

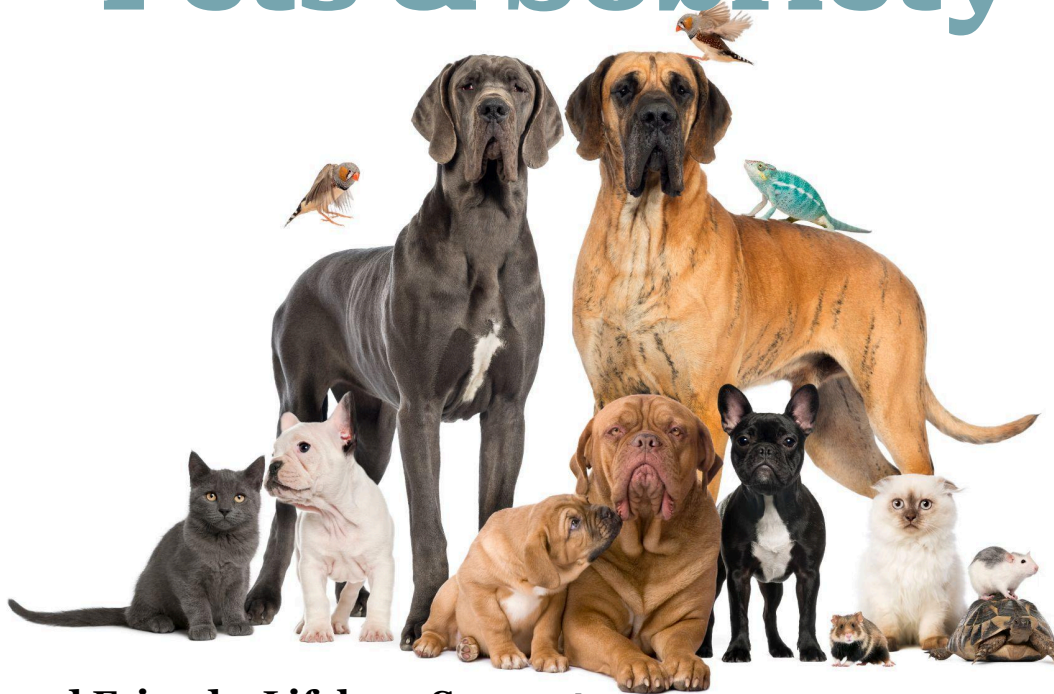
TEE TRUDGE

aaHG's OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

"CARRYING THE MESSAGE"

Issue 6 • September 2024

Pets & Sobriety



Four-Legged Friends, Lifelong Support...

This issue of our newsletter is dedicated to the incredible bonds we share with our pets. We'll explore how our furry, feathered, and finned companions have brought comfort, inspiration, and support on our sobriety journeys. Pets ground us in the present, offer unconditional love, and remind us of life's simple joys. Whether nudging us out of bed on a tough morning, providing a listening ear when we felt alone, or simply offering a wagging tail or gentle purr, many of us have found strength and solace in their companionship during our darkest times.

In this issue, you'll find heartfelt stories from members who share how their pets helped them navigate the ups and downs of getting sober and staying sober. Their stories celebrate the healing power of our animal friends. We hope these accounts remind you that, in sobriety, we don't have to do it alone; sometimes, our best support comes from those who don't say a word but are always there.

Yours in Service,
aaHG Steering Committee

AA Step, Tradition & Concept Spotlight

by Anonymous, CA

A.A.'s Twelve Steps are principles for personal recovery. The Twelve Traditions ensure the Unity of the Fellowship. Finally, the Twelve Concepts provide guidance for service in the AA fellowship.

	MAIN IDEA	PRINCIPLE
Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.	<i>An Apology is Not the Same Thing as an Amends</i>	Love
Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.	<i>The Action Continues</i>	Discipline
Tradition 8: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.	<i>Paid Staff Help Make 12 Step Work Possible</i>	Non-Professional
Tradition 9: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.	<i>Organization and Service Aren't Mutually Exclusive</i>	Spirit of Service
Concept 8: The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.	<i>Trustee Oversight Has 2 Primary Parts: Overall Policy and Finance and Oversight of Our 2 Corporations</i>	Consistency
Concept 9: Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.	<i>We Lead to Serve Rather Than Leading to Govern</i>	Vision

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AA Step, Tradition & Concept Spotlight**(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)****Owning Up by Anonymous, CA**

When I first got into this whole amends thing, I thought it was just about saying, "Sorry," like I always did. I'd mess up, throw out a "sorry," and keep it rolling, thinking that was good enough. But when I really started looking at it, man, I had to face some real ugly stuff — like cheating on a lot of girlfriends and acting like it was no big deal. I was a man, and that's what real men did. Then there was taking stuff that "fell off the truck" like that was just a perk of the job. I used to nobody would notice or care cause everyone was doing it.

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

But I found out real quick that this wasn't about just saying some weak a** apology and moving on. Cheating wasn't just me being a player; it was more about how I broke trust and messed with people who really cared about me. So when I had to make things right, it wasn't about me feeling better. It was about shutting up and listening when folks wanted to let me know just how deep I cut them. Some didn't want to see my sorry a** again, and I had to respect that too. It wasn't about making myself feel good; it was about facing up to all the sh*t, the damage I'd done, no matter how it made me feel.

