lives, we needed to expand our fundraising efforts and steward our resources to support programs and initiatives that

would help us get there. Therefore, we made a conscious effort to invest in our volunteers and staff through training, shift to open adoption philosophies, and build a customer-friendly atmosphere that focuses on making matches and creating new families. We have strengthened our relationships with donors, local veterinarians, area behaviorists, and other shelters in the state to partner with us in saving more lives. We have also implemented creative out of the box marketing initiatives like our fee-waived cat promotions and annual mega adoption events to facilitate and increase our pet adoptions.

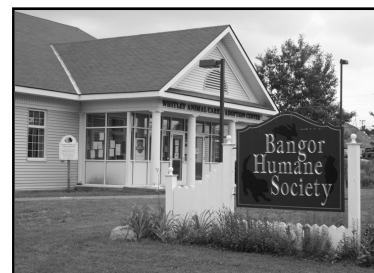
Getting our guests into new homes is our first priority, but in order to sustain a culture of saving lives in the long-term we must reduce the number of unwanted and abandoned pets coming through our doors in the first place. We have worked hard to secure ongoing financial resources to offer a spay/neuter program for low income individuals. We have also committed to working with individuals to help keep their pets in their homes by offering guidance, support and recommendations for local resources. These efforts have ultimately reduced the number of unwanted pets abandoned or surrendered at our shelter, allowing us to spend our resources on the animals most in need.

We are excited to embark on a new year continuing to serve our community's most vulnerable residents—our homeless pets. We are grateful for every single one of our donors, adopters, volunteers, and supporters who have helped us get where we are. We hope you will continue to stand by us to help us continue doing our life-saving work.

We cannot do it alone. Over 4,000 animals this year alone will need us— all of *us*. Many more will need us in the future.

Please make a donation today and help us continue to build a legacy of saving lives for many years to come.

*Suzan Bell*



### Hours of Operation

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

### Board of Directors

Emily McIntosh, President  
Amy Faircloth, Vice-President  
Steve Thomas, Treasurer/Past President  
Lani Naihe, Secretary  
David Cloutier, DVM  
Shirar Patterson  
Bob Williams  
Renee Ordway  
John Kenney  
Matt Nye  
Jeff Russell  
Buddy Angst  
Laurie Qualey

### Our Staff

*Executive Director*  
Suzan Bell

*Shelter Operations Manager*  
Chris Young

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

*Office Manager & Bookkeeper*  
Deborah Hawkins

*Adoption Counselors*  
Kristin, Sarah, Alicia, Katelyn, Bethany,  
Keren, Krysta, Biz

*Animal Technicians*  
Mariah, Brittney, Cody, Aron, Holly,  
Maddie, Sam and Nikki

*Veterinary Technician*  
Allen Batchelder, LVT

*Foster Care Coordinators*  
Mariah Cassidy and Brittney Littlefield

*Volunteer Coordinator*  
Brittney Littlefield

## Featured Spotlight

# Love Blooms for a Special Match Made

## Finding homes for Feline Leukemia Positive Cats

By: Renee Ordway

Some of the thousands of pets that arrive on our doorstep each year face a challenge or two. Some are visible and some are not.

We evaluate those challenges and consider each of them as we begin the process of adopting a pet into a new home.

One such challenge is the Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV). On occasion, a seemingly healthy and happy cat comes to BHS and tests positive for FeLV.

Such cats must immediately be isolated because FeLV is very contagious to other cats.

While once thought to have been an immediate death sentence, research has shown that some cats with FeLV actually can live healthy and happy lives.

The staff at BHS researched FeLV and watched carefully as other shelters experimented with ways to re-home cats that tested positive for it.

They were just on the verge of implementing a very special and specific FeLV adoption program, when a two-year-old female grey tiger came through the door.

Love bloomed.

The staff named her Flowers.

But Flowers tested positive for FeLV.

All proper precautions were taken and the staff monitored her closely.

Flowers was happy and healthy and stole the hearts of the staff.



