

Foster families making a difference for animals



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By Nate Smelle

Every week Bancroft This Week and the Bancroft Times feature several cats and/or dogs rescued by Home Again that are up for adoption. According to Home Again volunteer, foster and adopter Mary Freeman, last year alone Home Again rescued 145 cats and 95 dogs. Pointing out how this tends to be the average number of animals in need of care by Home Again throughout North Hastings each year, she said the organization is needed now just as much as it was since it was founded in 2009. Considering how much time, effort and resources go into rescuing a single animal, Freeman understands that Home Again's success in rehoming the animals it rescues would not be possible without the foster families that temporarily provide them with shelter and care. Dannielle Dudgeon and her husband joined Home Again's team of foster families last summer. Since then, she said the experience has proven to be far more rewarding than she expected. At first, Dudgeon said her husband was resistant to the idea of becoming a foster for Home Again, because of the commitment it requires. Now that they have provided shelter and care for several dogs, she said he is totally onboard. Currently, Dudgeon said they are fostering two seven-year-old dogs named Millie and Shyla who happen to be sisters. Fostering has been such a positive experience for them, she encourages others who want to help animals to consider signing up. "It is very rewarding, and I find it really motivates a person to get out there with the dogs, and put themselves in different situations," said Dudgeon. "If you are thinking of getting an animal yourself but you're not sure, that's another great reason to foster, because then you get a feel for it. Plus, you are really helping the animals." Dudgeon said that one of the most enjoyable aspects of fostering an animal is seeing them find the right home. Though it can be difficult to let them go, she said watching a dog and its new

owner meet for the first time is a beautiful experience. "It's amazing to watch that connection between the dog and their new owners," said Dudgeon. "It's sad to see them go, but it's happy at the same time." Having fostered 18 cats over the past year and a half, Kendra Kilpatrick and her family understand how rewarding the experience can be. She said the idea to get involved with Home Again as a foster family initially came from her nine-year-old daughter Brynn. Finding a forever home for the last two kittens they were caring for over the holidays, Brynn said her family has now taken on two new kittens named Peep and ALF. Through her experience as a foster, she has learned just how much time, effort and funds are necessary for Home Again to help care for the animals it rescues. "Sometimes the animals need treatments because they have fleas, or they might be a little sick," Brynn said. "It's good to know that while you are fostering them you can keep them healthy, so the people who adopt them don't have to pay as much. Fostering is important because you can help animals and get them adopted so they can have a better life." After noticing a collection can for donations on the counter of a local store, Brynn thought of another way to help the animals at Home Again by starting her own Christmas fundraising drive. By the time the holiday season was over, she had raised \$80 for the organization. Widely known for her work protecting Ontario's turtles and their habitat throughout cottage country, last spring Kelly Wallace decided to rescue another species for a change - a two-year-old cat from Home Again named Merle. After bringing Merle home, she said it didn't take long for her new furry friend to become a part of the family. Though the summer months can be depressing at times because of all the injured and dead turtles she finds, Wallace said Merle is always there to comfort her when she gets home from a rough day. "She brings so much love into the house," Wallace said. "It's really nice to have a little animal in the house that looks to you to love them and to care for them. It's kind of a trade-off - we take care of her and she takes care of us." For more information on Home Again and the services they offer visit their website at: www.homeagainbancroft.ca. To find out more about adopting one of the cats or dogs rescued by Home Again; or to get involved as a volunteer or a foster contact: info@homeagainbancroft.ca; or 613-334-8471.