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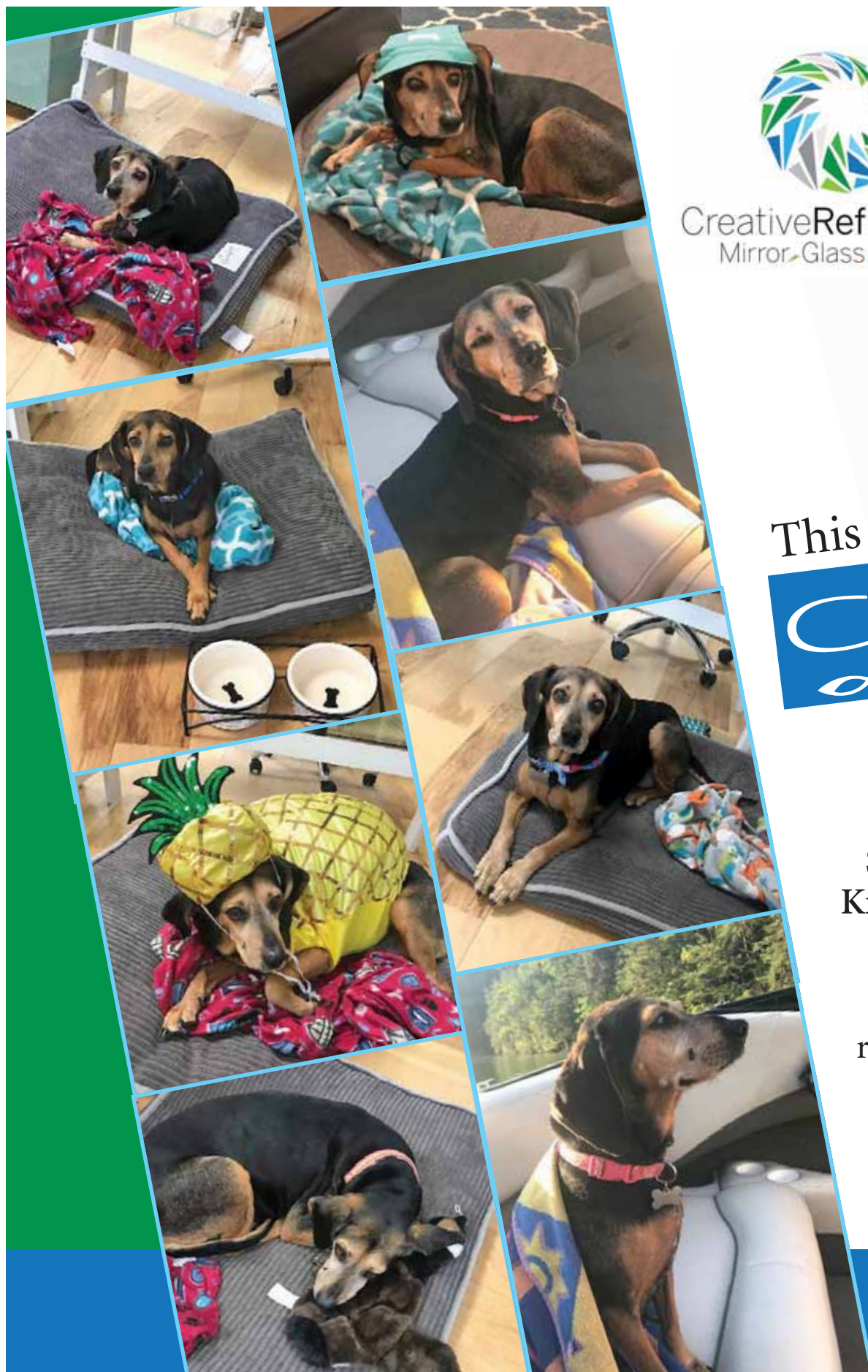
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HOME is where your PET is

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Find pictures of local pets on the
cover, page 3, 10, 11, and 12!

Thank you to all the local pet parents who contributed
photos for this special publication!

