



Inside DAKIN

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT ANIMALS AND THE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THEM

WINTER 2026

A NOTE FROM MEG

When I look at the stories in this issue of *Inside Dakin*, I'm reminded that our mission takes many forms—and that each one is made possible by people who care deeply about animals and our community.

You'll meet Meghan Delaney, whose 13 years of medical expertise have helped countless animals heal. You'll see that care in action through LaLa's long journey back to health, and in the behind-the-scenes teamwork that helps animals find the right homes. You'll meet Grub Hub and her six kittens, rescued because someone was willing to respond when they needed help. And you'll see Dakin reaching beyond our walls, connecting people with resources and building relationships throughout our community.

You'll also meet the volunteers who greet everyone who comes through our doors and the people who open their homes to foster animals in need.

These stories may be different, but they share something important: none of this happens alone. It takes dedicated staff, volunteers, fosters, adopters, community partners—and donors like you.

Thank you for being part of that team. Your support gives Dakin the ability to keep responding, keep evolving, and keep being there for animals and the people who love them.

With gratitude,

Meg Talbert
Executive Director
Dakin Humane Society



TROUBLE THE FERRET ▲

Trouble Finds A FRIEND



Don't let his name fool you—Trouble was anything but during his short stay at Dakin.

Five-year-old Trouble, a brown ferret, arrived at Dakin on July 21 after his family's move meant they could no longer bring him along. At five, Trouble is considered a senior ferret, as ferrets have a typical lifespan of five to seven years. But despite this change in his life, his sociable, playful personality quickly shone through. His previous family described him as friendly to everyone, fond of interacting with people, lazy, and rambunctious.

And then, almost as quickly as Trouble arrived, the right person found him.

Just hours after Trouble's profile appeared on Dakin's website, Tim and Tracy spotted him. Their senior ferret, Baloo, had recently lost his ferret companion—and he was noticeably depressed without his friend. Trouble seemed like he might be the perfect new companion.

Three days after arriving at Dakin, Trouble went home with Tim and Tracy to meet Baloo.

The match has been a happy one. "Trouble is doing well and has gained a bit of weight, which is good," Tracy shared.

Trouble's story is a wonderful reminder of what can happen after a shelter surrender. Sometimes, the right home is already looking for an animal when they arrive. Other times, it takes longer for that connection to happen. Either way, because of the care and support made possible by Dakin's community of donors, animals like Trouble have a safe, welcoming place to land while they wait for what comes next.

Pet Adoption: **A BEHIND THE SCENES LOOK**

When animal populations rise at Dakin, the team doesn't wait for a problem to become a crisis. Discounted adoption events can help move animals into homes quickly, creating space for those who will arrive next. Sometimes they're planned a week or two in advance. Other times, a decision is made on Tuesday for an event that begins that Friday. Either way, making it happen takes coordination, preparation, and teamwork.

It starts with careful monitoring. Adoption Center Manager Alanna Regan and Senior Manager of Shelter Operations Mary Jane McGuire regularly assess the animals in Dakin's care, looking at overall population and the needs of particular groups, including dogs, cats, kittens, and Tiny Spirit Kittens. When numbers climb, an adoption promotion can help move animals into homes while creating room for animals still waiting to come into Dakin's care.

Once a promotion is planned, departments across Dakin spring into action. Marketing spreads the word, while adoption staff make sure animal profiles and photos are ready. Medical and behavior teams work to complete veterinary exams, health certificates, and assessments. Volunteers may be called in to help with "matchmaking"—connecting adopters with pets whose personalities and needs fit their lifestyles.



Dakin staff and volunteers celebrate the finale of the recent adoption fee discount event by displaying paperwork of pets who found homes.

The goal isn't simply to move animals quickly. It's to make thoughtful, lasting matches. Staff take the time to understand what adopters are looking for and to be transparent about each animal's medical or behavioral needs. On event days, that teamwork is especially visible. Staff organize lines, guide visitors, and carefully manage busy adoption areas, so families have time to meet the animals they're considering.

Behind every successful adoption is a team working together to make sure both the pet and the person are ready for what comes next. For Dakin's staff and volunteers, the reward is seeing animals who may have been waiting a long time finally head home—and knowing that the space they leave behind allows Dakin to help the next animal who needs them. The support of our community makes this responsive, collaborative care possible.

LaLa's Long **ROAD HOME**

When seven-year-old LaLa arrived at Dakin in late April, she had already been living with chronic diarrhea for years. Her person had recently passed away, and while LaLa was a gentle, easygoing cat, her ongoing medical issues made finding the right path forward a challenge.

