



Dakin Pet Health Center – Caring for our Community

This summer marks the arrival of the long-awaited Dakin Pet Health Center (PHC). For years we have been moving towards the goal of opening a medical center that offers wellness exams, vaccinations, sick pet care, diagnostics, x-rays, lab work and routine surgeries for publicly owned cats and dogs throughout the Pioneer Valley.

In 2020 Clinic PLUS, a pilot program, was created to offer pets the ability to be seen at Dakin for minor medical issues before launching our multi-day-a-week PHC.

75% of people with pets can't afford an unexpected vet bill over \$400

The pandemic has shown us how easily our lives can be overturned, and how anyone can be just one crisis away from needing help. Circumstances on a national level reveal that more and more people are facing hardships in securing veterinary care for their beloved animals. Shelters across the country have been witnessing an increase in pet surrenders, due to the economic strains faced by many.

Dakin's values reflect what many are now coming to realize; we cannot help pets without helping their people, and therefore, offering medical services to the public and their pets becomes vital. We believe in reaching pets before a crisis presents itself, or before treatment becomes too expensive. We believe giving people payment options will keep their pets by their side.



INSIDE:
Meet Dr. Muth,
pictured here
with his pup
Harmony

When pets stay with their people, it also reduces the number of animals unnecessarily entering the shelter, and allows us to focus our efforts, resources and support on the most vulnerable populations who are brought to us as a last resort.

According to Jack Muth, DVM, PhD, the public medical and education director for the PHC, "Many times Dakin needs to rehome pets with medical conditions that - had they been caught earlier - might not have overwhelmed their families and resulted in surrender. People really love

see **CENTER** inside

Inaccessibility to veterinary care cuts across all walks of life:

25%

of Americans have experienced a barrier to vet care in the last two years

30%

can't cover the bill for a pet emergency within 30 days

80%

of people can pay off a \$400+ vet bill over time

A Community Rallies for 28 Guinea Pigs

One of the most challenging moments for Dakin is an unexpected intake of several pets at once when our animal population is already high.

Such was the case on May 25 when we received 28 guinea pigs, in addition to the 22 pigs already in-house. Our total animal population then exceeded 200, double the figure of the previous month!

They had been left in a box, next to a dumpster, where a Good Samaritan found them and brought them to Dakin. Staff members carefully examined the group, and found that many of the females were pregnant, and 22 had ringworm, a contagious fungal infection that affects the skin. Ringworm treatment involves 2-3 months of daily care including oral medication, fungal cultures and medicated baths.



(above) Dakin staff during intake of guinea pigs. (right) Some of our newest arrivals!

At that point, Dakin's guinea pig population was 50, an overwhelmingly large number for staff to treat. Help was needed immediately to house - and treat - many of them and adopt out the existing piggies.

Dakin got the word out, which was soon shared through countless channels. A plea for fosters as well as financial support and adopters went out. We knew that asking for foster parents to help with ringworm piggies was a tall order.

Within 48 hours, amazingly, every available guinea pig had an interested adopter, and we received over 58 foster caregiver inquiries from individuals on standby, ready to help.

We are in awe of how our Dakin community came together so quickly to help these delicate creatures who needed emergency attention. It was inspiring and a huge relief to our team. In particular, we're grateful for the fosters who

were kind enough to take home a piggy with ringworm to heal them.

Thanks to animal lovers like you who stepped up to help divert a crisis and send these 28 sweet souls, plus their offspring, onto a better path.



PEPPER RATINGS

Nervous, but can be touched

Somewhere in the middle

Straight-off-the-street feral



How to Measure Kitten Spice Levels

At Dakin, we like to describe kittens and cats who are a bit on the feisty side as "spicy."

Our adoption center team devised a clever cage card to indicate the "spice level" of certain kittens on a scale of 1 pepper to 3 peppers. Important handling info is noted on the card so we can put these little nuggets in the right hands.

Our Adoption Center staff discusses the needs of these kittens with adopters, and they get info to take home. These kittens' first real bond with a person is their adopter, but

it's love you have to work for!

Most kittens come in as a 3, then have an evaluation phase when they spend time with staff and volunteers who provide them with treats, playtime, and socialization, which gets them more accustomed to people. They become adoptable when they're rated 1-2 peppers.

If you're wondering about the "Caution - may attack" notation, kittens have different responses to fear, and this helps the staff identify how to care for them safely.



KITTEN
STREET TEAM

A Mother's Day Rescue

A call came in to the Kitten Street Team (KST) on Mother's Day from a concerned woman named Carol who found four weak and wobbly kittens in her backyard. They had emerged from a hiding space under her deck in search of their mother, who sadly, had been hit by a car and not survived.



The three-week-old kittens were desperately hungry and their raspy cries were heartbreaking to hear. Carol gathered them together and gently placed them in a box. KST volunteer Alesha arrived soon afterward with an Emergency Kitten Kit and began to bottle feed the quartet in Carol's garage while she asked her questions about the litter.

