

HOOP TIME



The education center features 2,935 square feet of blue cushioned flooring, an essential for protecting joints – for both dogs and humans.

“It’s foam coated with a flexible epoxy – making it safe for canine athletic activities – and the epoxy coating makes it impermeable to liquids, including dog urine. The technology was developed for equestrian facilities,” says executive director Mary Tiefenbrunn. “It was costly to install, but worth it!”

NEW EDUCATION CENTER OFFERS



A Tail of Two Buildings

By Jill Pyrz

The Champaign County Humane Society is more than just a place to adopt your next pet – it’s a place to learn.

“It’s called a campus for a reason,” says executive director Mary Tiefenbrunn. “We designed it that way.”

After the big move from the old shelter in Urbana in 2023, the nearly 125-year-old organization is bustling with activity at the new two-acre campus on Kearns Drive in Champaign.

The campus is anchored by two buildings – the main shelter, where you go to adopt a pet, and the education center, a 9,000-square-foot multipurpose building that Tiefenbrunn has been dreaming about for nearly two decades. She realized the need for more space “the day I became executive director in 2007,” she recalls.

DOG TRANSLATORS

The old shelter in Urbana lacked adequate space for just about everything. But one of its biggest shortcomings was a lack of space for people and animals to learn.

AMPLE SPACE TO LEARN AND PLAY!



Animal training isn't just a bonus for people who have extra time and want to teach their dog to jump through hoops – though that part of it can be fun, too. Rather, it's an absolute essential to reduce reasons for relinquishment.

In other words, it's not just about getting pets adopted – it's about making sure they don't get returned.

"The likelihood of successful incorporation of a new dog into a home goes up considerably when the owner has the tools to help their dog become a well-mannered and well-adjusted member of the household," Tiefenbrunn explains. "In a nutshell: Well-behaved dogs stay in homes."

CCHS training courses teach people how to understand what their dogs are communicating, which isn't always what you'd expect. While this might be very, very hard to believe, "dogs are not humans," says CCHS animal behavior specialist Breanne Tabbert, who teaches many of the training courses at the new education center.

"Yeah, but she hasn't met my dog," says everyone who is reading this right now. Really though, while Tabbert insists that dogs are not humans, they indeed are our best friends. And best friends are good at understanding each other.

(continued...)

GRADUATION DAY



Sneha, Soutick and Momo on their big day.

REVIEWS ARE IN — TWO PAWS UP!

We adopted Momo from a rescue when he was 10 weeks old. As first-time dog owners, we needed a lot of help with his training and building a strong bond with him. My wife, Sneha, found out about the classes offered by the Champaign County Humane Society online, and we heard great things about CCHS trainer Natalie Piper from other dog parents.

We first signed up for the Puppy Socialization class. Natalie and Breanne were amazing – helping us train Momo, understand dog body language, and improve communication with him. They were always ready to answer our many questions, even outside the class. They went above and beyond to make sure we had everything we needed to be successful. The class was so helpful that we signed up for the Basic Manners Dog Training class, which was equally beneficial.

So one of Tabbert's goals as a trainer and educator is to help you understand what they are really trying to say so you can have the most fulfilling relationship. In a sense, "we are dog translators," Tabbert says.

ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN

The six-week courses are offered in two sections: one for puppies ages 2 to 4 months old; the other for dogs over 4 months. Courses are open to any dog who is up-to-date on vaccines, regardless of where they were adopted. And classes are not just for new pet owners.

"Even people who already know the fundamentals of dog training benefit from taking a new dog to a class," adds Tiefenbrunn. Tabbert agrees.

"I think that having people take a little bit of time, take an hour out of their Monday, for a couple Mondays, and just focus on their pet is so powerful and important," Tabbert says, speaking from experience both as a seasoned animal trainer and recent student. Last year, she took her new puppy, Piper, through a 6-week course.

"Even for me, just getting to focus and be fully present with my dog helped us both so much. And doing it in a focused way makes it so much easier," she says. There's always more to learn.

A THING OF THE PAST

The old shelter lacked more than just a dog training space. "We had no indoor space to conduct dog introductions – for adopters introducing their new dog to their existing dog to make sure it was a good match. We had no indoor space to exercise shelter dogs in bad weather," Tiefenbrunn says. "We had no space for our animal behaviorist to do proper dog temperament assessments – something we do for all new dogs at the facility so we can make sure they are safe for adoption.

"We had no space to do dog training with groups of volunteers or staff. We also had no space suitable for full staff meetings or other gatherings. And we had no space for youth education programs – we had to hold Pet Pals, our club for pet lovers ages 10-15, in the employee break room."

But those headaches are a thing of the past. The new education center is big enough to do all of that – and then some! After all, that's the purpose of any good campus – to be a space for learning and exploration with your new best friends.

FREE PET FOOD PANTRY



The education building is also home to CCHS' free pet food pantry, where the shelter stores donated pet food and supplies for pet owners in need of assistance. The program offers short-term, emergency-based food for pet owners in Champaign County on a first-come, first-served basis.

