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Flagstaff-Sedona Dog

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Cover Story: Tuba City Humane Society Shelter Without Walls Struggles to Serve Navajo Nation

Travels with Pets
Sedona Staycation

Training
Play Drive vs
Prey Drive

Doggie News
Sedona Statue Honors
Military Service Dogs

Horsin' Around
Listening to the Whispers
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Business Spotlight
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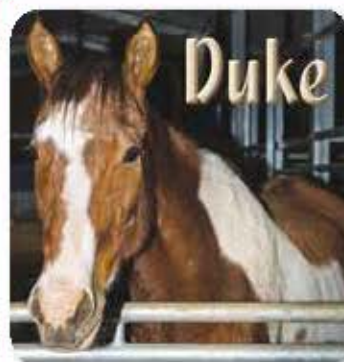
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Camping World
of Flagstaff



By Jacqueline Vaughn

The term "shelter without walls" is an apt one for the Tuba City Humane Society in northeast Coconino County. There are no kennels, no lobby to greet visitors, or cages for kittens, or the sounds of barking dogs. Instead, this organization operates through the efforts of a small group of volunteers and a handful of grants and donations while remaining dedicated to reducing animal suffering and homelessness for animals of Tuba City and the western Navajo Nation. Tuba City is the largest community on the Navajo Nation, 80 miles northeast of Flagstaff, and 80 miles from the Grand Canyon and Lake Powell. It is, in some ways, a major crossroads for travelers despite a population of only about 8,600 people. It is also the home to countless rez dogs, abandoned or left to fend for themselves in the harsh environment.

This was the problem that Mary Jo Parys, a pediatric nurse at the Tuba City Hospital, sought to solve when a small group of



Sylvia and Willie Moore

community members came together in 1992. She and Sandy Burd rescued as many animals as possible, with those suitable for adoption transferred to the Arizona Humane Society or Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab, Utah. Mary Jo retired in 2010 and Sylvia Moore became executive director, increasing the number of animals rescued and then transferred to Noah's Ark Pet Adoptions in Glendale, Arizona. In 2013, they also partnered with Second Chance Center for Animals, which began transferring the Tuba City animals for adoption to their Flagstaff facility.

Dr. Carol Holgate and her husband Elward provide veterinary services for the group through Desert View Veterinary Clinic in Tuba City. In the past, grants to cover animal care have been provided through the Tuba City Community Fund, Arizona Community Fund, and from the Arizona Pet Friendly License Plate Fund. When it looked as though the group might fold, Rose Moonwater and Jazmin Villavicencio became the new leadership board in July 2016.

Jazmin, who lives in Tuba City, is part of the "ground crew" of first responders who help to trap a stray dog, or to find a mom with puppies that needs a safe place or food. She began when she moved to Tuba City from Tucson and rescued a single dog, and now "collects them" when it seems as if no one else is available to help. When a call comes in, she and her husband are the ones that have to make the difficult decision about what to do next. "Which animals do you take," she says? "What do we do about the feral dogs, the ones that bite or act aggressively, or all the puppies that need homes? We simply do not have the resources to do all that we would like to do."



Jazmin Villavicencio

She heaps praise on the Holgates, saying that Carol Holgate "has the biggest heart." They are the only veterinarians in Tuba City, and operate without kennel staff or an office manager. Their work became even more important when the Navajo Nation closed down its Tuba City facility due to maintenance issues. Although tribal officials hope to reopen the shelter some time in 2017, right now, the Tuba City Humane Society relies on foster homes to help more animals in need. They borrow what they can, but need a new humane trap so they can have one of their own. One volunteer has put together foster care kits for new fosters, and they have received many in-kind donations, including 11 pallets of dog and puppy food from Best Friends Animal Society, dog coats, dog crates, dog igloos and many other needed supplies. Despite challenges, in 2016, they were able to rescue more than 230 animals, more than double the previous year, and about 25 percent higher than any previous year. They adopted out 9, with 7 in foster near the end of the year. Fifteen animals were euthanized, mostly strays that were hit by a car and severely injured and then brought in for euthanization, or a couple of very sick puppies with parvo.

