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BRANDON McMILLAN

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ISSUE 99

Features

22 What You Need To Know About Dog Water Sports
From paddleboarding to dog surfing, more dogs are joining their pet parents with their natural attraction to water and boards.

30 CBS Host of Lucky Dog Brandon McMillan
Brandon graces our cover for the fourth time and takes on role of Spokesperson again for our pet adoption tour, Get Your Licks on Route 66®. Find out how our favorite dog trainer is doing after marriage and fatherhood.

34 18th Annual Life Saving Tour Get Your Licks on Route 66®
Here we go again! Traveling down America's Favorite Highway supporting adoption events and raising money for the shelters. 21,000 pets have been saved in the first 17 years thanks to the support of our sponsors.

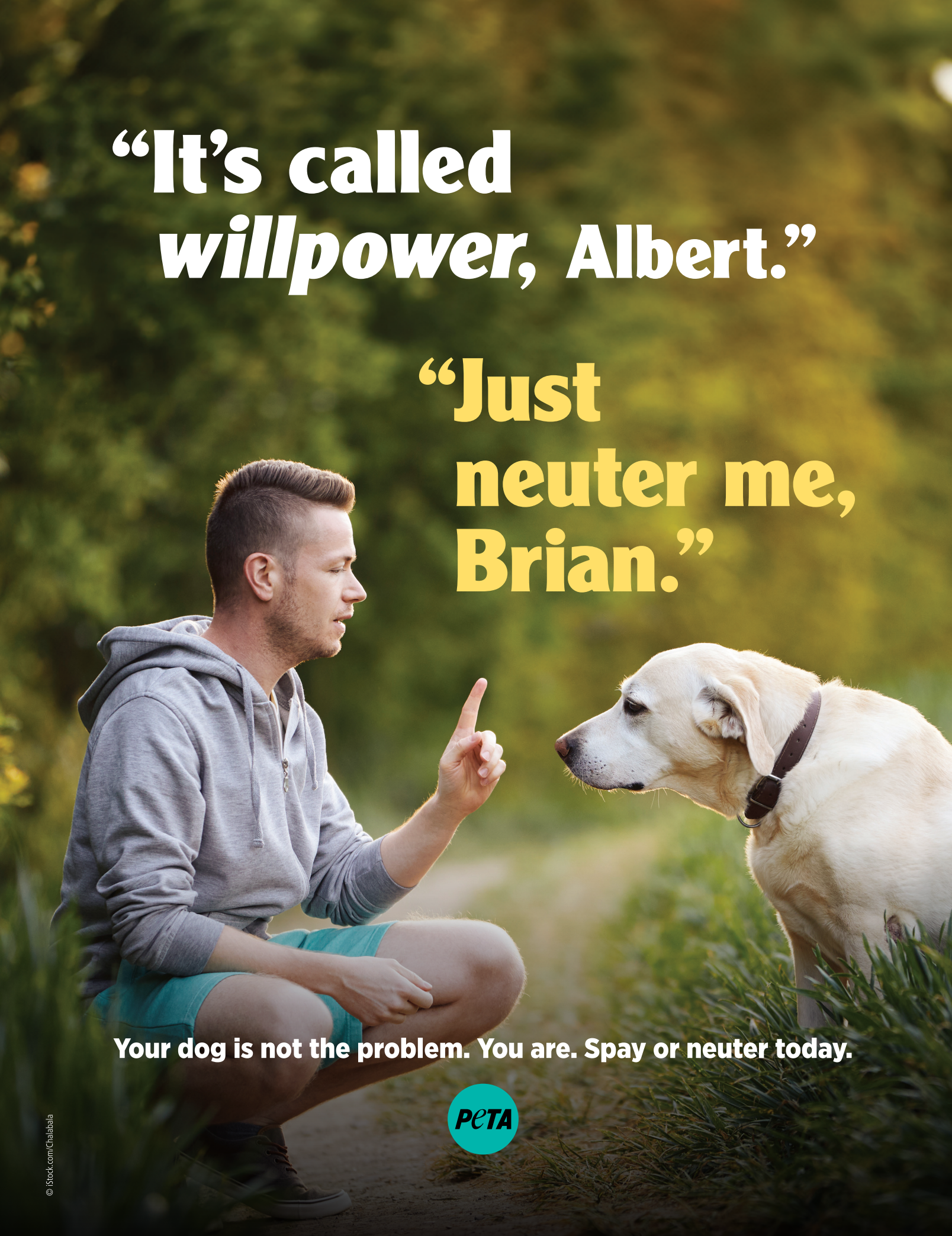
44 Shutting Down Ridglan Farms Breeding Facility
When mounting public pressure and animal cruelty allegations led to the permanent closure of Ridglan Farms breeding facility, hope finally arrived. Rescue organizations, including **Big Dog Ranch Rescue, Beagle Freedom Project, Pilots To The Rescue**, and countless volunteers and partners, united in one of the largest beagle rescues in history.

Trends

12 Contest Winners
Meet the lucky dogs who recently won big time!

14 Contest entries
Check out the cute pups who made the Summer issue.

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“It’s called willpower, Albert.”
“Just neuter me, Brian.”
Your dog is not the problem. You are. Spay or neuter today.
PETA
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ffgazetteer



57
Hotels and Inns that welcome Fido from sea to shining sea.

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Travel

16 Albuquerque New Mexico
Route 66's nicknames include the Mother Road, thanks to author John Steinbeck, and the Neon Road, for the signs that have illuminated Albuquerque's 18 miles of America's famous 2,400-mile-long highway for decades.

26 Newport Beach, California
Why Hyatt Regency Newport Beach is the perfect home base for exploring coastal California with your dog.

36 Adventures in Petsitting
Nighttime Nuzzles in Costa Rica
There is nothing more rewarding than gaining the love of a dog.

40 Bowser Goes to Banff
The pet-friendly Fairmont Banff Springs welcomes dogs with treats, beds, and bowls.

Home

18 Stars of Social Media
Enjoy the exciting adventures from breathtaking photos of wolfdogs, a cat in a backpack while her pet parent enjoys snowboarding to an 85-lb dog riding in a bicycle sidecar.

42 Dog Days of Summer
The TurfMutt Foundation's tips to safely enjoy the dog days of summer.

Living

38 Bowser on a Budget
Pack the leash and hit the road with Fido-friendly summer escapes from city hotels to seaside retreats.

60 Ask Honey
Our very own Director of Barketing takes questions from her fans.

No way to treat a dog

UNITED KINGDOM

- 20 tracks operating in the UK
- 35,168 injuries and 4,631 fatalities were documented between 2017 and 2024

UNITED STATES

- Greyhound racing is illegal in 44 states
- Only 2 operational dog tracks remain, both in West Virginia

IRELAND

- 15 licensed dog tracks in Ireland
- Highest number of track deaths in 2024
- On average 6,000 greyhounds are killed annually

NEW ZEALAND

- 6 tracks in New Zealand
- Between 2021 and 2025 there were 4,383 injuries and 583 deaths

AUSTRALIA

- 49 greyhound tracks across six Australian states, with at least 5 slated to close by 2027
- Between 2020 and 2024 there were 53,696 injuries and 9,912 deaths reported



Zosie was rescued

GREY2K USA WORLDWIDE

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[ISSUE 99] SUMMER 2026

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Pet Friendly



Ridglan Farms survivors touching grass for the first time.

PHOTO CREDIT BEAGLE FREEDOM PROJECT.

Summer Starts Here!

By Susan Sims, Publisher

SUMMER HAS OFFICIALLY ARRIVED, and if you're anything like me, you're looking for ways to beat the heat while making memories with your four-legged best friend. When temperatures climb, remember that it's often **too hot for Spot**, so instead of pounding the pavement, why not head for the water?

In this issue, we're diving into **What You Need to Know About Dog Water Sports**, where our experts introduce you to the exciting worlds of dog surfing and paddleboarding. Whether your pup is a born water dog or just getting their paws wet for the first time, you'll find practical tips on choosing the right equipment, building confidence, and staying safe while enjoying these refreshing summer adventures together. *(See page 22.)*

While summer is a season of fun, it's also a time to reflect on the incredible compassion that exists within the animal rescue community.

This issue takes you behind one of the most extraordinary rescue efforts in recent history: the saving of more than **2,100 beagles from Ridglan Farms**, a commercial breeding facility in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, that supplied dogs for biomedical research. Following investigations that raised serious concerns about animal welfare, dedicated rescue organizations worked tirelessly to negotiate the surrender of these dogs, giving them a chance to experience life beyond laboratory walls. As I write this, Ridglan Farms has officially closed, and thousands of beagles are discovering simple joys many of us take for granted, walking on grass, feeling sunshine, and learning what it means to be loved. We're honored to profile three of the organizations whose collaboration made this historic rescue possible. *(See page 44.)*

Meanwhile, we're putting the finishing touches on another adventure. The **18th Annual Get Your Licks on Route 66®** pet adoption tour is about to hit the road! During the past 17 years, we've helped more than **21,000 pets** find loving forever homes from Los Angeles to Chicago. Be sure to read our tour preview and see whether we'll be stopping near your hometown. You just might meet your next best friend. *(See page 34.)*

Until next time, stay cool, travel safely, and make every adventure a Fido-friendly one.

Your partner in caring,
Susan Sims
Publisher, **FIDO Friendly® Magazine**

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Contest Winners!

Check our Facebook page for fun contests. facebook.com/FIDOFriendlyMagazine



CONTEST: *Mother's Day*
Winner: DANNY
Pet PAWrent: Patricia P. Williams, OR

Winner received the following prize package:

Park Lane Furever Necklace and Dainty Sparkle Heart Earrings

Because every fur mama needs a paw pendant and earrings that show her heart belongs to her precious pup! Wear with pride or gift with love!
https://bit.ly/3AfGVFp

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Learn more at *HandsOnGloves.com*

CONTEST: *Father's Day*
Winner: LOKI
Pet PAWrent: Diane I. Boca Raton, FL

Winner received the following prize package:

Annamaet Freeze-Dried Raw

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https://annamaet.com/freeze-dried/

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Learn more at *HandsOnGloves.com*





CONTEST: *July 4th*
Winner: PETUNIA
Pet PAWrent: Annette G. El Montes, CA

Winner received the following prize package:

Tranquil Tails

Keep your pup calm this Fourth of July! One lucky winner will receive a Tranquil Tails Diffuser with 28 calming pads to help reduce stress during fireworks and loud celebrations. Create a peaceful holiday for your dog and enjoy the festivities together! *https://tranquiltails.us*

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• Clifford Snuggle Buddy Plush Dog Toy, Red (1)
• Clifford Chicken Jerky Treats (1)
• Clifford Mini Chicken Sausage Treats (1)

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Winner Receives:

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• Dole Broc N' Tug Rope Plush Dog Toy (1)

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https://www.chewy.com/dole-broc-n-veggie-inspired-squeaky/dp/4080326
https://www.chewy.com/dole-tuff-avosqueak-plush-dog-toy-9/dp/4080374

Pop-Up Pets

Our beloved pet collection is officially retiring, and we're sending them off in style with 50% off every single design. Whether you've been eyeing one for a while or want to stock up before they disappear, now's your moment!
https://www.freshcutpaper.com/collections/pop-up-pets

Winner receives one of every dog and one of every cat and then birthday outfits for each one!
https://www.freshcutpaper.com/products/party-pups-collection
https://www.freshcutpaper.com/products/party-cats-collection



BAILEY
Mary C.



BELLE AND NIKKI
Julie P.



BRYN
Leslie R.



RUBY BLUE EYES
Ellen W.



HANK
Julie P.



HOLLY
Christine A.



RIGGS, TACO AND MISS Q
Brittany M.

Great entries to our fun contests that we wanted to share.

Look for more FIDO fun in our Fall/Winter issue 2026!



HAILEY
Eric B.



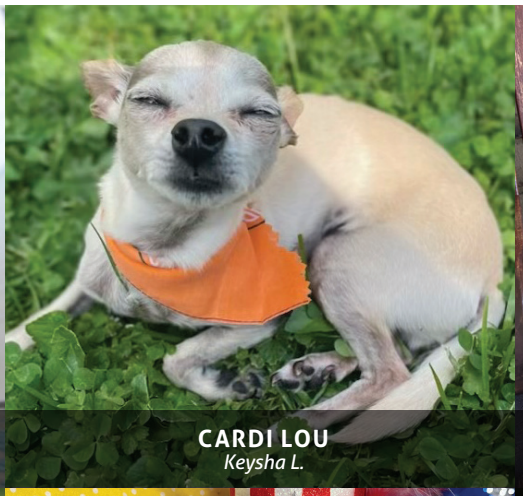
MILLIE
Melissa M.



CHLOE
Logan L.



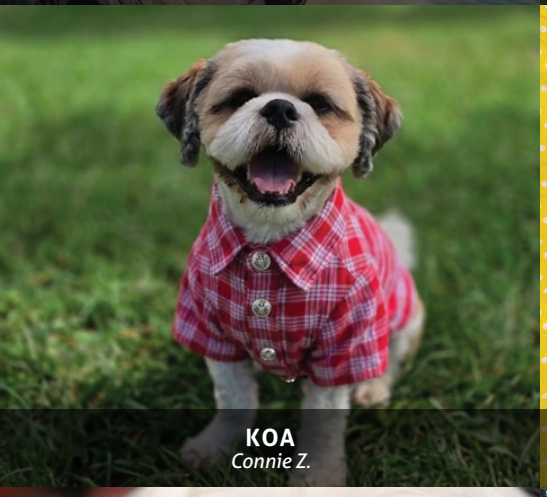
BUDDY
Nancy B.



CARDI LOU
Keysha L.



CLARA
Kimberly F.



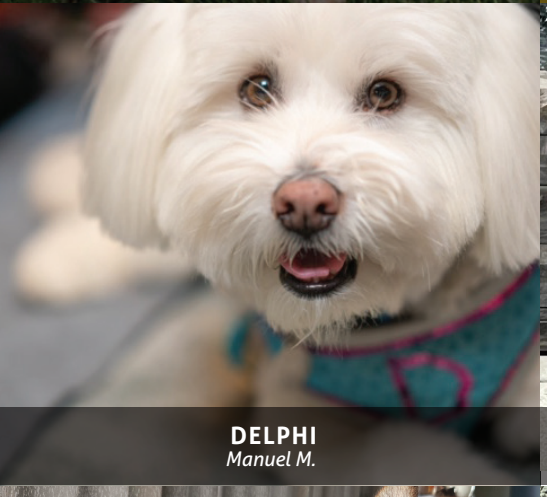
KOA
Connie Z.



PIA PIA
Dawn T.



TINKERBELLE
Eva S.



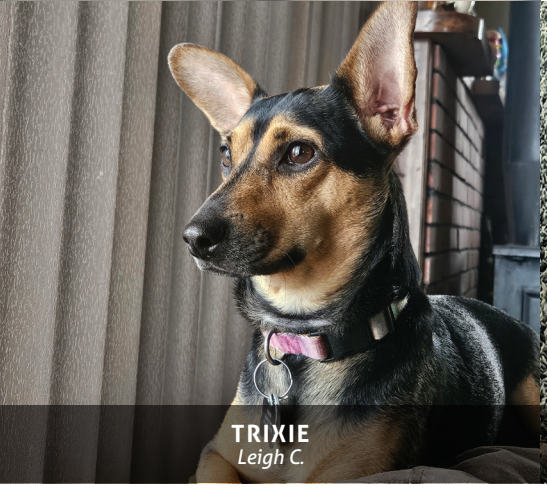
DELPHI
Manuel M.



LOKI
Diane I.