The goal of the program is to make sure that pets aren't being relinquished because of short-term financial difficulty. "If we can bridge that gap to keep people and their pets together, then that's what we'll do," says CCHS humane educator Elijah Imlay, who coordinates the free pet food program.

For more information about how to donate or receive pet food or supplies, email elijah@cuhumane.org.

Meet Stella!

I'd love to be your only gal.





Miss Pink needs a home.

Ask the Expert: Embarrassing Questions Edition

By Breanne Tabbert

Question: My dog keeps marking the side of the sofa. Why does he do this, and how can I get him to stop?

Answer: Your dog is literally leaving his mark and letting everyone know he is here. Dogs communicate with each other via pheromones, and urine carries these important communication pheromones. Much like how humans use their phones to text, dogs use their urine to send messages to each other too!

Different from urinating to relieve himself, marking involves much less urine and is usually done on vertical surfaces in the home, like your sofa. When your dog urinates on trees, fire hydrants or sides of buildings, he's practicing the same idea.

This may happen if there's been some kind of big change to the household – new furniture that doesn't smell like the rest of the home; a new dog, cat or housemate; or even when a new dog moves in next-door. If the urinating is excessive or constant, a vet check may be due to rule out any underlying medical condition. If your animal is intact, having your dog neutered can solve the issue, as some marking is done to signal breeding status – though this is not always true. Fun fact: Both male and female dogs exhibit marking behavior; it's not just for the boys.

Cleaning your sofa properly after marking is so important to prevent recurrence in the same spot. Be sure to use an enzymatic cleaner specific to pet urine, because those contain a solution that doesn't just mask the smell but eliminates the underlying pheromones.

Supervision is also key, so you can interrupt your dog before he marks and calmly take him outside for a more appropriate place to go. Crate training may be beneficial for times your dog can't be supervised to prevent him

from practicing that behavior while you're gone. A quicker solution is blocking access to the sofa so it is physically impossible for him to mark there again.

Question: Why does my dog like to sniff other dogs' butts so much?

Answer: This answer ties in with the question above. Dogs gather information from smells and pheromones, and the dog's rear end is where their anal glands are located. These glands produce pheromones that share so much information for other dogs to take in – their age, their sex, even their health status and mood!

You may notice that your dog sticks her nose in the air when a dog is within eyesight but far away – your dog is “air scenting” and can gather a little information that way – but up close and personal will give her the most accurate information. Your dog's nose plays such a vital role in how she perceives and navigates the world around her.

Another fun fact: A dog's sense of smell is about 100,000 times more sensitive than a humans!

Question: Why does my dog go nuts when another dog walks by the fenced yard? Is there anything I can do to help her? It's so embarrassing whenever people walk by!

Answer: Your dog is reacting to the stimulus of another dog being nearby and out of reach. Now, the reason behind the reactivity is where reading dog language and understanding dog vocalization can help.

The barking may be due to the sheer excitement of seeing another dog and wanting to engage with that dog. It may also be frustration with the barrier in the way of your dog's ability to engage. It may be a fear response – your dog could be barking to “make the

scary thing go away.” Or it may be based on aggression.

Without additional context, it’s difficult to determine why she is barking and what can be done to help her calm down. In any case, I recommend figuring out how to interrupt this behavior, because no matter what, she is in an aroused state that can cause stress and frustration. For example, you might consider covering gaps in your fence with a material your dog cannot see through, or taking your dog out on leash so you can keep her close to you, and lead her back into the home BEFORE she notices and barks at another dog.

To modify her behavior, you’ll want to work on desensitization and counterconditioning to stimuli outside of the fence. You can help change her emotional response through positive reinforcement, like giving her a treat when she sees or hears another dog on the other side of the fence. If you try this, remember that timing is important – you must give her the treat BEFORE she starts barking.

Question: My husband lets the dog lick his face all the time. Is he really giving kisses or is it something else? Is it OK to let dogs lick your face?

Answer: To answer this question, body language is key. Dogs lick for a variety of reasons and determining why your dog is doing the behavior is so important in answering your questions.

Dogs may lick you for attention, from excitement, from stress or appeasement. In what context is your dog licking your face? What else is going on in the environment? And what does the rest of your dog’s body look like?

A soft, level spine and broad tail wag would most likely indicate enjoyment and a positive interaction. A dog jumping up and licking your face when you bend over to talk to him may be a sign he is trying to appease you as you may look large and scary to him.

If your dog's tail is tucked and his eyes are large with dilated pupils, your dog may be licking you because they would like some space – this more commonly happens with young children.

If your dog is happily licking away and you enjoy the attention, go for it! If dog saliva covering your face isn’t your cup of tea, not letting your dog lick you is

perfectly fine too. But if you’re unsure if your dog is enjoying licking or trying to communicate something else, you can always remove yourself and see if he comes back for more.