And all that stuff I took? I used to think, "Ain't nobody gonna notice. They got too much coming in and out to even care." But that was just me trying to make myself think what I did was alright. Companies were losing money but I got mine, so who cares, right? Well, my sponsor told me I was wrong and that I needed to pay those companies back. Man, was I so not prepared or wanting to do that. Some of what I stole would put me in jail and I didn't want to do no time. But I manned up, and tried to figure out who I owed what. I'm still working on this one cause it's A LOT, but at least I'm trying to make things right and owning my sh*t.

Making amends ain't just saying, "My bad," and walking away. It's standing up and facing the mess you made, figuring out how to you can make it right, and learning to not be that person who keeps screwing up in the first place. It's about trying to be better so you don't have to keep saying sorry over and over. ■

The first three steps taught me how to give up. Four, Five and Six taught me how to own up. Seven, Eight and Nine taught me how to make up. Ten, Eleven and Twelve taught me how to grow up.

What Does Cirrhosis Really Look Like?

by Matty B., VA

Cirrhosis is a condition often shrouded in misconceptions, typically envisioned as a distant consequence of alcohol abuse. However, the stark reality of living with cirrhosis and the journey toward a liver transplant is far more complex and harrowing. As a former alcoholic who has survived cirrhosis and a liver transplant, I want to shed light on the true face of this disease.

The Diagnosis

At the time of my diagnosis, I was an everyday drinker – morning, noon, and night. I vividly remember arriving at the hospital after a full day of work, with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.38. Dr. Siddiqui at VCU Hospital looked me in the eyes and told me very sternly, "You are a very sick man." The insidiousness of the disease lay in my denial. I kept convincing myself that I had an ulcer from stress. Despite not eating, vomiting blood, and being unable to use the bathroom properly, I dismissed the severity of my condition. I experienced hallucinations and was often detached from reality, yet I was still considered a functioning alcoholic.

My physical state was rapidly deteriorating: my hair was thinning, my muscles were wasting away, my skin was thin and yellow, and my eyes were a constant mixture of bloodshot and jaundiced. I embodied the physical, mental, and spiritual pervasiveness of alcoholism.

The Year on the Waiting List

My journey toward a liver transplant began with this stark diagnosis, followed by a grueling year on the transplant waiting list. Proving my commitment to sobriety was an unrelenting challenge. Transplant teams don't hand out livers to alcoholics without solid evidence of significant lifestyle changes. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) played a crucial role in helping me achieve and maintain sobriety. The support and structure provided by AA were indispensable in transforming my life.

False Alarms and the Final Call

During that year, I received three phone calls indicating a potential liver match, each one turning out to be a false alarm. Each call was a rollercoaster of hope and despair, underscoring the uncertainty and emotional toll of waiting for a transplant. Then came the fourth call. Unlike the others, this time everything moved at lightning speed. Within 15 minutes of the call, I was in the hospital and heading into surgery.

Living with Cirrhosis

While waiting for the transplant, life was a series of grueling trials. One of the most debilitating aspects was the need for paracentesis – the process of draining excess fluid from the peritoneal cavity. Every 10 days, I had 10 liters of fluid drained to manage the painful and uncomfortable

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To Our Fur Children

by C.Y., CA



We often say this when beginning a meeting and after: *"Remember the innocent children caught in the crossfire."*

It's tragic some children grew up without their parents because of their disease in alcoholism. Our pets pay the same price. They can be taken from us much like CPS and they would never fully understand what happened to their owners. Or they are lost because of a terrible accident because of drinking. I don't have a human child, although one day I hope to be a mother. But health issues on the horizon might keep me from carrying a child, adoption is always an option, giving someone a chance at life, much like I did with my fur children.

Unlike a fur baby, children grow and mature and they can choose to forgive or choose not to. Fur babies give us that unconditional love – that of our Higher

power. Clear blue and unconditional love. How often do we think about our pets? I think about mine all day every day. They are my life and support besides my sobriety circle.

They've seen me at my worst times. To God be the glory, I never lost a pet from my active drinking days. I'm grateful every day for my dogs, my horses, my pig, two goats, my cat and my chinchilla. Especially my dogs. There's a special bond. I've raised all my dogs. I don't know how many nights on a bender I would only know the feeling of a fuzzy protector keeping me safe. Either stretched out alongside me or curled into a ball at my head or feet.

I've driven drunk with my dogs in the car with me, by God's grace alone, He kept them safe. My best dog, whom has since passed away from stomach cancer, has seen me in my darkest hours and has always loved me during my bad times. She only had ten short years and was with me every time I picked up and every time I went back on the wagon.

I believe with every fiber of my being that she was created specifically for me. I warned everyone "The day I lose her, is going to be very difficult for me." I am grateful I was sober when God called her back home.

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Sansa

by Destiny K.

This is Sansa....



She saved my life one night when I had too much to drink and was bleeding out... I looked over at her and realized I couldn't leave her alone and she couldn't be without me... I reached for help. Been on the struggle since.