*Flowers, now Rosie, looks outside from inside her new home.*



*Rosie happily settled in her new home.*

the 1960s and is a transmittable retrovirus that compromises a cat's immune system. It is contagious to other cats, but cannot be spread to any other species - including dogs and humans.

The FeLV virus is shed in many bodily fluids including saliva, nasal secretions, urine, feces and blood.

While some cats will die of FeLV fairly quickly, other cats can go years with no symptoms at all. While there most cer-

“We decided that it was time and this was the cat to kick off our FeLV adoption program,” said Suzan Bell, executive director.

FeLV was discovered in

tainly is a chance of reduced life expectancy, some can live a normal life span.

Because FeLV is so contagious to other cats, it is imperative that there are no other cats in the home, unless they too, are FeLV positive. Such cats must be kept inside at all times. A potential adopter must have an existing relationship with a veterinarian or be willing to initiate one immediately.

Staff consider all these facts when seeking a home for a FeLV positive cat.

So with all of that in mind, the search for a perfect home for Flowers began.

Enter Eric McManus.

Eric came to BHS looking for just the right feline companion. He had no other pets and simply wanted a cat for companionship.

One of the adoption specialists talked with Eric about what he was looking for and mentioned Flowers and her special circumstances.

Eric met her, and just like the staff, he fell head over heels. He took some time to consider it, but soon decided that he could provide Flowers with what she needed.

Flowers has now been renamed Rosie.

Eric is so grateful for her that he regularly posts updates to the BHS Facebook page and shares stories and pictures of her new life.

“We're very happy together,” Eric wrote recently. “She's changed my life and the way I think about time and love. I'm going to give her the best life I can. That starts with letting her know she's loved every moment.”

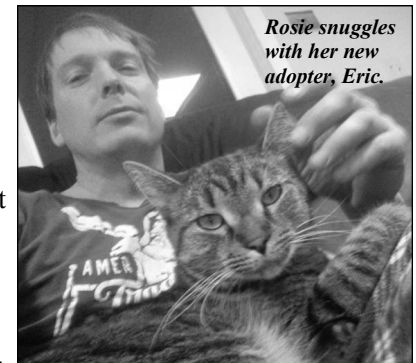
He went on to write:

“She is sleeping in her bed now. It's in my living room on my couch. She seems very happy.... If I were to detect any sadness in her at all it would be from missing you all. She ran a lot last night. Like a bullet up and down my hallway.”

The staff could not be happier with the results of their first FeLV positive cat adoption.

Even with her special circumstances, Rosie found her perfect match - and it would appear that Eric did as well.

If you think you can help save the life of one of these very special cats, please let us know. ■



*Rosie snuggles with her new adopter, Eric.*



## Ask the Vet

**Q: Why is it important for my pet to see the veterinarian every year even if he/she appears healthy?**

**A:** There are two ways in which a veterinarian can help you and your animal companion. The first is to treat your pet when he/she is ill. The second is to get ahead of potential health risks through prevention.



A young, healthy pet should see the veterinarian at least once a year for a wellness exam and to receive recommended vaccinations. An older, healthy pet should see the veterinarian every six months as the potential for health risks increases. Regular visits help prevent the onset of serious conditions by treating any concerns early, such as dental disease and heartworm.

Core vaccines that are recommended for most adult dogs annually are rabies (given every year or every three years), canine distemper booster, and canine hepatitis. Other vaccines that your

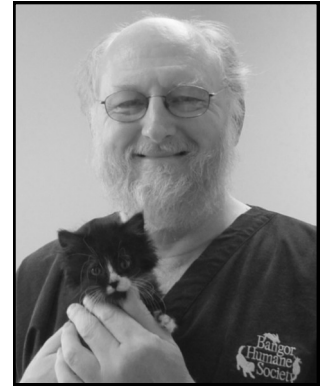
veterinarian may recommend based on your dog's exposure risk are bordetella, lyme disease, and leptospirosis,

Core vaccines recommended for most adult felines annually are rabies (given every year or every three years), feline distemper booster, feline herpes virus, and calicivirus. Other vaccines that may be recommended are feline leukemia and bordetella.