Dakin's medical team got to work, conducting examinations, testing, and dietary trials to understand what was causing LaLa's discomfort. After ruling out parasites and finding no significant abnormalities in her blood work, the team eventually suspected a dietary intolerance or food allergy rather than Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Less than two weeks after arriving at Dakin, LaLa went into foster care with longtime volunteers Marcy and Jim Wyatt. Their observations about LaLa's personality and day-to-day behavior gave the team valuable insight while her medical care continued. Meanwhile, LaLa also spent time in Dr. Katie Spaulding's office, where she patiently greeted staff, watched the activity outside and—on occasion—seemed ready to assist with veterinary exams.

With a limited-ingredient diet and a course of steroids, LaLa's stools gradually returned to normal. Her medications

were carefully tapered, and by July 16—nearly three months after arriving at Dakin—she was ready for her next chapter.

That chapter began with Sue, who quickly fell in love with her. Today, LaLa is feeling great and embracing life with her new person, from racing up and down a spiral staircase to enthusiastically chasing birds and bugs on wand toys.

Sue summed up LaLa's journey with gratitude for the "medical services that brought her back to health." LaLa's story is a wonderful reminder of what can happen when a dedicated team, committed foster caregivers, and a supportive community come together for an animal in need.



LALA AT DAKIN ▶



FROM LEFT: Greeter Bethaney Healy, Adoption Center Manager Alanna Regan, and Greeters Diana Fordham, Diane Dow-Korbel, Dale Zlotnick, and Nancy Darnold

MEET DAKIN'S GREETER TEAM



Sue Blumenthal	Diana Fordham
Carolanne Campbell	Terrie Gaiser
Emma Candib	Elaine Harrison
Nancy Darnold	Bethaney Healy
Diane Dow-Korbel	Deanna Ridgway
Celeste Drake	Dale Ann Zlotnick

The Heart OF OUR FRONT DOOR

At Dakin, every person who walks through the front door arrives with a story. They might be excitedly anticipating a new pet, looking for help caring for an animal, bringing a donation—or facing one of the hardest moments people with pets can experience. Whatever the circumstance, there is often someone there to greet them.

Dakin's all-volunteer Greeter Team serves as the organization's first point of contact, offering a warm welcome while helping visitors find the information, services, or support they need. It's a role that requires kindness, flexibility, and a remarkable ability to meet people where they are.

"When I'm looking for someone to fill the greeter role, I focus heavily on finding someone whose personality aligns with Dakin's core values," says Volunteer Coordinator Luis Roche. "Our greeters interact with people from all walks of life, often during emotional or stressful moments."

That can make the role challenging. "The role also requires a great deal of emotional resilience," Luis says. "Greeters

need to be able to manage their emotions, remain present for the people they're helping, and have healthy ways to process difficult experiences afterward."

The greeters themselves say the rewards make it worthwhile. Bethaney Healy says, ***"I absolutely LOVE being a greeter and an ambassador for Dakin! This place is magical. It is special."***

And the job involves plenty of surprises. Sue Blumenthal says her responsibilities can include everything from sorting donations and assembling carriers to "mopping up the occasional 'oops.'" She also makes sure the dogs receive a little love—and sometimes a few puppy kisses.

For Diane Dow-Korbel, the greatest reward is "witnessing pets going home and living the life they deserve."

With 12 dedicated volunteers serving as greeters, Dakin's front door is in very good hands. Their warmth, compassion, and willingness to help ensure that anyone arriving at Dakin knows they've come to a place where they—and their pets—matter.



"I'm excited to be here at Dakin and I'm excited for whatever is next!"

A Meaningful Impact: **MEGHAN DELANEY**

For Meghan Delaney, no two days at Dakin are alike—and that's exactly how she likes it.

A veterinary technician at Dakin for 13 years, Meghan is one of the people working behind the scenes to make sure animals receive the medical care, attention, and comfort they need. Her days can include everything from meeting with fosters and adopters to handling intakes, starting treatments, administering medications, and responding to emergencies. "No day is the same!"

What keeps her motivated through all that activity? The animals.

"There's really nothing like seeing an animal that is suffering, and being able to do whatever I need to do. I love being able to provide that comfort and care that they need. Whatever they need."

Meghan's expertise has also helped shape Dakin's medical protocols and treatment guidelines. When the Kitten ICU was created several years ago, she was an important part of



bringing it to life. Her enthusiasm for the project is easy to understand: "My favorite things in the world are kittens!"