Foster homes are always important to a successful animal shelter or rescue group, but they are absolutely essential to the Tuba City Humane Society. Dogs can be temporarily housed in a few outdoor kennels



Dr. Carol and Elward Holgate



Patrus before and after rescue



belonging to Dr. Holgate, but her clinic does not have room for rescued cats or kittens, which must be cared for by fosters. In Coconino County, foster homes for animals are in short supply, and local rescues compete for those individuals willing to take on the challenge of puppies that need to be bottle fed, kittens rescued without their mother, or dogs that have been injured and need to be cared for after a limb has been amputated, or an eye removed. Foster homes also allow animals to be socialized, often with other dogs, children, or cats, which makes them more likely to be adopted.

Shelter Without Walls Struggles to Serve Navajo Nation



Jimmy is typical of the kind of transformation that can take place when a rez dog enters a foster home. Volunteers Deb and Jeff broke down tasks in very small steps for the dog, who originally was a stray, then placed in an outside run at Dr. Holgate's, to living successfully in a house with people and other dogs. On his first day, Jimmy hid behind the couple's couch, shaking and growling. Deb and Jeff started teaching him the difference between inside and outside, potty training, treats for good behaviors, about the kennel/crate in their bedroom, and the structure of the day, including eating, potty, plays, treats,

and rest. Jimmy was so terrified of the car that it took little steps of giving him kibble near the vehicle in the garage, to then being able to eat kibble next to the car, to then being able to go into the car and eat kibble, to short rides with other dogs. They also exposed Jimmy to meeting little children, seeing animals like the neighbor's goats, people in different settings, and even an adoption event at a car dealership to build his confidence.

As Jimmy became more comfortable and relaxed, more traditional puppy behavior surfaced, including wanting to chew, and climbing up on things where he should not be. But he progressed from the first moment he was at his foster home, and the small chunks of learning and exposure created a solid foundation for him so quickly that when he went to his adoptive home, he was very successful there, too. Deb continued to interact with the adopter, noting items she thought Jimmy would chew that could not easily be replaced, convincing the new person to fix areas of fencing where Jimmy might be

able to escape, and why the use of the crate was crucial when she was not at home. Without the kind of foster care that Jimmy received, the outcome might have been very different.



Purdy before and after

Veterinary care, food, and supplies for not only routine care but also for foster animals, costs the Tuba City Humane Society, on average, over \$150 per animal. For many rez dogs, the costs skyrocket due to the prevalence of parvo, mange, ticks, and injuries. Those expenses are covered by the Tuba City Humane Society prior to transferring an animal to a local rescue partner, such as Arizona Border Collie Rescue, High Country Puppy Rescue, or Paw Placement Animal Rescue, where a foster network is already active and in place. Fosters then transport the dogs to a veterinary service in Flagstaff for follow up care, or take an



Rose Moonwater and friends

animal to an adoption event where they have a better chance of finding a permanent home. The adoption fees are retained by the partner group.

Moonwater says that for 2017, their small group has several major goals. First, they would like to expand their current foster homes network, which currently includes 1 foster in Tuba City and 4 in the Flagstaff area. Second, the Tuba City Humane Society seeks to do additional fundraising. Reliance on grants and periodic donations is not a sustainable business plan for an organization that serves the huge Navajo Nation. In the past, fundraising has taken a back seat to the immediate needs of rescuing animals. "It is a constant juggling act," she says, of getting animals from the reservation, then to Tuba City and Dr. Holgate, and then to a foster, or to a partner agency."

A third goal involves spreading the ethic of kindness, care and response to animals in need in Tuba City and the western Navajo Nation, joining with other people who care. Moonwater says this means helping and responding to animals in need and supporting the efforts of neighbors who care about animals, but it also means validating and supporting kindness to animals through compassionate action.



Lastly, the group would like to participate in adoption events to find permanent homes for the animals in their care. This too, has been postponed in the past so that animal rescue remains at the forefront of their work. She believes that by working to grow the group's support network, including recruiting new foster homes in Flagstaff and eventually in Sedona, more adoptions could take place, providing a more reliable source of income for spaying and neutering rez animals.

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