Using alcohol as a crutch to suppress mental health issues has shown its worst... ■

Junior

by Shawn Redbeard, VT

So I should tell the story about my buddy Junior. Junior is a Leopard Gecko and he is 17 years old. Did you know that a lizard can live several decades? I didn't, I thought I was getting a

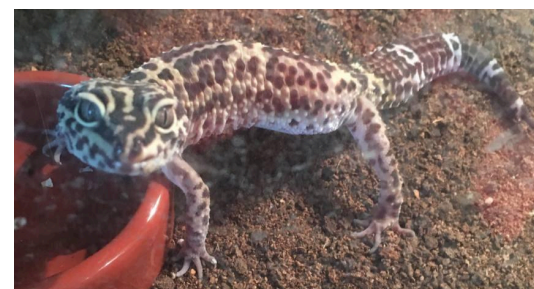
goldfish... though, now that I think of it... I had one of those for 9 years, but I digress.



I bought Junior when I was a senior in college with the knowledge that leopard geckos like to be held and played with. And they do, except for Junior. Every time I or anyone else put their hand in his tank he would bite and sometimes draw blood. My mother has a scar to prove it. I asked the gentlemen at the pet store "Am I doing something wrong?" He said "No, humans are nice but sometimes you get Jeffery Dahmer"

Now, I don't want to scare people by thinking I live with a serial killer. He's actually been a great friend and confidante. He will watch people walk by him; when you talk to him he will look you in the eye and listen, and he really has a very unique personality. But he has taught me a very important life lesson. Respect boundaries. Junior is very happy being Junior; as long as you respect his bubble. People are the same way. People will be there for you, but you need to stay out of their bubble unless they let you in.

I always call him an A- hole, but I love him and he loves me. As long as we understand and respect our relationship. ■



Iluka's Story

by Grady S

My name is Iluka and I am a dog of an Alcoholic. I was close to one year old when my human and I found each other. The first year of my life had been very hard and had found myself in a small pen and neglected more often than not, I was really starting to question my purpose in this life. Being an Australian Shepard, I am blessed with boundless energy but this zest to play and run had somehow been annoying to all the humans in my life that first year and had ended me up in a life of confinement and loneliness until that day my human walked into my life.

I will never forget the morning I saw him walking towards my pen. I could tell he was coming to see me as he started talking to me, me of all things as he got closer. I am embarrassed to say that I was so excited that I peed all over myself but this human only laughed and then he did the unimaginable. He worked the latch and let me out. He didn't even have a leash. I was free, free as I had ever been. I remember he then started walking up into the fields behind my pen calling for me to follow. Oh, how I ran. The smells, the freedom and the adventure were intoxicating. I would bound away only to stop at the sound of his voice and charge back to him. He seemed really excited when I would return to him because he always smiled and petted me, saying "Good Boy", which made me happy to hear.

I didn't go home with him that day, which broke my heart but a week later he returned and I have been by his side ever since. I realize now, that first year of hardship was meant to be so I could find my human and this Happy, Joyous and Free life we share today together.

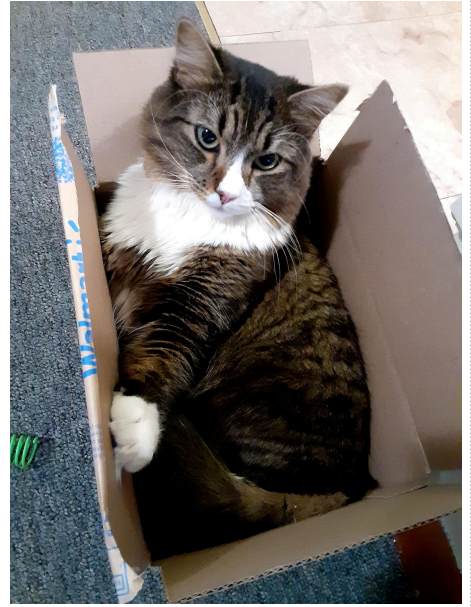
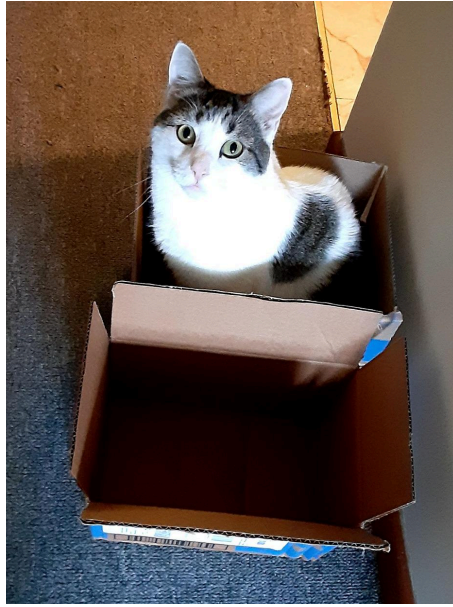
In that first year with my human, I had always believed that he had saved me from a life of misery but today I realize that we saved each other. I have watched his struggles and can sense his moods. My love for him and the excitement I get when we share an adventure always seem to pull him out of those dark places that he can slide into. I have taught him what unconditional love looks like because I am all about attraction rather than promotion. But most importantly, I make him walk with me each day because regardless how hard our day has been, the fresh air, the exercise and the serenity that walking in nature brings always returns us to the house in a better place than when we started.

