

A Change: Animal Shelter Medicine

Jim Ziegler DVM

Most people see a humane society in a very traditional way. This entails taking in surrendered animals as well as stray pets, and either finding them homes or reuniting them with their owners. Most people feel that this should be done unconditionally and with no questions asked. The problem with this approach is that it quickly leads to overcrowding, which leads to illness in the animal population, which leads to pets being kept for long periods of time, which slows down adoptions, and so on.

Every humane organization can choose what it wants to accomplish, and how it approaches the problems in their community. The traditional approach of pet intake does not have to be the standard that everyone chooses.

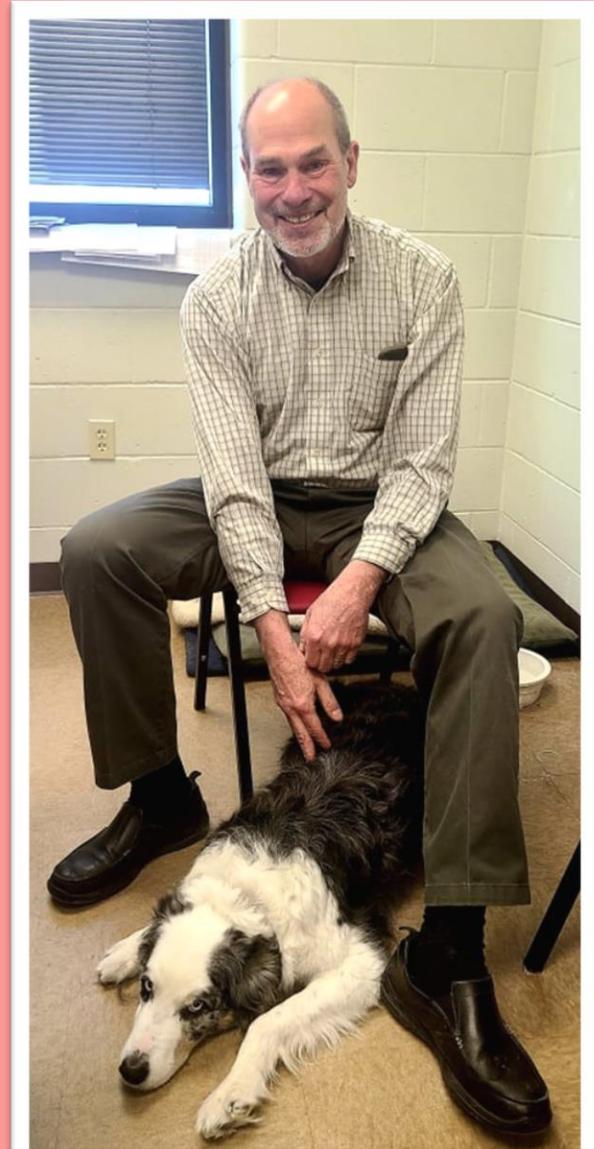
Fortunately, we were given the opportunity to have a team of veterinarians from UW Madison who specialize in shelter medicine and management adopt us. They taught us all of the new concepts in sheltering and population management. They coached us in how to prioritize our intake and how to make animals flow through our system more efficiently, the end result being that they got into homes much faster, which is where they belong.

The question then is what has been the result of this change in direction? For one, we have been able to help serve the community in many other ways. We offer vaccine clinics to help pet owners protect their pets against infectious diseases. Our capacity to spay-neuter and vaccinate feral populations of cats has expanded. We have been able to help other shelters and rescue groups with their medical and surgical needs (FVHA has two wonderful veterinarians and a staff of technicians and assistants working in a modern medical and surgical facility), and we are able to assist the public with lower cost spaying and neutering surgeries.

Why is this important? It is estimated that 30 to 40% of pets never see a veterinarian. Much of this is due to economic factors. This number is projected to grow steadily in the next ten years. It will be up to facilities like ours to provide many owners the access to care that their pets need and deserve.

Making a difference in a community can have many faces. We want the people in our community to understand what we do and why. We take in strays and surrenders, but we manage them carefully so as to not stress our facility and to not compromise the programs that we find to be an asset to the pet owners who need us.

Personally, I am very proud of the work that is being done at FVHA. It is relevant, meaningful, and valuable to many others. We can make a huge impact in many lives, which is always the goal.



Dr. Jim Ziegler and his dog, Newt

Who Safeguarded Who?

Serenity Luoma

Renji was brought in as a stray by police on September 15, 2021. He seemed to be paralyzed and stuck on his side, unable to stand or even switch positions. This meant he had difficulty eating and drinking on his own. He also was unable to stand to use the restroom, therefore, he was coated in a thick layer of his own excrement. Despite his disability, he clearly craved attention and human contact. The night that he came in I immediately gravitated toward his gentle nature and will to live.



Renji upon intake



Renji during his bath

For the next couple of weeks, I kept him with me in the office, attempting to feed his determination and show him he had something to fight for. My time was spent syringe feeding and changing kitty diapers. Our vets noted he couldn't see and initially theorized he may have gotten into something toxic, causing him to lose his mobility and vision. His lab results came back showing he was extremely anemic due to being malnourished as well as having poor kidney function. They also discovered a previous spinal injury that they thought it might be a contributing factor to his condition.

By miracle, Renji managed to get his feet under himself for the first time during his bath and even managed a couple soft meows. It felt like he was asking us to not give up. After his bath, he had a new zest for life. Somehow becoming more affectionate than he was before. In the week that followed, he started to drag himself around on his belly, making it only short distances before becoming completely exhausted.

One night while I was finishing up the day's paperwork from adoptions, I set Renji on the lobby floor to hang out while I worked. I heard a chair scoot behind me and glanced down to find the goofy boy, all four paws under himself, belly scooting around. My smile soon turned to tears as I watched him take his first steps. After weeks of round the clock care and many touch and go moments, he slowly became a cat again.

Renji spent 4 and a half weeks with us in recovery before finally being able to begin his journey in finding his new home. Renji now has a furry feline sister, Cookies and a wonderful home to call his own.

Animals like Renji are a prime example of the rewarding work we are able to accomplish with your support. I am thankful every day for my wonderful vet team and coworkers who have become more like family, and for the countless souls like Renji who I often believe do more to heal us than we can ever do for them.



Left; Renji and his sister, Cookies



Right; Renji exploring is new home

March Vaccine Clinic Dates

CLINICS ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY - PLEASE CALL AHEAD

DATE		TIME
TUES- 1ST	~~~~~	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
TUES- 8TH	~~~~~	2:00 PM- 4:00 P.M
WED- 9TH	~~~~~	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
THURS - 10TH	~~~~~	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
TUES - 15TH	~~~~~	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
SAT - 19TH	~~~~~	9: 00 AM - 1:00 PM
TUES - 22ND	~~~~~	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM
TUES- 29TH	~~~~~	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM



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How You Can Help



RENJI'S RECOVERY WAS MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF DONORS LIKE YOU. IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP MORE PETS LIKE RENJI, CONSIDER GIFTING TO OUR WELLNESS PROGRAM



Fox Valley
Humane Association
Caring for pets and their people