A regular veterinary relationship will help establish a baseline health history for your pet so your veterinarian can best advise you on making the right health decisions for your pet. Through annual blood and urine samples they can determine normal health patterns for your pet and be proactive in caring for your pet's health should they detect any impending concerns or abnormalities.

Your veterinarian can customize a wellness regime for your pet that includes measures like a flea/tick and heartworm preventative, as well as diet recommendations to ensure your pet has a balanced diet and maintains a healthy weight.

As your pet's advocate, supporting his/her healthy lifestyle can help keep him/her in good health for the long term, while reducing the potential expense of treating expensive diseases that are otherwise preventable. ■



*Dr. Benson, Broadway Veterinary Clinic*

## Paws for Thought

**Spaying and neutering your pets helps them live longer and healthier lives!**

## Shelter Highlights & Upcoming Events



Thank you to Penobscot Theater for partnering with us for the third year in a row to feature our dogs during their holiday performances, helping to find homes for 20 of them!



Thank you to Laurie Qualey for hosting our first two "Kids Give Back" events in December and February! And, thank you to all the kids who attended and made donations, treats, special toys and adoption signs for our shelter pets!



## Help Us Save More Lives!

\* **Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>**  
**Noon to 3 p.m:**

Join us for an orientation to learn more about joining our foster family! Please call or stop in to complete a foster care application.

*RSVP for the orientation by Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>!*

\* **Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup>** from  
**10 am-4 pm:**

We hope you will join us for our annual Kitten Shower. Please stop by and make a donation from our Wish List!

## Dinner for Dollars

By: Renee Ordway



Kara and Jeff O'Sullivan

It was at the height of the economic collapse in 2008 that Jeff and Kara O'Sullivan of Hampden felt compelled to do whatever they could to support the Bangor Humane Society.

"We had read a story about people abandoning their pets at the humane society because they

could no longer afford them," Jeff recalls. "There were stories about workers arriving at the shelter to find dogs chained to the door."

The couple had always supported other charities, but those stories convinced them that they wanted to support the staff and the animals at BHS.

That year the couple hosted their first spaghetti dinner and promised to match, dollar for dollar, any money that was raised.

"We just threw the dinner and invited our friends," Jeff says. "We have a great circle of friends who we knew would support us and this effort."

The first year the dinner raised \$1,800. This year it raised \$12,000.

Suzan Bell, BHS executive director, says she is humbled by the O'Sullivans' generosity.

"The generosity of the financial donation and the generosity of their time and their willingness to ask their friends to support us is just such an amazing gift," she says.

Kara grew up in the area and Jeff hails from Connecticut. Bowdoin College brought him to Maine and he graduated from there in 1985.

The couple has been married for 12 years.

Jeff is a financial advisor for Morgan Stanley and Kara is a nurse.

They have three cats they have adopted from the Bangor Humane Society.

He says their decision to support BHS was a "no brainer."

"Most importantly we know we have no worries about how the money is being spent. We have every confidence in the world that our donations are being spent in the right way. That's a very comforting thing when you are donating to any nonprofit," says Jeff.

Jeff noted that he and Kara are more than financial supporters, but also cheer on BHS throughout the year.

"We are committed supporters," he says, "And for very good reason. It's a tough job they do over there every day - a very tough job and they do it with an incredible level of compassion. Kara and I both have complete faith in them and are forever grateful to them."

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## From Purrs to Tail Wags

It's hard to believe it is already time again to start preparing for our busiest season here at the Bangor Humane Society— Kitten Season!!

While we continue to need shelter items from our shelter wish list all year round, such as blankets, towels, cat and dog toys and treats, and wet food for our pets with special diets, our annual spring kitten shower is where we direct our request for everything of the feline persuasion!