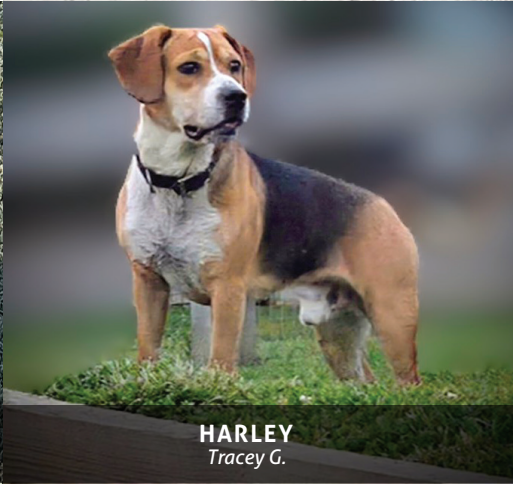
HARRISON, JEEP AND EZRI
Chris M.



TRIXIE
Leigh C.



LUMI
Janice W.



HARLEY
Tracey G.

Get Your Kicks on Route 66

From unique market finds to outdoor fun, Albuquerque is the place to be this year.

Story and Photos by Robin Tierney



Two happy guests arrive at Albuquerque hotel.



Enjoy festivals and outdoor sculptures downtown.

ROUTE 66'S NICKNAMES INCLUDE THE MOTHER ROAD, thanks to author John Steinbeck, and the Neon Road, for the signs that have illuminated Albuquerque's 18 miles of America's famous 2,400-mile-long highway for decades.

Route 66's 100th anniversary makes this a brilliant time to explore Albuquerque. This ever-sunny New Mexico destination's so Fido friendly it merits another nickname: Ruff 66.

MARKETS TO SAVOR

Sensational weekend markets and street parties rev up friendly locals accompanied by dogs. Shopping finds shine with New Mexico flair: turquoise jewelry, casual clothes, affordable artworks depicting diverse cultural traditions and enchanting purple-pink mountain sunsets. Homegrown veggies and flowers and homemade delicacies flood tables with color.

Vibrant markets include the Rail Yards Sunday market and downtown's Friday evening artwalks stretching for blocks. Old Town's vendors display handcrafted goods daily on blankets, ready to make a deal. A highlight of the Saturday growers-crafters fest at historic leafy tree-filled downtown Robinson Park: the local humane society's adoptable dogs show! These markets typically run spring through autumn.

EVENTS GRAND AND INTIMATE

Drives along Route 66 reveal classic architecture, neon signs and street murals, some stand-outs created for the centennial. Animal lovers will spot plenty of heart-warmers, from huge animal sculptures downtown -- illuminated after dark -- to butterflies, birds and buffalo painted on walls.

Free live music in nice weather enlivens places like Old Town Plaza, where a charming gazebo features bands performing a rich songbook: mariachi, Latin jazz, western swing, ranchera, Pueblo dance, country and hip hop. Well-behaved dogs are welcome.

Same goes for several wine spots in a town that's seen four centuries of wine production. Old Town Plaza's Noisy Water Winery lures adventurous sippers, accompanied by dogs, with its Rojo Caliente infused with red chile and Besito Caliente green chile wine, among winners crafted exclusively with New Mexico grapes.

This year, Albuquerque's annual International Balloon Fiesta lifts off starting October 3 for 9 days, with some 500 hot air balloons filling the skies. Since the launch site's unsafe for Fido, watch from dog-lovers' favored sites such as North Diversion Channel Trail. Or just stay in town and avoid the traffic altogether; many dogs find huge balloons disturbing.

"THIS NEW MEXICO DESTINATION'S SO FIDO FRIENDLY IT MERITS ANOTHER NICKNAME: RUFF 66."

Make note: it's always wise to keep Fido on leash, since Albuquerque brims with cacti and roadrunners, the state bird that zips around on ground.

MUST-SEE MUSEUMS

Albuquerque's museums boast national reputations, and one allows well-behaved dogs inside! The National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, a Smithsonian-affiliate, reveals the intriguing history and uses of atomic science in the fields of energy, medicine and military strategy. Learn secrets behind the Manhattan Project, nuclear bombs, harnessing radioactive elements to benefit humankind and atomic-age toys, games, books, "Duck and Cover" school memories and fallout shelters. Outdoors, a 9-acre Heritage Park beckons with decommissioned airplanes and missiles.

Back in Old Town, meander with Fido along Albuquerque Museum's open-air sculpture garden trails filled with wonderful locally inspired artworks, many depicting animals.

NATURE CALLS

For a peaceful break from city bustle, stroll Paseo del Bosque, a 16-mile paved trail edging the cottonwood-dotted Rio Grande. Stop along the way at Tingley Beach. A short drive east, hike amid wildflowers and cactus on trails leading 10,678 feet up to Sandia Mountain's crest. Sandia means "watermelon" in Spanish, inspired by the granite range's pastel colors. For easier wandering and picnics, visit Elena Gallegos Open Space, a 640-acre desert habitat in the foothills. Bring plenty of water!

EAT AND STAY

ABQ style extends to dogs-welcome lodging close by Route 66. Hotel Chaco makes a peaceful, luxurious Old Town base with oversized walk-in showers, window-walls, balconies and oh-so-comfy beds. Pets can't be left unattended in rooms, but no worries with so many Fido friendly attractions.

ARRIVE. Albuquerque offers boutique quarters across from lovely shade-filled Robinson Park. Vibrant with regional artworks, this delightful transformation of a historic downtown building debuted in 2025.

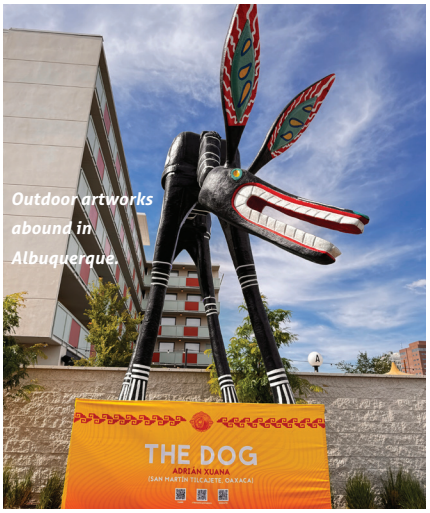
Foodwise, this cultural crossroads is famous for spicy red and green chile pepper-accented dishes. To smother your meal with a mix of both, "Christmas" is the code-word. Nourishing, delicious places with shaded Fido friendly patios abound.

For bowls of plant-based goodness, Itality elevates traditional Pueblo dishes with fresh, fully plant-based local ingredients just north of Old Town. Blackbird Coffeehouse's heavenly drinks and bites make it a cheerful Old Town community hub. At Sawmill Market, a food court with trendy outdoor seating, try Notorious POKE's Imposter, topping purple rice with edamame, avocado shiitake and sprouts. Vinaigrette downtown serves tantalizing salads, sandwiches and fresh-squeezed tonics.

Sufficiently fueled, you and Fido will be ready for more kicks on Route 66.



‹ ROBIN TIERNEY, *an award-winning photojournalist, seeks out intriguing places fit for Fidos and the people who love them.*



Outdoor artworks abound in Albuquerque.



This sculpture at Albuquerque Sunport airport symbolizes friendship.

Where To Get Your ABQ Kicks

VISITOR INFORMATION

VisitAlbuquerque.org

THINGS TO DO

Old Town Plaza
Albuquerqueoldtown.com

Railyards Sundays
Railyardsmarket.org

Robinson Park Market
Downtowngrowers.org

Paseo del Bosque
bit.ly/bosquetrail

Elena Gallegos Park
bit.ly/elenagallegos

Route66ABQ.com

Nuclearmuseum.org

ABQartwalk.com

Balloonfiesta.com

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Vinaigretteonline.com



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Stars of Social Media

SUMMER SOCIAL MEDIA STARS – TWO DOGS AND A CAT LOVE EXCITING ADVENTURES

By Elise Phillips Margulis



Lil Man and Andrew Laske.

Benji The Bernedoodle's Life is Going Swimmingly

HE'S HAVING A GRAND TIME TRAVELING ON THE US WEST COAST AND IN BANFF, CANADA.

Andrew Laske picked up nine-week old Benji at the Memphis Airport in 2016, and they've been having fun together ever since. Andrew stated, "Benji is obsessed with lying in tummy deep water – the cooler the better – so his favorite destinations are places like high alpine lakes in the mountains." He added, "[Some of our favorite] destinations are the Eastern Sierras of California, North Cascades in Washington, and Banff in Alberta."

Some of Benji's social media pictures include 85-pound Benji in a long dog carrier on Andrew's back as Andrew rollerblades, riding in the sidecar of Andrew's bicycle or in a bike trailer, hiking on steep mountains, sprawled out sitting on Andrew in a boat, helping Andrew propose to his now fiancee Gina Rettig on the beach, riding shotgun in a convertible with Andrew to a ballot box to vote, at a vineyard, on beach chairs, on a hammock, on a swing, building a snowman, and posing in front of palm trees, water bodies, waterfalls, mountains, high fiving Andrew, and more. They are buddies who love doing everything together.

Andrew noted that he began posting photos of Benji on social media in 2018 because everyone told Andrew how special Benji was and recommended sharing their adventures. If you haven't seen a Bernadoodle before, you will fall in love. Benji is a shaggy, fluffy cutie pie who looks like a stuffed animal or a human in a dog suit.

They travel in a Mercedes Sprinter van that Andrew converted into a mobile home in 2021. When FIDO Friendly caught up with him, they were staying in Lake Tahoe, California. Andrew and Benji don't have a permanent residence because they travel full-time.

Andrew described his Bernadoodle, "Benji is a dramatic comedian and he's only gotten more funny, spoiled and carefree with age. You'd have to meet him to know what I'm talking about. He can be a real diva and he knows he's the one running the show!" He also said that Benji is his best friend.

Andrew shared that he is working toward obtaining his private pilot's license so he can bring Benji on scenic flights over the mountains." That's dedication to entertaining his pooch!

Andrew left his full time sales engineering position and focuses full time on monetizing content creation. He also launched a premium pet product company, featuring the "Whiffie Cushion," – the world's first patented high quality foam chin rest for car windows for dogs.



Lil man with "Whiffie Cushion," the world's first patented high quality foam chin rest for car windows for dogs.



Lil Man in backpack with Andrew Laske.

Facebook https://www.facebook.com/lilmanlife 265K
Instagram https://www.instagram.com/andrewlaske/ 26K followers

PHOTO CREDIT, GINA RETTIG



Mikey and one of his wolfdogs.



Courtney Udvar-Hazy Barminski with one of her Wolfdogs.



Gorgeous Pet Wolfdogs Love Vacationing in The Wilderness

'WANDER WITH WILLOW' SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ARE ABOUT TRAVELS WITH WOLFIES.

Courtney Udvar-Hazy Barminski got her first wolfdog, Willow, about ten years ago. She shared, "What began as a curiosity about these extraordinary animals quickly turned into a deep passion and eventually the center of my work and lifestyle." Courtney credits Willow for teaching her patience, humility, and respect for their instincts. She explained that you have to earn a wolfdog's trust. "Wander With Willow" premiered on social media in 2017.

Their posts feature gorgeous puppy pictures, their young human daughter dressed as Little Red Riding Hood with a wolfie, the wolfdogs in bed, and the breathtaking beasts in beautiful landscapes – remote beaches, mountains, forests, flowers, waterfalls, etc.). In some posts, the dogs are wearing happy birthday hats, fun bandanas, sunglasses, and outfits.

Courtney and her husband Mikey travel extensively with Willow's successors, Phoenix and Bane. "We like exploring remote landscapes, hiking and creating photography and film projects together. We mostly road trip the US and Canada but we also fly worldwide." Courtney noted that some of their favorite trips were in the American West and parts of Europe.

Courtney said that traveling with wolfdogs is an incredible experience that comes with responsibility. "These animals need space, mental stimulation, and environments that respect their instincts. When their needs are understood and honored, the bond you build with them and the places you explore together can be truly magical." She added, "They have a way of reconnecting you with nature in a very real, soulful, and grounding way."

She, Mikey and the wolfdogs adore exploring wild places and seeing animals. Courtney described the hybrid dogs, "Wolfdogs carry something incredibly special; they embody both the wildness of wolves and the companionship of dogs. They're deeply intelligent, emotional, and intuitive animals. I was fascinated by the idea of building a relationship with an animal that still carries such a strong connection to nature,"

According to Courtney, wolfdogs are usually half Siberian Husky, Alaskan Malamute, or German Shepherd. They are often social with other dogs. She mentioned, "Introductions and social dynamics need to be managed carefully because their instincts and communication can be more complex."

It's important to note that Courtney and Mikey have extensive experience with this breed. FIDO Friendly is not suggesting this breed is suitable for all lifestyles.

Facebook https://www.facebook.com/wanderwithwillow 111K
Instagram https://www.instagram.com/wander_with_willow/ 742K
TikTok https://www.tiktok.com/@wanderwithwillow 2.5M
YouTube https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=wander+with+willow 10.3K

PHOTO CREDIT, COURTNEY UDVAR-HAZY BARMINSKI

Ragdoll Cat Hikes, Bikes, Boats, Sledges, Snowboards, and Skis

SHE'S TRAVELED ACROSS SWITZERLAND AND TO ITALY, FRANCE, GERMANY, AND SPAIN.

Amanda Buehler lives part time in Lavaux, Switzerland, by Lake Geneva, and also resides in Spain (near Marbella). She got a beautiful, four month old Ragdoll kitten, Elle, six years ago and began posting pictures of Elle's adventures under "Lavaux Cat." Amanda spoke about the social media name. Elle lives in Lavaux, a UNESCO-listed wine region by Lake Geneva. Lavaux Cat is a play on words -- in French, it sounds like l'avocate ("the advocate"), as she represents and showcases the beauty of the region.

The social media photos are beautiful with Elle's elegant, long white fur and gorgeous blue eyes. She's jumping over lakes, meeting a boy kitty, befriending ducks and swans, frolicking in the snow, riding on sleds, exploring in the mountains, swimming, dipping a paw into the water while floating on a paddle boat, climbing trees, enjoying the views, in her basket, sometimes being carried in a bag, and fearlessly participating in many sports.

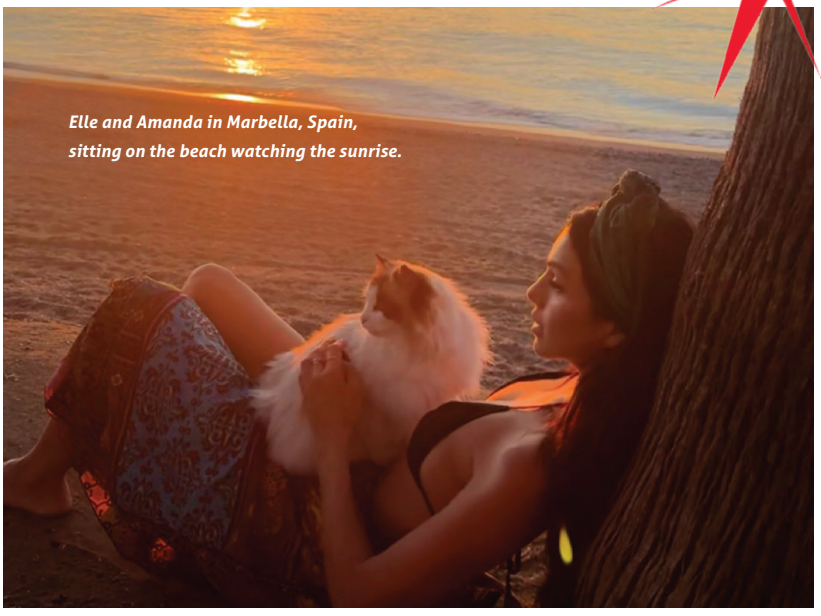
Elle and Amanda hike, bike, boat, sledge, snowboard, and ski. Amanda shared, "Elle also swims and even joins me for mushroom foraging. We go camping together in the summer time, and she happily accompanies me to watch morning sunrises at the beach and strolls across the Lavaux vineyards."

In fact, Elle has traveled extensively across Switzerland and has also visited Italy, France, Germany, and Spain.

Amanda said she began her social media posts just to show people how cute Elle was. "Over time, it evolved naturally into something bigger, and it also became a helpful space to experiment with content creation for my work." Amanda works in fashion marketing and runs her own creative agency. She noted that Elle's account has become a valuable creative and professional tool for testing and showcasing content strategies.