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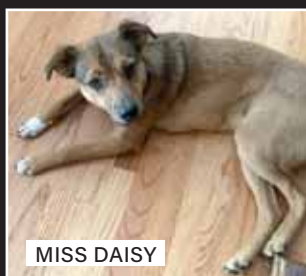
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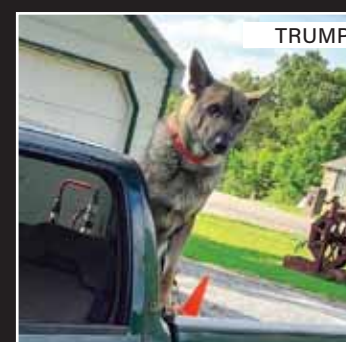
ROCKET AND COULSONS DUCKS



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TRUMP

Stay-at-home order a blessing for dogs

For all of the human horrors of COVID-19, the stay-at-home isolation resulting from the worldwide pandemic proved to be happy times for thousands of once-abandoned dogs.

In the grips of stay-at-home restrictions by late March 2020, households looking for more companionship started adopting new four-legged family members — many as first-time pet owners — at their local animal shelters.

According to a dog adoption statistic provided by Dr. Alan Gassel, owner/veterinarian of Concord Veterinary Hospital in Farragut, “at the beginning of March (2020) the estimated national adoption rate was 58 percent. By the end of the month, when stay-at-home orders were strict and widespread, the number jumped to 85 percent.

“Our socialization was diminished by COVID, and our need for socialization was recognized, and a dog or a cat certainly provided that,” Gassel said.

“We saw a huge spike in adoptions,” said “the Dog Wizard,” dog

trainer Trent Steele at CVH.

“... We’re talking about new pet owners who are 40, 50, 60 years old. I’ve seen more new pet owners (during COVID-19) than I’ve ever seen,” he added.

Visits to veterinary clinics nationwide also have spiked, Gassel said, “Probably because (pet owners) are noticing illness more and variations of their pet’s behavior more,” having spent more time with them through stay-at-home periods.

“It’s positively affected a spike in our business,” he added. “It’s very heartwarming.”

“Especially with puppies, it’s skyrocketed to the point of where we were seeing, I’d say, three to four times more puppies per day than we were before COVID,” said Dr. Lisa A. Sulewski, CVH medical director.

“We’ve added more classes, basic obedience puppy classes, just within the last two months just because we’re getting such a high spike of people coming in,” Steele said.

Even long-time pre-COVID pet owners were noticing new things about their dogs during stay-at-home.

For example, “They didn’t know that their dog acted up,” Steele said. “If you’re home all the time,

you’re going to notice if your dog is sleeping more, or if your dog isn’t eating as much,” Sulewski said.

“A lot of people were still working at home, but they had a little bit more time to, No. 1, take care of their pet and bring their dog to the vet if they noticed things,” Steele said.

With many of these pet owners going back to work, dog daycare became vital with many such owners — while providing added socialization with other people and other dogs perhaps lacking during stay-at-home periods.

Pet owners “could control the behavior because they were there, but now that they’re gone they can’t control the behavior ... the dog’s just acting up and they don’t know what to do,” Steele said. “So they give us a call.”

Gassel said “separation anxiety” is especially concerning in these cases, with the dog going from full households during stay-at-home to empty houses, while Sulewski pointed out those dogs “aren’t getting socialized,” which is “critical to their development.”

About any given dog, “They learn from other dogs,” Steele said.

Such challenges “happen all the time, but we see it more now because



Dr. Lisa A. Sulewski at CVH

we’re getting an influx of dogs,” the Dog Wizard added.

Curb service challenges

Required to greatly reduce its inside lobby traffic of owners with their pets at CVH during the first year of COVID-19, curbside service became mandatory. “We did make exceptions for euthanasia,” Sulewski said.

“And critical care cases,” Gassel added.

“We’re very much looking forward to increasingly getting away from curbside,” he added, as CVH has begun to allow some lobby access while “managing the population within lobby at any one time.”