Annually we take in nearly 3,000 homeless cats and kittens, most of which arrive at our doors between spring and fall. Many are sick, vulnerable and in need of lots of love and care before they can be adopted into new loving homes.

They receive this extra nurturing in one of our many dedicated foster homes. As you can imagine, helping fifty foster families care for thousands of cats and kittens over a six month period requires a lot of resources.

The items we receive at our annual kitten shower serve as the lifeline between us and our foster families caring for pregnant and nursing moms and underage, orphaned kittens.

These items include: canisters of powdered Kitten Milk Replacement (KMR), pet nursing bottles, baby wipes, raised cat beds, baby blankets, cans of wet kitten food, cat litter

(clumping), cat toys, and rolling cat cages for foster families to help separate their fosters from their own pets.

Typically, during our busiest time of year we see our donations, both monetary and in-kind, wane. Yet, it is also the time of year where we are in most need of resources. During the summer months, we operate at or over capacity. The slowing donations and our increasing need often leave a significant gap.

During the summer, we use one ton of cat litter every eight days. Having more animals to care for depletes our resources more quickly.

We hope you will join us for our annual kitten shower on **May 30<sup>th</sup>** as we prepare to welcome another year of shelter guests.

You can follow the event details on our Facebook page.

Thank you in advance for your generosity. ■



Continued from page. 1

*BHS takes in and cares for nearly 3,000 felines every year.*



ing stronger, more open relationships with potential adopters. And, in 2013, our adoption rate reached 90%- the highest in agency history.

BHS has worked diligently to break down the barriers to adoption, and, in turn, is saving more lives than ever before.

## Reducing Intake

BHS has a long history of directing its efforts to support a strong local spay/neuter initiative in order to decrease the number of homeless animals in our community that will ultimately end up at our shelter. For years, local veterinarians, who offer significant discounts, have helped ensure every single pet that comes through the shelter is spayed or neutered before it goes home.

For three consecutive years, through the generosity of local foundations and the participation of local veterinarians, BHS has been able to help low-income individuals spay/neuter their pets, which has not only prevented hundreds of unwanted litters coming to the shelter but has also helped keep pets in homes.

## Quality Medical Care For Every Shelter Pet

BHS operates as an open door facility. As long as there is room, we do not turn away any community pet, regardless of medical or behavioral condition. BHS leadership understands that saving more lives requires more resources. Over 93% of the agency's annual budget is used towards the direct care of our pets. And, more than \$200,000 a year is spent on veterinary expenses for the animals.

Dr. David Cloutier, board member and owner of Veazie Veterinary Clinic, remembers how just ten years ago animals that came to BHS with medical needs did not have the same chances as they do now.

"We have been able to provide quality life-saving care for more shelter animals in the last few years than we ever have in the history of BHS," says Dr. Cloutier. "It just wasn't possible when the shelter was taking in between 5,000 to 10,000 animals a year. Back then, even with unlimited resources, an 85% adoption goal was unrealistic and unattainable."

Not only has the agency's spay/neuter efforts helped decrease the number of animals entering the shelter, the agency's development staff has spent considerable efforts building strong relationships with our donors and veterinary partners who support our life-saving work. Now, if one of our pets needs an expensive surgery, if he/she is otherwise healthy and can have a high quality of life, BHS will provide the surgery.

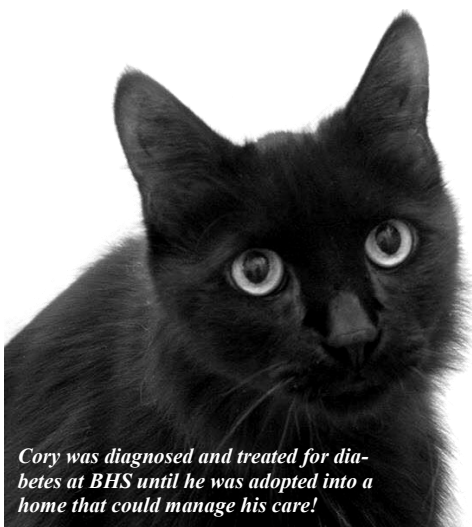
"The bottom line doesn't dictate our decision-making," says Bell. "We are so grateful and fortunate for our incredible donor family and for our partnerships within the veterinary community who help us meet the needs of each of our pets, so we can always do what is in their best interest without concern for how we will pay for it."

