

## Intervention or Interference? *When to Leave Baby Wildlife Alone*

**A**s human development encroaches on once-pristine acreage, encounters with wildlife increase. And spring means more newborn wildlife will be visible. Although we may be tempted to pet, touch, or “help” furred or feathered babies, it’s usually best to leave fawns, baby birds, and other wildlife alone.

If you find a baby animal, try to determine whether it is hurt or sick. Is it shivering, vomiting, or bleeding? Does it have an apparent broken limb or wing? Has it been attacked by a dog or cat? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the animal needs assistance. The best thing to do is to contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator immediately. These experts care for injured, ill, and orphaned wild animals with the goal of releasing them back into their natural habitat.

If the answer to the above questions is no, then try to figure out if the animal really is orphaned. Spring is a busy time for wildlife parents, who typically leave their young alone, sometimes for long periods, throughout the day. This does not mean that the parent is not nearby and very conscious of its young. The following guidelines from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) will help you

determine whether your well-intentioned actions would be intervention or interference:

### **Birds**

A nestling—a naked baby bird or one just beginning to grow feathers—may fall or be blown or pushed out of the nest. Try to place the nestling back in the nest. Human scent on baby birds will *not* discourage parent birds from caring for their young. If the nest is out of reach, construct a makeshift nest out of a margarine dish with several holes punched in the bottom or use a small basket. Attach a wire or twine so that you can hang the basket from a tree branch. Pad the interior of the basket with soft, smooth cloth or paper



toweling, place the nestling inside, tucking the feet under the body, and hang the basket as close to the original nest as possible. Watch for the return of the parents; if no parents return by dark, the nestling may be in trouble. Call a rehabilitator for advice.

Fledglings are slightly older feathered birds that are learning to fly—a process that may take several days—and should be left alone to practice hopping and flying from low shrub

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**It's About  
the Animals**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Response and Recognition

Prince George's County has its share of critics, each who has various complaints about the county: high crime rates, political corruption, substandard education, racial issues, and economic decline, just to name a few. In fact, some outsiders may believe that there's nothing right happening here, but we know better. "Gorgeous Prince George's," as the county calls itself, is home to a lot of good stuff, including a stellar parks and recreation system, affordable high-quality housing, a good public transit system, over twenty museums, and lots of cultural venues.

Our county is also home to some really good people, many who care deeply about animals. Some have joined our ranks, either as member, volunteer, or donor, but many are out there helping in the way that seems right to them. One such individual was Captain John Smathers, profiled on page 5. Captain Smathers did what so many of us do: he saw animals in need and he responded, ultimately sacrificing a great deal to rescue one lucky canine named Scout.

It's not easy to respond reasonably to the huge problems of pet overpopulation and animal cruelty, whether you see them locally or abroad. There is so much suffering to relieve, so much work to be done, so many areas in which change is needed. We see it in every facet of the work we do. We walk by filled and overflowing cages at the shelter, and we want to save every animal. We receive pleas for help with sick and injured animals, and we want to say yes to each one. But we know that we can't do it all and so we do the best we can with what we have, realizing that sometimes the only way to approach something big and overwhelming is to start with small steps.

To recognize, applaud, and promote such caring and commitment, we've created the Humane Heroes Program to honor individuals who are doing the quiet but important work in which we so strongly believe. Captain Smathers is our first Humane Hero. We enjoyed meeting him and hearing his story, and we are confident that others are out there with stories just as compelling. We'll collect nominations and choose the most worthy honorees, spotlighting them on our website and here in this newsletter. So if you know of anyone over 18 years of age who lives or works in Prince George's County and has done something unusual or extraordinary to help an animal or to further a humane-related cause, we want to hear from you. You can email us at [info@pgspca.org](mailto:info@pgspca.org) or call 301-262-5625 and leave a message in box #5.

There are great things happening in Prince George's County, and with your help, we'll make sure the word gets out.

Tamela Terry, president  
SPCA/HS of Prince George's County, Inc.



United Way  
of the National Capital Area

United Way #8977

CFCNCA #7439

The SPCA/HS of  
Prince George's

County is a  
private, nonprofit  
organization  
dedicated to

animal welfare. All  
activities are  
funded solely  
through contri-  
butions, dues, and  
special events.

To learn more, visit  
our website at

[www.pgspca.org](http://www.pgspca.org)  
or call

301-262-5625.