Amanda talked about how she trained Elle for the exciting outdoor life. "We started early and built confidence slowly. My best advice would be to start with a backpack before even trying the harness." Amanda explained that she began training Elle and bringing her everywhere when she was a kitten. Elle learned that accompanying Amanda meant being included in fun activities. Elle is very responsive to Amanda's commands, so she can wander a bit and be trusted to return.

facebook https://www.facebook.com/lavauxcat/ 195k followers
Instagram https://www.instagram.com/lavaux_cat/ 250K followers
TikTok https://www.tiktok.com/@lavaux_cat 691.4K followers



Elle and Amanda in Marbella, Spain, sitting on the beach watching the sunrise.



Amanda and Elle enjoying a very cold day out in Switzerland in December where it had just snowed and they wandered to the forest above Amanda's house.



Amanda cycling with Elle on her shoulder. Marbella, Spain,

PHOTO CREDIT, AMANDA BUEHLER

What You Need To Know About Dog Water Sports



Meet the O.G. SUP Pup Jack, he is the one who inspired Samantha to start SUP Pups. Sadly he passed away Feb. 2025, but his legacy lives on! Photo credit: Joe Obani of Flagship media.

From paddleboarding to dog surfing, more dogs are joining their pet parents with their natural attraction to water and boards.

By Claudia Bensimoun



Client Brittney and Balto from Arizona seeing the San Diego, CA downtown skyline for the first time on the water. Photo credit: Samantha Eastburn of SUP Pups.

"PADDLEBOARDING CREATES A REALLY UNIQUE SHARED EXPERIENCE. You're out in nature, unplugged, and working together as a team. For many people, their dogs are family, and this is a way to include them in an activity that's both calming and adventurous. It also builds trust and connection in a way that's hard to replicate elsewhere," says Samantha Eastburn of SUP Pups.

It's no secret that dogs love water, and what better way to stay cool this summer than with fun dog water sports?

Dog surfing began as a fun, local fundraising activity, with the first competition held in 2006 in Imperial Beach, California. Over time, it evolved into organized competitions across Southern California and became a recognized niche sport with judging criteria and events.

Whether you're introducing your pup to a paddleboard this summer or just want to catch a few small waves, understanding more about dog water sports conditioning, safety, and training can help ensure a positive experience.



A memorable moment with Patrick Iveson, Judy Fridono, and Ricochet at a Waves of Empowerment event, celebrating courage, connection, and the healing power of dogs. Photo credit Allison Shamrell.

We spoke with Samantha Eastburn of SUP Pups, Jennifer Volz, Executive Director of Puppy Prodigies and a longtime advocate for Ricochet's mission, and Dr. Matt Brunke, DVM, DACVSMR, CCRP, CVPP, CVA, a canine sports medicine and rehabilitation specialist, to learn more about dog water sports and how to keep our four-legged best friends safe on the water.

One of the most famous canine ambassadors for water sports was Ricochet, the Golden Retriever who captured hearts around the world as both a surfing dog and a therapy dog.

"The defining moment came in 2009 when Ricochet independently chose to jump on a surfboard with a quadriplegic boy. That spontaneous decision revealed her true purpose, not just surfing, but connecting with and helping people," says Volz.

When it comes to paddleboarding with your four-legged best friend, Samantha Eastburn of SUP Pups believes success starts with patience,



Kim and her Dogs Paddling with two big pups having the time of their lives! Photo credit: Samantha Eastburn of SUP Pups.

trust, and creating a positive experience from day one.

"What started as a fun experience with my own dog turned into a full business built around helping others create that same bond on the water, " says Samantha. She emphasizes going at your dog's pace and explains that not every dog will jump on a board right away. "It should be a positive, pressure-free experience. Start on land, let them get familiar with the board, and build confidence step by step. Also, choosing the right environment is key. Calm, flat water in a no-wake zone makes a huge difference for a first experience."

As for training your dog for paddleboarding, Samantha says that it's all about building trust and creating a positive association. "I start with desensitization on land, then move into shallow water where the dog can still feel secure. I use body positioning, clear communication, and positive reinforcement to guide them. Every dog learns differently, so I adjust based on their personality and comfort level. Over time, they learn where to sit or stand, how to move with the board, and how to stay balanced even with small shifts."

The most common beginner mistake Samantha mentions is rushing the process. "People often expect their dog to be ready immediately, which can create stress or fear. Another common issue is choosing the wrong conditions, like going out in choppy water too soon. Equipment also matters more than people think. The wrong board or lack of proper setup can make it much harder for both the person and the dog."

Paddleboarding and surfing can be exciting activities for dogs, proper preparation is essential. Safety starts long before a dog jumps off a dock or climbs onto a paddleboard. These water sports offer fun ways to stay active together, but safety and physical preparation should always come first.

Many people assume water sports are reserved for young, highly athletic dogs, Dr. Brunke says that isn't necessarily the case. "One of the most important concepts is that not every dog needs to be a competitive athlete to enjoy water sports safely," he explains.

"Some dogs love dock diving, some enjoy leisurely swimming, and others are happiest wading at the shoreline. The goal should always be matching the activity to the individual dog's physical abilities, temperament, and health status. When owners prioritize fitness, safety, and enjoyment over performance, dogs tend to stay active and healthy for many more years."

According to Dr.Brunke, canine athletes face many of the same injury risks as their human counterparts. "The most common injuries I see are soft tissue and musculoskeletal injuries, particularly involving the lower back, shoulders, wrists, ankles, and iliopsoas muscle."

Dr. Brunke says that high-impact activities such as dock diving can also aggravate underlying conditions, including arthritis, elbow dysplasia, and lumbosacral disease.

Rather than focusing solely on injury prevention, Dr. Brunke encourages owners to minimize risk through year-round fitness programs." The best ways to reduce risk include maintaining a lean body condition score (BCS), preserving ideal muscle condition score (MCS), participating in year-round conditioning, performing appropriate warm-ups before activity, and avoiding excessive repetition once a dog becomes fatigued. Well-conditioned dogs with strong muscles and healthy body composition are generally better equipped to tolerate the physical demands of water sports."

The key is matching the water activity to the individual dog. Although there are a few absolute reasons a dog cannot participate in water activities, certain medical conditions require additional consideration.

Significant heart disease, uncontrolled respiratory disease, severe neurologic disorders, poorly managed epilepsy, advanced arthritis, severe lumbosacral disease, and orthopedic instability may increase risk. Chronic ear disease can also be problematic for dogs that spend a great deal of time swimming.

Even so, Dr. Brunke emphasizes that many dogs with orthopedic conditions can still safely enjoy water activities when exercise is appropriately modified and closely monitored. In fact, swimming is often incorporated into rehabilitation and conditioning programs because it allows dogs to exercise with reduced impact on their joints.

For dogs training for surfing, dock diving, or paddleboarding, conditioning exercises can help build strength, endurance, and injury resilience. Dr. Brunke recommends controlled hill walking, cavaletti exercises, sit-to-stand transitions, backing exercises, balance work, and core strengthening as part of a structured fitness program.

He is also a strong advocate of underwater treadmill conditioning. "Unlike swimming, underwater treadmills allow dogs to remain weight-bearing while pushing through water resistance," explains Dr. Brunke.

"This creates a highly controlled environment where speed, water height, duration, and workload can be adjusted to the individual dog. "The resistance provided by the water recruits additional muscle groups while allowing the dog to move through a more normal gait pattern." Underwater treadmill exercise can safely build strength, stamina, endurance, and overall athletic fitness while al-

lowing careful progression and monitoring by trained rehabilitation professionals.

Before dogs begin participating in competitive water sports, Dr. Brunke recommends a thorough veterinary examination that evaluates orthopedic, neurologic, cardiovascular, and respiratory health.

"Many dogs have subtle underlying issues such as arthritis, shoulder instability, iliopsoas injuries, lumbosacral disease, or reduced cardiovascular fitness that may not be obvious during routine daily activities."

One of the most important responsibilities falls on the owner. "Many highly motivated sporting dogs will continue working long after they should have stopped," says Dr. Brunke. "It is often the owner's responsibility to recognize fatigue before the dog does."

Warning signs include excessive panting, slowing down, reluctance to continue, weakness, stumbling, or difficulty maintaining proper swimming form. During hot weather, Dr. Brunke also recommends monitoring body temperature, providing shaded rest areas, offering fresh drinking water, and scheduling regular recovery breaks.

For some dogs, water sports become much more than recreation. They become a way to inspire others, build confidence, and create meaningful connections. Few dogs embodied that spirit more than Ricochet, the legendary surfing dog whose story continues to inspire dog lovers around the world.

"Training is both physical and behavioral, and it starts very early. Dogs are introduced to boards on land or in controlled environments, like kiddie pools, to build stability and comfort. They progress from still water to small waves before attempting real surfing," explains Jennifer Volz, who continues to champion the organization's mission and honor the profound bond between the late Judy Fridono and her famous therapy dog, Ricochet.

"Dogs must learn to stay calm, follow cues, and not panic in moving water. Ricochet, for example, learned to adjust her stance and balance depending on who she was surfing with," says Volz. "Programs like Waves of Empowerment use surfing as a shared activity to reduce social anxiety, build confidence, and create connection in a non-judgmental environment. Firsthand impact includes improved emotional well-being, increased social interaction, and a sense of empowerment and accomplishment."



Surf Dog Ricochet became internationally famous as the world's first certified therapy dog specializing in adaptive surfing. Photo credit Allison Shamrell.

"Finally, all water and sport training should be based on positive reinforcement and should be fun for the dog," adds Dr. Brunke.

"The best canine athletes are dogs that genuinely enjoy what they are doing. Building confidence, rewarding success, and ensuring that training remains a positive experience helps create safer, happier, and more successful canine partners."

SURF DOG RICOCHET

Surf Dog Ricochet was a legendary Golden Retriever therapy dog based in San Diego, California. Guided by her owner and trainer, Judy Fridono, Ricochet became internationally famous as the world's first certified therapy dog specializing in adaptive surfing. More than a champion surfing dog, Ricochet became known for surfing with purpose and helping transform lives through the healing power of the ocean.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Accidental Surfer: Although originally trained as a service dog, Ricochet's future changed in 2008 when she jumped onto the surfboard of 14-year-old Patrick Ivison, a surfer with a spinal cord injury. That moment made her the first canine assisted surf therapy and adaptive surfing dog. Her love of surfing began even earlier when she balanced on a boogie board at just eight weeks old.

Therapy & Healing: Known as the world's only SURFice Dog®, Ricochet surfed with hundreds of children with special needs, people with disabilities, wounded warriors, and veterans living with PTSD. She also surfed with professional surfers, celebrities, other dogs, and even a goat named Pismo. Through canine assisted surf therapy, she helped build confidence, independence, and emotional resilience.

Philanthropy & Legacy: Through her surfing, therapy work, and advocacy, Ricochet and Judy raised more than $1 million for over 250 human and animal causes. Ricochet passed away in April 2023 at age 15 after battling liver cancer. Judy Fridono passed away later that year. Their extraordinary partnership continues to inspire adaptive surfing programs, therapy dog teams, and communities around the world.

Home Is Where the Paws Are

Why Hyatt Regency Newport Beach is the perfect home base for exploring coastal California with your dog.

By Susan Sims



Shopping at Lido Marina Village is made better with your furry companions. Photo credit Redwood West.

I grew up in Orange County, raised my family here, and spent countless days exploring the beaches, harbors, and coastal communities that make this corner of Southern California so special. Newport Beach wasn't simply a destination; it was part of everyday life. Although I no longer call Orange County home, every opportunity to return feels like a homecoming. So when Hyatt Regency Newport Beach invited me to experience the resort and share it with FIDO Friendly® readers, I happily accepted. There are few places I enjoy revisiting more than the community that shaped so many of my favorite memories, and I was eager to discover how one of Newport Beach's premier resorts welcomes today's travelers and their four-legged companions.

Some hotels welcome pets. Others welcome families, including the four-legged members.

After more than 25 years exploring pet-friendly destinations for **FIDO Friendly®**, I've learned that the best hotels offer more than a place to stay. They become part of the destination itself.

From the moment I arrived at Hyatt Regency Newport Beach, it was clear this coastal resort understands the difference. Dogs aren't simply accommodated; they're genuinely welcomed, beginning with a complimentary plush dog bed waiting in the room and continuing with beautifully landscaped walking paths that invite leisurely morning strolls beneath swaying palms.

Nestled on 26 acres overlooking Newport Back Bay, Hyatt Regency Newport Beach combines relaxed coastal luxury with one of its greatest assets: location. True to the Hyatt Regency brand, the resort feels connected to the surrounding community, encouraging guests to experience Newport Beach rather than simply stay nearby. Nearly every major attraction is only minutes away, making it easy to spend less time driving and more time enjoying the coast.

START THE DAY SLOWLY

The best way to experience Newport Beach is to ease into the day. Before heading into town, take a quiet stroll through the resort's lush grounds where palm trees sway overhead and ocean breezes drift inland from nearby Newport Harbor.

Breakfast at **Newport Lounge**, conveniently located inside the hotel, provides the perfect start. Fresh coffee, espresso drinks, pastries, breakfast sandwiches, smoothies, and fruit are available, and the outdoor patio welcomes dogs, allowing everyone to begin the morning together.

Fueled and ready to explore, Newport Beach is just beyond the resort.

MORNING: FASHION ISLAND

A short drive brings you to **Fashion Island**, Newport Beach's premier open-air shopping destination. More than 150 boutiques, restaurants, fountains, and beautifully landscaped promenades create an atmosphere that's as enjoyable for strolling as it is for shopping.

Leashed dogs are warmly welcomed throughout the property, and many retailers happily provide water bowls and treats for visiting pups. Even if shopping isn't your priority, the relaxed outdoor setting and panoramic coastal views make Fashion Island worth exploring.

The combination of luxury retailers, inviting public spaces, and dog-friendly hospitality perfectly captures Newport Beach's laid-back sophistication.

MIDDAY: BALBOA ISLAND

By late morning, slow the pace with a visit to **Balboa Island**, one of Orange County's most beloved waterfront communities.

The nearly three-mile walking path circles the island past charming cottages, boutiques, cafés, and magnificent waterfront homes overlooking Newport Harbor. Sailboats, paddleboarders, and kayakers glide across calm waters, creating postcard-worthy views around every bend.

No visit is complete without stopping for one of Balboa Island's famous frozen bananas or a hand-dipped Balboa Bar, sweet traditions that have delighted visitors for generations.

By early afternoon, you've already experienced two distinctly different sides of Newport Beach, yet the day is only half over.

As afternoon settles over Newport Beach, the pace shifts from bustling shopping districts to tranquil waterfront neighborhoods that showcase the city's relaxed coastal lifestyle.

Just minutes from Hyatt Regency Newport Beach, **Lido Isle** and neighboring **Lido Marina Village** offer an entirely different experience. While Lido Isle is a private residential community known for its picturesque homes and flower-filled streets, Lido Marina Village welcomes visitors with upscale boutiques, waterfront restaurants, cafés, and beautifully designed public spaces overlooking Newport Harbor.

The marina's wide promenades are perfect for strolling with your dog while admiring sleek yachts and sailboats gently rocking in their slips. Stop for a coffee, browse locally owned shops, or simply relax on a waterfront bench and watch harbor life unfold. The atmosphere is sophisticated without ever feeling pretentious, making it one of Newport Beach's most enjoyable destinations for a leisurely afternoon.

For travelers eager to spend more time outdoors, Newport Beach offers plenty of opportunities to embrace the California sunshine.

Just minutes away will find you at **Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort & Marina**, where calm bay waters provide the perfect setting for kayaking, paddleboarding, or simply unwinding along the shoreline. Walking paths trace the marina, offering beautiful harbor views and plenty of space for a leisurely walk with your canine companion.