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Filled With Love

by Celina



Misha is my amends Dog I got at about 1 year in recovery. Willow is the fluffy one and Her brother is Asher, I got at about 7 years sober. I got my Kitties to bring comfort to Misha as she was struggling with the changes in my Life. She was dealing with loneliness and being abandoned as life got lifey. With the many changes in my Life and Recovery I forgot about her. And that she was going through the changes with us. I believe the 3 of them have come to love each other and that fills me with love. ■

A Dog Named Bob

by Amy



My name is Amy. I am an alcoholic in my 11th month of sobriety. I never thought that it would be possible for me to stay sober for this long. But I am doing it... with a little help.

The word 'DOG' is 'GOD' spelled backwards.. And I believe that there might be something to that. When I look into the eyes of my little, old, dog, I see something that is beautiful, pure and perhaps, greater than me.

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I Am Your Disease

by Anonymous, MS

*You know who I am, you've called me your friend
Wishes of misery and heartache I send.*

I want only to see that you're brought to your knees, I'm the devil inside you, I am your disease.

I'll invade all your thoughts, I'll take hostage your soul, I'll become your new master, in total control.

I'll maim your emotions, I'll run the whole game, until your entire existence is crippled with shame.

*When you call me I come, sometimes in disguise, quite often I'll take you by total surprise.
But take you, I will, and just as you've feared, I want only to hurt you, with no mercy spared.*

*If you have your own family, I'll see it's destroyed. I'll steal every pleasure in life you've enjoyed.
I'll not only hurt you, I'll KILL if I please. I'm your worst living nightmare.
I am your disease.*

*I bring self-destruction, but still you can't tell. I'll sweep you through Heaven, then drop you in Hell.
I'll chase you forever, wherever you go. And then when I catch you, you won't even know.*

*I'll sometimes lay silent, just waiting to strike. What's yours becomes mine, because I take what I like. I'll take all you own and I won't care who sees. I am your constant companion.
I am your disease.*

If you have any honor, I'll strip it away. You'll lose all hope and forget how to pray. I'll leave you in darkness, while blindly you stare. I'll reduce you to nothing and won't even care.

So don't take for granted, my powers sublime, I'll bend you and break you, time after time. I'll crumble your world with the greatest of ease. I'm that madman inside you. I am your disease.

*But today I'm angry... you want to know why..?
I let this whole room of addicts slip by. How did I lose you? Where did I go wrong?
One minute I had you, the next minute you're gone.*

You can't just dismiss all the good times we shared. When you were alone, wasn't it I who appeared? When you sold those possessions you knew that you'd need, wasn't it I the first who stepped in and agreed..?

Now look at you assholes! You're all thinking clear! You escaped with your lives when you found your way here. Only fools think they're winners when admitting defeat... and that's what you must say when claiming that seat.

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I Am Your Disease

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Go ahead and surrender, if that's what you choose. But I'm not giving up because I can't stand to lose. So go to your meetings and pray hand in hand for God to come save you...and leaving me damned.

Well damned all your meetings each night of the week, be damned Higher Powers, however unique, be damned all your savings, be damned your cliches, be damned every addict who back to me strays.

For I know it will happen; I've seen it before. Those who love misery will come back for more. So take comfort in knowing, I'm waiting right here. But next time around, you better beware.

You think that you're stronger or smarter this time, there isn't a mountain or hill you can't climb. Well if that's what you're thinking, you ain't learned a thing, I'll still knock you silly if you step back in my ring.

But you say you've surrendered so what can I do? It's sad in a way, I had big plans for you. Creating your nightmare for me was a dream, I'm sure going to miss you. We made quite a team.

*So please don't forget me; I won't forget you. I'll stand by your side, watching all that you do. I'm ready and waiting, so call if you please, I won't let you forget me.
I am your disease.*

Animals & Sobriety

by Anonymous

When I found a sick mother cat in the abandoned apartment above me, she was thin and shivering. No one cared about her. I felt an unexpected pull to help her, yet I knew I was not helping her as much as I should. She had five tiny kittens, all boys, eyes not even open yet. I brought them into my home, nursing her back to health with late-night feedings and gentle care. Three days in a row of antibiotic shots. The kittens were fragile, and slowly, heartbreakingly, all but one slipped away. I named the last one Lucky.

Caring for Lucky and his mother kept my hands busy and my mind occupied on something else. Each day I focused on their needs instead of my cravings and the resentments I could not forgive. I found comfort in their tiny purrs and grateful eyes. Through their survival, I found my own, one sober day at a time. But I questioned the death of the four kittens who did not survive.

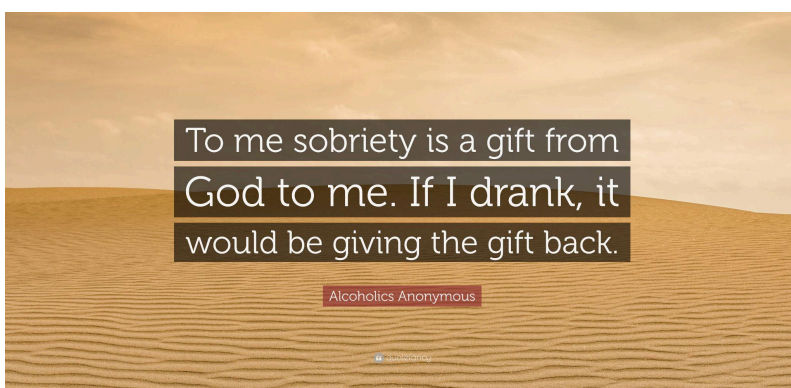
I know I'm not as grateful as I should be. I know I don't realize how Lucky I am. Some days are Light. Other days seem heavy. And some days are just ok. Either way I will remember to trudge the road to happy destiny, by simply showing up to a meeting here and there, and listen to the God of my understanding speak to me through others. ■