It’s especially important for the owner to be with the dogs alongside the CVH doctor in the examination

See BLESSING on Page 13



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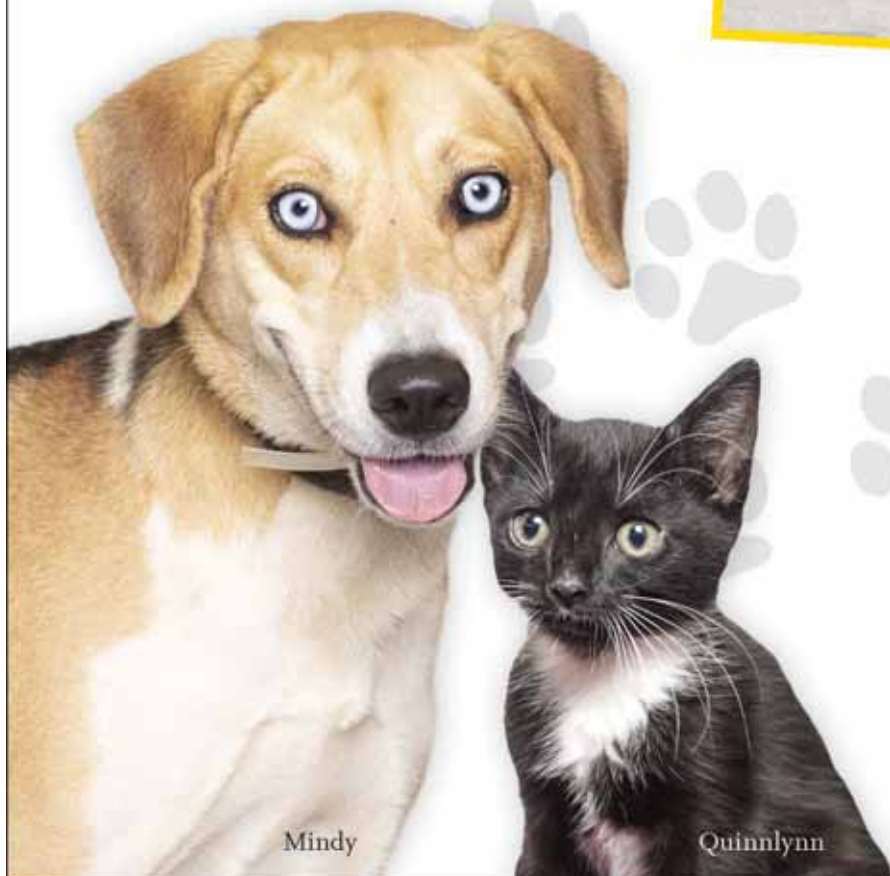
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Agility, obedience, daycare, dock diving...

K9 Center has many options for dogs

In terms of care, training and basic recreation for dogs of all sizes and ages, K9 Center of East Tennessee is “everything dog under one roof,” which encompasses a little more than 18,000 square feet.

That phrase, to which she elaborated, is from Susie Stout, co-owner/trainer at K9, 11225 Threadstone Lane in Knoxville.

“We have daycare, we have a pool for dock diving, we have an indoor agility arena and we train just about every dog sport.”

As for what’s most popular among dogs and their owners, “There’s a large group that does agility,” said Stout, who also trains dogs at Meadowbrooke Kennel. “There’s a pretty large group doing dock diving. There’s another dog sport called flyball that’s pretty popular. And obedience.”

As for numbers, “We’ve got a pool of over 400 dogs that come to daycare some, but we’re got about 50 on any given day,” she added.

“We’ve had thousands of dogs in that building” since K9 Center opened in the fall of 2018.

Obedience

“There’s a lot of people who just want their dogs to behave around the house and be good companions and be nice on a leash and be polite,” she added about the popularity of obedience training. “... We can do from household obedience all the way up to competition obedience.”

As for when to sign-up your puppy for obedience training, “Under a

year is the best (age) to train your dog. ... about 14 weeks is a good time to get started,” Stout said.

With puppies and young dogs, areas to correct feature “jumping on people, walking on a loose leash and not pulling, barking excessively and nipping, or nibbling on people,” she said. “And people need help because they’ve got two dogs and they fight sometimes, or show aggression toward other dogs or people.”

