News

Best Friends for Life: The Earliest Dog Lovers

By Jasmine Streeter, DVM
Special to The Skanner News

Dr. Streeter

Many of us have heard the saying since childhood: Dogs are man's best friend. I have no choice but to agree since I am writing this piece as Sheba, my German Rottweiler, snores softly on my gray Chesterfield sofa. (Soleil, my Egyptian Mau, glares from the back of my chair as she reads the title of this article.) Turns out, dogs and humans have been friends for a very long time, for good reason, and research can prove it.

A recent study published in the Journal of Archaeological Science found humans may have developed emotional and caring bonds with their dogs around 14,000 years ago, during the Paleolithic era. The bone remains of a dog found in Bonn-Oberkassel, now a suburb of Germany, showed that its owner cared for it through multiple bouts of illness for weeks. The puppy suffered from distemper, a debilitating viral disease that without intensive care by humans would have resulted in death within days. These findings suggest that this puppy was a beloved pet that was near and dear to its owners' heart. Thankfully, due to modern medicine, canine distemper virus is nearly 100 percent preventable because of vaccines.

Fast forward to modern day and we can still appreciate the strong physical and emotional bonds that people share with their pets. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, with nearly 63 percent of households in the United States having a companion animal and nearly 69 million of those animals being dogs, it is no secret that dogs bring us joy.

Studies have found that dogs are good for mental health. They help people become more social and can even help you score a date. Dogs make us appear friendlier, less threatening and more approachable. Their presence brings added benefits of reduced stress, increased quality of life and may even extend longevity. As a dog lover and owner, I reap the rewards of my furry forever puppy every day. Sheba will be seven years old on March 8. Not only is she my best friend, but I am also hers. So if you are wondering, yes, there will be a party thrown in her honor.

It seems friendships between dogs and people are here to stay. As stewards of this earth, we are responsible for those who cannot take care of themselves. If you have been blessed to share your life with a dog that brings you joy, please email a picture to be featured in upcoming articles.

Ask Dr. Jasmine your pet question at drjasmine@theskanner.com.

Howard University Heads to Puerto Rico to Help

Students Give Up Spring Break for Recovery Efforts

By Tatyana Hopkins
NNPA Special Correspondent

PHOTO: JUSTIN D. KNIGHT/HOWARD UNIVERSITY

Ivon Alcime, a graduate communications major, helps build a cement wall at the School of Good Samaritans as part of a previous Alternative Spring Break in Haiti after the country was struck by an earthquake that devastated much of the island.

WASHINGTON — When Oluwakanyinsola Adebola signed up to do community service as part of Howard University's Alternative Spring Break, she knew she wouldn't be joining her classmates and thousands of other college students who use their week off to party and play in the sun and surf of Jamaica or Aruba or any of a half dozen other Caribbean locations.

Instead, Adebola would be part of the hundreds of Howard students who, each year for more than 20 years, have given up their traditional spring breaks to serve in communities in need in places like Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Memphis and New Orleans.

Ironically, Adebola will travel to a Caribbean island after all. She will be in Puerto Rico aiding the millions of U.S. citizens still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria, which hit the island on September 20.

The storm, which had 155 mph winds, caused at least $90 billion in damage, destroying thousands of homes, killing at least 60 people and decimating the island's already deteriorating power grid. Currently, about 1,200 generators power some of homes, hospitals and schools while seven larger, more powerful energy centers, called microgrids, provide energy to key areas near important buildings like hospitals and schools.

Electricity, however remains a challenge. Recurring blackouts plague the island, and about 340,000 people, are still without power. The blackouts have upset traffic and interrupted water service to dozens of neighborhoods, including the historic Old San Juan in the nation's capital.

The Federal Emergency Management Administration has been providing relief and rescue efforts, providing meals and water to residents.

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