

Camp Barry fostering new lives for puppies

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Cash, a German shepherd/Malamute mix puppy, was found some months ago in a banana box with five other littermates on South Beach by Del Norte County Sheriff's Department deputies.

Two of the deputies adopted three of the puppies. The remaining three went to a start-up puppy rescue organization, Camp Barry.

When the organization's director, Rhonda Barry, posted Cash's photo to its Facebook page, friend Gloria Bobertz jumped at the chance to adopt him.

"I saw him and it was like, 'I have to have him,'" Bobertz said.

"I was friends with Rhonda, but when I went to Camp Barry, I didn't know she was running that. I had no idea how heartfelt it was for her and how much work she put into these puppies."

Barry started the puppy rescue operation in 2018, inspired by her own dog's backstory. Her family had adopted Mister Baloo. But two of his littermates ended up at the Del Norte Animal Rescue shelter.

“I was so blown away that these happy, healthy puppies went to the pound and it was two years before they got adopted,” Barry said.

After Mister Baloo passed died, Barry’s family decided to foster puppies and help make a difference in the animals’ lives.

“It takes all four of us to make any of this possible,” said Barry. “My son, Matt; daughter, Kayla, who’s special-needs; and my husband, Greg,” all pitch in.

The puppies come to them as strays, or have been picked up by Dogs of Del Norte, or are animals dropped off at the Del Norte Humane Society.

Camp Barry cares for the puppies until they’re adopted.

If, for whatever reason, they need to be returned to Camp Barry after adoption – say, the puppy just wasn’t a compatible match – that’s not discouraged by Barry. Only two puppies have been returned so far.

She said the family can comfortably handle five or six puppies at a time.

“We have been pushed to the limit the last few months,” she said, while holding Rocky, the star of her latest litter of five.

“When we first started fostering, we didn’t know how much it cost to foster puppies, and it it’s outrageous,” said Barry.

Camp Barry purchases all of its own foods, going through 140 pounds a month. The family also buys the laundry soap, bleach, potty pads, toys, beds, and items for a care package they send off with every pup that gets adopted.

“We spend at least \$500 per puppy that comes into our care,” Barry said.

To help offset those costs, her daughter came up with a Jars for Paws campaign. The two of them make and jar their own jams and jellies to sell at farmers markets and other public events.

Flavors include cucumber jelly, garlic, lemon ginger marmalade, blackberry and blueberry jam, strawberry habanero and blackberry habanero, strawberry basil and vanilla pear.

Barry figures the sales offset 90% of the puppy-fostering costs. But first, they donate 30% of their sales to the Del Norte Humane Society. “Then, we take out supplies for the next batch. What’s left over goes into a foster fund,” she said.

Eileen Bennett, director of the Del Norte Humane Society, estimates that the family’s Jars for Paws sales generated about \$650 for her organization in 2019.

Barry said the camp’s feedback has been almost universally positive. “An elderly couple in Fort Dick adopted a puppy (from Camp Barry) and said, ‘Wow, he already knows how to sit. He’s already potty trained. Already kennel trained.’

“That’s what we go for. We want them to have manners they can take with them. They have a better chance of staying with that family longer,” Barry said.

Bennett said the camp’s puppy-fostering service isn’t available anywhere else in the region.

“We’re a cat shelter, but I’m an animal lover. So, if I can help in any way possible, I do. Without her, we couldn’t help the puppies that we help, at all.

“I don’t have to transport them to other shelters. Because there is nowhere here for puppies. South Coast is bringing them in from even farther distances. We used to drive to Portland or beyond.

“She’s being very modest. This girl works a full-time job, has a family to take care of, and they all work well together in every area. She’s put her heart and soul into these dogs.”

Bennett said the humane society has taken Camp Barry under its nonprofit umbrella “so that she can do everything she does in the community.”

So now, whenever Bennett receives a call to rescue or take in puppies, she calls Barry to come along, providing an alternative for the animals other than the pound.

“I love the work our volunteers do. And what the ones out at the dog pound do, too. Walking the dogs, sometimes paying out of their pockets for spay and neutering,” Bennett said.

“However, it is the county dog pound, and the turnover for dogs getting homes is not great. There are dogs that sit there sometimes two or three years. The dog pound is no place for a puppy. They’re not vaccinated yet, their immune systems are not strong.

“There are not a lot of people in our area that do what Rhonda does.”

Cash, meanwhile, has become a very large 9-month-old and is still a growing, healthy puppy. Bobertz plans to train him to be a visitation therapy dog to work with special-needs children and adults.

“He gets along great with everybody, considering he had such a crappy start in life,” Bobertz said. Thanks to Camp Barry, she said, Cash got a second lease on life.

For more information, go to the Camp Barry Facebook page.