



# Among FRIENDS

The newsletter of The Friends of the New Haven Animal Shelter  
[www.findafriendforlife.org](http://www.findafriendforlife.org) OR [www.petfinder.com/shelters/CT74.html](http://www.petfinder.com/shelters/CT74.html)

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## An Empress Finds Her Perfect Throne

Some cats' charms are not readily apparent. Our Exhibit A: Meredith, a 7-year-old tortoiseshell with plenty of "take no prisoners" moxie (or, as admirers of this particular coloration of cat call it, "tortitude"). She lived a year at our shelter being, well, cantankerous. She didn't like to be handled, took a dim view of her shelter mates, approved of petting only sometimes and—being a sturdy, voluptuous girl—reserved her greatest affection for treats and the occasional extra spoonful of wet food, which volunteers and staff used as a last resort to get her back into her cage on the occasions she was let out.

A few of those staff and volunteers called Meredith "The Empress." She fended off plenty of potential adopters with a hiss or an impatient swipe of her paw. Yet, under this gruff exterior, we all perceived a gentle soul looking for a home that would unlock her cautious heart, and we rooted unwaveringly for her to find it. Finally—wouldn't you know it—along came just the right cheerleader: Ashley Van Tassel.

A former veterinary technician (for At Home Veterinary Care in Waterbury), Van Tassel has owned cats all her life. A year prior to adopting Meredith, she had lost her cat of 16 years, Malice, who had been her feline companion since age 15. When her boyfriend adopted a pit bull from the shelter named Gorm—who's now known as Bleu—she began following the Friends of the New Haven Animal Shelter on Facebook, where she got her first peek at Meredith. What she saw was what we all worried about, an older cat with limited opportunities for adoption. So she came to the shelter determined, Van Tassel says, "to help her out."

She did not have great expectations, at first, for their future relationship. "Meredith was very aloof, and didn't want to interact that much. But she did like having her head rubbed. I figured she might do better in a different environment. My previous cat, Malice, didn't like other cats either, and was pretty much the only cat in my household. I just saw this as my opportunity to rescue someone new."

Meredith came home to a living situation out of every cat's dream—a house where she automatically had the full run of the entire upper floor, not to mention one room (the guest bedroom) entirely dedicated to her. "I got her a nice cat tree," Van Tassel says, and an abundance of jingle ball toys, which have become clear favorites. Almost immediately, the aloof queen metamorphosed into a total lovebug. She's her owner's constant companion, following Van Tassel around the house, sitting at her feet while she works on her computer, and delighting in games like



**Meredith**

chasing a string up and down the stairs.

Like many cats who have had long shelter stays, Meredith needs to lose some LBs. Her new mom not only emphasizes exercise, but limits treats to no more than two a day. "I put one on the top of her cat tree every day so she has to climb to get it," Van Tassel says. Others, she hides in various spots around the house. "Mer's lost a little weight. We're trying to go slow so the change doesn't hurt her liver, which can happen."

When not doing kitty aerobics, Meredith loves resting in the bed that sits atop Van Tassel's own bed (though every night at 1 or 2 a.m., she leaves its comforts to sleep atop her owner instead, as seen in the accompanying photo). She also enjoys sitting in the bathroom shower and will meow loudly if she can't get in. "I try to keep the door propped open and the shower seat clear for her," Van Tassel says. She's been known to grab the limelight when friends visit. "I recently hosted a games night, and Meredith rolled over on her back and played dead because she wanted more attention." Thus far, however, she has yet to make friends with the family dog, a pug named Mortimer: "He's a little intense and gets too excited around her—they kind of stay separate."

For her part, Van Tassel is delighted with how things have turned out. "I just wanted Mer to have a place where she could get healthy and be comfortable. It really warms my heart that she likes me and has taken so well to her new home."



## An Ideal Fit

Ask any person about their favorite holiday gift and the answer might be predictable; the latest iPhone, Fitbit or laptop; a gift card to a favorite restaurant or a coveted piece of jewelry. But for Ryan Mack, it was none of these things. His gift was waiting for him at the New Haven Animal Shelter.

In mid-December of 2018, he visited the shelter to adopt a dog. What he saw took his breath away. Sitting in the first kennel was a large, beautiful 3-year-old female pit bull mix who reminded him of a lost love.

"It was *déjà vu*," Ryan says. "She looked just like my Rhodesian Ridgeback, Wrangler, who passed away at age 13."

