



Nicky is a beautiful Siamese mix available for adoption

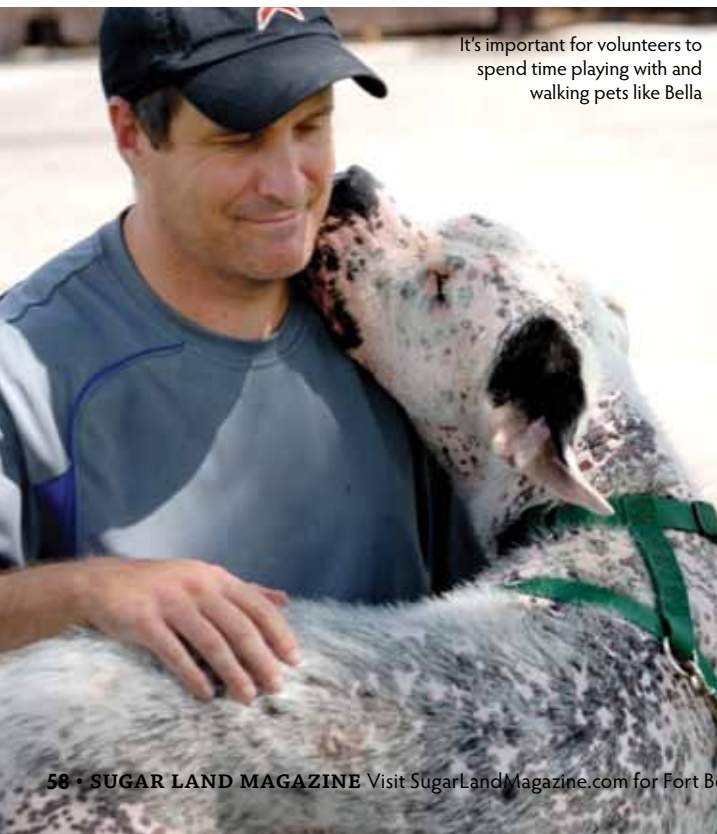


Sisters, Walta and Banna enjoy volunteering at the pet shelter in Sugar Land

Caring for Fort Bend's **Furry Friends**

*Written by Andrea Harden
Photography by Suzi Issa*

*Volunteers Make a Difference
with Sugar Land Animal Services*



It's important for volunteers to spend time playing with and walking pets like Bella




Senna loves when shelter volunteers take her outside to splash around in the water

Volunteers, Becky and Casey Whitelaw enjoy regular visits with the shelter's pets to help socialize them



Loose dentures? Missing teeth?



We can help with

Dental Implants

X-Ray
Study Models
Exam
Implant Consultation

\$200
(a \$300 Value)


-This initial fee will be applied to your implant treatment

AD
Advanced
DENTISTRY

Virghese John, D.M.D., FICOL, FMIH
Advanced Dentistry
9920 U.S. Highway 90-A Suite 160-D
Sugar Land, TX 77478
www.SugarLandCosmeticDentist.com 281.494.5600

Convenient Pet Care in the
Comfort of Your Own Home!

Serving Sugar Land and the surrounding area since 1994
Does your dog need a break during your long workday?
Flexible pet sitting . . . no term too long or short



Quality personal care • Current clients short notice okay

POOCH PATROL
SUGAR LAND, TEXAS
www.poochpatrolpetsitting.com
poochpatrolpetsitting@comcast.net 281-343-5777

F

From cats, kittens, dogs, and puppies to the occasional ferret and rabbit, all of Fort Bend's furry friends need a loving home. Sugar Land's Animal Services operates a warm and inviting shelter for stranded, abused, and lost animals to recuperate in while they wait to be placed in a forever home. During this period of time, which can range from days to months, SLAS looks to local volunteers to help out with everyday duties such as kennel cleaning and walking pets.

A variety of ways to Get Involved

The shelter's daily routine can get pretty hectic, says animal services manager, Kathryn Ketchum. Amongst other activities, SLAS handles animal services like vet care, medication, flea prevention, baths for skin issues, behavior evaluations, shelter and kennel cleaning, shelter tours, and field ordinance transactions.

With more and more animals being neglected by their owners, stranded, or lost, SLAS depends on additional local volunteers to offer them some relief from overflow. "We are bursting at the seams with animals, which takes a big toll on the staff," says Ketchum.

When there is not a steady flow of volunteers to help out at the shelter, the staff and the animals feel the difference. During an average month, volunteers log well over 400 hours at the shelter – the productivity equivalent of two full-time employees. The volunteers are able to help the staff with cleaning responsibilities, which is a constant process, as well as helping to walk, pet, brush, and love the animals.

Preparing Pets for Forever Homes

Everything the volunteers undertake helps socialize the animals, so they are friendly and open to prospective adopters. "For some of the animals, the first love and attention they have had their



whole life comes from our volunteers,” explains Ketchum. Donations received from the community also serve as a big tool to keep the shelter moving during the most stressful and crowded periods of time. Donations are used to buy medicine to treat sick animals, food, and toys to keep the animals from getting bored in their cages when they are not getting walked, bathed, or played with.

When reviewing volunteers to work hand in hand with regular staff, the shelter looks for those who want to make a sincere difference in their community and who have an honest love for animals. While performing various activities, the volunteers are expected to come in ready to go, report any problems or concerns about the animal, and become attuned to the animals they work with. A great team of veteran volunteers awaits newbies, ready to help them learn how to help the animals. “They understand the operation of the shelter and are supportive, but most of all, they love the animals,” says Ketchum.

Giving Back with a Donation Drive

Volunteering isn't the only way the community can get involved, though. While volunteering at the shelter can be a great experience, it may not be the best option for young children who want to make a difference. Even families with young children or anyone who doesn't have time to spend at the shelter can help make an animal's time at the shelter comfortable and enjoyable through monetary donations or by giving supplies.

SLAS has several service organizations, such as schools and local scouting troops that host donation drives on behalf of the shelter. These donation drives gather food and toys from the community, which is then brought to the shelter to help make the animals' lives better. “We have had individuals build playground equipment for the dogs, bake homemade dog treats, plant flowers at the shelter, grow catnip for the



Become a Volunteer

For the safety of the shelter and animals, volunteers must be screened by the Serve Sugar Land volunteer program. Call 281-275-2842 or visit sugarlandtx.gov.

cats, and make blankets,” says Ketchum. The shelter is also always in need of supplies like newspapers and towels.

A Growing Need for Caring Volunteers

“It would be nice if everyone was a responsible pet owner and there was no need for shelters at all,” says Ketchum. With the number of abandoned animals growing, the need for loving homes and local volunteers who will donate their time and heart to caring for a shelter animal is also expanding. These animals need a loving place to call home and someone to call their friend. SLM

ANDREA HARDEN graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she earned a degree in communications and public relations. She is happy to have returned home to Sugar Land.

Voted "Best Montessori" in Sugar Land - Fort Bend Sun

Memorial Montessori

Early Childhood Advancement Center



Meaningful Curriculum, Certified Teachers, Healthy Meals
Safe & Secured Campus, Professional Service and much more!

5630 W. Riverpark Dr.
Corner of Grandparkway & Riverpark

(281) 238-9626
www.memorialmontessori.com