Nature lovers should also carve out time for **Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve**, affectionately known as "The Back Bay." One of Southern California's largest coastal wetlands, this protected reserve features miles of scenic trails winding through native habitat that's home to hundreds of bird species and other wildlife.

Leashed dogs are welcome on designated trails, making it an ideal destination for travelers who enjoy combining nature with their coastal getaway. The preserve's peaceful setting offers



No visit is complete without stopping for one of Balboa Island's famous frozen bananas or a hand-dipped Balboa Bar, sweet traditions that have delighted visitors for generations. Photo credit Bigstock.



Beautiful courtyard fountain at the Hyatt Regency Newport Beach. Photo credit Hyatt Regency Newport Beach.

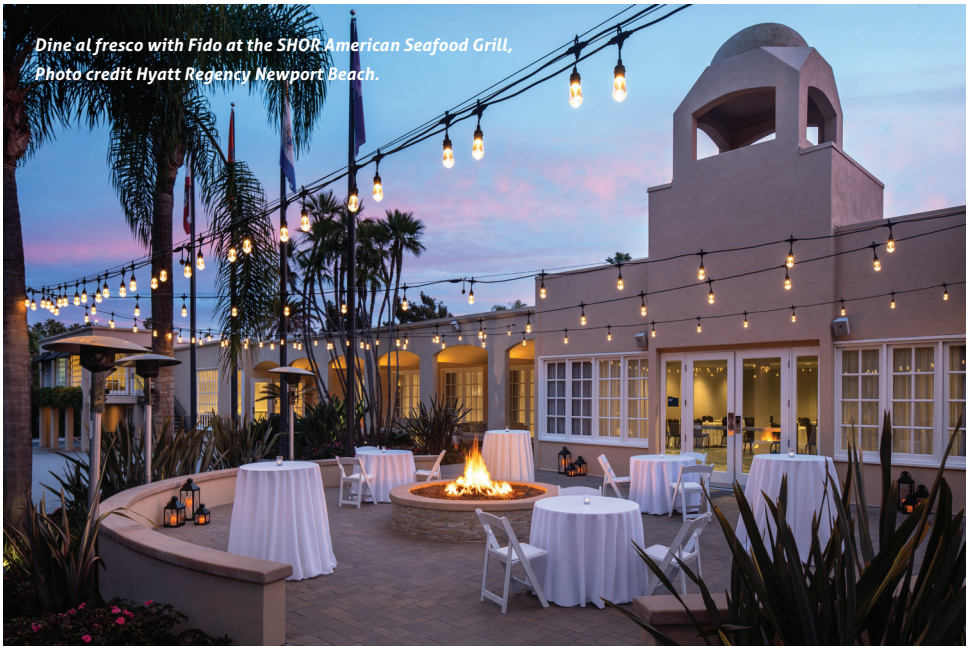
a welcome contrast to Newport Beach's lively shopping and dining districts, reminding visitors that some of Orange County's greatest treasures are found in its open spaces.

By late afternoon, returning to Hyatt Regency Newport Beach feels like slipping into vacation mode all over again.

Whether relaxing beside one of the resort's three pools, gathering around a fire pit, or unwinding on your private patio, the property invites guests to slow down and savor the easy rhythm of Southern California.

As evening approaches, there's no need to leave your four-legged companion behind.

SHOR American Seafood Grill, the resort's signature restaurant, welcomes dogs on its spacious outdoor patio, making it easy for everyone to dine together. While guests enjoy fresh California-inspired cuisine and locally sourced seafood, canine companions are treated to a menu created especially for them. It's one more example of how Hyatt Regency Newport Beach goes beyond simply being pet friendly to creating an experience where dogs are genuinely part of the vacation.



Dine al fresco with Fido at the SHOR American Seafood Grill, Photo credit Hyatt Regency Newport Beach.

As daylight fades and the palms sway in the evening breeze, dinner at SHOR provides the perfect ending to a day spent discovering why Newport Beach remains one of California's most treasured coastal destinations.

After a full day exploring beaches, boutiques, waterfront promenades, and nature trails, it's easy to appreciate why Hyatt Regency Newport Beach feels less like a hotel and more like a welcoming home base for every adventure.

As every seasoned traveler knows, where you stay often defines the entire vacation. Hyatt Regency Newport Beach succeeds not only because of its comfortable accommodations and thoughtful amenities, but because it places guests in the heart of everything that makes Newport Beach such an unforgettable destination.

Whether your itinerary includes shopping at Fashion Island, wandering Balboa Island, browsing the boutiques of Lido Marina Village, paddling the calm waters of Newport Dunes, or ex-

ploring the scenic trails of Upper Newport Bay, every adventure begins just minutes from the resort. Instead of spending valuable vacation time navigating traffic, guests can focus on enjoying the very best of coastal Orange County.

That convenience is especially meaningful when traveling with a dog.

Newport Beach embraces an outdoor lifestyle where four-legged companions are welcome on waterfront promenades, open-air shopping districts, restaurant patios, and scenic walking trails. Hyatt Regency Newport Beach reflects that same philosophy, creating an environment where pets aren't simply permitted, they're genuinely welcomed.

The difference is evident throughout the resort. It starts with the plush dog bed waiting in your room and continues with beautifully maintained walking paths, inviting outdoor gathering spaces, and a staff that greets canine guests as warmly as their owners. Those thoughtful touches transform a hotel stay into an experience that feels relaxed, effortless, and distinctly Southern California.

Luxury here never feels formal. Instead, it encourages guests to slow down, linger over breakfast, spend an extra hour beside the pool, or gather around the fire pits as the sun slips below the horizon. It's the kind of place that invites you to settle into the rhythm of Newport Beach rather than simply check another destination off your travel list.

For me, returning to Newport Beach is always a little nostalgic. Familiar streets, harbor views, and favorite landmarks bring back memories of the years I spent calling Orange County home. Experiencing them again while discovering Hyatt Regency Newport Beach reminded me why this community continues to hold such a special place in my heart.

Some destinations change with time.

Newport Beach has certainly evolved, yet it has never lost the easygoing coastal charm that made me fall in love with it years ago. Hyatt Regency Newport Beach captures that spirit beautifully by blending genuine hospitality with an ideal location that encourages guests to explore everything the area has to offer.

Whether you're planning your first visit or returning to rediscover an old favorite, you'll find a resort that welcomes every member of the family and makes it remarkably easy to experience Southern California together.

Sometimes the best journeys aren't about discovering somewhere new.

Sometimes they're about coming home.

DINING TOGETHER AT SHOR

One of the highlights of staying at Hyatt Regency Newport Beach is **SHOR American Seafood Grill**, where dogs are welcome on the spacious outdoor patio.

The restaurant goes beyond the expected with a dedicated **Dog Menu** featuring grilled chicken breast, grilled salmon, hamburger patties, brown rice, and steamed seasonal vegetables. While canine companions enjoy a freshly prepared meal, guests can savor California-inspired cuisine, locally sourced seafood, handcrafted cocktails, and garden views in a relaxed outdoor setting.

Whether you're fueling up before a day of exploring or unwinding after an afternoon on the coast, SHOR makes it easy for everyone to dine together.



My Meal of King Salmon and Ikura was beyond perfect. I am picky when it comes to salmon and chef had it cooked to perfection with just the right amount of glazing on top. Served with sautéed Tuscan kale, onion, mushroom, red pepper coulis, mango crème, spiced candied macadamia and mico green. Pair it with a chilled glass of Pinot Noir.

If You Go

Hyatt Regency Newport Beach
1107 Jamboree Road
Newport Beach, CA 92660

Reservations: (949) 729-1234
Website: Hyatt Regency Newport Beach
https://www.hyatt.com/hyatt-regency/en-US/newpo-hyatt-regency-newport-beach

Pet Policy: Up to two dogs are welcome per guest room with advance notice. Individual dogs may weigh up to 50 pounds, or two dogs may have a combined weight of 75 pounds.

Pet Fee: $150 for stays of one to six nights. For stays of seven to 30 nights, an additional $150 deep-cleaning fee applies. Service animals are exempt.

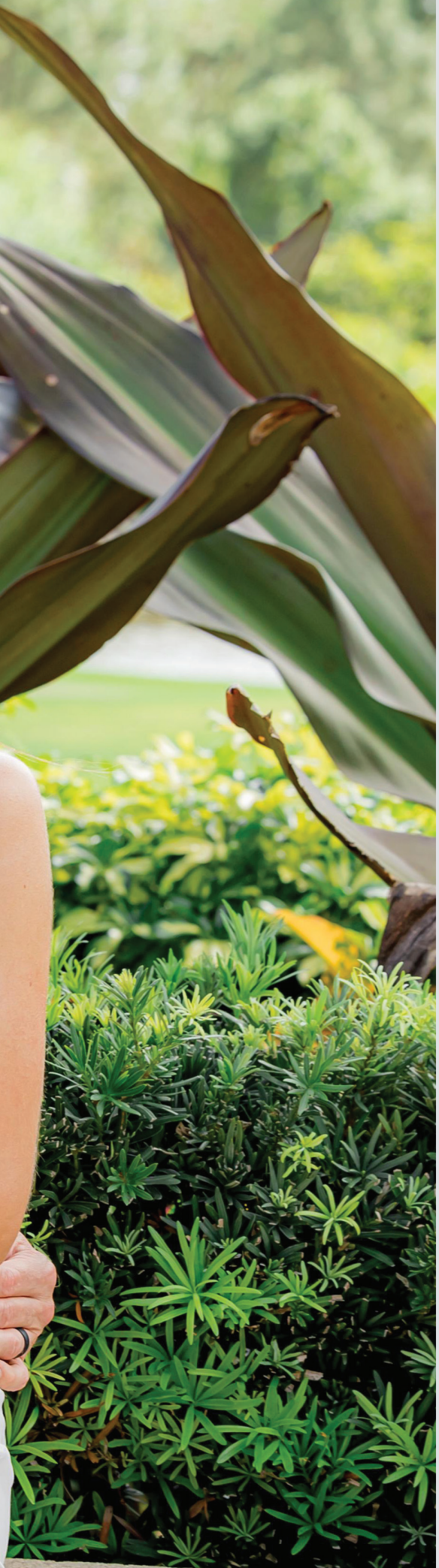


PHOTO CREDIT SUSAN SIMS

FIDO Friendly® Tip: Begin your morning with breakfast at the hotel, spend the day exploring Fashion Island, Balboa Island, Lido Marina Village, Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort & Marina, and Upper Newport Bay, then return to the resort for dinner beneath the palms at **SHOR American Seafood Grill**, where dogs are welcome on the spacious outdoor patio. Hyatt Regency Newport Beach makes it easy to enjoy the very best of Newport Beach without ever leaving your best friend behind.



Brandon McMillan, wife Jessica and son Parrish. Photo provided by Brandon McMillan.



A New Chapter with Brandon McMillan

Television Host, Animal Trainer, Husband, Father and Once Again, the Voice Behind Get Your Licks on Route 66®.

By Susan Sims

I first met **Brandon McMillan** in 2015 when he graciously agreed to serve as spokesperson for our **Get Your Licks on Route 66®** cross-country pet adoption tour. Over the next three years, Brandon lent not only his celebrity status but his passion for animal rescue to our mission. He even joined us in Los Angeles to film our pet adoption event, and each year our tour was featured on **CBS's Lucky Dog**, bringing national attention to the importance of pet adoption.

Now, nearly a decade later, I'm delighted to welcome Brandon back as spokesperson for our **18th Annual Get Your Licks on Route 66® Pet Adoption Tour**. While so much has changed in his life since those early days, one thing remains constant: his unwavering commitment to helping shelter pets find loving homes.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Brandon to catch up on life after *Lucky Dog*, his growing family, exciting new television projects, and why animal adoption continues to be one of the most important causes in his life.

Although many fans still associate Brandon with the Emmy Award-winning *Lucky Dog*, his career has expanded in exciting new directions. Today, he hosts not one, but two successful series: **Lucky Dog Reunions** and **Lucky Dog Down Under**.

One of the projects closest to his heart is **Lucky Dog Reunions**, a show that gives viewers something they've long hoped to see: what happened after the cameras stopped rolling.

"It's a reunion show where I revisit the dogs that I found homes for," Brandon explained. "Some of these dogs I haven't seen in over 10 years. Many of them were puppies when I rescued them and now they're seniors. It's extremely emotional because I'm hearing about their entire lives they've lived."

For Brandon, each reunion is a reminder that the work never ended with a successful adoption. The true reward is seeing those once-forgotten shelter dogs grow into beloved family members who have spent years changing the lives of the people who adopted them.

His newest adventure takes viewers halfway around the world with **Lucky Dog Down Under**, filmed in Australia.

"It's basically *Lucky Dog* with Australian accents," he laughed. "The series follows a rescue group using the classic *Lucky Dog* model."

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST TRANSFORMATION IN BRANDON'S LIFE, HOWEVER, HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TELEVISION.



Brandon and Tex. Photo provided by Brandon McMillan.



While the scenery may have changed, the mission remains familiar: rescuing deserving dogs, providing training, and matching them with families whose lives are forever transformed by adoption.

When asked whether one reunion stood above the rest, Brandon admitted choosing a favorite is nearly impossible.

"I can't pick a single one," he said. "But the service dogs always get me because those dogs are truly helping the ones who can't always help themselves."

His passion for service dogs runs especially deep because they changed the course of his own life.

"They're actually the dogs who made me quit my career as a movie animal trainer," he recalled. "Once I dipped my toe into the service dog world, I was so captivated that I called my old boss up and told him I quit that day. The rest is history."

That decision would eventually lead to the career millions of viewers know today.

Of course, Brandon's adventures aren't limited to dogs.

Many fans know he's also become a familiar face during **Shark Week**, where he's encountered some of the ocean's most formidable predators. His most unforgettable experience sounds like something straight out of an action film.

"I was in northern California when an 18-foot, 5,000-pound great white shark grabbed my cage and thrashed it like a rag doll," he said. "I barely made it out of that one."

Thankfully, Brandon lived to tell the tale and is already preparing for another expedition later this year.

His personal life has evolved just as dramatically as his professional one.

After relocating to Florida, Brandon expanded his dog training business to meet growing demand from clients across the East Coast.

"My California training location has done so well that people from all over the country are calling to get their dogs trained," he explained. "People on the East Coast weren't going to travel that far, so I opened an East Coast location and solved that problem."

The move also came with an unexpected bonus.

"My new location is right by one of the prettiest stretches of beach in the country."

Despite opening a second training facility, Brandon continues traveling back to California every few months to oversee operations there. His expertise is now sought worldwide.

"When I get a call from clients in Europe, I always tell them there are great trainers there," he said. "But they insist on flying me over to train their animals. Of course, I don't say no."

Brandon has also expanded into product development with a new line of practical training tools designed to solve some of the most common behavioral challenges pet owners face.

Among his newest products is the **Lure Stick**, an extendable training wand that helps make training both dogs and cats more efficient. The **Shake & Break** uses sound to interrupt unwanted behaviors before they escalate, while the **Pull-Stopper Pro**, currently his bestselling product, is an anti-pull harness designed to make walks more enjoyable for both dogs and their people.

Professionally, Brandon continues looking ahead, although he admits he isn't quite ready to reveal everything he's working on.

"I'm developing a couple of new projects," he smiled. "Until everything is finalized, I keep it under wraps."

Perhaps the biggest transformation in Brandon's life, however, has nothing to do with television.

Marriage to his wife, Jessica, and becoming father to their son, Parrish, has changed his perspective in ways he never anticipated.

"Having a family is the greatest thing that ever happened to me," Brandon shared. "I didn't realize how self-centered I was until I had a family of my own. Suddenly all those nights of going out whenever I wanted became thinking about what we want to do as a family this weekend. What adventures will we plan next? I wouldn't change it for the world."

His priorities may have shifted, but his dedication to animal welfare remains as strong as ever.

As Brandon once again joins us as spokesperson for the **18th Annual Get Your Licks on Route 66® Pet Adoption Tour**, his message is as heartfelt today as it was when we first met in 2015.