Agility

Nationwide, “Agility is the fastest growing dog sport,” Stout said. “... We have trials where we had 500 runs over a two-day period indoors on our agility course. ... The agility area is over 8,000 square feet, and it’s all indoors. ... When it’s raining in Knoxville, we’re the only place you can do agility.”

“Even puppies can start getting the foundations for agility ... but you take it real easy with puppies. ... Really, just run over bars on the ground until they’re about a year old,” she added. “You don’t start competing until they’re at least 15 months old.”

Agility levels run from Novice to Open to Excellent, then plateau with Masters.

“In a Masters-level course there’s up to 20 obstacles,” which includes “going through 12 weave poles.”

Novice would feature “14 or 15 obstacles, and you only have six weave poles,” Stout said. “They let you make a few mistakes and you still can qualify” toward the next round.



Above: Dogs at K9 Center

Right: Trish Isbell, one of the K9 Center business partners, helps a daycare dog learn to swim.



Right: Susie Stout and her dog, Xander, during Tennessee Valley Kennel Club AKC Agility Trial at K9 Center.



“But once you get to Excellent and Masters you can’t make any mistakes.”

Jump obstacles, for example, are from 4 to 24 inches tall, with a dog’s measurements “from the shoulders down to the ground” determining their competition jump height, she said. “If you had a miniature dachshund (the jump height) would be 4 inches, and if you had a German shepherd it would be 24 inches.”

Each dog is on the course, in a given run, “for a minute or so,” Stout said. “We have about 250 runs a day ... you can have up to 350 a day.”

As for older dogs, “You can still teach old dogs new tricks,” the trainer said. “I didn’t start agility (training) with my first dog until he was about 5 years old, and he did great. He’s at the Masters level now

and competing at age 10.”

Moreover, “I know a guy who started when his dog was either 9 or 10, and she’s still competing at the Open level ... and she’s probably about 12 now,” Stout said.

In short, “I’ve never met a dog that not trainable,” she said.

However, your dog may not be ready for agility training if he or she is more than a little bit overweight “because that might hurt their joints,” Stout said.

Though COVID-19 has wiped out many competitive dog events nationwide during the past year, “We’ve had about four at K9 Center,” Stout said. “But we are super careful. ... We don’t let people come into the building more than a few

See K9 CENTER on Page 14



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Pet therapy

Schaeffer's three dogs have filled the COVID-19 pet void at Morning Pointe

Before COVID-19 hit, various volunteers would bring their dogs to Morning Pointe Lenoir City Assisted Living Residence for a visit, knowing the therapeutic value they give to dozens of residents.

The worldwide pandemic, however, left a therapeutic void, with residents isolated from relatives, friends and pets — until Jessica Schaeffer, MPLC Community Relations director, filled that void with Isabel, Wallis and Sadie.

"We have always had pet therapy as a part of our activities and programs," Schaeffer said of MPLC.

The main question: "How can we help combat this isolation that a lot of them are feeling?" she said. "... They really missed having our previous pet volunteers.

"So I just started bringing my dogs with me to work. They would stay with me all day long," Schaeffer added, though never bringing more than two at a time — bringing the dogs about twice a week on average. "I have a little pet gate that I put up in my office, so residents will just stop by and be able to pet them.

"A few times during the day I will just take them around; we'd go room-to-room and visit with the residents. They enjoy that."

For the residents, "It was the highlight of a lot of their days," Schaeffer said.

Her dogs, in fact, offer more pet time per day at MPLC versus the pre-pandemic volunteers with their

pets. "They would only be here for an hour or so," she said.

With Schaeffer's dogs seeing "from 50 to 60 to 70 residents a day ... the one that visits most often, she's a little shih tzu," the MPLC official said of Isabel, age 8, which she got "from an elderly woman who could no longer care for her as a puppy."

"My other dog that comes (regularly), his name is Wallis, a border collie-basset hound mix," age 9, who "was adopted from a shelter," Schaeffer said.

Sadie, a 9-year-old terrier mix weighing about 20 pounds, "was a stray we found on the side of the road," the owner added.