A Dog Named Bob

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My dog is named Bob. He is a 13-year old, 20 pound, miniature poodle. He joined our family when he was 8 weeks old. I can still hear my young son, Hieu, say, "Bob is our little blessing!" At the time, I just didn't see it. He was a fluffy, little nuisance. My life was already approaching the turn of unmanageability, as my reliance upon alcohol was growing stronger at the time. But, Bob stuck with me through it all... through some of the best times and then, through the worst.

I am so blessed that Bob has been a part of my life for the last 13 years. He has been an essential part of my sobriety. He is a healthy, sassy, goofy, loving, sometimes naughty, loyal companion. He loves our daily walks. I find this a wonderful time to get in touch with nature and explore my spirituality, with the company of my small friend. Bob brings me joy, love and laughter every day. He gives me a sense of purpose and responsibility. He reminds me to take the time to breathe life in and, live in the moment. I will be forever grateful for Bob, my little blessing. ■



Floof, Fosters, and Finding My Way

by Liz P-H

Note: The kiddo I mention in this article uses "they/them" pronouns.

Back in 2020, before rehab, before I got sober, before AA, two friends rescued a kitten from a storm drain. The husband insisted on keeping it, despite being allergic, and after his allergies kicked in, I found myself agreeing to take in cat #4. Floof Bader Ginspurr, or Floof for short, was my constant companion throughout my downward spiral, curling up beside me or on my head. Her little meows would pull me back to reality, reminding me that I needed to find a way out. I was blackout drunk most of the time, but Floof stayed with me through it all.

When I got home from rehab, Floof was a little distant, like she didn't recognize me, but soon she was back by my side, reminding me of the love and comfort I needed.

Cut to December 2022. My kiddo needed community service hours to graduate, and with their love for animals, it was a perfect fit when a vet friend needed help with rescue cats. My kiddo, a natural cat whisperer, agreed, and soon we welcomed our first foster, Emma. Then came the next batch, and then another... Each group brought its own lessons. Here's a glimpse into some of our foster journey and the lessons they've taught me.

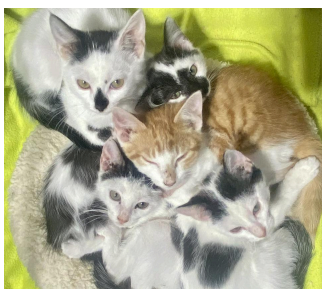


EMMA: When she first arrived in NY from an overcrowded shelter in FL, Emma was so terrified that she climbed walls and curtains to escape my vet friend. But even in her fear, she never hissed or lashed out. When she came to us, she hid immediately, beginning our journey into fosterland. Kiddo and I learned on the fly, worked tirelessly with her — giving treats, respecting her space, and approaching her on her terms. Gradually, she came out of her shell, seeking affection and showing love.

Emma learned to trust, and I learned that **time takes time**, boundaries matter, and trust has to be earned.

THE CANDY BAR KITTENS: Kit-Kat, Twix, and Snickers were a ridiculously cute batch with big personalities. Kit-Kat was always getting into something, Twix was super affectionate, and Snickers was a playful troublemaker. They got adopted in no time, and saying goodbye to those little furballs was bittersweet.

I learned the **importance of letting go**, even when it's hard, and to cherish moments of joy, knowing new beginnings are always just around the corner.



PAINT & SIBS: This batch had three spotted white kittens and an orange sibling, all saved from a kill shelter in FL. I don't remember all their names — my husband always jumped in and named them first. The only one I can remember is Patch, and you'll soon see why. While Patch's siblings had balanced spots and were generally adorable, he had weird spots, a long, thin face, and a stubby cut off tail — not ugly, but not exactly cute either. They were all sweet active kittens, but Patch really enjoyed being a lap cat and his favorite person was my husband.

Floof, Fosters, and Finding My Way

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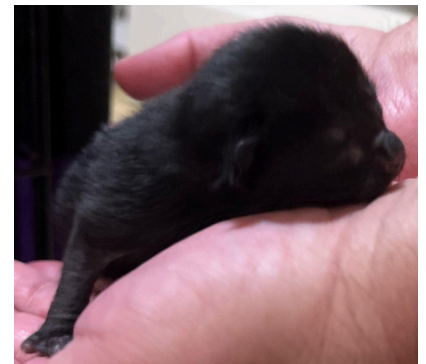
His siblings had all been adopted months earlier before we made the decision. We were Patch's forever family.. Patch absolutely loved my husband and would come running for him when he heard his feet on the stairs to my office. Since we couldn't find anyone even remotely interested in this gawky kitten, keeping him was a no-brainer.

So, yeah, we broke the sacred cat-to-human ratio (1 cat per person). Technically, having more cats than people makes you a hoarder, but since we treated the dog like a person, then the dog deserved a cat too. Patch is like the Danny Trejo of cats—rough exterior, but a total softie inside. He taught us that **true beauty is on the inside** and that personality can outshine any awkward looks.