## Meet Your Forever Friend at an Adoption Show!

**Second Saturday of the Month:** 12-3 pm, White Flint PETsMART, 301-770-1343

**Third Saturday of the Month:** 12-3 pm, Columbia Petco, 410-290-1313

**Fourth Saturday of the Month:** 12-3 pm, Bowie PETsMART, 301-352-7286

\*Schedule subject to change! Check our website—[pgspca.org](http://pgspca.org)—for the latest information.

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## **Wildlife**, continued from front page

branches to the ground and back. The parent birds should be within view of the fledgling; you may not see them, but you probably can hear them making sounds from a nearby tree.

### **Rabbits**

Rabbits are independent animals, not orphans, if they are more than four inches long and have full fur, open eyes, and erect ears. Rabbit nests are usually found in a shallow, furlined depression in the grass. If you come upon furless young who are out of the nest, return them to the nest. Reform the nest if it has been destroyed, cover the young rabbits with loose grass, and then mark the nest with an X using sticks. Female rabbits only feed their babies at dawn and dusk, so you are unlikely to see the mother return. If she returns, she will move the marker when she enters the nest. If the marker remains undisturbed and the baby rabbits' abdomens appear sunken the next day, you should contact a rehabilitator. Young rabbits easily succumb to stress, so you should handle them only as a last resort.



### **Fawns**

Young deer are also left alone, usually hidden in tall grass, for long periods of time while the mother feeds. Unless the fawn looks injured, diseased, or dazed, leave the animal alone and vacate the area so that the mother will feel safe in returning.

### **Squirrels**

A baby squirrel on the ground probably needs help. If he is very small and has closed

eyes, place him in a box at the base of a tree and stay completely out of sight. The mother will usually retrieve her baby within a couple of hours. If she does not, call a rehabilitator for advice. Do not leave the squirrel out overnight. Older juveniles who are fully furred and climbing are capable of surviving on their own.

### **Opossums**

Opossum babies are carried in the mother's pouch as they mature; when they grow too large for the pouch, they often cling to the mother's back. Occasionally they fall off, and opossums less than seven inches long (not including the tail) may need a rehabilitator's assistance, as the mother will not come back to retrieve them. However, opossums who are longer than seven inches and have fur are independent and should be left alone.

### **Get Help**

If you determine that a wild animal needs assistance, a wildlife rehabilitator can explain what to do to keep the animal safe, quiet, warm, and protected until you can get the appropriate help (see resources below). Keep cats, dogs, and children away from the animal.

Never attempt to rehabilitate a wild animal yourself. They have very specific needs, and the care that would nurse a domestic animal back to health could harm a wild animal. Plus, in most states it's against the law to keep wild animals—even temporarily—unless you have a permit to do so.

*by Judy McClain*

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#### **PGSPCA/HS Board of Directors:**

**Tamela Terry,  
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**Mary Bayless  
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Pam Townsend  
Sandy Twigg**

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### **Who to call about sick, injured, or nuisance wildlife...**

**Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR):** 1-877-463-6497 (Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)  
DNR also can help you locate a wildlife rehabilitator.

**Prince George's Animal Management Division:** 1-301-499-8300 (press one for emergencies).

**SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County:** 301-262-5625 (press one for emergencies).

**It's About  
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## A New Year Brings Great New Ways to Give

**W**e're offering two opportunities to tempt your taste buds while donating to the SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County:

First, there's a fundraising day at **Franklin's**, a popular restaurant/brewpub/general store in Hyattsville, MD. Stop by anytime on **Monday, April 24**, and dine, drink, or shop at the store. Present your receipt to the hostess, let them know you are there to support the SPCA/HS of Prince George's County, and Franklin's will donate 20 percent of your total. (And don't forget that that week is Secretary's/Administrative Support Week, so if you work nearby, show your support staff how much you appreciate them while helping us help the animals...just by celebrating at Franklin's that day.)

Those of you with a sweet tooth will really enjoy our second food-related fundraising effort. For only \$10 you can get a gift certificate good for a six-pack of classic **Cinnabons!** To order your gift certificate, please mail your check to SPCA/HS of Prince George's County, Cinnabon Gift Certificates, P.O. Box 925, Bowie, MD 20718.

And while you're enjoying these tasty treats, don't forget our other, ongoing fundraising opportunities (some new, some not so new):

### iTunes

If you get your music online, your purchases can mean money for the SPCA/HS. We've partnered with iTunes, the digital music download service that has sold more than 125 million songs. Click on the iTunes link in our website—[pgspca.org](http://pgspca.org)—and we'll get a commission on all the music your purchase.