## Rehabilitating Broken Spirits

Don Hanson, former BHS board member and Director of Behavior Training and Counseling and co-owner at Green Acres Kennel Shop, says that diagnosing and rehabilitating behavioral concerns with shelter dogs poses a special challenge for animal welfare professionals. Staff are often working with a limited history, behavioral issues require a long-term commitment in order to manage them appropriately, and sometimes they just aren't curable.

"BHS staff are now calling in more experts than ever before when they need to assess how they can best help one of their animals," says Hanson. "Not only have we helped train staff to increase their knowledge and skills around canine behavior, but we will evaluate a specific dog to uncover a root issue in order to offer our expertise and guidance to help BHS staff find the best home for any dog with special behavioral concerns."

People need to understand that animals can suffer from mental and emotional issues and are not always able to be rehabilitated. Animals in a shelter environment are especially susceptible to stress. BHS staff have worked hard to build and nurture



*Cory was diagnosed and treated for diabetes at BHS until he was adopted into a home that could manage his care!*



relationships with adopters, educating them in finding the right match for them, as well as how to manage their behaviors once they are in a home environment.

“BHS is doing a great job balancing the reality of what behaviors can be rehabilitated and what homes are reasonably available to their pets with special needs,” says Hanson. “Consistently, they will always do what is in the best interest of the animal.”

## Thinking Outside the Kennel

Dr. Weiss from the ASPCA encourages shelter workers who still operate within the confines of old animal sheltering philosophies to ask themselves: “Would you volunteer to have your own dog or cat spend a night in a shelter?” Typically, when posed with this question most answer, “No” and begin to take actions to shift their focus from taking care of their shelter residents to finding them homes.

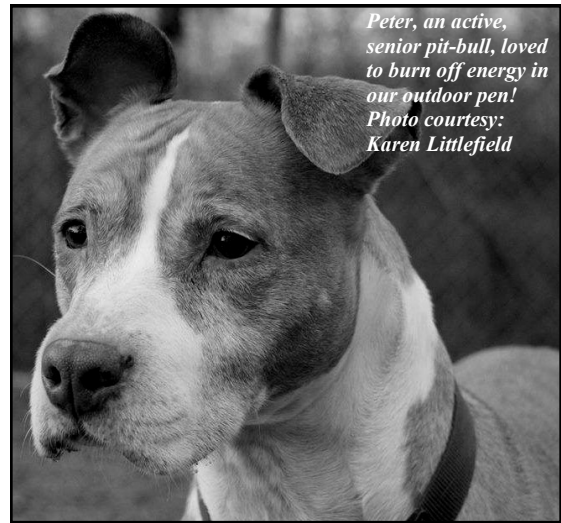
“The belief used to be that if people didn’t pay a full priced adoption fee then that was a red flag that an adopter would not be able to afford or care for a pet,” says Dr.

Weiss. “But the truth is people are going to get a pet if they want one. There are plenty of places they can get an animal that is ‘free to a good home,’ so why not have them get one from us where they are at least spayed/neutered and connected to a network of support?”

At BHS, in addition to offering discounted or fee-waived adoptions and a variety of other creative

marketing promotions throughout the year, one of the most significant approaches that has increased our adoptions and reduced the average length of stay for our pets is our effort to build a large collaborative network of community partners both outside of our shelter walls and within our own community. Not only have we increased our local business partnerships to offer more off-site adoption opportunities for our pets, but we have developed a system of support with other shelters statewide. We work regularly with other shelters to swap some of our animals, which helps us find more homes for more of our pets, particularly long-term residents. Shelter swapping not only broadens our reach by giving our pets visibility in new geographic areas, but it helps us create new markets for adoption outside of our own.