Indeed, Gracie, who had been at the shelter since April 2017, closely resembled that breed, typified by a short, dense, body and sleek coat. She lacked the distinguishing ridge of hair running down her back but otherwise, she was almost a dead ringer. For Ryan, it was love at first sight. He wasn't looking for a replacement, just a new friend.

"Her large, droopy eyes were the first thing I noticed," he says, "and she was the same size and had the same coloring as Wrangler."

The shelter staff brought Gracie into one of the dog runs to meet Ryan. He soon discovered that she was a "gentle giant" who "didn't have a mean bone in her body." She was lanky and playful and had a loving personality.

The deal was sealed, and Gracie, after being spayed and checked by the vet, went home. Ryan confesses that he was worried that her long stay at the shelter might have caused extra stress or that she wouldn't be housebroken—but Gracie showed him that her routine was like clockwork.



**Gracie**

At 6 a.m., she sits by the door and waits to be let out for her morning constitutional, then hastens back inside to her favorite spot on the couch. Or, sometimes it's the bed, depending on how much room she wants to stretch out.

A big girl who weighs about 70 pounds, Gracie might give the impression that she's clumsy. But her grace (thus her name) is evident. Ryan says that the muscular canine is not a jumper and loves long walks through the woods and on the beach. Even after the longest hike, she looks back at Ryan as if to say, "Why are you stopping?" She is also gentle with children, who love to pet her, and responds by wagging her long tail. Sometimes that tail gets her into a bit of trouble; in her excitement she can use it as a bull-whip, Ryan says, and can take everything off the table. Then she regards him calmly with a look that says, "Oops, I didn't mean to do that."

Gracie's toy of choice is a rope or stuffed animal, but they never last long. They inevitably become shredded and an indestructible Kong toy comes to the rescue as a substitute. Ryan is happy to report that *that* toy is still intact. Mealtimes are always a full bowl of food, after which she sits on her couch (which he calls "her throne"), looking out the window and keeping watch over the neighborhood.

Gracie's strength and stature belie her sweet nature. She could be mistaken for a guard dog, but Ryan says that she's "anything but." She rarely barks, even when the doorbell rings. Ryan attributes her serenity to knowing that she's finally home, safe with

her best buddy.

The only time that she's cautious is going outside in the rain, which is odd, since Ryan says that she loves taking a shower with him sometimes—although there's not much room in the stall.

As if on cue, Gracie knows when its time to turn in for the day. When Ryan climbs the stairs, she's right behind him. It's a bit tricky to maneuver their places on the bed, since he says that she takes up a lot of room and is "dead weight." Fortunately, Gracie never wakes up during the night. Morning brings a gentle head butt to signal that it's time to get up.

Ryan admits that he was a little worried that Gracie wouldn't like him or that he wasn't the right adopter. He found that he was wrong on both counts. Although he notes that she's a 'Type A' personality who can be stubborn, he's now convinced that "we are a perfect fit."

Ryan believes that pit bulls are a misunderstood breed and says he would adopt another "in a heartbeat." When he returned from Somalia after serving eight months in the U.S Armed Forces in 1995, he returned to Connecticut suffering from anxiety. His life—and outlook—changed as a result of the love he found with Wrangler and now, Gracie.

"She lightens up my life," he says, "and has become a great therapy dog. Adopting her is the best decision I ever made."



## SHELTER UPDATES



Hello Friends! Hope you are having a wonderful year so far!

The Friends organization has been very busy as usual. We have been holding our usual monthly events with the North Shore Animal League America at locations around the New Haven area. In December, we were excited to hold our annual Santa pics at the shelter in conjunction with an Open House event. It was wonderful to see shelter alumni, new friends and longtime supporters.

We want to say a special thanks to everyone who was kind enough to donate funds and items from our Amazon Wish List around the holidays – our animals benefited greatly from your generosity! Thanks to your support, our volunteer funds were used to help provide care for some of the dogs and cats who entered our shelter in need of medical attention.

Please look on our social media sites to find out about our outside upcoming events! On Friday, May 17, we will be at the New Haven Night Market. We are also excited to be a part of the Shoreline Spring Festival and Pet Adoption Fair, which takes place on May 18 on the Madison Green. We also will be at Broadway Island in New Haven on August 18 for an animal adoption event, which will be in conjunction with the 3rd Annual Appetizer and Dessert Crawl – a portion of the crawl tickets will go to our organization. Hope to see you there!