### Cell Phones/Printer Cartridges

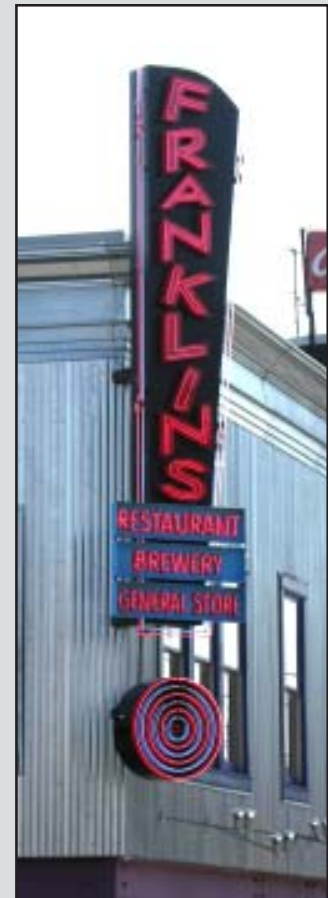
Don't throw away your old cell phones or used inkjet/laser printer cartridges. Give them to the SPCA/HS; we work with a vendor that will give us a donation for these items. Please email [info@pgspca.org](mailto:info@pgspca.org) or call (301) 775-0110 for more information.

### Link Your Food Lion MVP Card!

Visit your local Food Lion, go to [www.foodlion.com](http://www.foodlion.com), or call 704-633-8250 (extension 3810) to register your Food Lion MVP card with the SPCA/HS. A portion of your total purchases will be donated to our group.

### Shop at [www.iGive.com/pgspca](http://www.iGive.com/pgspca)

Become a member of [www.iGive.com/pgspca](http://www.iGive.com/pgspca). Shop for gifts and everyday items at more than 600 stores in the virtual iGive.com mall, like Barnes & Noble, Office Depot, Lands' End, and Expedia.com. Up to 26 percent of each purchase will be donated to the SPCA/HS.



## Celebrate with Us this Spring!

### Maryland Day

Saturday, April 29, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of Maryland, College Park. Stop by our table at "Ag Day Avenue" (in the Animal Sciences courtyard), say hello to our friendly volunteers, and meet some adorable four-legged playmates. Visit [www.marylandday.umd.edu](http://www.marylandday.umd.edu) for more information on the day's events.

### Bowiefest

Saturday, June 3, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Allen Pond Park in Bowie. This community festival offers you another opportunity to stop by our table, chat with our volunteers, and learn how you can get involved. Visit [www.cityofbowie.org](http://www.cityofbowie.org) for details.

### 4th Annual Dog Adoption Reunion

Sunday, June 11, from 1 to 3 p.m. by the carousel at Wheaton Regional Park. Food, fun, games and prizes for you and your furry friend! Visit [www.pgspca.org](http://www.pgspca.org) for upcoming information. Email [info@pgspca.org](mailto:info@pgspca.org) for details.

## Remembering a Humane Hero

Last October I learned of a captain in the Army Reserve, and local Laurel lawyer, who had returned from his duty overseas and worked for almost two years to bring back his faithful canine friend, Scout. It wasn't your typical reunion story; Scout is a Canaan dog that had befriended Captain John Smathers while he was stationed in Baghdad.

There are numerous wild dogs in the Middle East. In fact, prior to deployment, Smathers' unit was warned to stay away from the dogs that roamed Baghdad streets. It was feared that they carried rabies and other diseases. But Smathers saw Scout and found a friend.

Scout would stay close to the Baghdad house where Smathers' unit stayed. He would bark an alert if someone he didn't recognize approached. While Smathers and Scout walked around their camp and bombs exploded nearby, Smathers would jump into a ditch and Scout would be there right behind him. Scout had become part of the unit, he even enjoyed meals of beef jerky and military-issued rations just as the soldiers did.

In February 2004, Smathers' convoy was on its way to assist cities outside of Baghdad when his unit was ambushed. Smathers' arm was broken and his right knee badly injured. Three weeks later, he ended up at Walter Reed Medical Center, with Scout still in Baghdad.

But Smathers couldn't forget his loyal friend. He began a new mission: to be reunited with Scout. He emailed friends still overseas in hopes that they knew where Scout was. Thanks to the help of Bonnie Buckley from Military Mascots, he learned from one soldier that Scout remained at the house for the first two weeks after Smathers had left, as if he were waiting for him to come back.