Isabel, "the smallest of the three ... at about 16 pounds" according to Schaeffer, "is very easy going but loves to be the center of attention," she added. "That's nice because she can sit on the laps of the residents."

However, "some of the residents prefer Wallis, which is the largest of the three ... almost 60 pounds," Schaeffer said. "He moves slower, he doesn't have as much energy as the small ones.

"But he's got those hound dog eyes that our residents love," she added. "Some of them just gravitate more to a larger dog."

Sadie "just has a lot of energy, a lot more than the other two," Schaeffer said. "... Sometimes they don't gravitate to her as much as they do



Top left: A close-up of Sadie. Center: Wallis relaxes between visits. Above: A Morning Pointe Lenoir City resident enjoying time with Isabel.

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See PET THERAPY on Page 14



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Tips to make your home more Cat-Friendly

Millions of people cannot imagine life at home without their cats. Cats make wonderful pets, bringing their own unique personality into a home and providing companionship to their owners.



SUSIE AND MIDNIGHT

As great as cats are, millions still enter animal shelters every year. According to the ASPCA, roughly half of the 6.5 million companion animals that enter United States animal shelters each year are cats. And while figures are thankfully on the decline, hundreds of thousands of those cats end up being euthanized. Local animal shelters are home to many cats that would make great pets, and prospective cat owners are urged to visit such shelters to find cats that would make welcome additions to their homes.

For those who seek that “purr-fect” pet, the following are a handful of

ways to make a home as cat-friendly as possible.

- **Take stock of appliances that pose safety risks.**

Certain appliances pose potentially significant threats to cats’ safety. For example, International Cat Care notes that open washing machines or tumble dryers, particularly those with warm clothes inside, may be too tempting for cats to ignore. Unsuspecting homeowners might close the doors to washers and dryers, trapping cats inside, or even turn the appliances on without recognizing the cats are trapped. Always keep doors to such appliances closed, and check to make sure cats are not inside before using them. Paper shredders and work stations with lots of wires also pose a safety risk to cats, so make sure these appliances and areas are inaccessible.

- **Watch how cats behave around cat flaps.**

Some cats respond positively to cat flaps, while others do not. Cat flaps also may invite other cats into a home, which can upset your cat and make it vulnerable to attack. While some cats may want the freedom a cat flap allows, others may be on edge around the cat flap. Let cats’ behavior dictate if you will keep the cat flap or not.

- **Watch how cats drink water.**

International Cat Care notes that the presence of water near food may deter some cats from drinking enough fluids. That’s because cats naturally hunt for food and water separately. Some cats may be fine if food and water are in the same bowl, but if you notice your cat is ignoring its water bowl, try placing it elsewhere in the home to ensure your cat gets enough fluids.

- **Provide high but safe resting places.**

Cats want to rest and observe their surroundings from on high. Don’t deter cats from resting in such places, but make sure they’re positioned in such a way that cats can safely get down when they want.

Cats make wonderful pets, particularly when welcomed into cat-friendly homes.



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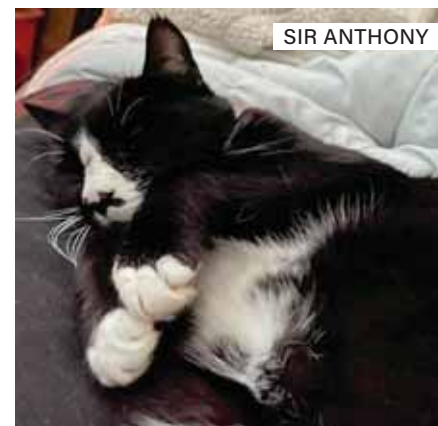
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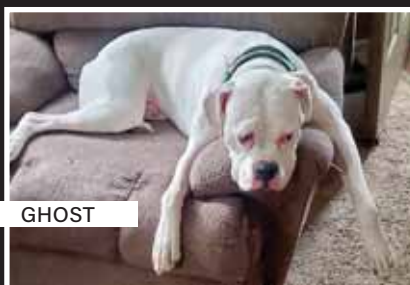
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Blessing

From page 4

area, otherwise “it’s really hard to communicate about their pet,” Sulewski said, adding an owner could, for example, pinpoint specific areas of concern on the dog’s body during the examination.