BONUS CAT QUESTION: Why do cats like to be scratched at the base of their tails so much?

Answer: Imagine having an itch on that spot on your back that you just can’t reach – and when you finally get it or someone helps you out, it just feels the greatest! That is similar to the feeling a cat can have when you scratch right at the base of their tail. If your feline friend is on the heftier side, you may see them lick another part of their body in response. This is a redirection of behavior because that spot is so arousing to them and is usually a spot they cannot reach themselves. But beware, not ALL cats enjoy this area being touched – scratching too much can cause them to be overstimulated and turn back for a quick bite or swat to ask you to stop.

Meet Lydia! She loves cats and wants to be yours.



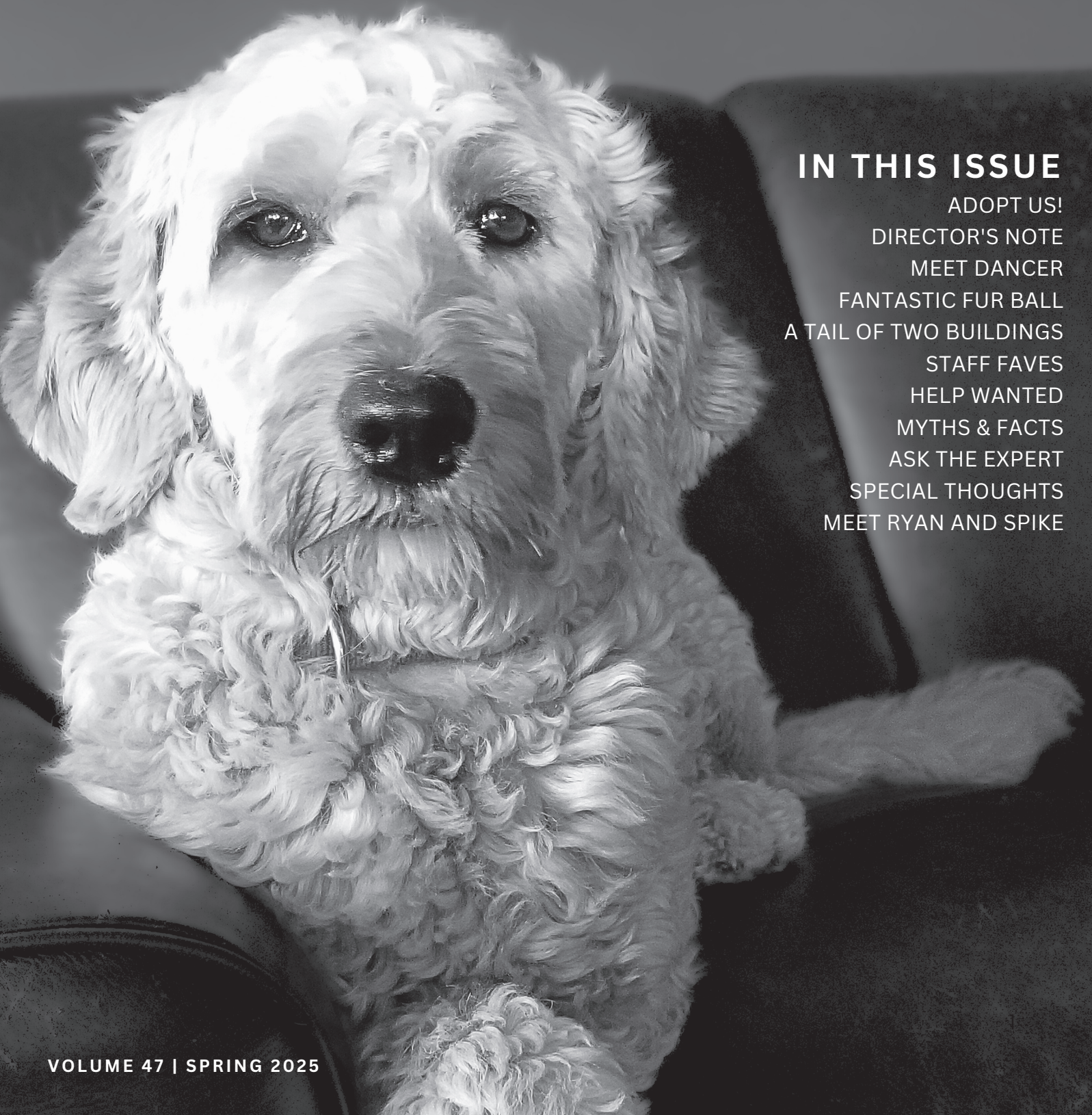
BREANNE TABBERT has done it all in her decade-plus career at CCHS. She started as an animal care intern while she was still a student at the University of Illinois and has helped in nearly every department since then. Today, Breanne is the shelter’s animal behavior specialist. When she isn’t training dogs at the shelter, she enjoys hikes with her pup, Piper, and running marathons at DisneyWorld.





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HUMANESOCIETY

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