

More than books

Meet Mr. May!

I'd like to usher in January by inviting you to meet Mr. May. He's the May poster boy in the 2015 Friends Forever Humane Society calendar. In the spirit of full disclosure I should tell you that Mr. May is my pooch, Sam.

Sam is one of the Friends Forever shelter animal success stories selected for the calendar. Sam's relationship with Friends Forever goes back to 2005 when he was a puppy being fostered by then Friends Forever Humane Society Board Member Judy Petta. Judy found Sam a wonderful home.

When Sam, through no fault of his own, was cast upon life's rocky shore for a second time, Judy demonstrated that she was more than a fair-weather friend to Sam. She proved herself to be his friend forever by getting to work and finding him his second home, with me, in 2014.

2014 was quite a year for Sam, a year that required considerable resilience in the face of loss and change. Sam has rolled with it all and is proof that an old dog can learn new tricks. I am proud to report he passed his therapy dog certification this fall and will join the library's Paws for Reading program in January.

Although I am understandably partial to Sam's story and his handsome photograph, I must say the calendar, which runs through January 2016, contains arresting photographs and inspiring stories of equally deserving and attractive Friends Forever Humane Society rescue dogs and cats for each of its 14 months.

In addition to the featured animals, there are over 200 beloved pet photographs provided by local families. You may recognize a neighbor dog or cat, not to mention the occasional goat, horse, lizard, hedgehog, bird, and bunny. Cuteness alert: the bunny is at the wheel of a toy car.

The calendar includes animal quotes galore and holidays not to be found in just any calendar, e.g., National Hug Your Cat Day. Minimum donation per calendar is \$15. Any amount above \$15 is gratefully accepted, and since everything associated with the calendar – from printing to photography to design and copywriting – was donated, all proceeds go directly to support the shelter.

Calendars are available at Friends Forever, Carlson Canine Camp, Tender Loving Care, Freeport Animal Hospital, State Bank, Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Center, M45 Marketing Services, and online at www.friendsforeverhs.org.

Paws for Reading

Many of the certified therapy dogs in the library's Paws for Reading program are shelter rescues. You can meet some of them this Saturday and every first Saturday of the month between 10 and 11 a.m. They show up with their handlers to provide a friendly, fun reading experience for any child who would like to practice reading aloud to a willing pooch.

Although a weekday Paws program is organized just for the benefit of an afterschool reading enrichment class, our Saturday sessions are open to the general public. While the program was initially developed for struggling readers, those who can already read well won't want to pass up their chance to read to a

therapy dog. Children may bring a favorite book or choose a library book to read to a kid-friendly dog. It is my experience that a child frequently selects a title he or she believes the dog will enjoy.

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