MAMA CAT & THE RAINBOW KITTENS: Ever had a cat give birth in your bed? I did. Ever play midwife to a cat? Been there, done that. Ever try to resuscitate a stillborn kitten. Unfortunately, yes. I was dead asleep when Mama Cat, Frida, began her labor. I woke up because I heard this weird chirping noise; it turned out to be a kitten's cry. Over the course of 12 hours, eight identical black kittens - seven alive, one stillborn. The last living one almost didn't make it; Frida was too exhausted by then to do what she needed. I saw that Frida was struggling and in a panic to save the kitten I broke the sac, and rubbed the little guy until he breathed. Since she practically gave birth on me, I got to name them this time:: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple, and Black. Orange

was the only girl. Purple, the kitten I had saved, was my favorite, of course. We put the appropriately colored nail polish on their claws so we could tell them apart. Did I mention they were identical? Watching these tiny seven black kittens go from minutes old to become older kittens, to see them develop their personalities and quirks has been a reward in itself and one of the most fulfilling things that I have done.



Holding the 7th tiny kitten, just minutes old and fighting for life, I felt something Greater than me, reminding me that even in the darkest times, there's always hope. The stillborn kitten taught me that life is fragile, not always in my control, and **accepting loss is part of finding peace**.

CASSANDRA & PATCH: Patch and Cassandra were as different as night and day. Patch, the little pouncer, loved stalking his sister's tail like it was the ultimate prey. He was a bit rough in play, but always kept his paws soft and clawless. Cassandra was the calm to Patch's storm - quiet, content, and happy just being petted. Her quirk? Refusing the litter box in favor of the floor under my desk. We tried crating her at night, but she turned into a little Houdini, escaping three times until I finally MacGyvered her crate shut. Once she couldn't escape, she resorted to using the litterbox.



Floof, Fosters, and Finding My Way

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

What sticks with me most is when Patch smacked me in the eye, probably because I was taking too long to feed him. That night, he slept on my head as if nothing had happened. And I guess nothing had in his mind even though I needed antibiotic drops and wore an eye patch for a day. These two taught me that personalities come in all shapes and sizes—some are big and loud, others small and quiet. I needed to adapt and stay flexible because people—and cats—are who they are. I also learned the importance of **forgiving those who hurt you**. Sometimes, you just have to let things go and move on, just like Patch did with his playful swat.

NALA, GOLDIE, SHY SAM AND SYLVESTER: These were semi-feral kittens that needed a lot of careful handling and socializing... which went out the window when my husband "accidentally" let them out of the crate. Accident, yeah right. Now I had four terrified kittens who only came out for food or the litterbox. Little by slowly, they got used to the "Food Lady"—me! I read up on how to tame feral cats, watched YouTube videos for advice, and noted the process most rescuers used.



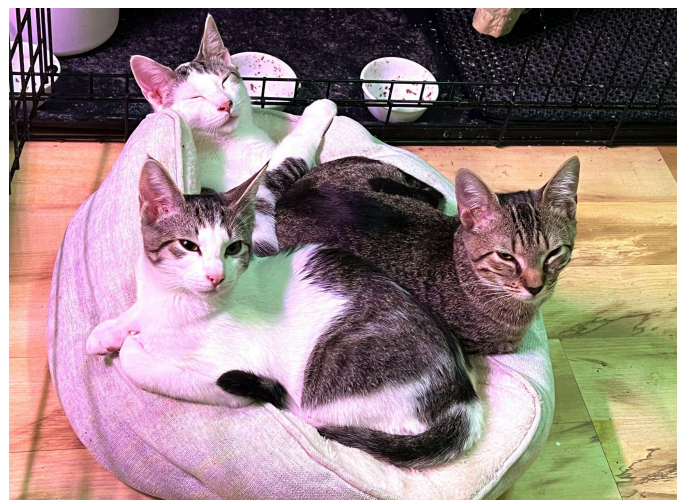
At first it was awesome to just having them stay put when I moved. That gradually turned into petting them with a back scratcher - I mentioned they were feral, right? - and slowly introducing my hand. My kiddo, the cat whisperer, played a huge role in getting these cats tamed. They're like Ace Ventura; they walk into a room, and all the cats come running. Eventually, the kittens got used to being petted and even allowed us to handle and pick them up. (No additional blood was shed!). I'm not going to lie, this was a loooonnnnnng process, but it was so worth it. It took time, effort, and patience, but it was worth every minute. All were eventually adopted, and I even got a video from Sylvester's new owner of him playing fetch! Goldie was the last to go...

well, not exactly. My husband had bonded with her and couldn't let her go. (The man had liver surgery and nearly died, so what's one more cat. Sigh.)

This experience taught me that **persistence can change lives**, even tiny ones. It reminded me of working the steps—sometimes progress feels slow, but with the right guidance and a willingness to keep at it, change does happen. I learned to ask for help when I needed it, to trust the process, and to celebrate small victories on the way to bigger transformations.

SIMBA, MOLLY, CHARLIE: These are the kittens that you see running behind me when I'm on camera these days. These guys are also feral. Charlie's bitten me twice and drawn blood. Molly and Simba have hissed and swatted at me. None of this fazes me.

