



# *Looking for Love?*

Photos courtesy of Steven Stiefel  
and CARE Humane Society



## *Finding your ‘purrfect’ match*

by Steven Stiefel

LIVELee@opelikaobserver.com

If finding romantic love isn’t at the top of your list this February, there’s another method for finding an affectionate companion. Best of all, its love for you is unconditional.

Pets provide companionship, reduce stress and combat loneliness. Dog owners benefit from increased physical activity through regular walks and playtime. And the presence of a cat can soothe weary souls with its purring.

“To find a perfect pet for adopting is like dating,” said Abbey Crank, the development specialist from CARE Humane Society. She said that choosing a dog reminds her of how people search for a partner on dating apps, hoping to match with someone whose temperament matches their own.

“Every single pet in our shelter has a completely different personality,” she said. “It’s almost like they choose you. They all have different quirks.”

CARE’s Director of Development Jenny Warren shared

some information about a pup named Bean.

“There’s this one dog named Bean who barks at shadows all the time,” she said. “He’s the only dog I’ve ever seen do that, and he likes to run around inside a car, but every single animal you meet here is completely different. Bean would be the snuggle bug that will sit on the couch and eat popcorn with you. He wouldn’t be like the boyfriend you can go traveling with, but if you are a homebody, then Bean’s your boy.”

Crank said CARE Humane Society’s personnel can assist with the matchmaking. They assess animals’ temperaments and needs, helping match people with a pet suited to their lifestyles. People can choose from a wide range of animals, including sizes, ages and activity levels.

“Staff helps a lot with that,” Crank said. “Usually, we’ll have some people come in and they don’t know which animal they want or what they want. We have a worker



## Summer Village

A SOMERBY COMMUNITY

AZALEA PLACE • CAMELLIA PLACE • MAGNOLIA PLACE

CALL: 334-501-0904



named Clara here who is like the guru for all cats. If you come in and tell her what you want, what your personality is, she can pick one out just like that. It's literally just like dating."

Compared to buying from a breeder or pet store, adoption fees are often significantly lower for shelter pets. Many come already spayed or neutered, vaccinated and microchipped, reducing initial veterinary costs.

While buying a dog from a reputable breeder who specializes in specific breeds can be the right choice for certain families, choosing to instead adopt a shelter pet comes with numerous societal benefits, both for the animal and the adopter. Sometimes it is a matter of predictability.

For those willing to take a chance by adopting, they provide a second chance to an animal in need. Shelters like the "no kill" facility serving Auburn and Opelika often operate at capacity; adoptions and foster care helps to free space for other animals who are also in need. Some shelter pets in other cities face the risk of euthanasia due to overcrowding, so adopting literally saves lives.

"You can have nine intakes and two adoptions on the same day, so it's a battle constantly and the more people who foster the puppies and the kittens, the better," Warren said. "We've kept the live release rate steady since our shelter director, TJ McCullough, arrived in 2015, but the more animals that come in and the space we have, we don't want to have to make those hard calls. So that's why fostering does save lives and it's so important."

CARE Humane Shelter serves Auburn and Opelika but



not other parts of Lee County for legal reasons. Animal Control is legally responsible for handling animals in other sections of the county.

“Have you ever noticed when you come home from a stressful day, pets can’t speak but if you’re really sad about something, it’s like they can vibe on that and they stay close to you,” Warren asked. “When you’re sick, they’re sleeping with you. You just have to love how each of them are so different, but pets in the same household can vibe together just like kids, you know? It’s adorable. Humanity doesn’t deserve them, but we sure can take really good care of them. Dogs and cats do not live long, so it’s a very special, special time.”

Adoption promotes responsible pet ownership and helps combat overpopulation. Taking a pet home is an excellent way to teach children about empathy, responsibility and the importance of caring for animals.

It also supports local shelters and rescue organizations, which rely on community involvement to operate. Plus it raises awareness of the importance of helping homeless animals.

Adopted pets often seem to understand they’ve been given a second chance, forming deep and loving bonds with their owners.

“What does an animal mean to me? I feel like they are best friends,” Crank said. “It is one of those things where they’re just a little part of your life, but you’re their entire life — you’re all that they know, which is such a powerful thing.”



**Ballard Pest Management was founded in 2020 and has a team with more than 30 years of experience.**

**[scott@ballardpestmanagement.com](mailto:scott@ballardpestmanagement.com)  
[www.ballardpestmanagement.com](http://www.ballardpestmanagement.com)**

**(334) 502-6049**

**“Our Family Protecting Your Family.”**

**Auburn University biomedical student Courtney Bedford pets the cats at the CARE Humane Shelter. She is a native of Jacksonville, Florida.**





While owning a pet can be deeply rewarding, pet ownership is not for everyone. The shelter offers a seven-day trial program in which adoptees can test their willingness to take in an animal needing a new home.

“It takes time to acclimate, and you don’t see their full personality right away,” Warren explained. “Dogs and cats have their quirks, positive and negatives. Maybe they’re a barker, but they’re so sweet and they’re good on a leash. It’s funny how it varies from pet to pet.”