The unit Smathers served with eventually relocated and he learned that Scout had been picked up by the local dog catcher. Somehow, somehow, Scout escaped by digging under the fence. Four months later, Smathers received word from a soldier who spotted Scout almost everyday. Smathers emailed a friend and asked him to capture Scout and take him to the Baghdad Zoo, where he had made friends that could care for Scout until he could be transported to the States.

Of course, it wasn't as simple as buying a plane ticket. There were no commercial flights leaving Baghdad and dogs were not allowed on military flights. So Scout remained at the Baghdad Zoo for a year. Finally, Buckley located a woman willing to transport Scout to Kuwait. From there, Scout was able to get a flight to Dulles and was reunited with Captain Smathers on August 22, 2005, a year and a half after he began his humane campaign to bring Scout to the United States.

Everyone I shared the story with was astounded and impressed. It was amazing how much this one man went through to bring his loyal companion back after he had

been through so much himself. The SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County contacted Smathers and asked if he would share his experiences at our December 2005 membership meeting. We were thrilled when he agreed and even more so when we learned Scout would be attending as well. Smathers arrived with Scout and brought many pictures that portrayed what life was like for man and dog in Baghdad. It was an evening that I will always remember. Their story even aired on Animal Planet's "Animal Planet Report" in January 2006.

Smathers had wanted a friend for Scout, and in January brought home Judy, a Canaan puppy. Sadly, on February 4,

Captain Smathers passed away. He collapsed while walking his companion Scout and their new friend Judy, and paramedics were unable to resuscitate him. Smathers was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on March 13, 2006. Scout and Judy will remain with Smathers' girlfriend, Lindsay.

Captain Smathers' efforts with Scout exemplify what we in the SPCA/HS of Prince George's County believe in: that every life is precious and that rescuing an animal brings great rewards. That is why we are honoring him posthumously as our first "Humane Hero" through a new program that will recognize individuals who live or work in Prince George's County and have made a positive difference in the life of a suffering or homeless animal. I can't imagine anyone more deserving of this honor.



*by Jenn Evoy*

## Questions About Positive Reinforcement Training

### Don't dogs just want to please?

Sure—themselves! Dogs are smart, but they can't make decisions about right and wrong, and none were born with an urge to please humans. Dogs **can** learn which behaviors are rewarding (reinforced) and which are not so rewarding. Like any animal (humans included), they will keep doing behaviors that are rewarded and stop doing unrewarded behaviors. For example, dogs who jump up on you do it for attention and contact. Even if you yell "NO!" (talk to them), push them away (touch them), and look at them in an irritated way (hey, you're looking!!), they see it as attention, so they keep jumping.

### If I use food for training, isn't that bribery?

Just as you get paid with a paycheck, you will be paying your dog with food to reinforce the good behavior you are teaching. **All behavior is driven by consequences.** If a consequence is good, the dog will repeat that behavior again. Start using your dog's dry food mixed with some special treat food as rewards (paychecks) and less "free" food in a bowl, and you will see your dog's responses toward you improve. **You** will control a very strong reinforcement: food!

### Will I have to use *constant* food rewards forever?

No. The constant reinforcement is necessary in the beginning to keep the training "flowing." As the dog becomes more reliable, you can adopt a slot-machine payment schedule instead of a steady paycheck. You can also use "life rewards": The dog will get all the things he wants (toys, walks, attention, etc.) **only after** responding to a command he has learned.

### Why isn't praise enough?

For praise alone to be at all effective, it has to be "balanced" with punishment (or you'd have to withhold praise except in training). Punishing/praising is a slow and confusing way to teach a dog, and when the dog is at all distracted, this becomes even more difficult. It's much faster and kinder to simply reinforce the dog with something tangible, like food, toys, or walks when he gets it right. Dogs who are punished over and over (even with a choke chain) become less likely to offer **any** new behaviors—even new ones you try to teach.

### How much should I practice?

Practice one skill at a time in repetitive drills lasting at least 3 minutes, 3 to 5 times a day. Several short sessions are better than one long one. Start out doing drills in the house, then move outside and do drills there, working up slowly to bigger distractions and "random requests" as each skill gets better conditioned. It will take at least 6 to 8 weeks to expect great performance from your dog with bigger distractions around, even if you practice every day.

