If they gave blue ribbons to felines for sweetness of disposition, former shelter cat Ferguson would no doubt have won a couple of dozen by now. Unfortunately, this handsome domestic shorthair—graced with a gorgeous Russian Blue-shade gray coat and fetching dark tiger stripes on his hind legs—came to the New Haven Animal Shelter at 7 months of age with a daunting disability: a neurological disorder that affected his motor skills. Much as he gamely tried to ignore his limitations, he could barely bounce after a toy mouse, or even take a few steps around his cage, without falling over. (In fact, volunteers who took him out of his cage to introduce him to potential adopters had to be extra vigilant, as he’d often roll over and nearly fall onto the floor.)

Clearly, he needed a forever home that could accommodate his special needs, one without stairs to climb and too many obstacles to avoid—and happily, Erica Ricker’s one-story Guilford house fit the bill. Ricker, who works as a data analyst for the Department of Developmental Services in Hartford, fell in love with Ferguson upon meeting him at a FNHAS community adoption event at North Branford’s Rose Orchards Farm last July. He became her first cat. “My mother is not a huge animal person,” she says, “so I never really had any pets growing up, except for a parakeet.” She gained her fondness for animals by hanging out with her friends’ cats and dogs.

Though his balance issues touched a “soft spot” in her heart, Ricker soon learned that Ferguson requires no coddling.

Prior to snuggling with her in bed at night, he enjoys a little evening television, joining Ricker for her go-to show, “The Office.” Having hooked her television up to Amazon Prime, she’s also arranged for him to have his own “must-see TV,” a series of bird videos designed especially for cats. “I’ll put those on and he’ll sit and watch for half an hour,” she says.

They may share a cozy pad pour deux, but that doesn’t mean Ferguson’s social life is limited. In fact, he’s developed quite the fan club. “Everyone who meets him falls in love,” Ricker says. “Everyone” includes his vets at Pet Shield in North Branford who, she’s told, have been enamored of this big boy ever since he received his obligatory neutering upon adoption. “When I went to pick him up after the operation, the receptionist told me, ‘You better move fast—the doctors want to take him home!’”

They can’t compete, however, with Ricker’s once pet-resistant parents. “My mom is usually afraid of cats, but he’s become the only one she likes,” she says. “And my father is obsessed with him. At least three days a week, he’ll stop by on his way home from work, and the first thing he does when he gets in my door is grab a bag of treats and say, ‘Here, Ferguson!’ So Ferguson’s learned to love my dad as the ‘treat guy!’”

His condition is something of a mystery—it may have been caused by a virus passed on by his mother in the womb—but it hasn’t affected his overall health. The open floor plan of her house gives him plenty of room to exercise. “I feel that since I’ve adopted him, he’s gotten a little better at walking,” she says. He doesn’t let anything get in the way of his love of playing with his interactive toys (his favorites are a squeaky mouse on a pole and jiggly toy springs). As for appetite, he’s becoming one of catdom’s true gourmands: “I’ve tried a few different types of foods and he likes them all,” Ricker says.

During his down time, Ferguson prefers to stay as close to Ricker as possible. “I work from home a couple of days a week, and wherever I am, he likes to lay right next to me,” she says. “He knocked a cushion off of one of my chairs and ever since has claimed it as his own—he moves it to wherever he wants to lie down, and lies on it every day. No one else can use it now.”
Early on a steamy August morning in 2018, New Haven police officer John Moore began reviewing incoming calls when one caught his attention. This call was labeled “holding,” one that’s typically not a high priority but needed investigation before his shift ended at 8 AM. The location of the call was 81 Fournier St., which he recognized as the Robin I. Kroogman New Haven Animal Shelter. Officer Moore arrived at the scene to find a large dog tied to a bench. He was cautious, not knowing the dog’s temperament. As he moved closer, the dog seemed friendly, raising his eyebrows as if to say, “What are you doing up this early?” Upon petting the fawn-colored dog, and a friendship was on the horizon. The best way to cultivate that friendship, he thought, would be to offer food and drink.

Moore knew of a local gourmet food store close by where he bought some food and water, then quickly returned to the shelter. He laid the goodies out in front of the dog who, he says, immediately “sopped them up.” Being on duty he couldn’t stay, but came back every hour to check on the dog and replenish his water. At one point, a woman driving by the shelter grounds shouted out her car window, “You should be ashamed of yourself!” as if were Moore who abandoned the dog. If only she knew the impending outcome of this scene. When his shift ended, Moore called the shelter staff’s supervision, he walked the dog in one of the fenced areas. Moore immediately knew that he wanted to adopt him but needed to wait out certain formalities. The dog had to be put on a seven-day holding period to see if his previous owners re-claimed him, undergo a veterinary exam to update vaccinations, and be put through an assessment of his disposition – particularly because he is a Cane Corso mix, a large Italian dog breed that is typically used as a guardian and for protection and could eventually weigh in at close to 100 pounds. Of course, Moore said that he would wait, but it seemed like an eternity.

