

Thankful for furry friends, especially the older ones

Pebbles column by Rebecca Seymour

There's so much to be thankful for – our families, friends, health, food on our table and a warm bed at night. My family is also very thankful for our dog, Charlie. We adopted him through JR's Pups-N-Stuff a couple of years ago, and he is a joy in our lives.

November is National Pet Awareness, as well as Adopt a Senior Pet Month. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), older dogs are often the last to be adopted in shelters.

We humans feel pretty good about rescuing pets from animal shelters and foster organizations and most would admit their pets in turn, have "saved" them back in countless ways.

Shorehaven Health and Rehabilitation Center and Memory Care in Oconomowoc provide opportunities for their residents and staff to experience comfort and unconditional love given by therapy dogs. Family members will also bring in pets when they are visiting their loved ones.

Pam Thomas is the manager of volunteer services at Shorehaven. Her dog, Darcy, is a therapy dog and visits with residents every Friday, which has been fondly dubbed "Darcy Day."

"There are several dogs that visit Shorehaven because of resident families who bring them along. There are also four to five therapy dogs that come on their own schedules. On any given day you will see at least one dog at Shorehaven," she said.

Bella the Yorkshire Terrier was rescued by Jill Jung from Seniors Rock Rescue of Waukesha, a network of foster homes that help older dogs find a forever home. Jill started bringing Bella to work with her at Shorehaven Memory Care, and it has been quite a memorable experience for everyone involved.

"The residents light up when they hold her," she said. "They start reminiscing about dogs they owned, farm dogs, family dogs, lap dogs. The pet therapy experience has them interacting with one another. It's a sensory exercise just to hold and pet Bella. It's amazing how gentle they are with her - they just know."

Pet rescue resources

JR's Pups-N-Stuff, www.jrspupsnstuff.org. Holiday Shopping Fair fundraiser, 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2, Knights of Columbus Hall, W164 N9161 Water St., Menomonee Falls.

Seniors Rock, www.seniorsrockss.com.

Fluffy Dog Rescue & Wellness, www.fluffydog.net. Fluffy Dog will have a meet and greet with some of their adoptable dogs, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3, at The Doggy Dag, 124 E. Wisconsin Ave., Oconomowoc. The Doggy Bag is also hosting pet photos with Santa, noon to 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, www.thedoggybagllc.com.

Humane Animal Welfare Society/Waukesha County Animal Shelter (HAWS), www.hawspets.org.