"Carol was so happy to be able to see the kittens getting some food in their bellies," recalled Alesha. "After all, there's nothing quite like seeing a hungry, crying kitten satiated, eyes closed and ears twitching, until they're love-drunk and purring."

The kittens, three males and one female, were dubbed Apollo, Hercules, Zeus and Athena. They would now need a foster caregiver who could bottle feed them and help them to thrive, and Jennifer stepped up. We are grateful for the loving actions of Carol, Alesha, and Jennifer in helping these vulnerable kittens.

I want to express my gratitude for the KST, and particularly Alesha, who came to our home on Sunday evening after we discovered a litter of kittens under our deck. Our trail camera showed that the mother cat had not returned to them overnight.

Alesha took them home for the night to feed and keep them warm and even sent me a photo the next morning to show me that they were sleeping and doing well.

Had it not been for the recommendation of Alanna at Dakin, who steered us to the KST, we would not have known this team existed and the outcome might not have been a good one, as we have seen an uptick in coyote activity in this area.

Thank you again for volunteering.

Regards, Carol

Carol's Letter
to the KST

WHAT'S IN AN EMERGENCY KITTEN KIT?

Carrier	Canned kitten food
Thermometer	Oral syringes
Karo syrup for dehydration	Toilet paper
Cotton swabs	Blanket
Bottled water	Heating disc
Powdered formula	Instant hand warmer packs
Bottles	Portable scale

THE ROBO-TRAP *Trapping with Technology*

The Kitten Street Team's (KST) devotion to help curb the feral cat and kitten population through humane trap/neuter/return (TNR) efforts has found a new ally in technology. Introducing the Robo-Trap!

Anna, a longtime KST volunteer, saw a diagram on Facebook for an automatic device that indicates to trappers when a cat has entered the open end of a trap. The trapper then pushes a button on their smartphone, the opening snaps shut and the cat is ready to be transported for care.

Intrigued by the prospect, Anna outfitted a TNR trap last March with the following items:

- An actuator – it controls the locking and unlocking of doors
- A circuit board – it controls the trapping unit (requires portable WiFi)
- A camera inside the trap – confirms that the cat has entered the trap and is in place for the door to close

Unlike typical TNR efforts where the trapper needs to be nearby and await the cat's arrival, Anna can be virtually anywhere to

activate the cage door to close with her iPhone.

"Before the Robo-Trap, we'd set traps and wait, but sometimes cats could detect us nearby and not enter the trap," she noted.



"This lets me be hidden away." Her stats are impressive. As of mid-June, 28 of the 79 cats and kittens Anna has caught this year have been Robo-Trapped.

"If I can reduce my time out trapping, I can do more. I can have multiple active trapping sites," she stated. "After all, why not have technology work to your advantage?"

The Robo-Trap may pave the way for the future of TNR efforts!

PAWS & YOU: SAVING LIVES

What do a Georgia-transplanted kitty and a feisty rabbit have in common?

The love of Dakin supporters.

Also, the fact that each has benefitted from Dakin's P.A.W.S. Program (Program for Animal Wellness), and have taken steps (and hops) toward a brand-new life, thanks to you.

P.A.W.S. is a program created to tend to the many animals we receive with a wide variety of special needs. Our medical and behavioral teams create patient-specific treatment plans to address each animal's unique needs and situations.

Baby Billy is one of our current patients. He came to Dakin in a cat transport from a Georgia shelter. The handsome five-year-old with the striking green eyes had undergone surgery on his right front leg,

but was showing signs of pain in both front legs when he arrived. X-rays revealed fracture injuries to his left front leg, presenting unique challenges in his treatment. Billy's pain is being managed while Dakin's veterinary team consults with an orthopedic surgeon to handle both his old and new injuries.

A few years back it was conservatively estimated that the average cost of care each Dakin animal incurred pre-adoption was \$705. At this point, Billy's ongoing treatment has totaled more than seven times that figure, which is not a typical scenario, but one made possible thanks to those who support us through the P.A.W.S. program.

Another recipient of your care is Esther, a 1 ½ year old rabbit who spent a record-breaking 317 days in Dakin's care and



Baby Billy -
on the mend!

Esther -
home at last!



with a devoted foster family, until she found her new home this past spring. Described as a "little ball of sass with a big personality" in her pet profile, Esther's medical concerns were minor, but her length of stay was excessive. Her foster caregiver noted that she could jump a 30" high cage and "will laugh while doing it." Dakin's staff was so elated when Esther finally found her new home that they decorated her cage with goodbye messages.

Sixty percent of animals admitted to Dakin have diverse medical/behavioral needs, and the P.A.W.S. program guides them on the path to adoption. Thanks to you, P.A.W.S. patients

receive specialized surgeries, medications, lab work, behavioral plans and more during their treatment.

