

Missing cat leaves lasting legacy

18th Annual Puss 'n Boots Ball set for October 24

BY CAROLE MOSKOVITA

In 1989 Sally Melton's cat, Ethel Ann, went missing from her Talent home. Frantic, Sally phoned the Jackson County Animal Shelter to see if they had found her. They hadn't; but Sally was impressed by the way Colleen Macuk, a Shelter employee, responded to her call.

"Colleen was so kind and wonderful to me," said Sally, "I knew I just had to meet her."

Later, Sally drove to the "pound" as it was then known and Colleen invited her to take a look for herself. Although she didn't find her cat, Sally did discover that the facility could use more help. Disinfectant was in short supply, the cat cages had no kitty litter or containers, no dogs were being walked, etc. Sally, still hoping her cat would turn up, began to visit daily, often stopping beforehand to buy some kitty litter and pans for the cats, then staying to walk a dog or two. When her friends learned what she was doing, they started coming along as well.

Eventually Sally Melton's prodigal cat returned home. But by this time, Sally and her friends had found their passion—helping the animals housed at the county pound. Colleen Macuk, now Program Manager for the Jackson County Animal Shelter, says that although she had already started a small volunteer program, it wasn't until "Sally showed up and just ran with it" that the program really took off.

In December 1990, with \$200 seed money from the Yolo County California SPCA (a group Sally had previously worked with), the prelude to what became the "Puss 'n Boots Costume Ball" took place in Pioneer Hall in Ashland. This early event involved the supporters of the Jackson County pound and the Southern Oregon Humane Society. It raised almost \$2,000.

In 1991, the pound's volunteers applied for non-profit status as the euphemistically renamed Friends of the Animal Shelter (FOTAS). Later that year, another of the early volunteers, Fredricka Lawrence, came up with the idea of putting on a costume ball fundraiser to tie in with the Halloween season. Volunteer Marcia Price dubbed the event Puss 'n Boots, named after a 17th century fairy tale about a clever cat with magic boots who helped his master find good fortune.

This year marks the 18th year the Friends of the Animal Shelter will hold the Puss 'n Boots Ball. Set for Saturday, October 24, at the Historic Ashland Armory, the colorful event, voted "most fun fundraiser" by readers of a local magazine, traditionally attracts a high-spirited, imaginative group of animal lovers from all over Southern Oregon and Northern California.



Eliza Kauder, who starts working on her costume each September, says she never misses it because she enjoys "spending the evening with generous and creative people from all over the Rogue Valley." She adds that "the fabulous food, costume contests and great music keep us howling all night long!"

Julia Roupp, long-time FOTAS volunteer and current board member, said that she's "lost track of how many years I've emceed the Puss 'n Boots Ball, but I never grow tired of being a part of such a fun evening. It's such a hoot to see the costumes people come up with." She said she finds the variety of types and ages of people who attend as interesting as why they attend. But, whether they come for the "great auctions and food, or for the costumes and dancing, everyone joins in to help homeless animals in a very festive way."

Rich Werich, another Puss 'n Boots veteran who plans on making this the 15th consecutive year he's attended, said he goes for the "fun, camaraderie, costumes, dancing ... and most of all, the warm feeling I get in my heart when I see the

dedication and devotion people have to the animals of the Rogue Valley."

Last year more than 220 attended the event that raised about \$24,000. All the proceeds went to support FOTAS programs including a medical fund for Shelter animals needing special medical treatment to make them healthy and adoptable. Peggy Moore, current FOTAS president, stresses that "this year—since the Shelter receives no General Fund money from the county—FOTAS again will help with medical support as well as 'Two-Fur-One,' a program that saves the lives of cats and kittens by paying a second adoption fee."

FOTAS also funded and helps the Shelter maintain a fenced play yard for dogs and the Slim Jim dog-walking path. More than 210 active FOTAS volunteers care for animals at the Shelter. They also maintain photo-boards at locations featuring adoptable pets; provide foster homes for dogs or cats needing temporary special attention; and participate in educational programs.

This year's Puss 'n Boots Ball has many attractive features, including a gourmet dinner buffet by Quality Catering from Cafe Dejeuner. There will also be a cash bar with a great selection of fine wines and spirits and dancing to the music of The Rogue Suspects. This well-known local group has an eclectic mix of Texas-style shuffles combined with East-Coast jazz, an old rock 'n' roller on bass and a Motown drummer. Costume prizes will be awarded to best group, couple, or animal-theme costumes; and the most creative, scary and unusual costumes. Participants will have the chance to bid on hundreds of items donated by regional businesses and artisans during a silent auction. FOTAS is also doing a second year of live auction items featuring, among other things, vacation getaways to the Siskiyou Mountains, Ashland, and the Pistol and Smith River areas; and a beautiful hand-made quilt with a dog theme.

The fun starts at 6 pm on Saturday, October 24 at the



Historic Ashland Armory, 208 Oak Street, Ashland. Tickets are \$35 per person; \$315 for a table of 10. Advance tickets go on sale October 1 at Paddington Station in Ashland or by calling 541-821-8291. Early purchase of tickets is encouraged as the event often sells out.

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Photos clockwise from left: Chick Magnet and Chicks; Woodstock Couple; Palin the Aliens and First Dudes.

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