



I fell in love with senior dogs when my now-husband, Matt, and I went to Austin Animal Center on New Year's Eve 2015 to adopt our first dog together.

We wandered the kennels for a long time, meeting several wonderful dogs, but none of them was The One. Then, we passed a kennel that stopped me in my tracks. While most of the dogs in the building were barking and jumping and demanding our attention, this nine-year-old black lab, whose shelter name was Jackson, simply sat patiently, looking up at me as if to say, "Maybe you could be my mom?" When we took him for a walk, I was done.

We adopted Jackson that day and renamed him Hank, inspired by our mutual love for

Hank the Cowdog. Our time with Hank was too brief—he lived with us for just under two years before he passed away—but he made a permanent pawprint on my heart. I knew I wanted to continue giving homeless dogs like Hank the chance to find the homes they deserve, where they can be spoiled rotten and loved unconditionally.

Fast forward to December of 2018. Matt and I were engaged then and madly in love with a beautiful lab puppy we'd been gifted after Hank's death, but I was still searching for a way to support other rescues. We decided

NO-KILL IN AUSTIN

SARAH WELCH

In 2011, Austin became the country's largest no-kill city. But how did that happen, and what does it mean?

A movement in the late '90s, hadn't seen much traction, and in the mid-2000s, the city was killing about half of the animals that entered the shelter, roughly 14,000 per year. Meanwhile, a stray cat had showed up on Ryan Clinton's porch, spurring the young attorney to do some research about what to do with him—where to get him vaccinated, neutered, and anything else he might need.

In the process, Clinton came across the shelter stats, and he knew he had to do something. He started attending Animal Advisory Commission meetings, where he learned that he was just one of many eager to reform the system. The group started researching what other communities were doing—New York was the leader at that time—and formed a political organization called Fix Austin, with the goal of being the voice for animals in Austin.

While many animal stakeholders were resistant, the public was wildly supportive of turning Austin into a no-kill city. Fix Austin kept advocating, and eventually Emancipet's founder, Dr. Ellen Jefferson, joined the cause, becoming the new executive director of Austin Pets Alive! and unrolling foster programs, off-site adoptions, and more. Finally, the conversation shifted. The political advocates, the public, and now a key animal welfare stakeholder, too, were not only preaching but demonstrating the potential to save more of Austin's animals.

In March 2010, City Council approved a no-kill resolution that set a minimum save rate of 90 percent for Austin's homeless pets. By 2011, the city had surpassed that goal, and the save rate reached 97.5 percent in 2018. In March 2019, City Council voted unanimously to raise that threshold from 90 to 95 percent, reaffirming Austin's commitment to saving our homeless pets.

There's still a lot of work to be done, as our shelters are consistently at capacity. But the way our citizens have come together time and again in support of Austin's animals is truly inspiring.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Everybody has a skill set that can be put to work advocating for Austin's shelter pets. From adopting and fostering to donating time and money to spearheading marketing initiatives that educate the public on adoptable pets, and responsible pet ownership, each of us can lend a paw in one way or another to support animal welfare in Austin.