"Adoption is important because millions of pets every year are euthanized in this country because they can't find homes," he said. "That's an epidemic happening right before our very eyes. We have the power to do something about it. That's a freedom most people don't have."

Those words perfectly capture why Brandon has continued to support our mission for a fourth time.

For nearly two decades, **Get Your Licks on Route 66®** has traveled thousands of miles each September, bringing communities together, raising funds for local shelters, and helping thousands of pets find forever homes. Brandon McMillan has been an important part of that journey, lending not only his name but his genuine passion for giving homeless animals the second chance they deserve.

As we prepare to hit the open road once again this September, we're honored to have Brandon beside us, reminding all of us that every adoption changes two lives: the pet's and the person lucky enough to welcome them home. Together, we hope to inspire even more families to visit their local shelters, choose adoption, and discover that their next best friend may be waiting just behind a kennel door.

Saving Lives on the Open Road

Get Your Licks on Route 66® Returns for Its 18th Year, Proving One Road Trip Really Can Change Thousands of Lives

By Susan Sims

EVERY SEPTEMBER, WHILE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE WINDING DOWN SUMMER VACATIONS, MY HUSBAND GREG AND I ARE JUST GETTING STARTED.

Our destination isn't a luxury resort or a famous landmark. It's the next animal shelter. Then the one after that. And the one after that.

For six weeks, we travel more than 6,000 miles along America's most iconic highway, carrying a giant spinning prize wheel, a vehicle filled with sponsor-donated products, and one simple mission: help homeless pets find the loving families they deserve.

This September marks the **18th Annual Get Your Licks on Route 66® Pet Adoption Tour**, a journey that has grown from a dream into one of the country's longest-running traveling pet adoption events. Along the way, we've witnessed incredible stories of hope, resilience, and love that remind us why every mile is worth it.

When Greg and I launched the tour nearly two decades ago through **FIDO Friendly®**, we knew shelters across America were filled with wonderful animals waiting for someone to see beyond the kennel door. We wanted to shine a spotlight on those deserving pets while giving local shelters an opportunity to connect with their communities in a fun and meaningful way.

What began as a single idea has become a lifesaving tradition.

Today, more than **21,000 dogs and cats** have found forever homes through adoption events held during the first 17 years of the tour. Every adoption represents far more than a statistic. It›s a family made whole, a lonely heart finding companionship, and a shelter pet finally receiving the second chance they never stopped hoping for.

The tour officially begins on **September 5** at the **Los Angeles City East Valley Animal Shelter**, where families, volunteers, and animal lovers gather to celebrate adoption while supporting one of their community's most important resources.

One attraction has become a signature part of every stop: our oversized **Get Your Licks on Route 66® Spinning Wheel**.

It's impossible to miss.

Colorful, energetic, and surrounded by smiling faces, the spinning wheel has become the heartbeat of each event. Visitors make a donation for the opportunity to spin and win sponsor-donated prizes ranging from pet products to travel accessories. Every spin creates excitement, but the greatest prize isn't what's won on the wheel.

It's knowing that **100 percent of every dollar raised stays with that day's shelter** to help care for homeless animals waiting for their forever families.

Throughout the day, children cheer as the wheel spins, adopters celebrate new beginnings, volunteers share stories, and shelter staff introduce visitors to dogs and cats hoping today will finally be their day.

We've learned that something magical happens when people gather around a common purpose.
Communities come together.
Conversations begin.
Barriers disappear.
And pets find homes.

As the tour leaves Southern California, the adventure continues east through the breathtaking red rock landscapes of **Sedona, Arizona**, across the historic Mother Road, and onward through the heartland before reaching **Nebraska**. Every stop introduces us to remarkable shelters, passionate volunteers, and countless individuals who dedicate their lives to helping animals in need.

While each community is unique, one thing remains beautifully consistent.

Love has no zip code.

We've celebrated joyful adoptions that brought tears to everyone's eyes. We've watched senior dogs finally leave shelters after years of waiting. We've seen children meet the puppy they'll grow up with and veterans discover companions who would forever change their lives.

These are the moments that fuel another early morning departure, another long highway drive, and another shelter waiting just over the horizon.

People often ask what keeps us going after 18 years.

"GET YOUR LICKS ON ROUTE 66® IS MORE THAN A ROAD TRIP. IT'S A SIX-WEEK JOURNEY FUELED BY HOPE, COMPASSION, AND THE BELIEF THAT EVERY SHELTER PET DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE."

The answer is simple.

Every shelter has another dog waiting.

Another cat hoping.

Another family searching.

As long as those stories remain unfinished, there's another reason to hit the road.

Of course, this journey wouldn't be possible without the incredible companies that believe in our mission. Generous sponsors donate thousands of dollars in pet products that fill our spinning wheel, helping us raise even more money for local shelters while introducing adopters to products they'll enjoy with their new companions.

Every donated leash, toy, treat, travel accessory, and grooming product becomes part of something much larger than itself. Together, these gifts create opportunities for shelters to raise much-needed funds while making each adoption event a memorable community celebration.

Our sponsors aren't simply supporting an event.

They're helping save lives.

As we prepare for another September on the open road, we carry with us the memories of every family we've met, every volunteer who inspired us, every shelter that welcomed us, and every wagging tail that reminded us why this journey matters.

More than anything, we carry hope.

Hope that another shelter dog will find a couch to call their own.

Hope that another kitten will curl up in a loving lap.

Hope that another family will discover that their best friend has been waiting for them all along.

For Greg and me, **Get Your Licks on Route 66®** has never been about the miles we›ve driven.

It's about the lives forever changed because we did.

If you're looking for a meaningful way to make a difference this September, we invite you to join us at one of our shelter stops. Whether you spin the wheel, make a donation, volunteer, adopt, or simply share our mission with others, you'll become part of a journey that proves compassion still has the power to change the world, one paw at a time.

Visit **www.fidofriendly.com** and click on the **Get Your Licks on Route 66®** badge to view the complete tour schedule, participating shelters, and the latest updates.

Together, we can continue turning miles into miracles.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 SPONSORS

Visit www.fidofriendly.com for the latest 2026 shelter schedule, tour updates, and sponsor announcements.

Presenting Sponsor ZYMOX®

- Media Sponsor Animal Radio
- Cat Food Sponsor Catit®
- Community Sponsor Tito's Vodka for Dog People
- Grooming Sponsor HandsOn Gloves
- Kampground Sponsor KOA
- Car Wrap Sponsor Signs 2U

SPINNING WHEEL SPONSORS

- Bike Tow Leash
- Buddy Belts
- Charlee Bear
- Suzie's CBD Treats

2026 Exciting Partnership Announcement

Welcoming a New Partner with a Shared Heart.



One of the greatest joys of this journey has always been meeting people and organizations who care about animals as deeply as we do. Every year, we're reminded that helping pets find loving homes isn't something any one person or company can accomplish alone. It takes a community.

That's why Greg and I are especially excited to welcome Tranquil Tails® as our Official Campaign Partner for this year's FIDO Friendly® Get Your Licks on Route 66® tour.

When we first met John and Lisa Bryson, it didn't take long to realize we shared the same philosophy. While Tranquil Tails® is known for developing innovative products that help pets feel calmer and more comfortable, what impressed us most was their genuine commitment to improving the lives of pets and the families who love them.

That commitment extends well beyond products. Together, we'll be working to shine an even brighter spotlight on animal shelters, promote pet adoption, encourage responsible pet ownership, and celebrate the incredible people who devote their lives to giving homeless animals a second chance.

Throughout this year's journey, Tranquil Tails® will help us share stories from the road, support community outreach, support shelter events, and encourage pet lovers to become part of our mission. We believe this partnership will help us reach even more families while reminding people that every adoption changes two lives—the pet's and the persons.

As we've often said, every mile we travel represents hope for another shelter waiting to be discovered and another pet waiting to be loved. We're grateful that John, Lisa, and the entire Tranquil Tails® family have chosen to partner with us.

Together, we're proving that when organizations unite around a common purpose, we can create something far greater than any of us could accomplish alone. And that's something worth celebrating.

Nighttime Nuzzles in Costa Rica

There is nothing more rewarding than gaining the love of a dog.

Jane Thomas



Mochi watches goings on from the safety of the garden

WE WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO LAND IN SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA, a few days before the city shut down for Easter. That is, I forgot to check – again – when the moveable feast would be occurring. Accommodation prices throughout the region baffled me until I realized my error, and it was with a degree of desperation I leapt onto the housesitting website at two in the morning and happened to bump into a fresh new listing. Two dogs for ten days in San Jose? I rattled off a bleary-eyed application and had confirmation less than 24 hours later.

As it happened, we hit the jackpot. We ended up in a large house in what I'd say was an affluent suburb, looking after Denver and Mochi. Both were shy rescues, with Mochi having been pulled from the streets of South Korea some years earlier but never quite recovering from whatever had happened to her before.

At first, Mochi stayed in the garden, looking in at us. She would come to the door when it was dinner time, waiting until we'd tiptoed away before she would approach the bowl. But at night, we were transformed into a safe space and she would appear at the bedroom door, standing silently until we noticed her, then pad over to the bed and settle down. The bed was, fortunately, very low to the ground, so as the night progressed and Denver and Mochi stretched their paws more and more, Grant found himself balanced half on the bed, half on the floor.

The day after we arrived, San Jose emptied itself. Everyone disappeared to the coast. We would walk the dogs in the early morning, before the heat of the day arrived, silent streets waiting to be sniffed by two eager, elderly noses that were happy to sleep for hours to recover from their brief outing.

Grant and I walked into the city to watch the Easter processions, everyone loving that two foreigners had turned up to see the spectacle. Apart from those lining the routes with palm trees, the city was empty. It was a remarkably calm introduction to what is otherwise a country of color and chaos. We sipped coconuts in the shade, watched as even the donkey was allowed to enter the cathedral, and dedicated a chunk of each day to figuring out where on the earth the bus station was that we needed to get up to Nicaragua. Trust me, it's an impressively complicated maze.

Because we were 'at home' so much, quietly getting on with work or disappearing into books we'd long meant to read, the dogs got used to us more quickly than they might otherwise have done. By the third day, Mochi was venturing into the living room; by the fourth, she would even join us on the couch. Denver never went out of arm's reach, always available for ear tickles.

So when the homeowners returned at one in the morning, we were in the awkward position of them standing around our bed saying hello to two dogs who were so snuggled in they refused to leave. As chance would have it, we bumped into one of the owners two months later and she said they still laugh about this: two little noses looking up, tails thumping politely, but the general expression of, 'yup, nice to have you back, but we're good here, thanks' being firmly conveyed.

I'm not sure we'd go rushing back to San Jose, and apart from an amazing fruit and vegetable market nearby there wasn't anything of particular note beyond the house that we stayed in. But there is something immensely satisfying about staying with a dog as scared and scarred as Mochi and earning their trust and love by just being there and offering a quiet, safe space for them. Those two gentle older girls made what might have been a dull stay really rather magical, proof that even the most damaged dogs deserve a second chance.

JANE THOMAS *is a freelance writer, constantly moving around the world thanks both to housesitting assignments and an insatiable desire to see beautiful places. She loves writing about cycle touring, eighteenth century women poets, and unusual people and places. Jane is usually accompanied by at least one dog. booksandbicycles.com*



Mochi and Denver out on their morning walk through empty streets

Homes for two million paws

Mochi is from South Korea, a country with a long and complicated history when it comes to dogs. Mythical fire dogs, bulgae, once raced through the skies eating the sun and moon; now, the breed Sapsal, 'ghost chasing dogs', considered to be a likeness for these mythical beings, have received protected status and are a national monument.

In 2024, animal rights groups finally succeeded in getting the South Korea dog-meat trade banned; from 2027, nobody will be allowed to sell dogs for food. But there was no plan in place for the half a million dogs currently in captivity; it's causing a major crisis for hundreds of farmers who face fines and jail if the dogs are not adopted before the deadline.

As a consequence, many rescues in the States are importing dogs from South Korea. These dogs have had horrendous lives up until now – but as Mochi proved, even the most broken soul has space for love.



Grant and Denver, snuggle time on the couch



Holy Thursday procession through the streets of San Jose

These hotels make traveling together easier and more enjoyable.

Summer adventures with your dog can take you anywhere—from tropical island escapes and scenic wine country to bustling city streets and classic seaside towns. With Fido-friendly hotel packages adding thoughtful amenities and special perks, every getaway becomes more relaxing and rewarding. Wherever the season leads, these welcoming destinations make it easy to create unforgettable memories together.

Paris Permenter and John Bigley



Tropical breezes, turquoise waters and Caribbean hospitality make Park Hyatt St. Kitts a dream destination.

PHOTO CREDIT: ST. KITTS TOURISM AUTHORITY

WHETHER YOUR SUMMER PLANS INCLUDE RELAXING BY THE BEACH, exploring scenic mountain trails, or discovering vibrant city destinations, this season's getaways tempt you to make memories you'll always remember. From complimentary treats and cozy pet beds to dog-friendly dining and curated local experiences, these hotels make traveling together easier and more enjoyable.

NEW YORK CITY ADVENTURES START HERE

Set in a 1903 Beaux-Arts landmark, New York City's recently renovated Hotel Seville NoMad has unveiled its Pawcation Offer for dogs up to 50 pounds. Available through 2027, the package includes special amenities such as treats, a water bowl and a plush FUZI Pets luxury dog bed to welcome your dog after a day of city sightseeing. Human guests are treated to coffee and pastries for two from Bourke Street Bakery plus a leisurely 1 p.m. late checkout. Nestled in the heart of NoMad, (short for **North of Madison Square Park**), this stylish Manhattan neighborhood tucked between Midtown and the Flatiron District is known for its historic buildings. This unique boutique property is just a dog walk away from Madison Square Park (with its own dog run). *Hotel Seville NoMad, 22 E. 29th St., New York, NY 10016, (212) 532-4100; www.hyatt.com/unbound-collection/en-US/nycud-hotel-seville-nomad.*

UNCORK A FIDO-FRIENDLY NAPA GETAWAY

Luxury meets wellness at Napa Valley's Bardessono Hotel and Spa thanks to its popular Cabernet Canine Package. Dog guests are pampered with welcome gifts, gourmet treats, dog-friendly dining from Lucy Restaurant and Bar's Barkessono menu and more. Guests can also enjoy Yappy Hour on Lucy's patio, where dogs receive special menu items while their humans sip and savor Napa Valley flavors. After a day of wine country adventures, book the new Paws and Reflect spa experience; HigherDOSE PEMF Dog Beds combine pulsed electromagnetic field therapy with soothing infrared heat, designed to help dogs relax, recover and recharge—all accompanied *by a Bardessono doggie spa robe and cbd dog chews. Bardessono Hotel & Spa, 6526 Yount St., Yountville, CA 94599, (707) 204-6000; www.bardessono.com.*

PALM TREES, OCEAN VIEWS AND WAGGING TAILS

Travelers dreaming of a Caribbean escape are welcome at the Park Hyatt St. Kitts Christophe Harbour. This luxurious waterfront resort greets dogs (up to 50 pounds, one per room) with a cozy pet bed, food and water bowls, and special treats. Explore the tropical resort grounds on palm-shaded dog walks. When it's time to get out and explore, the concierge can assist with options like Fido-friendly tours with Greg's Safaris in open-sided, 4x4 Land Rover Defenders for a journey to the island's lush rainforest moun-