*by Elizabeth Marsden*

*Editor's Note: Elizabeth Marsden offers training and behavior services through The Logical Dog ([thelogicaldog.com](http://thelogicaldog.com)).*



## Hip Hip Hooray for Spay Day USA!

*Veterinary assistant Tamika Smith cradles a dog waking from anesthesia following surgery at our Spay/Neuter Clinic in Forestville. The SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County celebrated Spay Day USA by spaying and neutering the pets of limited-income county residents for just \$10. For more information about regular clinic services and hours, visit our website—[pgspca.org](http://pgspca.org)—and click on "Clinic."*

## SPECIAL THANKS

# Memorials & Honorariums

*Special thanks to Antharia LLC for website design services; artist Liz Holm for designing our 2005 holiday card and our new thank-you cards; Tresses & Shears salon for its holiday fundraiser; PETSMART for its pet pictures with Santa fundraiser; Westfield Corporation for its shopping event fundraiser; author Dean Koontz for two inscribed books that were auctioned on eBay; and College Park Animal Hospital for taking such good care of our furry fosters.*

### In Honor of People and Pets...

Virginia Atkins in honor of Craig and Patti Henderson  
Nancy Hadley in honor of Joni Marginot  
John King in honor of Brandy and Precious

### In Memory of a Person...

Robert and Marion Burrows in memory of Bettie Liguori  
Charles and Patricia Case in memory of Bettie Liguori  
Elise Liguori in memory of Bettie Liguori  
Patrick and Linda Petrillo in memory of Leo Petrillo  
Neville and Anna Radcliffe in memory of Bettie Liguori  
Doris Sanders in memory of Wilma A. Smith  
Wanda Yanovich in memory of Bettie Liguori

### In Memory of an Animal...

Robert and Dianne Ashworth in memory of "Sammy" Schultz  
D. Beatley in memory of Freckles  
Rita Bierman in memory of Weezie  
Ramona Britt in memory of Jean Jurkowski  
Tammi Foxwell in memory of Hi Ho Silver  
John Kopolow in memory of Katie and Willie, in honor of Annie  
Joan Marshall in memory of "Dickens" McClain  
Ann McKenzie in memory of Toby  
Virginia Taylor in memory of Shasta  
Gary Ulmer in memory of Dreyfus  
James and Christina Young in memory of Gigi

**The SPCA/HS of Prince George's County relies on contributions. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. If you want to help, just fill out and return the form below.**

## Membership Application/Donation Form

SPCA/HUMANE SOCIETY OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, INC. \* P.O. Box 925, BOWIE, MD 20718 \* 301-262-5625

PLEASE CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY:

MEMBERSHIP (circle one):      Single (\$20)      Family (\$30)      Lifetime (\$100 per person)

RENEWAL: Please check here if this is a renewal membership.

ADDITIONAL DONATION: I am enclosing an additional gift in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose the additional donation IN MEMORY OF:

A person: \_\_\_\_\_ A pet: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose the additional donation IN HONOR OF:

A person: \_\_\_\_\_ A pet: \_\_\_\_\_

VOLUNTEER: I am willing to help in the following capacity:

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE SPCA/HS OF P.G. COUNTY, INC.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

All donations and dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please complete this form and mail with payment to the address above.

## JUST FOR FUN

### Sit, Stay, Surf! Websites for Animals and Their People

As promised in the last issue of *Heads & Tails*, here are more of our favorite websites of interest to people and their pets. These sites provide information that can help you keep your pet healthy.

A complete library of pet care articles can be found at <http://www.healthypet.com/library.aspx>. Sponsored by the American Animal Hospital Association, the site is divided into sections about dogs, cats, and exotic pets. Written for pet owners, the articles are easy to read and understand.

For more detailed information, check out <http://www.vetinfo.com/> which offers medical information from A to Z in separate canine and feline encyclopedias. The site also includes a huge database of questions from pet owners that were answered by the site author, veterinarian Mike Richards.

And when it comes to the health of your furry friends, the government is here to help, too! <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/petsandpethealth.html> has links to web articles by veterinary associations and government agencies about pets and pet health, all compiled by the National Library of Medicine.

## HEADS & TAILS

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Editing and layout:  
Pam Townsend

Individual membership to the SPCA/HS of Prince George's County is **only \$20** and includes a subscription to *Heads & Tails*. Your vital support will help us reduce animal overpopulation, homelessness, and mistreatment in Prince George's County. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## Meetings, Elections, and Dues, Oh My!

Nominations for vacant board positions will be made at the next general meeting (7:15 p.m., May 4, 2006). Elections will be held at the June meeting. To vote or run for a board position, you must be a dues-paying member in good standing, who has attended four of the six general meetings in the prior fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). Membership dues cover the same period, so if you wish to continue as a member after July 1, you'll need to renew. Or make it easy on yourself and just become a life member!

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Bowie, MD 20718  
P.O. Box 925

Prince George's County

