

## Home Again improves lives

**By Nate Smelle**

Since 2010, Home Again has rescued thousands of local stray and unwanted dogs and cats. Working with a network of foster homes and volunteers, they have had great success finding forever homes for most of the animals they have taken in. Home Again volunteer Mary Freeman said last year alone the organization re-homed 88 dogs and 140 cats. She said they also spayed or neutered 93 dogs and 234 cats in 2017. Though these numbers are consistent with statistics from previous years, Freeman said as of Feb. 2, 2018, they already have 11 dogs and 39 cats in foster homes waiting to be adopted.

With so many animals in need of care locally, Freeman said Home Again is always looking for support, so that they can continue their work of re-homing local pets in need. One of the best ways to get involved with Home Again, she said is to foster an animal and/or volunteer. Freeman first decided to get involved with Home Again as a volunteer in May 2013. At the time she was having difficulty coping with the death of her 16-year-old dog that had passed away a year earlier. She said it wasn't until she took in her first foster dog that she was able to get over the loss of her friend. As challenging as it can be to foster an animal, Freeman finds the experience to be incredibly rewarding.

“Fostering dogs is physically demanding, and fostering dogs or cats can be an emotional roller coaster ride,” said Freeman.

“The foster sees their dog or cat through spay/neuter surgery, and there may be emotional or behavioural problems to overcome.

Then adoption day comes, which is both heart-wrenching and a successful graduation. Tears are shed. The work is fulfilling, and the work is satisfying for those who love animals because all the volunteers help save pets lives, and send them to a good life.”

During her time as a volunteer with Home Again, Freeman said she has seen firsthand how beneficial their work is for the animals they rescue and the people who take them in. For example, she recalls a four-year-old Lhasa Apso/Poodle-cross named Buddy who went from being an unwanted pet to a new best friend. Having spent most of his life in a cage, Freeman said when Home Again took in Buddy he was severely emaciated and unwell. After spending only three weeks in a foster home, she said Buddy was adopted by a physically challenged single woman. According to Freeman, the bond created between the woman and her new friend has made both of their lives better.

“She needed a dog to walk beside her motorized chair as companion and motivation to get out,” explained Freeman.

“Before he turned five, Buddy had gained weight to normal and was a certified therapy dog, who accompanied his owner to restaurants and to the beach where other dogs were not allowed. His new owner declared Buddy to be the best dog she ever had, in all her 60 plus years.”

Home Again's website currently has 1,850 members, who use the site to share information, look out for missing pets, and exchange ideas about pet problems. The organization also publishes a monthly newsletter as part of their efforts to reach out to the community and find forever homes for the animals they rescue. Freeman indicated that Home Again can be reached by phone (613-338-0037) 24 hours a day, seven days a week; or by email at: [homeagainbancroft@gmail.com](mailto:homeagainbancroft@gmail.com).

Being a registered charity, she said another good way to support Home Again is by making a donation online at: [www.homeagainbancroft.ca](http://www.homeagainbancroft.ca); or by mail: RR 1, L'Amable, ON K0L 2L0.