

## **Fairfax County Animal Shelter Saves Record Number of Neonatal Kittens through Foster Program**

### **Fairfax County Police Department**

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News Release: 09/AC/NeonatalKittens/tjw

May 1, 2009

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Fifty-five of the animals placed in foster care at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter in 2008 were neonatal kittens who required bottle feeding because they were too young to survive on their own. Many shelters in the nation that do not have a neonatal kitten foster program are forced to euthanize these animals, but the Fairfax County Animal Shelter has made a concerted effort to build the infrastructure to save these animals. In 2008, the shelter placed 320 animals in foster care, making the organization's foster program one of the largest in the region.

The Fairfax County Animal Shelter is able to save neonatal kittens due to the help of a specialized cadre of shelter volunteers who provide temporary out-of-shelter care bottle feeding and hand raising these small animals who weigh only ounces when they arrive at the shelter.

"Our vision includes working toward the day when no healthy, treatable, rehabilitable or manageable animal is euthanized for lack of space or resources," says Shelter Director Dr. Karen Diviney. "This includes senior pets as well as the very young ones. Sometimes we get these kittens when they are just hours old. We still give them a chance."

Each year, the shelter hosts neonatal kitten and cat care classes to train new foster care providers, members of the animal rescue community and staff from local animal shelters. The class is taught by two shelter foster care providers, Susan Spaulding and Rosemarie Crawford, who together have more than 30 years combined experience working with young kittens and cats. The class was recently taught at the state level and is now gaining momentum nationally to teach more shelters across the United States how to care for neonatal kittens.

Those interested in becoming a foster care provider for the shelter should visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animal/foster.htm> for more information and to complete an application.

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To request this information in an alternate format, call the Public Information Office at 703.246.2253. TTY 703-204-2264