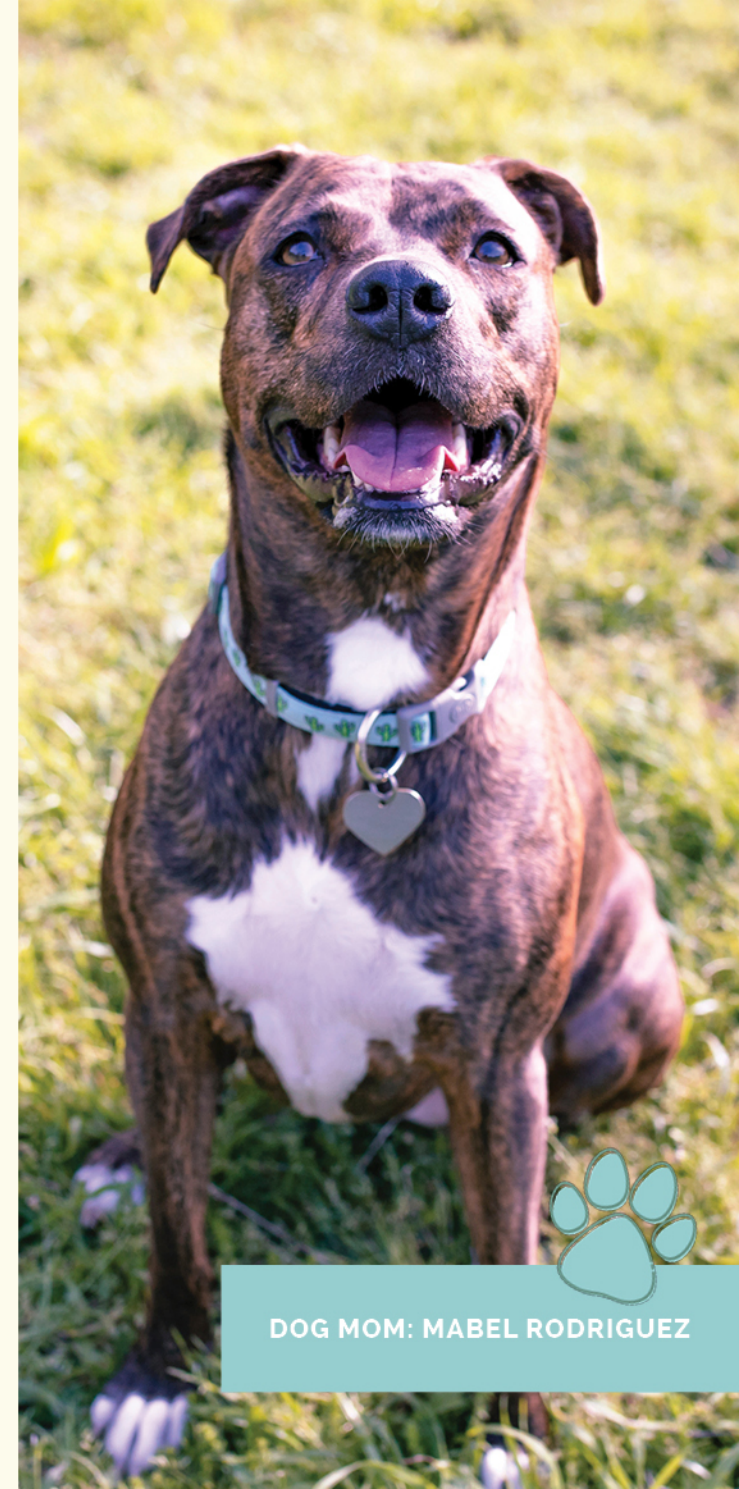
Scarlett

Scarlett, the Brindle Chicken

First thing I did when I moved to Austin in 2014? I got a kitten—pretty much immediately. I'd been dying to get a cat for ages! And now that I had graduated from college and was out on my own, it was the first move I made. My best friend, with whom I had moved in, got herself one, too. They came from the same litter—brother and sister—and we sat and watched them do nothing for about three days.

It was everything I wanted and more! The kittens brought playfulness and personality and fun into the apartment and helped me through those initial post-grad humps.

But after a while, life got very real and very hard...and it suddenly felt a little too easy to



DOG MOM: MABEL RODRIGUEZ

Charlie Brown

298 days. That was how long my sweet Charlie Brown was in my life, making each day a little brighter than the last.

Charlie was my very first foster from Austin Pets Alive! When I met Charlie Brown, I was told a few things about him. I was told he was deaf, likely had a bladder cancer diagnosis, had displayed signs of aggression in his previous homes, and had at one point been scheduled for euthanasia. It all made me go YIKES! But Charlie and I looked at each other and said, "Let's give this a try."

"THREE DAYS, THREE WEEKS, THREE MONTHS, THREE YEARS—HOWEVER LONG YOU NEED ME, YOU GOT ME."