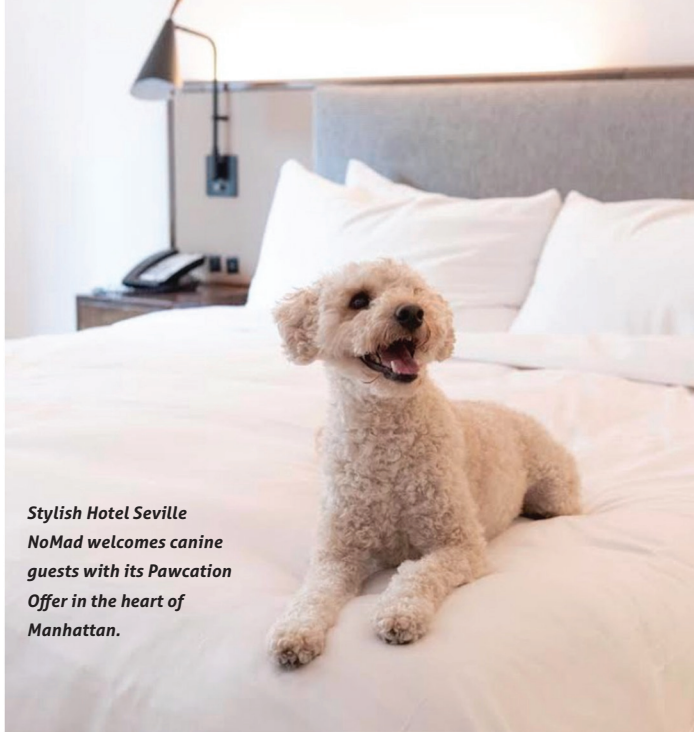


PHOTO CREDIT: HOTEL SEVILLE NOMAD

Stylish Hotel Seville NoMad welcomes canine guests with its Pawcation Offer in the heart of Manhattan.

tains, and stopovers at St. Kitts' most breathtaking viewpoints where you can see other neighboring Caribbean islands. *Park Hyatt St. Kitts Christophe Harbour, South East Peninsula, Banana Bay, St. Kitts & Nevis, (869) 468-1234; www.hyatt.com/park-hyatt/en-US/skbph-park-hyatt-st-kitts.*

COASTAL COOL FOR YOU AND YOUR DOG

Cool, creative, and delightfully off the beaten path, Wayfinder Newport offers a fresh spin on a classic seaside escape. Dreamed up by a collective of local chefs, bartenders, artists, designers, and entrepreneurs, this 197-room boutique hotel delivers a laid-back Newport vibe with plenty of personality. Spacious rooms give dogs room to stretch out and relax, while Fido-friendly outdoor spaces are perfect for sniffing, strolling, and soaking in the salty air. With the hotel's Paws and Stay package (up to two dogs per room), Wayfinder Newport makes it easy to enjoy a stylish, welcoming stay by the sea. *Wayfinder Newport, 151 Admiral Kalbfus Road, Newport, RI 02840, (401) 849-9880; www.wayfindernewport.com.*



JOHN BIGLEY AND PARIS PERMENTER Travel writers John Bigley and Paris Permenter are the authors of 35 travel and pet books; the husband-wife team are also the founders of DogTipper.com.

PACK THE LEASH AND HIT THE ROAD WITH FIDO-FRIENDLY SUMMER ESCAPES FROM CITY HOTELS TO SEASIDE RETREATS.

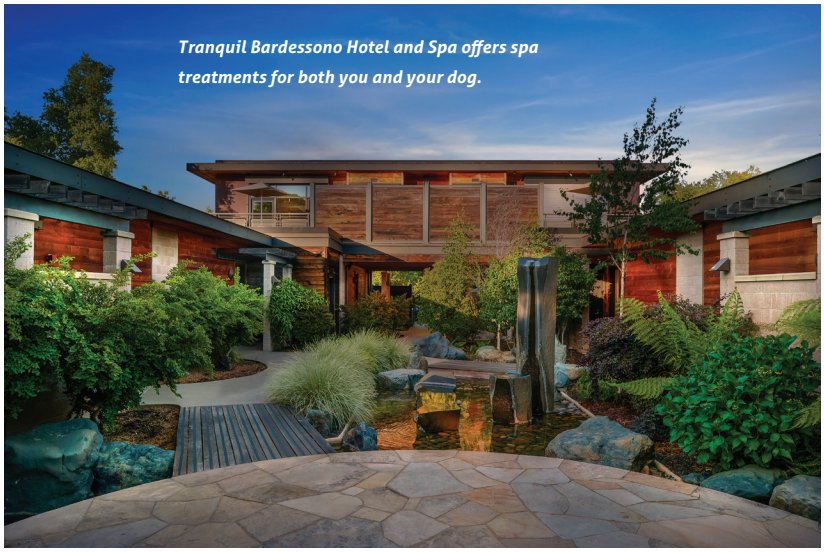


PHOTO CREDIT: HIGHERDOSE + BARDESSONO HOTEL & SPA

Tranquil Bardessono Hotel and Spa offers spa treatments for both you and your dog.



PHOTO CREDIT: HIGHERDOSE + BARDESSONO HOTEL & SPA

Bardessono's amenities make every dog feel like a VIP in the heart of wine country.



PHOTO CREDIT: WAYFINDER NEWPORT

Newport's laid-back charm and Wayfinder's creative spirit make a perfect match for pet travelers.

Bowser Goes to Banff

A Fido-Friendly Mountain Adventure

By Jane Cassie



Kalli – our hiking hound during Healy Pass hike.

THERE ARE FRINGE BENEFITS TO BEING A DOG OWNER. Along with free kisses, surprise wake-up calls, and the occasional sock theft, you also get a personal trainer who never skips leg day. Especially when hiking the trails around Banff National Park and Lake Louise.

"Sorry, there's no exception to the pet rule," the ticket seller says, stone-faced. "No dogs allowed onboard."

We're at the Sunshine Village Ski Resort parking lot, where a shuttle bus ferries humans to alpine splendor. Sitting neatly between us, ears alert and tail at half-mast, is Kalli—our trail-tested dog and self-appointed adventure coordinator. She looks up as if to say, *Surely this rule does not apply to me.*

It does.

"There's another option," my husband Brent says, pointing at the map. "We can hike the whole way."

I sigh. Loudly. Part frustration, part fear. We've recently completed the 18-kilometre round trip to the Plain of Six Glaciers—a trek softened by two tea houses and banana bread that Kalli rated highly. But Healy Pass climbs higher. Much higher.

"I'm not sure my boomer quads are up for this," I mutter. "And are we sure our pooch knows what she's signed up for?"

Kalli, meanwhile, is busy conducting an olfactory investigation of the parking lot. She seems confident.

TRAILS, TAILS AND MOUNTAIN VIEWS

Banff quickly proves itself to be a canine paradise. On the Bow River Loop, an easy interpretive stroll near our Lake Louise campsite, Kalli's ears operate like satellite dishes—locking onto burbling American dipper, cheeping ruby-crowned kinglet, and the steady percussion of yellow-bellied sapsucker hammering sap from riverside spruce. I admire the scenery. Kalli studies the smells.

She's equally enthusiastic on the Spray River Loop, prancing across bridges and peering into Bow Falls as if she might spot something edible.

Later, we wander Banff Avenue, a lively corridor of outdoor cafés, gear shops and strolling visitors where dogs are greeted almost as warmly as their humans. We continue on to Banff Upper Hot Springs. Although dogs are barred from these historic pools, which have soothed tired hikers for more than a century, Kalli enjoys a different kind of indulgence that evening.

CASTLE LIFE FOR CANINES

The Fairmont Banff Springs, known as the "Castle in the Rockies," has been welcoming guests since 1888. Built from stone quarried from nearby Mount Rundle, it rises dramatically above the meeting of two rivers. Inside, marble archways, sweeping staircases, grand ballrooms and multiple dining rooms evoke a bygone era when guests arrived by rail and dressed for dinner.

Best of all, dogs are welcome. And they are treated accordingly.

Staying on the Gold Floor comes with perks, and Kalli is clearly impressed. She receives treats on arrival, a plush pillow for sleeping on and silver bowls when dinnertime comes. I suspect she now believes this is how all hotels should operate.

But we didn't come to Banff just to lounge in castles.

The next morning, with Kalli leashed—as required in all national parks—we set out toward Healy Pass. The trail begins gently through a forest scented with pine and damp earth. Healy Creek appears and disappears beside us as we cross small bridges and weave between evergreens. Blueberry bushes line sections of the path and distant peaks pop into view, reminding us why we're doing this.

Kalli leads the way like a seasoned guide.

A primitive campground marks the 5.5-kilometre point. At eight kilometers, a junction leads toward Simpson Pass. Sub-alpine meadows unfold ahead, dotted with wildflowers and gopher holes that send Kalli into investigative overdrive.

"Three grizzlies have been tagged on this ridge," Brent says casually, reaching for bear spray. "But it's unlikely we'll see one."

Despite multiple reassurances, my wrist bells go into full festive mode. I soon sound like a one-woman Christmas parade. Kalli remains unconcerned. She is far more interested in a suspicious clump of grass.

We safely cross the meadow and reach Healy Pass, where the views demand silence. To the northeast rises the Massive Range. To the southeast, Mount Assiniboine stands like a distant beacon. To the northwest shimmer the waters of both Scarab and Egypt Lakes.

We sit, breathe and absorb it all.

"Going down will be easier," Brent says. "We'll still have energy for another hike tomorrow."

Kalli agrees enthusiastically. She has energy for several.

What she doesn't know is that tomorrow she's getting a spa day.

A DOGLESS DAY IN THE ALPINE

The following morning, we drop her at Veronica's Dog Daycare, a short drive from town. While she wrestles, chases tennis balls and makes new canine friends, we board the Sunshine shuttle—dogless and feeling slightly guilty.

The five-kilometer ride saves hours of climbing and lifts us into high alpine terrain laced with more than twelve kilometers of gravel pathways. Interpretive signs explain the fragile vegetation and geology of this remarkable landscape.

Soon we're standing on the Continental Divide, where water chooses between oceans—the Atlantic to the east and the Pacific to the west.

Our trail rises and falls through wildflower meadows beneath bluebird skies. Granite walls like The Monarch loom nearby, while Mount Howard Douglas and Mount Assiniboine dominate the skyline. Snow clings stubbornly to shaded slopes, their layered lines revealing centuries of wind, weather and time.

At the base of Quartz Hill, five kilometers into the trek, we stop for a snack and a moment of alpine calm.

"Do you want to keep going?" Brent asks, checking his watch. "Another hour and we'd reach Citadel Pass. The views are even better."

But we both already know the answer.

Kalli has a 4:30 pickup—and she waits for no one.

"Veronica does offer overnight care," I say hopefully. "Maybe next time we hike Sunshine, Kalli will opt for a sleepover."

Judging by the enthusiastic tail wag greeting us at daycare later that afternoon, it's clear Kalli has already approved our next Banff adventure.

And, as always, we'll happily follow wherever our four-legged guide leads.



Author Jane Cassie with her husband Brent and dog Kalli.

If You Go: Banff With Your Bowser

WHERE TO STAY

The pet-friendly Fairmont Banff Springs welcomes dogs with treats, beds, and bowls. Many Banff accommodations accept pets but always check policies and fees in advance.

DOG RULES IN THE PARK

Dogs are welcome in Banff National Park but must remain leashed at all times to protect wildlife. Carry waste bags and pack out everything.

GREAT DOG-FRIENDLY WALKS

- Bow River Loop – Easy riverside stroll with wildlife sightings.
- Spray River Loop – A longer scenic route perfect for energetic dogs.
- Healy Pass – A challenging but rewarding alpine hike.

DOG DAYCARE OPTION

If you want to explore areas where pets aren't allowed, Veronica's Dog Daycare offers daytime care so your pup can play while you hike. Veronica's Dog Daycare & Grooming, Banff, AB

WILDLIFE SAFETY

Carry bear spray and make noise on trails. Banff is home to elk, wolves, and grizzly bear.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Late June through early September offers wildflowers, accessible trails, and long daylight hours for hiking adventures with your four-legged companion.

Leash up, pack snacks—for both species—and get ready to discover why Banff might just be Canada's most spectacular dog park.



PHOTO CREDIT BIGSTOCK.

TurfMutt's Top Outdoor Trends

The TurfMutt Foundation's tips to safely enjoy the dog days of summer.

By Kris Kiser, President & CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation

SUMMER IS THE PRIME TIME to get outside and enjoy the green spaces around us with our four-legged family members. From high-energy games of fetch in the backyard to afternoon gatherings with friends at a neighborhood dog park or a sunset stroll in the community park, dogs love to embrace the season. Mulligan the TurfMutt, the spokesdog of the TurfMutt Foundation, is certainly no exception. She lives for summer days spent in her yard or at our favorite parks in our hometown of Louisville.

The TurfMutt Foundation – a longtime advocate for dog rescue and the care and use of managed green spaces for the benefit of people, pets and the planet – offers these tips to keep tails happily wagging all summer long.

EMBRACE BACKYARD BARKITECTURE

One of TurfMutt's top outdoor trends for 2026 is backyard "barkitecture," which is the practice of designing outdoor spaces with your pet's needs and happiness in mind. Embrace this trend by setting up durable "zoomie zones" for play session and selecting hardy, paw-friendly grasses that can withstand heavy paw traffic.

Consider creating a designated "digging pit" filled with play sand to keep Fido happy (and save your prized flowerbeds). For the ultimate backyard oasis, install built-in feeding and watering stations, a splash pad to cool off and a custom doghouse that seamlessly blends with your home's architectural aesthetic.

PICK PET-FRIENDLY PLANTS

Your backyard is your pet's primary playground, so it's vital to plant with care. Choose non-toxic vegetation and always opt for real grass over artificial turf. Natural turf stays cooler under the summer sun, is gentler on sensitive paws, and provides vital environmental support. Before you buy, consult the ASPCA's list of toxic and non-toxic plants at https://bit.ly/ASPCASafePlantList.

KEEP PETS AWAY FROM OUTDOOR POWER EQUIPMENT

Summer is peak season for yard maintenance, but outdoor power equipment and pets simply do not mix. Pets (and children) should never be around when lawn mowers, trimmers, leaf blowers and other types of outdoor power equipment are in use. When you're done with the yardwork, store all equipment safely out of reach from curious canines and kids.

BEAT THE HEAT

Dogs can overheat quickly, so always provide plenty of fresh water and shade, as well as a spot indoors for your dog to cool off during extremely hot days. Shift your dog's exercise routine to the cooler parts of the day, like early morning or late evening. Always check the pavement temperature before heading out. If it's too hot for your hand, it's too hot for their sensitive paw pads.

STORM SMARTS

Summer storms can be scary for pets. When the weather looks threatening, bring your pets inside and establish a safe, quiet space for them. It's also smart to assemble a pet emergency kit in case you need to evacuate your home. Include medications, water, food, waste bags and anything else your pet might need to feel comfortable.

BE TRAVEL READY

Planning a trip and want to bring your favorite co-pilot along? Safety on the road is just as important as safety at home. A harness or crate is the safest option in a car, and the crate should be big enough for your pet to stand, sit and turn around. Never, under any circumstances, leave your pet alone in a hot car. Interior temperatures can reach dangerous levels in a matter of minutes, even with the windows cracked.

CELEBRATE WITH CARE

From farmers markets and outdoor concerts at your local park to booming fireworks celebrating the holidays, summertime brings out the crowds and the loud noises. However, not all dogs are fans of the hustle and bustle of these events. Know your dog's temperament and leave anxious or sensitive pets at home. Create a secure, quiet indoor sanctuary during neighborhood celebrations to protect pets from stress.

KEEP AQUATIC ADVENTURES SAFE

Many dogs love to play in the water, but just like kids, pets should never be left unsupervised near pools, lakes or rivers. Even strong swimmers can tire out quickly, so consider a doggie life jacket for additional safety.

Follow the adventures of Mulligan the TurfMutt by tuning in to Lucky Dog on CBS on Saturday mornings. To learn more about the many benefits of the green space around us and get even more tips on how to create the yard of your pet's dreams, go to TurfMutt.com.





Ridglan Farms beagle survivor feeling grass for the first time in his life. Photo credit Big Dog Ranch Rescue.

A Second Chance Begins

For nearly a lifetime, more than **2,100 beagles** knew only the cold confines of wire cages inside Ridglan Farms, a commercial breeding facility in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, that supplied dogs for biomedical research. They never felt sunshine on their backs, grass beneath their paws, or the gentle touch of a loving family. Their world was one of confinement, fear, and uncertainty.

