

Sunday Column – Blessing the Animals
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The Feast of St. Francis will soon be upon us and the PAWS Humane staff are busily preparing for a celebration. We have provided Blessing of the Animals services in past years, however this year is going to be extra special.

When you consider the number of hours PAWS Humane staff members spend caring for our resident animals each and every day you can easily understand the bond we form with them. We clean their living areas every morning and throughout the day. We feed, water and walk them. We set up play groups and outings for them. We provide training in basic manners to help ensure a successful transition into their new homes.

As you can imagine we become very invested in how they are doing on a day-to-day basis. We worry about whether they are getting enough exercise and attention. It troubles us when they stay here too long and we fret over what the future holds for them.

After our animals get adopted we make periodic follow up calls to ensure they are doing okay and to find out if there is anything we can do to sustain a successful adoption. In some cases we can offer an appointment with our behaviorist or even a telephone consult. In other cases a medical consult is needed. In either case this is provided at no charge to the adopter.

Over the past few weeks we have taken in animals who are emaciated, blind, deaf or who have illnesses which may have to be treated over the course of their lifetimes. They need a little, or a lot, of extra tender loving care.

Though we take in at least 1,700 animals each year we care deeply about each one and we want to achieve the best possible outcomes. The Blessing of the Animals is one way for us to celebrate the love we have for our animals.

The Episcopal Church reaffirmed during the 76th General Convention in 2009 that animals are part of God's creation and that humans are called to be responsible stewards over them. The church has publically condemned puppy mills, factory farms and any other forms of animal cruelty. These positions are not new. The Episcopal Church has a history of calling for the "responsible care" of both wild and domestic animals.

On Saturday, October 1 at 5:00 pm PAWS Humane will hold a Blessing of the Animals with Father Luke Wetzel of Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus performing the blessing.

We will have a food vendor on site and will show the movie, *Homeward Bound, the Incredible Journey*, outside at 8:00 pm. This promises to be a fun evening for the whole family and we hope you will come. Check out our Facebook page for more details.

Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at byeo@pawshumane.org with your comments and story ideas.