Because he was deaf, Charlie insisted on keeping his human within eyeshot as much as possible, so the first month or so, when we slept, I would hear him getting up over and over again throughout the night. "Please don't try to eat me in my sleep, Charlie," I would joke. But he was just looking in on me to make sure I was still there. And that was all Charlie ever wanted: to make sure someone was still there for him. From day one I told Charlie, "Three days, three weeks, three months, three years—however long you need me, you got me." After a while, I realized I could not make Charlie, still a foster, adjust to another new home at his age. I couldn't imagine him feeling like he had to start searching for his human in the middle

of the night all over again. So, after seven months of loving him as a foster, I adopted him. During whatever time he had left, he would always know his human was there.

My dear sweet Charlie Brown passed away on June 20, 2019, 298 days after I first brought him home and a few short months after I formally adopted him. On that day, I was there holding him and comforting him until the very end. Charlie came to me a rescue, and everyone always gave me credit for rescuing him, when really there were a lot of kind, hardworking, dedicated people who came before me to do the really hard work. They saw a senior dog with health and behavioral issues and recognized that he still had love to give.

Thanks to the great folks at Austin Pets Alive!, Charlie had 298 days where he didn't have to worry about anything. Over those 298 days, he probably had 298 lipstick kiss marks on the top of his head and 1,000 or more of the walks he loved so much. He had 298 days of following me around to every



DOG MOM: VERONICA VILLARREAL



Rose

I'm so thankful that I live in Central Texas, where countless families support animal rescue, and this passion takes on many forms.

I join the collective effort by keeping my home at my own personal level of "max capacity." Meaning I don't wait. Our much-adored rescue dog, Riley, had just died, and because the shelters were full, I knew that I wanted to make space in my heart quickly for the next dog waiting to find us. The cycle is one of rescue, love, friendship, fun, comfort, and, of course, the heartbreak that comes with the inevitable goodbye. Then, I imagine the faces of all the other "Rileys" who are still waiting for someone to notice them.

This dog's story is a pretty typical one. She was a stray, nameless dog, roaming the streets, and she needed help. Was she discarded? Was she a loved pet who accidentally got out of her family's home? Either way, she was picked up by animal control, entered into the system, and never reclaimed. So there she sat in a kennel, no doubt confused. She was fed, sheltered, and safe, but she couldn't go back to the place she'd started; she could only wait and hope for someone to see her and to say yes.

I found her on an online pet search. The shelter in Temple, Texas, had posted what little they knew about her based on their observations, and I headed out to meet her. They brought her out and my first thought was, "Uh oh." She was much bigger than she had appeared in her picture, and she looked as strong as an ox. They handed me her leash, and I took a deep breath. She pulled me along the grass, barely even looking at me. I held on tight to that wild one's leash—and also to what I knew in my gut: that what

I was seeing in that moment was not really her. Her mind was spinning out. Although she received great care from a compassionate staff, she was not "showing well" due to the unavoidable stress of shelter life.

I brought her home, and my husband looked down at her and asked, "What is it?" We've decided she appears to be a mix between basset hound and pit bull, and now we laughingly refer to our gal as our little "Bass-e-Pit." That stray dog became our Rose: our snuggly, funny, joyful, intelligent, patient, silly, Rosie Posie hippo, chubby bunny, total chunk of joy incarnate.

Our rescue dogs' lives are stitched together. Their connected stories become our stories and fill me with peace and purpose. Riley left our hearts open for Rose, and Rose will honor other dogs who come after her, who just need someone to look beyond their confused, stray-dog-in-a-shelter behavior and see them. When we can manage that, the reward of our dogs' love and friendship is simply immeasurable. 🐾



DOG MOM: KARI HUGHES

Roscoe

When my husband and I are asked how we ended up adopting Roscoe, we say, "Our golden retriever really wanted a kid, so we got him a pug instead!"