But Meghan's impact extends well beyond the animals she treats. She places enormous value on her coworkers and the way Dakin's teams support one another, especially when the work is difficult.

"We are in the trenches. We are dealing with really difficult things, and sometimes one of us will react a certain way, and we just help each other through it..."

That spirit of teamwork also extends to volunteers, fosters, and adopters. "We're creating a team; I'm one of the staff handling the medical stuff, volunteers are here to do the 'comfort care.' We all bond over that animal."

It's a fitting description of Meghan's role at Dakin: bringing expertise, compassion, energy—and occasionally a hot dog for the dogs—into the work of caring for animals and the people who love them.



Dakin Outside THE WALLS



Dakin's mission doesn't stop at our doors. Increasingly, our team is meeting people where they are—building relationships, listening to community needs, and connecting people and their pets with resources that can make a difference.

Over the past year, Dakin has become a more active presence at community events throughout the region, including Springfield Community Night Out, Chicopee Night Out, Big Community Day at Tower Square, Victory Cares Community Day: Back to School Event, and the Springfield Puerto Rican and Pride parades. At these events, staff and volunteers share information about resources such as the Community Spay/Neuter Clinic, Pet Health Center, Pet Food Aid Program, Moms Fixed Free, and Dakin's Thrift Shop.

But community outreach isn't simply about spreading the word. It's also about listening.

"A large initial priority of this community outreach initiative is to really listen and learn from our community," says Community Engagement Manager Kaitlyn Holloway. "We don't want to

prescribe what we think people's needs are, we want to hear them and bring resources in response to their actual lived experiences."

That work is strengthened through partnerships with organizations already serving local communities. Dakin is building connections through neighborhood councils, health and human-services organizations, and other community groups, creating opportunities to reach people who may not yet know about the resources available to them.

Those partnerships increasingly include local companies, too. Through sponsorships and Dakin's Days of Service, businesses can support Dakin while giving their employees opportunities to work together on projects such as creating enrichment items, landscaping, clearing dog-walking paths, and preparing supplies for the Pet Food Aid Program.

For Kaitlyn, the goal is simple: "I think it's important to see us active in the community, building trust with our neighbors, and growing the visibility of the resources we offer to support both people and pets."



DAKIN AT COMMUNITY EVENTS



DAKIN AT COMMUNITY EVENTS



MASSMUTUAL EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORMED A "DAY OF SERVICE" IN OCTOBER 2025

With the support of donors, volunteers, community partners, and companies that care, Dakin is finding new ways to bring its mission—and its resources—where they're needed most.

DAKIN GUARDIAN

When you join Dakin's Heartstring Circle as a Guardian Partner, you make a difference for animals year-round. Your ongoing support allows us to weather animal emergencies and meet the needs of pets throughout our community.

SIGN UP to give monthly and become a Dakin Guardian today!

Scan the QR code to sign up to give monthly.



Seven LITTLE HEARTS

When a finder contacted Kitten Street Team volunteer Anna about a mother cat and her kittens living in a backyard, Anna knew she needed to be prepared for a feral family.

But when she approached the mother, the cat walked right up to her—without a moment of fear or hesitation. Then she led Anna straight to six tiny kittens who had literally just been born. Their umbilical cords were still attached, and they weighed an average of 110 grams.

Into the carrier they all went, without a fuss.

Anna settled the little family in for the night. The next day, fellow Kitten Street Team volunteer Zoly called about another newborn kitten who had been left behind by her mother. Alone and vulnerable, the tiny kitten needed help.

Anna had an idea: "Bring her over. Let's see if my momma cat will accept her."

There was no guarantee it would work. But the mother cat accepted the orphan immediately. Soon, she was nursing six of her own kittens—and one tiny newcomer.

She was an extraordinarily devoted mom, working tirelessly to care for all seven. And yet, whenever she had the opportunity, she came looking for Anna's attention, too.



GRUB HUB AND HER LITTER

This hardworking mother wanted love and affection of her own.

The family was welcomed to Dakin and named Grub Hub and her seven babies: Tuna Turnover, Butterchubs, Salacious Krumb, Salsa Dapplecat, Junior Asparagus, Sergeant Salami, and Strawberry Vertigo.

Sadly, Tuna Turnover did not thrive and was humanely euthanized. But Grub Hub and her remaining six kittens are growing stronger in foster care.

For the Kitten Street Team, every rescue is an important step toward reducing the number of homeless cats and kittens in our community—and giving the ones they find a safer future.