### We're Home! FNHAS Graduates



Dundee



Chloe



JFHANAS.org



Sadie



Pandora



JT

**OUR SPECIAL THANKS**

Awning Cleaning Industries	Daniel and Sharon Milkowsky
Laurel Casey	Rights, Education, Adoption & Protection For Animal Welfare Foundation, Inc.(R.E.A.P)
Bethesda Lutheran Church	
Blue State Coffee	Dr. and Mrs. Ronald Rozett
Sharon Bornholz, Shorty Long, Ross, Noble Ralphie, and Raquel	Mr. and Mrs. Edwin and Deborah Selden
Nicole Brophy and Ryan Torbett	Shell and Bones Oyster Bar & Grill
The Carrot Patch	Summa Realty and the Potentials Band
Earth Animal	Three Sheets New Haven
Fidelity Charitable Funny Money Fund	Wally, Betsey, and Kim
The Friends of Whitney and Kristen	Geffen Waterman on his Bar Mitzvah
Cadah Goulet	"Wild Bill" Taylor
The Hagani Foundation, Inc.	Yale McDougal Graduate Student Life Center
Karen Hanson	
Arthur and Evelyn Lawhorn	Yale Medicine Central Business Office

**AMAZON WISH LIST DONORS**

Amy	Soheil Ghili
Lucky, Carolyn, Bill & Maya Atwood	Ryan Gordon
Jason Blackwell	Laura Lipnickas
Eric Burns	Pauline and Dave Loh
The Carrot Patch	Linda Muscato
Sharon Connors and shelter graduate Amber Rose	Jennifer Palacio
Craig and Carl	Serima, Soheil and Nellie Theresa
Alyssa Cocco	The Tyson Family
CT Humane Society at Southern CT State University	Amy Ulrich
Amanda Devlin	Ali Parmelee, Joel, Lucy & Nina Waggener
Lydia Esdaile	Kaisi Zhang
Tracy Ford	and many anonymous donors
Christine Holmberg Gales	

**In Honor Of**

Carol Anthony in honor of "all animals; they deserve love and kindness."	Michelle Gonzalez in honor of "my sister, Elissa Landi."	Anne Olcott in honor of "Marisa Kalt and Paddy Nugent, and in memory of their cat, Ruby."
John Brehon in honor of "all U.S. Marines, alive and dead."	Joan Hubbard in honor of the Lamar-Sterling family, "for the animals who have found safety with you."	Katherine Potter in honor of Lal Potter, "adopted last May."
Christopher Brown in honor of Togo (formerly Widget), a "loving dog adopted from NHAS seven years ago and still going strong."	Mia Kahan in memory of Susan Brown-ing, "who loves and cares for all animals."	Tilden Russell and Dominique Bourassa in honor of IQ.
Connecticut Consulting Engineers, LLC in honor of Brady.	John Levis in honor of Jamaica the pit bull "stop chewing up the pillows."	Jeanne Sutton in honor of "all furry babies who deserve a home."
Mark and Carla Consorte in honor of Savannah.	Emily Lotko in honor of Daisy.	Bonnie Taylor in honor of Lei and Luke, "rescued in 2010."
Mary Drury in honor of Huey.	Margaret Mann in honor of Lizzy, "adopted 2018!"	"Wild Bill" Taylor in honor of Anna Schildroth, FNHAS volunteer.
Rachelle Fink in honor of Polly, "who is such a good mama to Molly."	Barbara Melotto in honor of Elaine Spinato, FNHAS volunteer.	Janna Wagner in "celebration of Rebekah Oppenheimer's Bat Mitzvah."
Barbara and Gerry Gaab in honor of Sheba, "the cat we adopted in January 2015."	Barbara Mulligan in honor of Princess (Mimi.)	Susan and Tim Yolen in honor of Ramona.