We learned early on that our golden retriever, Simcoe, had a "thing" for pugs, and that began our search for the right pup! We have some good friends who are actively involved in Pug Rescue Austin and who who knew of a younger dog that would be looking for a home in the coming months. Without hesitation, we filled out the adoption form and went through the month-long process of becoming eligible adopters. Right as we were approved, Roscoe became available to be adopted. We took him for a week-long trial and knew that, even though he'd had two homes already, ours would be his forever home. Roscoe can be a challenge from

time to time, but with patience and love, he has slowly begun to fit into our family. He and Simcoe are officially brothers from other mothers, and they are inseparable. If Simcoe is asleep on the ground, Roscoe is lying on him. If Simcoe is outside, Roscoe is right behind him. It has been so beautiful to see their relationship develop. Adopting Roscoe is one of the best choices we've ever made! 🐾



DOG MOM: MILLIE CLARK

Sir Jack Wigglestubb & Dame Harlequin

I had moved to Austin in 2012 and, living in an apartment and working full time, I didn't think I had the time or space to adopt a dog.

But I was volunteering with APA! and, during Thanksgiving break 2013, I signed up to take a sleepover. I was asked to take a fourteen-year-old Chihuahua who'd been returned because he'd snapped when a four-year-old had pulled his ear.

That's how Jack came in to my life, on a chilly November day, wearing a Santa coat,

looking sweet, scared, and confused. He got a lukewarm welcome from Cassi, my cat, but he relaxed and settled in pretty quickly. After just a couple of days, the idea of putting this fragile soul in a kennel became unacceptable, and I signed up to foster him. Months went by, and as the oldest dog on APA's adoptable list, Jack didn't generate many inquiries. When he finally

did get some interest, the potential adopter said she would meet others, too, to decide who was the best fit. I had an odd feeling of pride in that moment. This wasn't about my Jack being good enough—it was about finding an adopter who was good enough for him! With that, I realized the only home I would be happy for Jack to be in was mine, so I made it official!

I adopted Jack thinking I would be able to spoil him for one or two years at most. He was approaching fifteen, and he had bad teeth, arthritis, and cataracts. After adoption, he had a dental procedure in which he lost thirteen of his teeth, leaving him with the cutest gap between his canines. Four years later, Jack was still going strong, and he, Cassi, and I moved out of the apartment and in to our own house. Jack finally had his own backyard!

Soon after, our pack grew to include Harley ("Dame Harlequin"). This sixteen-year-old, deaf Yorkie-shih tzu-doodle needed to be rehomed because her owner was going in



SIR JACK WIGGLESTUBB
DOG MOM: OLIVIA REINERT

Cooper

Most of Cooper's story is a mystery, but let us start here:

Cooper was found as a stray, running around with another dog in the streets of Nebraska. When the shelter picked both dogs up, they noticed Cooper had a mass on his right hip and immediately went to remove it, since Golden Retrievers are at higher risk for cancer. However, the veterinarians quickly realized that it was not, in fact, a mass but a bullet. Someone had shot this sweet old man.

Two weeks later, unbeknownst to us, Cooper was released from his medical hold and was officially up for adoption. We had decided to visit the local animal shelter "just to look." We were going to school in Nebraska at the time and were ready for our first dog. Needless to

say, all it took was one look at his sweet old face and his never-stop tail wag, and we were sold. Cooper had a new home with us, where he would never have a reason to stop wagging his tail.

"WE COULD NOT HAVE ASKED FOR A BETTER FIRST DOG!"

These days, Cooper enjoys sunbathing at his home in Austin, swimming at Barking Springs, and getting pets from everyone he meets. He is the best big brother to his two furry siblings, Apollo and Brooklyn. We could not have asked for a better first dog! 🐾



Photo courtesy of @greatgoldenweenie



DOG MOM: MELANIE DEMI



DOG MOM: KATHRYNE BOSCO

Pepper

The first half of 2015 was full of heartache and sadness.

My then-boyfriend's mother passed away in January, and my own mother was placed in hospice for cancer she'd been battling for years. I knew I wanted to adopt a dog, and all my friends agreed it would be good for me, but I didn't want to bring another creature into the midst of my depression and grief. After my mother died in June of 2015, I started to look seriously again for a dog. Even though I was still grieving, I thought a dog could help distract me from my pain. If nothing else, who can be sad when looking at pictures of puppies?