Molly's come to trust me when I have food or a toy. Charlie still runs from me but sometimes TOLERATES me petting him. Simba is the furthest along and is nearly ready to be adopted out. He's still a bit twitchy, but he's learned to trust people. It's early on in their transformation, but I wonder what lessons they will teach me next. ■



What Does Cirrhosis Really Look Like?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

symptoms of ascites, a common complication of cirrhosis. Paracentesis involves inserting a needle into the abdomen to remove the fluid, a procedure that, while necessary, is both physically and emotionally taxing.

Understanding Cirrhosis: Current Data and Statistics

Cirrhosis is the end stage of chronic liver disease, characterized by the replacement of healthy liver tissue with scar tissue. This scarring impairs liver function and leads to a myriad of complications, including jaundice, variceal bleeding, hepatic encephalopathy, and ascites.

Signs and Symptoms of Liver cirrhosis are as follows:

- Fatigue
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Itchy skin
- Yellow discoloration in the skin and eyes (**Jaundice**)
- Fluid accumulation in the abdomen (**Ascites**)
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fluid buildup in the legs, ankles, and feet (**Edema**)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Confusion, drowsiness and slurred speech (**Hepatic Encephalopathy**)
- Spider like blood vessels on the skin
- Redness in the palms of the hands, and more



Jaundice



Nausea



Weight loss



Swelling in your legs



Fatigue



Ascites
(Abdominal fluid build up)

According to the latest data from the American Liver Foundation, approximately 4.9 million adults in the United States are diagnosed with liver disease, with cirrhosis being a leading cause of liver-related deaths. The primary causes of cirrhosis include chronic alcohol abuse, hepatitis B and C infections, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). Each year, about 32,000 people in the U.S. die from cirrhosis.

(continued on page 16)

What Does Cirrhosis Really Look Like?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

The Road to Recovery

Recovery from a liver transplant is a lifelong journey. The surgery is just the beginning. Post-transplant, I had to adhere to a strict regimen of immunosuppressive medications to prevent organ rejection. Regular follow-ups with my transplant team and a continued commitment to sobriety and healthy living were crucial.

Living with cirrhosis and undergoing a liver transplant has been a transformative experience. It has taught me resilience, the value of support systems like AA, and the importance of sharing my story to raise awareness about the realities of this disease. My hope is that by shedding light on the true face of cirrhosis, I can inspire others to seek help and make positive changes in their lives.

It is through this arduous journey that I found a profound love and passion for the work I do now. As a certified peer recovery specialist, I am dedicated to helping addicts navigate their own paths to recovery, ensuring they never have to endure the physical, mental, and spiritual torment that I once faced. By sharing my experiences and offering unwavering support, I have dedicated my time and my life to service work and my end goal is simply to make a difference in the lives of those struggling with addiction, guiding them towards a Hopeful and healthier future. 

To Our Fur Children

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

She was a special kind of soul. She came to me pre-programmed. She was the dog everyone should have had the benefit of know. She was kind, patient and verbal. We had a way of communication without direct verbal prompts. I don't think I have ever cried as I did that August morning. She was my service pet she went with me every where. From grocery stores to brick and mortar meetings. I never had to scold or talk hard to her, she was that amazing. I thank God for sending me such a perfect animal. He granted me a chance to love some one else so much.

Seventy days ago, I was waking from a night of heavy drinking and God spoke to me. "I have her, she is safe, I created her for you and you did the best you could. Drinking will not bring Ailey back but it will ruin the best memories you have of her, let me take over."

I now have two dogs that claimed me – a golden doodle named JuJu and a queenslandheeler named Avery. They are a very close second but Ailey will always be number one. Now being sober can be my living amends because Ailey saw me drunk a lot, and now I can provide comfort, love, happiness and they give me the same in return. Remember our fur children – they only are here for a short amount of time, be fully present for them in your recovery journey.

Very truly yours,

A full-time fur mama and a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous. 

Submission

by Blair, CO

Wind blows
People go
Walking by
Without a care
I want to try
Do I dare?

Do I dare let go?
Only God will know.
Are my worries real or not?
Either way, they twist the plot.

They blow in the breeze.
They bring me to my knees.
God, take them please.



God and My Puppy

by Jana

I had been single for several months and sober for only two when I got the big idea to get a puppy. I lived in an apartment but could take a dog to work as I managed a storage facility.

Well, being a good AA person, I prayed about it after falling in love with a baby long haired mini dachshund. I clearly heard God in my head saying..."Wait awhile until you can afford all her needs without using a credit card". BUT GOOOOD! She's so cute! I'll pay off my debt! Why can't I get her. "You will see why, if you move forward".

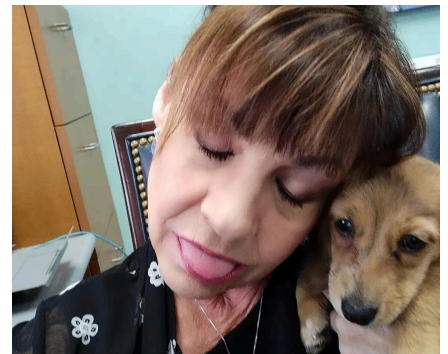
Well, having an instant gratification brain of an alcoholic, I got her.

O.M.G!!! For the next 3 weeks I didn't get a full night's sleep. I drug her supplies to work and home every day and, living on the second floor of an apartment building, my legs were worn OUT from climbing stairs to take her out hourly during the day and evening. I WAS EXHAUSTED and questioned everyday if I should give her back. I cried with exhaustion and body aches.