Some factors to consider about pets are their typical energy needs, personality traits, shedding tendencies, socialization levels, allergies and any behavioral challenges since animals face a variety of life experiences and not all dogs are trained from a young age to fit human lifestyles.

Some people adopt a pet on a whim without considering the long-term commitment involved. Pet adoption may not be the best idea for those who are rarely home or unable to dedicate time to daily pet care and companionship. A high-energy dog for a sedentary person can be a recipe



**Need a best friend?  
A pet will always greet you  
with happiness and be thrilled  
when you come home.**

for disaster. People who are impatient tend to demonstrate little tolerance for acclimating a pet. Animals gifted during the holidays typically end up in a shelter unless the recipient is ready and willing to take responsibility for their care.

Consideration of financial stability is crucial when taking on a new furry friend since food, grooming, veterinary care and possible emergency treatments, if needed, can be costly.

Renters should consider landlord approval for a pet and whether their living space is large and safe enough for the pet they want to own and care for. Families relocating need a plan for accommodating their pet in future living situations. A history of neglecting or mistreating animals is a major red flag for shelters, as is an unwillingness to educate oneself about an animal's needs.

Those adopting must be prepared to provide the safe, stable and loving environment that pets need to thrive. Proper pet ownership requires time, effort and resources, as well as a genuine commitment to the animal's well-being.

It's worth noting that mixed-breed pets, which are common in shelters, tend to have fewer genetic health issues compared to purebreds.

CARE Humane Society offers volunteer opportunities for pet lovers who feel compassion for the ones in the shelter even after adopting pets for their own homes. Cleaning is another task that never ends.

"We have a thing called 'cat companions' where people literally just come in and chill out with the cats for as long as they want," Crank said. "It kind of helps to get them socialized. Also, dog walkers. We have people help with events that we run. They might bring the dogs out, get some exposure."

"Children can't sign up to be volunteers without a parent until the age of 16, but you can still foster by bringing your child here and they can assist with things," Warren added. "They are not handling the dogs. It shows them that there are ways to be a good person in the community. We still have a full shelter, and that's because it's a community problem that we are not spaying and neutering our pets. We have programs that help depending on your income. You can get your animal spayed or neutered for what it costs for a cup of coffee. We're talking about fostering and the importance by using stories of seasoned volunteers like Marie, who has fostered 11 dogs."

The shelter also offers a way for citizens to vent at exes who, perhaps, treated them wrong. Warren said two fundraisers happen in February — one for the cats, the other for the dogs.

"The cat one is called '#crappyex', and if you have an ex-best friend or ex-boyfriend, ex-girlfriend, and you want to get out some of your frustrations, you can write their first names on the litter box, and then the cats do what they do best," Warren joked.

"With the dogs, we're going to have dog treats, and we're going to write the people's exes' names on them, and let the dogs eat those as well. It's \$5 to sponsor a



IN MEMORY OF  
OUR SWEET BABY  
QUITA-RITA

DINKY MUELLER  
BELOVED CAT  
ADOPTED 2012

SIMON MUELLER  
BELOVED CAT  
ADOPTED 2001

YOU CARE!  
ERRY AND  
BARNETT

MIDNIGHT MUELLER

IN MEMORY OF

pet that way. This helps our No More Waste of Lives campaign. We have a \$75,000 goal. We're over halfway there, but you know this helps with the community support. Honestly, I think our community support is amazing."

Adopting a pet is not only a compassionate choice but also a rewarding one that brings love, joy and companionship into one's life. Plus, you become part of the solution to animal homelessness, making a real difference in your community.

Warren advises those seriously interested in pet adoption to view the shelter's social media. CARE can be found on Facebook at Care Humane Society and on Instagram @carehumanesociety.

"Abbey does a great job of highlighting the pets with various pictures, describing their personalities, so you can be paired with the perfect pet," Warren said. "Go ahead and fill out the application, have a couple [of animals] in mind to consider and set up an appointment because some of these pets are in fostering and it's a matter of when the foster can bring them."

To adopt a pet from the shelter, appointments are highly recommended. Make an appointment by emailing [care1140@carehumane.org](mailto:care1140@carehumane.org).

There is no after-hours drop off. CARE is open to the public Tuesdays through Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.

Its website is [www.carehumane.org](http://www.carehumane.org) for more information about upcoming events.

CHESSIE R.  
ALWAYS LOVED  
AND REMEMBERED

HONORING JEFF BASTON  
FOR PUTTING UP WITH  
ALL THE HOUNDS

ANNA & MADD  
BUCKINGHA

**The memorial sidewalk at CARE  
Humane Society contains bricks  
that were purchased by people to  
memorialize their animals.**

**Details can be found on CARE's  
website at [www.carehumane.org/  
paver](http://www.carehumane.org/paver).**

CONNIE COOKSEY

HONORING  
THE INDOMITABLE  
MCCULLOUGH

IN HONOR  
OF

IN HONOR OF CALLIE,  
JUJU AND SOOKIE  
MCCULLOUGH FAMILY