I saw Pepper's picture on AdoptAPet.com. Then called Janis, she was the cutest eight-week old border collie/blue heeler mix

with big, floppy ears. She looked so curious and ready for an adventure. She had been brought from a full shelter to the Central Texas SPCA with her three sisters. I knew I had to meet her immediately, and once I did, I fell in love. But I wasn't the only one smitten with this puppy; I was one of several applicants to adopt her. After several days of waiting, I received the first good news I'd had all year: I was chosen to be this pup's new mom! On August 8, 2015, I brought Janis home to her forever family and renamed her Pepper.

Raising my first puppy wasn't easy at the beginning, but she provided such a great distraction. It was easier to get through each day when I knew this sweet girl would greet me with joy and happiness every time I came home. Her precious snuggles melted all of the stress and sorrow that had marked my life for so long. On the days that I didn't think I could get out of bed, I did because of her. Our many walks and hikes, with plenty of sunshine and fresh air, helped me heal. I

may have rescued her from the shelter, but she rescued me from my pain.

Over time, Pepper would become my navigator on road trips, keep me warm on camping trips, and blaze trails for me to follow up mountains and across rivers. While she was learning to fetch and swim and play, I was learning to move forward in my life with less sadness and more fun. She was the reason I met new friends, explored new places, and got out of my comfort zone. With Pepper by my side, I gained confidence and learned about tenacity, resilience, loyalty, and love. I never thought a dog could help me heal from the loss of my mother, but with the right timing and the right dog, anything can happen. I look forward to getting Pepper certified to be a therapy dog so she can bring comfort and joy to others who need it. 🐾

Graham

In my early twenties, it wasn't practical for me to have a dog.

My schedule didn't provide the best environment, and I wasn't that reliable either. But after ending a decade-long relationship, I decided to work on myself and really focus on being a strong, reliable woman.

Eventually, I met Juan, and we began building our future and our home together. Finally, the time was right to adopt a dog. We started our search on the annual "Clear the Shelters" weekend in Austin, but all the dogs were stressed, likely due to the crowds. Juan suggested we come back the next weekend when there weren't so many people so we could better see the dogs' temperaments. The following weekend we saw that Texas Humane Heros was hosting an adoption event outside our local

PetCo, and that's when I saw him! This ten-week-old pit bull/Labrador (and more) mix they called Meloo had been found in a box with his brother and dropped off at Texas Humane Heros.

I always thought I would just know which dog was supposed to be mine. But here I was, staring at this adorable puppy, full of questions. Having grown up with a rat terrier, I was apprehensive about a large dog. I feared we might not bond or that I wouldn't care for him properly. I had waited so long to open my heart and home to a dog that I was anxious and overthinking everything. Juan and I stepped aside to talk, and that's when it happened: someone else approached to

look at him—at my puppy! And in that second I knew Meloo was my dog.

"AND IN THAT SECOND I KNEW MELOO WAS MY DOG."

We named him Theodore Graham (a.k.a. Teddy Graham), and now we just call him Graham. When we first brought him home, Graham was full of excitement for everything he encountered. We called him "Scrappy Doo" because he ran headfirst into everything. He would get overexcited around other dogs, pulling on his leash and always wanting to play rough or say hi. (With training, he learned to behave much more appropriately on his leash.) Now that he's a bit older, he's a little more apprehensive about things like loud noises, but we're happy to give him a little extra time to investigate new things.



DOG MOM: RHIAN VALENTINE



DARLA
DOG MOM: CATHERINE STARK



BOSCO
DOG MOM: JENNIFER ASBURY-HUGHES

Bosco the Mighty & Darla the Dark Lord

The Dogs of FingerPulse Media

Hi friends, my name is Bosco, and this is my colleague Darla (or DeeDee if you're close). I am a tri-colored border collie mix, and I was adopted from All Border Collie Rescue seven years ago last June. I have a very short tail that wags extra fast. I don't remember if I was born this way or if something happened when I was a wee pup. All I know is it makes people smile.

"KEEPING MY HUMANS RELAXED AND HAPPY IS WHAT I DO BEST."

My parents started FingerPulse Media about ten years ago, then hired me on as Chief Petting Officer in 2012. My folks say I have a talent for sensing and soothing stress. Keeping my humans relaxed and happy is what I do best. I am paid in chicken