Moreover, on many occasions dogs without their owners alongside “will tense up or be scared,” Sulewski said.

In talking about their dog’s health or behavioral issues, owners “are more apt to open up to me when it’s one-on-one ... I think that can get somewhat lost over the phone,” she added.

“There are things people relate when in communication in a room, when it’s informal,” Gassel said. “Things they may otherwise inadvertently omit.”

Extremely rare transmission
COVID-19 illness or transmission with dogs is “extremely rare,” Gassel said, adding he knows of “no interspecies transition, certainly not Knox County.”



Contacts

To contact Gassel and/or Sulewski at CVH, 11904 Kingston Pike, call 865-966-4135 or e-mail concornvet@concordvet.com. For more information, visit www.concordvet.com

To contact Steele, call 865-320-9076 or e-mail Trent.steele@thedogwizard.com. For more information, visit www.thedogwizard.com/ knoxville

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K9 Center

From page 6

at a time.”

One problem the owner/trainer has encountered, and is reversing, at K9 was born in the COVID era.

“A lot of people got puppies because they were home during COVID, and able to be home with the puppies (during stay-at-home orders and/or unemployment), but now they’re going back to work, and a lot of the puppies have separation anxiety because they’re used to their people being there all the time,” she said.

“Also, it’s harder to socialize puppies; (owners) can’t get them to meet other people as easily, and other dogs as easily,” Stout added. “... Normally when you have a puppy in your home, people are coming into your home all the time — friends, neighbors and other family — but that’s not really happening (as of April 1).

“We get a lot of puppies that are just a little bit scared of people. You have to go slow and help them learn that people are OK.”

As for positive feedback, “I absolutely love K9 Center,” one dog owner stated. “The trainers really know how to keep classes fun and positive. The staff excels at tailoring the classes and training to all levels to make sure the humans and dogs both get the instruction they need. I am so fortunate to have found K9 Center for agility classes.”

Yet another owner stated, “K9 Center of East Tennessee is an amazing place that your dog will love. My pup loves going to ‘school.’ He impatiently waits for me in the mornings and is not a happy camper on weekends when he doesn’t get to go. ... The staff and owners are simply amazing, and your pup will love it as much as mine does.”

K9 Center is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday. Puppy daycare is from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

To register for K9 Center, or for more information, call 865-310-2800 or visit k9centertn.com/.

~ Alan Sloan

Pet Therapy

From page 8

the other two because she’s just high energy.

“Sadie doesn’t visit as often because she’s hard for me to wrangle,” she added. “She just gets so excited when she’s around people. It’s hard to have her all day long because she’s just so high energy.

“Isabel and Wallis are more low key. ... But they all three love to be around people.”

While some residents welcome Isabel, for example, to sit on their lap, other residents “would rather just pet the dogs,” Schaeffer said.

“I have a little treat bag that I carry around with me, so the residents are able to give them treats as they are visiting,” she added.

A lot of resident preferences concerning the three dogs could be tied “to what they had before they moved into our community, or what they were used to being around,” Schaeffer said.

As an added bonus, pet visitation “enhances our staff’s lives, too,” she added.

As for the dogs themselves, “They love it,” their owner said about the visitations. “It definitely makes me happy to have my dogs with me.”

Most importantly, the dogs “are always on leash” when making the visitation rounds, Schaeffer said.

As of early April, “Our full volunteer (dog) program is not up and running just yet,” she said, though adding, “We are seeing some of our family members who have dogs. They can come in and visit with their loved ones” if the dogs meet some basic guidelines.

In fact, “We allow pets to live with our residents if our residents are able to care for that pet,” Schaeffer said. “They do have to be under 25 pounds, and we do have to have all of the dog’s vet records.”

For more information, or to find out the exact requirements to bring a pet for resident visitation at MPLC, 198 Morning Pointe Drive, call 865-988-7373 or e-mail Schaeffer at lennor-crd@morningpointe.com

~ Alan Sloan

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