

FARTHER EAST

*Many Paws In This Cause*

“What is most exciting is that we’re doing what we can to move the foundation into the top tier of Southampton philanthropies,” said Clif Knight. “We hope to be in the same league as Southampton Hospital, Rogers Memorial Library and similar entities. That appears to be happening.”

What Mr. Knight is referring to is the Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation, of which he is the co-president.

In the fall of last year, I wrote about the foundation and the shelter itself, in advance of the “Paws on Parade” event held in the Village of Southampton. At the time, the town-run shelter was already pretty active. According to the most recent stats available, in the previous year there had been 900 pet adoptions, 3,000 pets spayed or neutered, 202 “re-homed surrenders,” 498 strays that found homes, 95 mobile clinic days, 208 dog rescues, and 10 puppy mill dogs saved.

I don’t mind disclosing that I am biased toward achievements like this because my youngest dog, Sophia, was found in a kill shelter in Georgia, brought north, and adopted from the good folks at Gimme Shelter when she was 4 months old. Sure, this Aki-ta-boxer mix can be a handful sometimes, especially when leaving little leg room at night, but I can’t imagine life without her.

I’ll wager that is a feeling shared by many people who have adopted pets from the Southampton Animal Shelter.

In the (almost a) year since I wrote that column, the foundation working to support and expand the shelter’s activities has taken large leaps forward. Now, before I go any further, so they don’t get buried, I want to alert readers to some fun upcoming activities sponsored or co-sponsored by the foundation.

One is a benefit dinner at the Boardy Barn in Hampton Bays on Saturday, September 8, beginning at 6 p.m.; call 728-PETS for details. Another is “Ties & Tales” on Saturday, September 15, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Rogers Mansion in Southampton—a cocktail party with a Jazz Era theme; call 283-2494 for tickets. And a third is the next edition of “Paws on Parade,” again at the Rogers Mansion, on Saturday, September 22, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; call 728-PETS about participating.

A shout-out should be given to the advertisers who help underwrite the foundation’s programs: Cook Maran, Riverhead Bay Subaru, Stony Brook Southampton Hospital, Southampton Inn, and Town & Country

Real Estate.

There is too much going on to fit into this column, but I want to highlight two Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation (in conjunction with the shelter) initiatives.

The first is Paws for Wars. This is a collaboration between the shelter and K-9s for Warriors, a Long Island organization that trains and places dogs with veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other emotional effects of combat. Rocky, the first one from the Southampton shelter, has completed his training and is being placed with a veteran, and three more dogs have now entered the pilot program.

Another initiative is the shelter’s work with The Retreat. Families subjected to domestic violence can include pets, too. If spouses and children need their own shelter from harm, what happens to their pets? I asked

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Loretta Davis, who has been the executive director of The Retreat since 2015, to explain the cooperation between her organization and the Southampton Animal Shelter.

“We provide housing for families escaping violence, and they may call us in the middle of the night to find shelter and get transportation to our safe home,” she said. “Adults come with their children literally with the clothes on their backs. They want the whole family to be safe and will not leave if their pets cannot come. People who harm people also harm pets—a big reason why the laws changed in New York to include pets as a protected class in protective orders.

“We can only house service animals. Our partnership with [the shelter] has resulted in a solution to the problem of where to house our clients’ pets. How can we make the entire family safe? The animal shelter has generously committed to caring for the pets while our clients are living at our safe home. Our clients stay at our shelter for three months. Now our families have peace of mind that they are not abandoning their pets but rather are providing shelter to the

pets while the clients are living at The Retreat.”

Ms. Davis added: “Once our clients find housing and relocate, they can move the family, including the pets, to a safe location. It’s a great gift to our clients, and we appreciate this generosity from the animal shelter. And when we have our staff picnic in August across the street from the animal shelter, we are all bringing donations of cat and dog food for adopted pets.”

According to Clif Knight, “We really are a true ‘community shelter’ of the East End, unique in that we take in all lost, abandoned, strayed and surrendered animals, regardless of age, condition or special needs.”

The shelter provides services to all seven incorporated villages and 16 hamlets in the Town of Southampton, in addition to the Town of Brookhaven and sometimes taking in animals from East Hampton. And, in 2017, the shelter can boast a 96 percent adoption rate.

Among the challenges now for the Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation is to grow financially and in other ways so that the shelter it supports can provide even more services, such as Paws for War, and with community organizations. During the past year, Mr. Knight said, “We have worked really hard to get the fundamentals in place. We have become more sophisticated with our budgeting and forecasting, and we have established an endowment fund and a capital fund. We needed to put the tools in place for development and fundraising.”

Speaking of fundraising, public participation in the upcoming events will certainly help. But maybe you’re not available those days, or in addition to participation you want to help the foundation with a donation. One option is to contact Jerry Rosenthal, the foundation’s executive director, at [jerry@sasf.org](mailto:jerry@sasf.org).

“Everyone connected with SASF is truly committed,” Mr. Knight stated. “The care for the animals is terrific, the service to the community is real and meaningful. You can see the results every single day of the year ... and it’s a lot of fun.”



Tom Clavin lives in Sag Harbor. “Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town In the American West” has just been published by St. Martin’s Press. For more info, go to [tomclavin.com](http://tomclavin.com).