## WE THANK YOU—IN MEMORIAM

- Geraldine Adams in memory of Pepper.
- Anne Bailey in memory of Koko.
- Kathryn Barrington in memory of Emma and Max.
- Catherine Benedetti in memory of "Casy, my dog."
- Chris Blazosek in memory of Chumley. "love you buddy, see you soon."
- B.K. Blakeley in memory of Kat, Nell, and Betty.
- Diane Bonomo in memory of Champagne and Molly.
- Richard Bromley in memory of Piper I.
- Tam Brown-Gurbs in memory of Sabbath.
- Michelle Calini in memory of Piper.
- Debra Computaro in memory of Barbara Kunst.
- William and Judy Cannon in memory of Maude.
- Ernest Canteen in memory of Lady.
- Laurel Casey in memory of Fred the Chihuahua.
- Nicholas Cofrancesco in memory of Rocky and Holly.
- Monica Micalizzi-Cofrancesco in memory of Harley D.
- Robin Corvino in memory of Desmond, "never forgot."
- Vin Como in "loving memory of Frank F. Prochilo."
- Edward Danaher in memory of Beau.
- Noreen DeDomenico in memory of , "my beloved friend, Maverick, my best friend."
- Raymond Dudley in memory of Pete. (Made in the name of Allison and Frank Pelliccio and Carol Brown and David Butler.)
- Marianne Federici in memory of Abbie and Cassie.
- Van Galligan in memory of "Robert Musco's
- Johnny, a sweet bear of a lab, who died suddenly and left us broken."
- Toddie and Chris Getman in memory of Handsome Dan 16th.
- Geri and Frank Glaser in memory of "all the animals who lost their lives or were injured in the California fires."
- Judy Gouveia in memory of Belle.
- Mary Hadley in memory of "all the animals who have given me joy and unconditional love."
- Liz Hellwig in memory of Calli and Tess.
- Robert Henninger in memory of Boo Boo Henninger.
- Elaine Herlihy in memory of Elvis, Becky, and Merlin.
- Peter and Kate Hvizdak in memory of Sky, "our rescued lab who rescued us."
- Peggy Ianniello in memory of Pitney.
- Dick and Sally Jaynes in memory of Doris Walden.
- Beverly Johnson in memory of Richard Fitol, Lori Hillson, and Groucho.
- The Kingsbury family in memory of Guinness.
- Elaine Kittler in memory of Chunky, Sam, Jessica, Trump, and Jordan.
- Cindy Koepke in memory of Rickey and Barney, "the scaredy cats—RIP."
- Jean Koepke in memory of Pugsly, "a much loved dog."
- Allison Kravitz and family in memory of "our beloved Toby."
- Mara Lavitt in memory of Zuri.
- Patricia Landolfi in "loving memory of Madie M. Montollo."
- Elizabeth Lester in memory of Hamish and Wilfie.
- Kristen Lopez in memory of Milo, "adopted from the NHAS in 1993 and left this world in 2002. Gone but never forgotten."
- Emily Lotko in memory of Ebony.
- Laura Margolin and James Johnson in memory of "our wonderful Sammy Short Ears."
- Pat Miner in memory of Mr. Pete.
- William and Eileen Moss in memory of Dolly and Buddy.
- Susan Mulcunry in memory of "Russo Lewis, the most wonderful pittie on earth, adopted from your shelter. He was a gift to all."
- Barbara Mulligan in memory of Freeway and Buddy.
- Zossima Press in memory of Budgy, "a beautiful, loving Maine Coon rescued from the streets of New Haven."
- Christine Ramsey "to Cynthia Brandt from Chrissie and Karen in memory of Iris."
- Russ Reynolds in memory of Skipper, Kaspar, White Sox, and Oscar."
- Charlene Rohloff in memory of Ric Rohloff.
- Edward Saccu in memory and honor of Lois Sills.
- Scott Scribner in memory of Katie.
- Keith and Sheri Shields in memory of Liz Chadell.
- Elaine Spinato in memory of Lady, "beloved companion of the Romaniuk Family."
- Mildred Steinfeldt in memory of "my dog Max."
- Dawn Tiedemann in memory of Tucker, "devoted dog. Miss you much."
- Cindy Tran in memory of Frankie.
- Linda Turski in memory of "our beloved friend Oakley and brother."
- Susan Wells in memory of Holly and Kelsey, "love you forever."
- We make every effort to include all tributes. If we missed anyone or misspelled names, please let us know and we will include you in our next newsletter.*



## Spring 2019

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### Save These Dates!

May 18, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Artisan Fair, Madison Green 11:30 AM - 3 PM

June 9, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, CT Fresh Food and Produce, 920 S. Colony Rd., Wallingford 11:30 AM - 3 PM

July 14, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Rose Orchards, North Branford 11:30 AM - 3 PM

August 18, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Dessert Crawl, Broadway Island at Yale 11 AM - 3 PM

August 17, 2019 - Clear the Shelter, 81 Fournier St., New Haven 1- 4 PM

September 8, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, CT Fresh Food and Produce, 920 S. Colony Rd., Wallingford 11:30 AM - 3 PM

October 6, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Bethany Harvest Festival 11:30 AM - 3 PM

November 17, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Bishop's Orchard, Route 1 Guilford, 11:30 AM - 3 PM

This issue of Among FRIENDS is dedicated in memory of Jerome Davis, our former assistant animal control officer of more than 30 years.

AmongFRIENDS

Contributors:

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*These dates may change so please check our website for confirmation.*

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