If all of the animals like Baby Billy and Esther that we have treated through P.A.W.S. could share their new life with you, they would, but it's left to us to assure you that your generosity and concern for their happiness has lifted them up in so many ways. And us as well. Thank you for caring about each one of the animals.

CENTER *cont. from front*

their pets and want them to have medical treatment when they need it. We want to serve them, including those who are under-resourced but providing for a pet."

A key function of the PHC model is our ability to offer multiple payment plans that

provide people with the relief of knowing that they can safeguard their pet's health and stay together while meeting other essential expenses in their lives.

Clients also have the peace of mind of knowing that what they pay to and through the PHC is reinvested back into shelter programs and thereby

helping more animals in need.

Dakin's role in our community is not solely to provide adoption services, but to deliver services that improve the lives of animals in need and the people who care about them. The PHC is just one of the many supportive services Dakin makes available to help pet caretakers keep their families intact.

Meet Dr. Muth

Jack Muth, DVM, PhD, is the medical director of public medical and education services at Dakin's Pet Health Center (PHC). His responsibilities include setting up the PHC and helping to run the PHC as well as seeing its dog and cat patients.

"I'm excited by Dakin's mission to provide affordable high-quality veterinary care to all animals in need."

Dakin Foster Pets Inspire Preschoolers

Marna, a longtime Dakin foster and preschool teacher, came up with a brilliant idea to engage her students and provide some enrichment for Noodle and Linguini, two mice she was fostering last winter.

She converted her schoolroom into a veterinarian's office, with play stations for different pet treatments, and carried the caged mice with her to school. The children were able to watch Noodle and Linguini burrow into their dens, eat snacks and race on their exercise wheel.

"They watched them constantly and giggled like crazy," Marna recalled. "The mice provided lots of laughs, and because they were extremely active, they made perfect classroom pets."

Meanwhile, other preschoolers were busy at their "work stations," performing exams, giving vaccines and gently handling their stuffed animal patients. "It brought out their gentle, caring nature to work together to 'care' for the patients," said Marna. "Several say now that they want to work with animals when they grow up!"

Will there be future visits from some tiny Dakin ambassadors to Marna's classroom? Definitely," she stated. "I love to bring in new experiences for the children, and do sweet and different things for them that they'll be excited about and benefit from. We enjoyed it so much and look forward to fostering more 'smalls' for Dakin. It's a win/win!"



Marna's students were enthralled by their guests



The doctor is in!



Compassion in the classroom



JACK MUTH, DVM, PhD

Public Medical and Education Director

Dakin Humane Society
Pet Health Center (PHC)

the community to help keep pets with their loving families," he stated. "An additional role is educating the public about health issues facing pets in our community, and I will also be mentoring interns who will be rotating through the Pet Health Center."

Dr. Muth most recently served as an associate veterinarian at Hampden Veterinary Clinic, Belchertown Veterinary Hospital, and Canterbury Tails Veterinary Clinic in western Massachusetts, and a number of hospitals and clinics in Michigan. He was a per diem veterinarian in Colorado and New York City, and conducted an externship at the Hluvukani Animal Health Center in South Africa.

Dr. Muth earned a PhD in Pathology (Virology) and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Colorado State University, as well as a BS in Animal Science from Cornell University.

"I'm a New Englander at heart, having grown up in Connecticut," he noted. "I've had the opportunity to work in a wide range of practices including shelter, large animal, exotic and urgent care/emergency. I am always up for a new challenge!"

EVENTS



Sunday, September 18

Fort Hill Brewery, Easthampton

Dakin's 7th annual dog party, Barks & Brews, at Fort Hill Brewery in Easthampton is an outdoor, dog-friendly party for humans and canines!

whisker
WONDERLAND

Saturday, November 12

Cedars Banquet Facility,
Springfield

Come take a walk in a Whisker Wonderland with 35 local vendors and their cat-centric crafts at The Cedars.



Scan code to view our calendar and learn more about both events!



Dakin Humane Society



What is Fever Coat?

Meet Verdell. While he has many special qualities, the salt & pepper pigment to his coat was a temporary anomaly. It's known as fever coat (or stress coat). This fairly uncommon phenomenon occurs when an adult cat experiences an illness or severe stress that causes a spike in body temperature during pregnancy. During feline gestation, the pigmentation of a kitten's coat is very sensitive to heat. If a mom cat experiences a fever due to illness or prolonged stress, it has the potential to affect the developing pigment of her kittens' fur.

Fever coat typically presents as silver, grey, or cream-colored coats, most prominent at the tips of the fur, darkening toward the root. It creates a visually striking coat but has no negative implications for the kitten's overall health going forward. Even though their coat pigment did not fully develop in the womb, their coat color is still written in their DNA and will present a little later in the kitten's life. Fever coat typically resolves around four months of age but can take up to a year in some cases.



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