When mounting public pressure and animal cruelty allegations led to the permanent closure of the facility, hope finally arrived. Rescue organizations, including **Big Dog Ranch Rescue**, **Beagle Freedom Project**, **Pilots To The Rescue**, and countless volunteers and partners, united in one of the largest beagle rescues in history. Together, they gave these dogs something many had never experienced: freedom.

One by one, frightened beagles stepped into a new world. They discovered soft beds, fresh air, wagging tails, gentle hands, and the simple joy of being loved. Their journey is far more than a rescue story. It is a powerful reminder of what compassion, determination, and collaboration can accomplish when people refuse to give up on those who cannot speak for themselves.

Turn the page to meet some of the heroes behind this extraordinary mission and the resilient beagles whose first steps into freedom are already inspiring the world.



Big Dog Ranch Rescue transport vehicles and volunteers. Photo credit Big Dog Ranch Rescue.

FROM LAB TO LOVE

Inside the Historic Rescue That Gave More Than 2,100 Beagles a Second Chance

By Susan Sims

After months of confidential planning, one of the largest canine rescue operations in U.S. history gave more than 2,100 beagles from Wisconsin's Ridglan Farms the opportunity to begin new lives. Led by Big Dog Ranch Rescue and supported by rescue partners across the country, the historic mission is not only transforming the future of these dogs, but also helping drive a broader movement toward ending the unnecessary use of dogs in research.

The beagle hesitated.

For what may have been the first time in her life, soft green grass stretched beneath her paws. She stood quietly at the edge of the transport crate, nose lifted to the breeze, uncertain whether the unfamiliar world before her was real. Volunteers waited patiently. No one pulled on the leash. No one hurried her.

Then, with one tentative step followed by another, she walked into freedom.

It was a simple moment, almost easy to overlook amid the organized bustle of veterinarians, transport teams, and volunteers. Yet it represented something extraordinary. After spending her entire life inside Ridglan Farms, a Wisconsin commercial breeding facility that supplied beagles for research laboratories, this little dog was experiencing the outside world for the very first time.

She wasn't alone.

More than 2,100 beagles would ultimately leave Ridglan Farms through one of the largest canine rescue operations in American history. Their journey from research breeding facility to loving homes was made possible by months of confidential negotiations, careful planning, and an unprecedented collaboration among rescue organizations across the country. At the center of that effort stood Big Dog Ranch Rescue and its founder, Lauree Simmons, whose life's work has become synonymous with giving dogs a second chance.

For Simmons, the Ridglan Farms rescue was not simply another mission. It embodied everything she has believed since founding Big Dog Ranch Rescue in 2008.

After witnessing the heartbreaking reality that healthy, adoptable dogs were being euthanized simply because shelters had no space left, Simmons knew the problem demanded more than individual rescues. She envisioned an organization that would save lives while addressing the larger issues contributing to shelter overpopulation and animal suffering.

Nearly two decades later, that vision has become the nation's largest cage-free, no-kill dog rescue.

Big Dog Ranch Rescue has rescued more than 92,000 dogs while developing comprehensive programs that include rescue and transport, advanced veterinary care, disaster response, community outreach, education, spay and neuter initiatives, legislative advocacy, and veteran service dog programs. Every program reflects Simmons' belief that lasting change comes from solving problems at their source rather than simply responding to emergencies.

As Founder and CEO, Simmons continues to guide the organization's strategic vision while overseeing rescue operations, building partnerships, advocating for stronger animal welfare protections, and ensuring every dog receives the medical care and rehabilitation necessary before finding a permanent home.

Those years of experience would prove invaluable when discussions began surrounding Ridglan Farms.





Big Dog Ranch Rescue founder, Lauree Simmons, Photo credit Big Dog Ranch Rescue.

What the public eventually witnessed as a historic rescue was, in reality, the culmination of months of careful negotiations taking place quietly behind closed doors.

"This wasn't something that happened overnight," Simmons explains. "Discussions, planning, and negotiations took place over several months. Because of the sensitive legal and operational nature of the effort, much of that work had to remain confidential."

Operations of this magnitude require extraordinary coordination. Attorneys worked through complex legal agreements. Veterinarians developed treatment protocols. Transportation specialists organized routes and schedules. Rescue organizations prepared space for incoming dogs, while adoption networks quietly readied themselves for what everyone hoped would become one of the largest placement efforts in rescue history.

The goal remained remarkably simple despite the complexity of achieving it: every dog would leave safely, and Ridglan Farms would close permanently.

Throughout the process, Simmons and her team remained steadfastly focused on protecting the negotiations. Public attention surrounding Ridglan Farms, including concerns raised by advocates and activists, helped bring national awareness to conditions at the facility. That attention underscored the urgency of finding a lasting resolution. Still, Simmons understood that the rescue itself depended upon maintaining confidentiality until every piece of the operation was securely in place.

When the time finally came, preparation gave way to action.

Dozens of Big Dog Ranch Rescue staff members joined veterinarians, veterinary technicians, transport specialists, animal care professionals, volunteers, and rescue partners from across the country. Every individual understood their role. Some handled intake and medical records. Others managed transportation logistics or coordinated temporary housing. Veterinary teams immediately began evaluating each dog while volunteers quietly comforted frightened beagles emerging into an unfamiliar world.

There was little time to celebrate.

The rescue marked not the end of the mission, but the beginning.

Every arriving dog required a comprehensive veterinary examination. Many needed vaccinations, parasite treatment, diagnostic testing, dental care, spay or neuter surgery, and additional medical attention based on their individual condition. Just as important, each beagle would begin learning something entirely new: how to be a dog.

For many of the Ridglan beagles, healing involved far more than medicine.

Most had spent their lives in a controlled research breeding environment where everyday experiences were nonexistent. Grass beneath their paws, birds singing overhead, the rumble of a washing machine, climbing stairs, riding in a car, sleeping on a couch, or chasing a tennis ball were all completely foreign.

"They had to learn how to simply be dogs," Simmons says.

Big Dog Ranch Rescue's veterinary and behavioral teams approached that



Big Dog Ranch Rescue volunteer holding a Ridglan Farms beagle survivor. Photo credit Big Dog Ranch Rescue.

process with extraordinary patience. Every dog progressed at its own pace. Some cautiously accepted treats from an outstretched hand. Others needed time before trusting human touch. Volunteers celebrated the smallest victories: the first tail wag, the first playful bark, the first joyful sprint across an open field.

Each milestone represented another step away from a life defined by routine and confinement, and another step toward becoming a beloved family companion.

Once the dogs were medically cleared and emotionally ready, the search for forever homes began.

The response from the public was overwhelming.

Approximately **7,000 adoption applications** poured in from all 50 states as families opened their hearts to dogs they had never met but already loved. Today, Ridglan beagles are settling into homes in more than 40 states, where they are discovering the comforts most dogs have known since puppyhood: soft beds, neighborhood walks, toys scattered across living room floors, and people who greet them simply because they are home.

As of July 2026, more than **200 beagles** remained in various stages of medical treatment, behavioral rehabilitation, foster care, or the adoption process. Simmons says there is no rush to place them.

"Our responsibility doesn't end when a dog leaves our care," she explains. "It ends when that dog is in the right home."

That careful approach reflects Big Dog Ranch Rescue's philosophy that successful adoptions are built on preparation, education, and long-term support for both the dog and its new family.

The Ridglan Farms rescue also demonstrated something equally powerful: no single organization could have accomplished it alone.

Veterinarians worked alongside veterinary technicians. Rescue organizations shared resources and expertise. Foster families opened their homes. Volunteers logged countless hours transporting dogs, cleaning kennels, comforting frightened animals, and assisting adopters. Shelters and rescue partners across the country became part of an unprecedented network united by one common purpose.

For Simmons, that spirit of collaboration offers hope well beyond Ridglan Farms.

While rescuing more than 2,100 beagles represents an extraordinary achievement, she believes meaningful change will come through continued cooperation among rescue organizations, policymakers, scientists, veterinarians, and advocates working toward a common goal.

Big Dog Ranch Rescue continues working with leaders at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including Health and Human Services Secretary **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, along with others who support reducing the use of animals in research whenever scientifically validated alternatives are available. The organization also remains engaged in discussions with federal and state leaders focused on strengthening oversight of large commercial breeding facilities and improving animal welfare protections.

Simmons says Big Dog Ranch Rescue is also working with **U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins** on initiatives aimed at eliminating cruel practices at large commercial breeding facilities while encouraging modern scientific alternatives that reduce the unnecessary use of animals in testing.

Those efforts build on momentum established in 2025, when **Lara Trump** helped launch an animal welfare initiative focused on strengthening enforcement against animal cruelty in collaboration with leaders from



Ridglan Farms beagle survivor touching grass for the first time and feeling sunshine outside. Photo credit Big Dog Ranch Rescue.

For More Information

To learn more about Big Dog Ranch Rescue, adopt a dog, become a foster, volunteer, or support its lifesaving mission, visit **www.bdrr.org**.

Big Dog Ranch Rescue
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Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Email: info@bdrr.org

Every adoption, every volunteer hour, every donation, and every voice raised on behalf of animals helps Big Dog Ranch Rescue continue its mission of saving lives, advancing animal welfare, and ensuring that more dogs experience the simple joy of finally coming home.

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Justice. The initiative seeks to crack down on puppy mills and other inhumane breeding operations while supporting the transition toward scientifically validated alternatives to unnecessary animal testing.

Although Big Dog Ranch Rescue remains actively involved in discussions concerning additional facilities around the country, Simmons says many of those efforts must remain confidential while negotiations are underway.

"Our long-term mission remains unchanged," she says. "We want to help end the unnecessary use of dogs in research whenever possible, promote greater transparency, strengthen animal welfare protections, and ensure every dog has the opportunity to live a safe and loving life."

That vision reaches far beyond one rescue.

For every beagle that leaves a commercial breeding facility, there are countless others still waiting for their chance. Simmons believes progress depends not only on rescue but also on education, responsible legislation, scientific innovation, and public awareness. Each successful mission becomes another step toward creating a future where dogs are valued not for what they can provide in a laboratory, but for the unconditional love they bring into our homes.

The closing of Ridglan Farms stands as one of the most significant victories in Big Dog Ranch Rescue's history, yet Simmons views it not as the finish line, but as the beginning of a larger movement.

Tonight, somewhere in America, one of the former Ridglan beagles is asleep on a family room sofa.

Perhaps there's a tennis ball tucked beneath the coffee table. Maybe muddy paw prints still linger by the back door after an afternoon of exploring a yard that belongs entirely to her. Somewhere, a child whispers goodnight. An older couple smiles as their newest family member curls into a peaceful sleep. A veteran reaches down to stroke velvety ears that no longer flinch at human touch.

That little beagle knows nothing about months of confidential negotiations, transport convoys, veterinary teams, or the thousands of people whose determination changed her future.

She doesn't know she was once part of a commercial breeding operation.

She doesn't know she helped write a new chapter in the conversation about animal welfare.

She only knows that someone calls her by name.

Someone reaches down to scratch behind her ears.

Someone loves her.

And after a lifetime spent waiting, she is finally home.

RIDGLAN FARMS BY THE NUMBERS

2,100+ beagles rescued from Ridglan Farms
92,000+ dogs rescued by Big Dog Ranch Rescue since 2008
7,000 adoption applications received
Applicants from **all 50 states**
Dogs adopted into **more than 40 states**
200+ beagles still completing medical care, behavioral rehabilitation, foster placement, or adoption (as of July 2026)



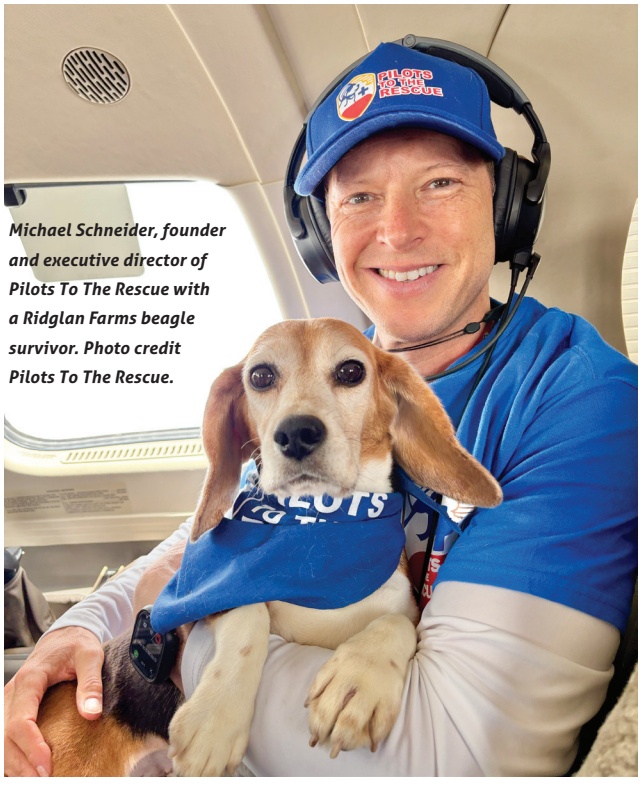
Wings of Hope

How one pilot's mission helped give Ridglan Farms beagles their first taste of freedom.

By Susan Sims

PHOTO CREDIT PILOTS TO THE RESCUE.

"We jumped at the opportunity to be part of this rescue," Schneider says. "These beagles had spent their entire lives inside a breeding and research facility. We weren't simply transporting dogs from one location to another. We were giving them the chance to experience freedom for the very first time."



Michael Schneider, founder and executive director of Pilots To The Rescue with a Ridglan Farms beagle survivor. Photo credit Pilots To The Rescue.

For Michael Schneider, founder and executive director of **Pilots To The Rescue**, every rescue flight begins long before the wheels leave the runway. It starts with a phone call, a desperate plea from a shelter, or an opportunity to save animals whose future depends on reaching a safer place.

When that call came about the beagles trapped inside Ridglan Farms, one of the nation's largest commercial breeding facilities supplying dogs for research, Schneider didn't hesitate.

"We jumped at the opportunity to be part of this rescue," he says. "These beagles had spent their entire lives inside a breeding and research facility. We weren't simply transporting dogs from one location to another. We were giving them the chance to experience freedom for the very first time."

For Schneider, that mission represented everything Pilots To The Rescue was created to accomplish.

FINDING PURPOSE ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Ironically, Schneider didn't begin his aviation journey as a lifelong pilot.

A spontaneous decision to go skydiving in 2011 ignited an unexpected passion for flying. After completing several jumps, he enrolled in flight lessons and earned his pilot's license in 2013 at the age of 37.

Already a devoted animal advocate, Schneider soon discovered a heartbreaking story about puppies abandoned in a ditch in North Carolina. The overcrowded shelter caring for them had no space and the puppy's faced euthanasia.

Rather than accept their fate, Schneider and another pilot climbed into a small private airplane and flew south.

That single rescue flight changed his life.

"It revealed my mission," Schneider recalls.

Two years later, in 2015, he founded **Pilots To The Rescue**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to transporting at-risk animals from overcrowded shelters to rescue organizations where they have a greater chance of finding loving homes.

What began with one flight has grown into one of the country's most respected animal transport organizations.

Since its founding, Pilots To The Rescue has coordinated **417 rescue missions**, saving more than **7,300 animals**. In 2026 alone, the organization has completed **58 rescue missions**, transporting more than **1,500 animals** by air and ground. While dogs and cats make up the majority of their passengers, Schneider's crews have also helped relocate endangered wolves, foxes, and even sea turtles to safer habitats.

A VILLAGE TAKES FLIGHT

The Ridglan Farms rescue required far more than airplanes.

"It truly took a village," Schneider says.

While Pilots To The Rescue volunteer pilots August and Stephen flew the beagles from Wisconsin to New Jersey, dozens of people worked behind the scenes to make the mission possible.