Dr. Weiss also says that the current residents in animal shelters are not the only animals that a shelter is responsible for. She argues that removing barriers to adoption not only will help shelters place more animals in homes but it can also help to save more animals in the long term.



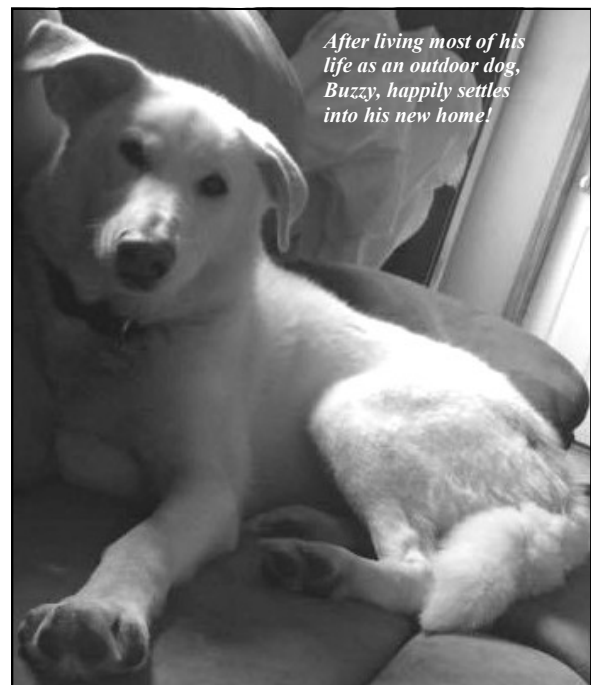
*Peter, an active, senior pit-bull, loved to burn off energy in our outdoor pen!  
Photo courtesy:  
Karen Littlefield*

“Shelters are responsible for all the homeless pets in their community,” says Dr. Weiss. “We need to solve the homeless pet problem in our own communities so we can help the next. By using our knowledge to create open relationships with adopters we can better protect our community’s pets. If we guide people and educate them in how to provide better care then we open the door for an ongoing relationship with our adopters who will, in turn, spread the word, ultimately helping us expand the humane community.”

BHS is proud of the life-saving accomplishments it has achieved within a short period of time and is grateful for a community that has supported their efforts to increase adoptions and decrease the unwanted pet population. Our local community has truly rallied around saving more lives. BHS remains dedicated to investing in every life that is entrusted to our care through providing community education, quality medical care, behavioral rehabilitation, staff development, and creative marketing strategies to increase our network of adopters and community partners to help each animal on their journey home. ■



*Flower, a playful kitten, finds her purrfect match with new best friend, Sam.*



*After living most of his life as an outdoor dog, Buzzy, happily settles into his new home!*

Continued from "Dinner for Dollars" on page 5

Bell says the trust in the staff and the mission of BHS reminds her and the staff daily that they are not alone in the goal to care for and find homes for the region's abandoned pets.

"We aren't alone and people like Kara and Jeff remind us that we really do have a village of people helping us on our mission," she says.

The O'Sullivan's hold their dinner in late November each year at the Sea Dog Restaurant in Bangor. The dinner is free and those who attend are simply asked to toss what they can afford into a donation jar.

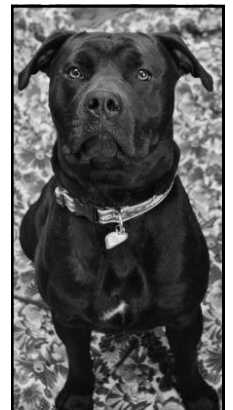
BHS is grateful to the O'Sullivan's and their ongoing generosity and support, along with each of their friends who attend their annual dinner and make a generous gift to help us save more lives. ■



*BHS alum happily snuggled in the O'Sullivan's' home.*

## 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.



Grayson thanks you for your support!