Moore worried that the wait would cause this dog to forget him. “But the staff allowed me to visit him every day and bring him a treat,” he says. “He was in the last cage to the left on the intake side, very quiet and wagging his tail. He remembered me!”

A potentially bigger hurdle awaited. Moore’s fiancé, Maegan Moran, also a New Haven police officer, wanted a small dog. Her initial reaction when she first saw the dog at the shelter was, “but he’s so big!” Moran admitted that she was fearful and not 100% “on board,” but Moore slowly convinced her that this could be the perfect dog for them. Maegan would soon discover that under the huge exterior lay the soul of a Teddy bear.

And so, after the mandatory neutering, vaccinations, and micro chipping – always provided to adopters by the Friends of the New Haven Animal Shelter - Mr. Zeus, as he was named, became an important part of the Moore family. The first order of business: some training. Even though Mr. Zeus is graced with a calm and pleasing disposition, Moore knew that a well-behaved dog of any size was crucial to safety and familial harmony, especially since his 6-year-old son, Mason and 3-year-old twins, Camren and Carter - as well as Moran’s daughter, Mya Rose - needed to feel comfortable with Mr. Zeus. He spent hours studying training videos, confering with the canine handlers at the New Haven Police Department, and finally, endlessly practicing the techniques with Mr. Zeus.

“It was effortless - he really listened,” Moore said. “He’s an amazing dog.”

The smooth transition from shelter to home succeeded not only because of Moore’s perseverance, but also because of Mr. Zeus’s innate gentleness. The big pooh coizes up to the four children, offering them his big paw and napping on the floor with them. A conveniently placed container of bones, “the Mr. Zeus bucket,” is always close by to reward him for his obedience. He can nimbly catch one in his mouth – well, usually more than one. He walks on command calmly though the family’s Westville neighborhood, his 90-pound (plus) frame hard to miss. As any self-respecting dog deserves, Mr. Zeus has his own crate and bed for sleeping. The Moore household now hosts a nightly “battle of the snorers.” Guess who always wins?

In this case, the adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” couldn’t be more appropriate. Verbiage is unnecessary. The happy faces of the Moore family and, of course Mr. Zeus, say it all.
Shelter Updates

Happy fall to all of our supporters! Our volunteer organization has been busy since the last newsletter was published. We have held monthly outside adoption events with North Shore Animal League America at locations around the New Haven area. In August, our adoption event was in conjunction with the 3rd Annual Appetizer and Dessert Crawl, which was a sell out and helped to raise money for our organization – it was the biggest crawl we’ve had yet, and we were so happy to see everyone who stopped by to see our animals that day. We are already looking forward to next year’s event!

Thanks to your support, our volunteer funds were used to help provide care for some of the dogs and cats who entered our shelter in need of medical attention. We appreciate your kindness and generosity in giving us much needed funds that helps us care for the shelter animals.

Please look on our social media sites to find out about our future outside adoption events! We are planning on going to Bishop’s Orchards in November and Hamden Petco in December. We are also going to have our annual Santa pictures in December, with volunteer Leo as our Santa. Hope to see you at our events!

We’re home! FNHAS Graduates
Our Special Thanks

A Dog’s Life
Bear’s Smokehouse New Haven
Awning Cleaning Industries, Inc.
Bishop Woods School
Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel Religious School CT
HOBY
The Curran Foundation
Davis St. School Student Council
Deep River Elementary School
District Athletic Club
Cheryl Earle
Karen Hanson
Highville Charter School
June Holmes – Happy Birthday from all your pals!
The Mabel B. Fischer Grant Foundation
The Barbara A. Mente Estate
Oak Haven Table & Bar
Olives and Oil New Haven
Elizabeth, Elijah, and Ezra Smolinski
St. Francis and St. Rose of Lima School Student Council
St. Thomas Day School Kindergarten
Three Sheets New Haven
Christine Wetzel
Yale University Properties

Amazon Wish List donors:

Brittany Cates
Melanie Hellwig
Anonymous In Memory of George Hance
Erika, Nate and shelter alums Olive and Harvey
Angelica Silva
Marissa Purificato
Soheil, Serima and Nellie
and many anonymous donors!