Volunteers from **Second Chance Rescue NYC** carefully transported the dogs from Ridglan Farms to the airport, ensuring each frightened beagle was safely loaded for the flight. Behind the scenes, **Big Dog Ranch Rescue** coordinated the release of thousands of beagles while working with rescue partners across the country to prepare for their arrival.

Once the aircraft landed, another team of Pilots To The Rescue volunteers and Second Chance Rescue staff unloaded the dogs and transported them to their receiving rescue organizations, where medical evaluations, rehabilitation, and eventually adoption would begin.

"Every successful rescue depends on planners, drivers, pilots, volunteers, veterinarians, and rescue partners working together," Schneider explains. "No one organization could have accomplished something of this magnitude alone."

MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER FLIGHT

Schneider has participated in hundreds of rescue missions, but Ridglan Farms remains unforgettable.

"Every rescue is meaningful because every animal deserves a second chance," he says. "But this one was different."

Unlike most transports involving shelter animals, these beagles had never experienced ordinary life.

"They had never known a home, soft beds, backyards, toys, or the unconditional love of a family."

Millions of people followed the Ridglan story as rescue organizations across the country united to help relocate thousands of beagles. Schneider believes the rescue demonstrated what is possible when organizations set aside individual recognition and work toward a common purpose.

"It inspired compassion," he says. "It showed people how much can be accomplished when everyone comes together to save lives."

GROWING THE MISSION

For the first five years, Schneider balanced Pilots To The Rescue with a demanding corporate career in event management. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he made the decision to leave that career behind and devote himself full time to animal rescue.

"I'd been looking for a sense of purpose and fulfillment for a very long time," he says. "It only took COVID-19 and 45 years to realize what I wanted to do when I grew up."

Today, the nonprofit operates with **13 volunteer pilots** based at Caldwell Airport in New Jersey, supported by a growing fleet of aircraft and transport vans strategically positioned across the country.

The organization's original aircraft, a 1976 Piper Lance, served faithfully for nearly a decade before donor support made it possible to acquire a **2013 Daher Kodiak 100**, affectionately named **Big Paw**. The larger aircraft nearly doubled the number of animals that could be transported on each mission.

In 2025, rock legend **Tom Scholz**, founder and lead guitarist of the band *Boston*, donated his personally flown **Beechcraft Bonanza A36**, now affectionately known as **Little Paw**. The aircraft provides a cost-effective option for smaller rescue missions while Big Paw handles larger transports.

Schneider hopes to add a third aircraft before the end of 2026, allowing Pilots To The Rescue to respond even faster when shelters and rescue organizations call.

EVERY FLIGHT CHANGES TWO LIVES

Ask Schneider why he continues flying rescue missions, and his answer extends beyond the animals.

"We're not just saving animals," he says. "We're improving people's lives. I hear from adopters who tell me their rescue helped them through grief, loneliness, or depression. That connection is incredibly powerful. It reminds me why I started the organization."

What began with one spontaneous flight to save a handful of abandoned puppies has evolved into a nationwide rescue network powered by volunteer pilots, compassionate partners, and countless supporters who believe every animal deserves a second chance.

For the beagles rescued from Ridglan Farms, that second chance began the moment their paws left the ground. For Michael Schneider, it was simply another reminder that sometimes the shortest distance between despair and hope is measured not in miles, but in compassion.

Michael lives in Greenpoint, Brooklyn with his wife, four boys, and Sydney, his 90-pound rescue dog.



Ridglan Farms beagle survivors take a tentative step towards a freedom they have never known, stepping on grass and feeling sunshine for the first time. Photo credit Beagle Freedom Project.

When Freedom Finally Came

Inside the Historic Rescue of 500 Beagles from Ridglan Farms with Beagle Freedom Project.

By Susan Sims

There are moments in animal rescue that forever change the people who witness them. For Shannon Keith, founder and president of Beagle Freedom Project (BFP), the release of 500 beagles from Ridglan Farms in Dane County, Wisconsin, was one of those moments.

For years, Ridglan Farms operated as a commercial breeding facility supplying beagles for animal testing laboratories. Behind locked gates, generations of dogs spent their entire lives in metal cages, knowing nothing beyond concrete floors, fluorescent lights, and human contact associated with fear. Many had never walked on grass, felt the warmth of sunshine, or looked up at an open sky.

Now, after months of confidential negotiations, their lives are finally beginning again.

"This particular rescue had been in the works since early February of 2026," Keith explained. "These negotiations take time, patience, and an enormous amount of coordination behind the scenes."

The effort culminated in one of the largest beagle rescues in recent history. While approximately 2,100 beagles are ultimately being released from Ridglan Farms, Beagle Freedom Project is overseeing the placement of 500 of those dogs, drawing upon years of experience rescuing animals from laboratories, breeding facilities, and other forms of institutional cruelty.

It was an operation unlike anything most rescuers will ever experience.

Over multiple rescue days, nearly 45 volunteers and professionals worked side by side during each phase of the operation. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians, rescue coordinators, transport volunteers, handlers, logistics teams, and support staff formed an assembly line of compassion designed to move frightened dogs from confinement toward freedom.

"It truly took a village," Keith said.

Yet no amount of preparation could soften what rescuers encountered once the gates opened.

For Samantha K., a member of Beagle Freedom Project's rescue team, the first impression remains unforgettable.

"Ridglan Farms from the minute we arrived at the large double gates was imposing and cold. We were treated as 'the enemy' and spoken to tersely and coldly. The family/staff barked orders and made sure that we all knew they were in charge of us, they did not want us there on their property and they would love any excuse to make us leave.

Once inside the gates we were directed where we should park and which building we would be entering each day. As soon as the doors were open, the sheer volume of barking hurt your ears and the smell was nauseating - some of the workers wore noise cancelling earphones and face masks to combat the volume of the barks and the awful smell, we did not.

There were rows upon rows of metal cages filled with dogs barking, howling and clambering

to get our attention. We were directed to follow the workers only as they walked briskly up and down the aisles. Once a cage was opened, depending on how many dogs were inside the cage, they either used a rectangular piece of plastic to isolate dogs from the pack, or grabbed a dog roughly by their leg and dragged them out of the cage, all the while insisting they never mistreated the dogs.

As each dog was handed to us, they were shaking and often covered in urine, vomit or drool, but they immediately melted into our arms and rested their heads into our necks as we carried them out. We held them tightly, whispering that they were safe and going to be okay. I walked past my coworkers who were openly crying, and it was hard not to, but I refused to let the people who mistreated these sweet dogs see me shed a single tear."

Each frightened beagle was met not with more fear, but with gentle voices.

Volunteers whispered promises.

"You're safe now."

"Everything is going to be okay."

Around her, Samantha watched fellow rescuers openly weep.

She refused to let those responsible for the dogs' suffering see her cry.

Instead, she held each trembling beagle a little tighter.

For Anna J., Beagle Freedom Project's social media manager, the emotional impact came not only from what she witnessed inside the facility, but from what happened afterward.

"It has been bittersweet watching 500 beagles finally experience joy after they realize they're safe," she shared.

Many of the dogs had frosted muzzles, silent evidence that they had spent nearly their entire lives inside breeding cages.

"It was heartbreaking to know this was the first time many of them had ever experienced happiness after spending their entire lives in small, filthy cages."

As Anna carried frightened dogs toward waiting transport vehicles, their reactions varied.

Some struggled desperately.

Others became completely rigid with fear.

Many urinated or expressed their anal glands simply from terror.

"For many of them, the only time a human had ever touched them was probably a negative experience," she said.

Even so, she leaned close to each frightened dog.

"I kissed their heads and whispered into their ears that they were free…that they could finally leave this terrible place behind."

Those quiet words represented something the dogs had likely never known.

Kindness.

Their decades of experience rehabilitating former laboratory and breeding dogs uniquely positioned them to help animals facing overwhelming emotional and physical challenges.

For many of these beagles, the healing process is only beginning.

Learning to trust.

Walking on grass.

Sleeping in a soft bed.

Discovering toys.

Feeling sunshine.



Debbie Gibson and Geezer Butler holding Ridglan Farms beagle survivors. Photo credit Jill Person.



Anna James, BFP social media manager, comforting a Ridglan Farms beagle survior. Photo credit Emma Grace.

Every ordinary experience is extraordinary when you've spent a lifetime without it.

Keith believes the Ridglan rescue represents more than a single victory.

It shines a spotlight on an issue many Americans don't realize still exists.

"There are still thousands of dogs trapped inside laboratories and breeding facilities that serve as pipelines to laboratories just like Ridglan," she explained. "Most people don't even know there's probably an animal testing laboratory with dogs hidden in their own backyard."

She believes public awareness is the greatest catalyst for change.

"The dogs are suffering in silence," Keith said. "We are their spokespeople."

For Beagle Freedom Project, rescuing individual dogs is only one part of the mission.

Changing the systems that put them there is the ultimate goal.

Keith believes society is approaching a turning point, but lasting change depends upon ordinary people deciding they want to become part of the solution.

"There needs to be more of us," she said. "We're on the precipice of change right now, and we need momentum."

For readers wondering how they can help, the opportunities are many.

Beagle Freedom Project welcomes volunteers from across the country, whether assisting onsite during rescues or providing remote support from home. Donations help fund medical care,



Shannon Keith, founder and president of Beagle Freedom Project (BFP) Photo credit Beagle Freedom Project.

transportation, rehabilitation, and placement efforts for rescued animals. Consumers can also make a powerful impact by choosing cruelty-free products and encouraging companies to move away from animal testing.

Every voice matters.

Every volunteer matters.

Every adoption matters.

Most importantly, every rescued dog matters.

As the last frightened beagles left Ridglan Farms and stepped into an unfamiliar world filled with grass, sunshine, gentle hands, and hope, they reminded all who witnessed the rescue why organizations like Beagle Freedom Project never give up.

Because freedom isn't simply opening a cage door.

Freedom is the chance to finally begin living.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Beagle Freedom Project continues to fight for animals trapped in laboratories and commercial breeding facilities across the country.

You can support their lifesaving work by:

- Volunteering for rescue and transport efforts.
- Donating to support medical care and rehabilitation.
- Choosing cruelty-free products and encouraging companies to end animal testing.
- Downloading the free **Cruelty-Cutter** app to identify cruelty-free brands while shopping.

Together, informed consumers and compassionate advocates can help create a future where no dog spends a lifetime behind laboratory walls.



Mabel had spent her entire life in a breeding and research facility. Fear shaped every part of her world.

Fostering Mabel

By Sasha Itzikman photo credit Sasha Itzikman.

HEALING TOGETHER: FOSTERING MABEL

A dear friend introduced me to Beagle Freedom Project (BFP), and founder Shannon Keith. I initially volunteered as a communications professional, helping tell the story of a quadruple amputee dog rescued from the meat trade in China. That experience opened my eyes to the realities of animal testing and the importance of advocacy. Over the past decade, BFP has not only changed my perspective, it has changed my life.

Through BFP, I have fostered many dogs and adopted two laboratory testing survivors and a hospice Maltese mix who was rescued just 45 minutes before she was scheduled to be euthanized. Caring for Gretchen, and later my senior dog Carley, meant I stepped away from fostering for a time. Losing Gretchen, then just ten months later, Carley in April 2026, left a tremendous hole in my heart.

When Shannon shared that Beagle Freedom Project was preparing to rescue dogs from Ridglan Farms, I immediately volunteered to foster one of the senior beagles. Knowing my experience with traumatized laboratory survivors, the team entrusted me with eight-year-old Mabel. I think of her arrival as one of the greatest and most well-timed gifts I've ever received.

Mabel had spent her entire life in a breeding and research facility. Fear shaped every part of her world. She hid behind furniture, refused food and water, and only felt safe inside the open kennel she was provided. Simple things most dogs never think twice about, walking through a doorway, hearing household sounds, or eating from a bowl, were overwhelming.

Fortunately, my two amazing animal testing survivors, Elliot and Bodhi, became her guides. By watching them, Mabel slowly learned where to potty, the joy of play, and that people could be kind. Today she loves basking in the sunshine, running through the vegetable garden, and after six weeks, proudly climbed onto the sofa, where she now sleeps every night.

She still startles easily and doesn't enjoy walks yet, but every day she grows more trusting and a little braver.

Mabel arrived just weeks after I lost Carley. In many ways, we have been healing together. She has taught me greater patience, deeper presence, and what it truly means to love without expectation. Watching her slowly discover freedom reminds me that recovery doesn't happen all at once. It happens one small, courageous step at a time.

I hope my family and I are preparing Mabel for the forever home she deserves. The truth is, she has already given me far more than I could ever give her.

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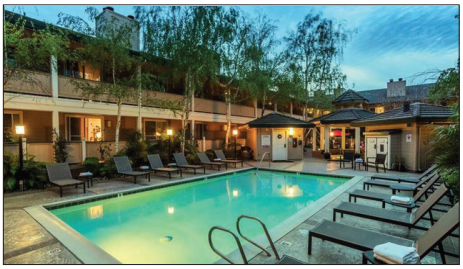
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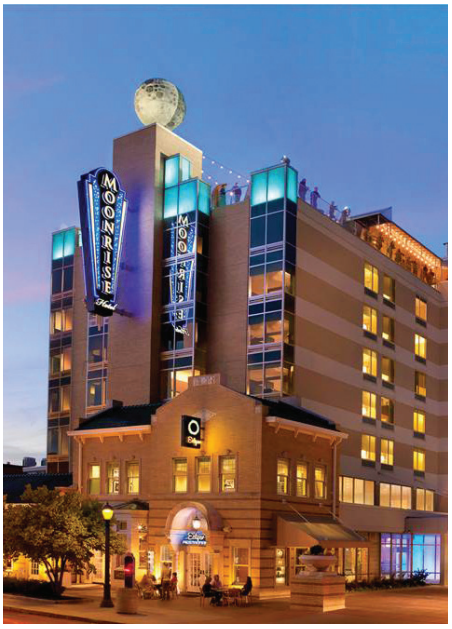


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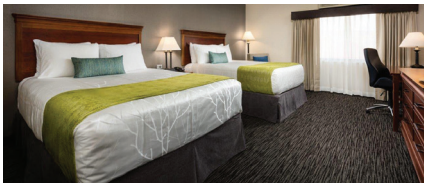
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Pet Friendly



"Dear Honey..."

– Ask the Director of Barketing

Summer Edition

Where curious canines come for answers, and I deliver with mud on my paws and wisdom in my wag.



Q: Dear Honey, My family wants me to learn to swim, but I'm not sure about this whole "water" thing. Any advice?

— Signed, Dry Paws in Dallas

Honey: Every dog learns at their own pace! Start in shallow water where your paws can still touch the bottom, and never let anyone toss you in. Bring treats, your favorite human, and plenty of encouragement. Before you know it, you'll be making a splash instead of making excuses!



Q: Dear Honey, My human bought me goggles! Am I supposed to be a lifeguard?

— Signed, Squinty in Sarasota

Honey: Dog goggles, or "doggles," aren't just adorable. They can protect your eyes from bright sun, wind, sand, and splashing water. If you wear them, make sure they fit comfortably and introduce them with treats. Looking cool is just an added bonus.



Q: Dear Honey, Do I really need a life jacket? I can dog paddle just fine!

— Signed, Captain Confidence

Honey: Even champion swimmers wear life jackets on boats, paddleboards, and kayaks. Waves, currents, and long swims can tire anyone out. Pick one with a sturdy handle so your human can lend a helping hand if needed. Safety is always in style.



Q: Dear Honey, Is it okay to drink from the lake while I'm swimming?

— Signed, Thirsty Retriever

Honey: Better not! Lakes and ponds can hide bacteria or harmful algae that can make us sick. Bring fresh water and take plenty of drink breaks. Trust me, the bottled stuff tastes just fine after chasing a tennis ball.



Q: Dear Honey, What's the best part of summer?

— Signed, Sunshine Pup

Honey: Easy! Adventures with the people you love. Whether you're surfing, paddleboarding, splashing in a kiddie pool, or simply relaxing under a shady tree with a frozen treat, summer is about making happy memories together. Now grab your leash... adventure is calling!

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