In Honor Of

Jessica Artemchuk “donated on behalf of A. Artemchuk’s Capstone Project for the Bethany Middle School.”
Rene Bacon in honor of Nolan Cotlier.
Catherine Benedetti in honor of “Casy, just adopted.”
Kathleen Boudreau and Debra Halverson in honor of Elaine Spinato, “Happy Birthday to a dear friend.”
Mary Drury in honor of Duffy.
April Feathers & Fred Jungeblut in honor of “our rescued cat, Maggie.”
Edith Fisher in honor of “Abbie, proud alum.”
Holly Flugrath in honor of “those who help save lives.”
Barbara Kagan and Mike Jones in honor of “Woody and Pops, our buddies.”
Melanie Joseph in honor of “the orange male cat rescued from Dixwell and Charles on 9/19/19.”
Dawn Landon in honor of Dave Holley’s birthday.
Susan Yolen and Charles and Christine Fabian in honor of Tim Yolen’s “milestone 70th birthday!”
WE THANK YOU - IN MEMORIAM

Janice Abele in memory of Margert Foley and Martha Sullivan.

Joan and Bill Aquilino in memory of Lucy and Licorice 2.

Anne Bailey in memory of Pookie.

John Barnard in memory of Penda, "a very sweet (and long-lived, over 18 years) pup, beloved companion of Chris Barnard & Lauren Anderson."

Kathryn Barringham in memory of Andy, Ben, Max, Emma, and Sam.

Richard Bates in memory of Ginger and Lilly - "great little girls."

John and Eileen Brannigan in memory of Raven.

Emily Brink in memory of Magic.

Thom Brown and Marsha Rabe in "loving memory of Daisy, the find of a lifetime, and in honor of Anne, who gave her the best life any dog ever had."

Laurel C. Casey in memory of Fred the chihuahua, "forever loved."

Robert Cole in memory of Che, "the beloved kitty of Dr. Nadia Ameen."

Linda Coppola in memory of Mark Drenzek.

Robin Corvino in memory of Ally.

Laura Cricco in memory of Jessica, "the sweetest, most loving standard poodle ever. Miss you so much."

Dean Criscio in memory of Allan Nystrand.

Edward Danaher in memory of Beau.

Fred and Francis Desenti in memory of Mary Conlon.

Barbara and Fiona Fren in memory of Jim Spinato, "a big hearted animal lover."

David and Moira Hambleton in memory of Paula Saccu.

I. Haynie in memory of Bonnie J. Pavone.

Daniel Hopkins in memory of Bailey, "a FNHAS dog."

Kate and Peter Hvizdak in memory of Michael Kiernan, "a dear friend."

Janice Izzo in memory and honor of Patricia Dube.

Barbara Kagan and Mike James in memory of "Noggin, the Uber Dog."

Susan Keeney in memory of "my grandmother."

Jean Koepke in memory of "beloved Possum and Ticker."

Allison Kravitz in memory of "our beloved Toby, the greatest dog in the world."

Mary Lee in memory of Birdman, "beloved dog of David Ramos and friends."


Deena and Brian McCarthy in memory of Murphy.

Pat and Karen McCarthy in memory of Lola and Belle.

Neco McFadden in memory of Loe.

Pat Miner in memory of Finnigan.

William Moss in memory of Dolly, Buddy, and Shadow.

The Oehrle Family in memory of "our beloved cat, Fiona."

Regina Paulhus in memory of Tucker Sheetz, "a good boy."

Hollis Redding in "loving memory of Martha Grace. Our hearts are broken at your loss. Love mama and Emily Claire."

Russell Reynolds in memory of Skipper, Kasper, White Sox, and Oscar.

Edward Saccu in memory and honor of Lois and Paula.

Marsha Silverman in memory of Muffin.

Anna Simone in memory of Denzel, Rusty, Smokey, Lady, Misty, and Brutus; "to all my beautiful dogs and companions. Miss you all."

Elaine Spinato in memory of Barbara Sullivan Stanley.

Veronica Stankowski in memory of Jennifer and Neville.

Linda Turski in memory of Oakley, "forever missing you."

Carol Walker in memory of "Mister, who went over the Rainbow Bridge, Feb. 28, 2019."

Cynthia Walker and Patrick Edwards in memory of Mindi, "our beloved Boston terrier. Our house is empty without your daily antics."

In Memory of Jerome Davis

Vin Como "In loving memory of my dear friend, Jerome Davis."

Rachael Harvey

Marsha Rabe in memory of Jerome Davis, "a gentle gentleman."

Deb Wan
Save These Dates!

November 17, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Bishop’s Orchard, Route 1 Guilford, 11:30 AM - 3 PM

December 1, 2019 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, Hamden Petco, 2335 Dixwell Ave., 11:30 AM - 3 PM

December 8, 2019 - Santa pictures at the New Haven Animal Shelter, 81 Fournier St., New Haven, 1 - 4 PM

January 1, 2020 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League, North Haven Petco, 390 Universal Dr., North Haven, 11:30 AM - 3 PM

February 9, 2020 - Adoption event with North Shore Animal League - site TBD.

Theses dates may change so please check our website for confirmation.