Thirty-one days later I have learned to have a set of things that she needs at home and a duplicate set at work. I have physically gotten stronger and am in much less pain. She sleeps 7 hours a night and is absolutely the love of my life!

And during all of this I remained sober! When will I get a puppy again? Probably not as I am 60 years old. And it doesn't get easier, I'm sure. But I wouldn't trade this one for the world!

But the moral of the story?.. when God tells me to wait next time I'm going to wait!! Lesson learned! Well played God...well played! 🟦



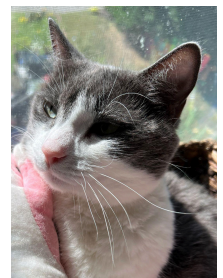
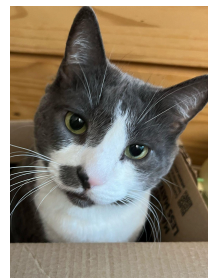
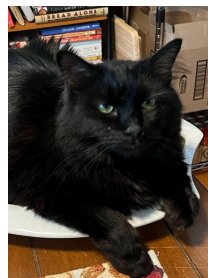
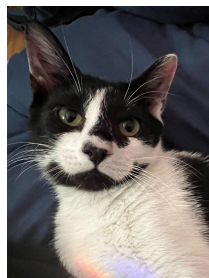
aaHG Pet Corner



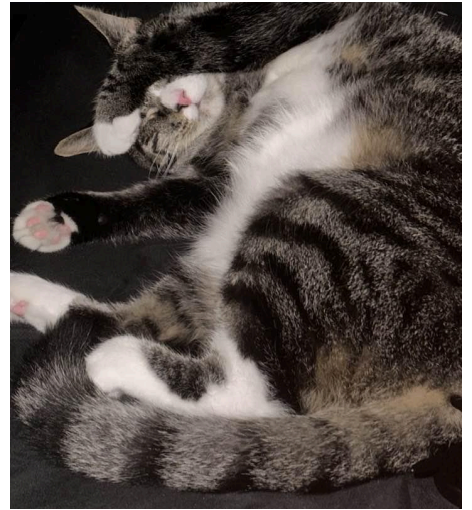
Steph, NJ's Zeek



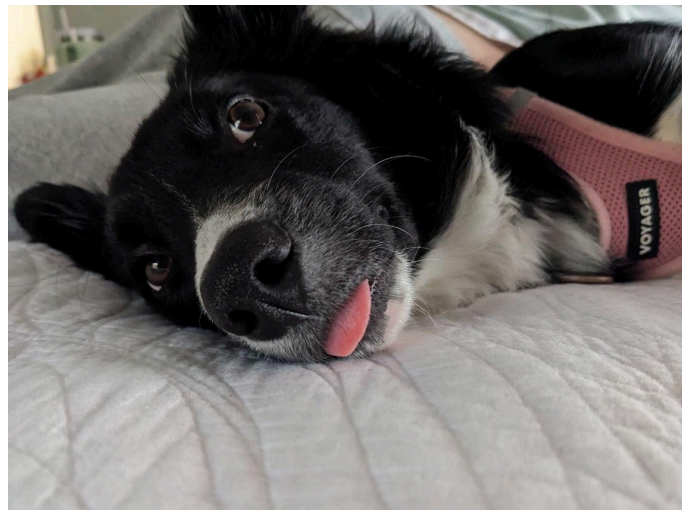
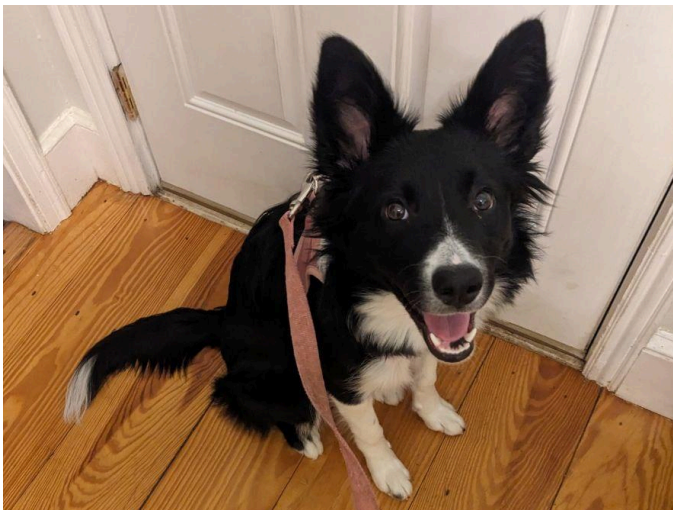
Lois H.'s Duke



Liz PH's menagerie: Floof & Haku, Goldie, Paint, Raisin, Smudge & Uni



Ash Megan's Bella & Bruno



LG's Penny



George K & Cesare

Iluka's Story

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

I can only hope that all the dogs, and cats as painful as that is to say, in this world can find a human in recovery. I truly believe that we make for some of the best companionships with the strongest bonds. Thanks aaHG for letting me share my story and for always being there for my human as well! I rarely miss a meeting when my human is on.

Transcribed by Iluka's human, Grady S. ■



Buddy

by Sarah C, NY

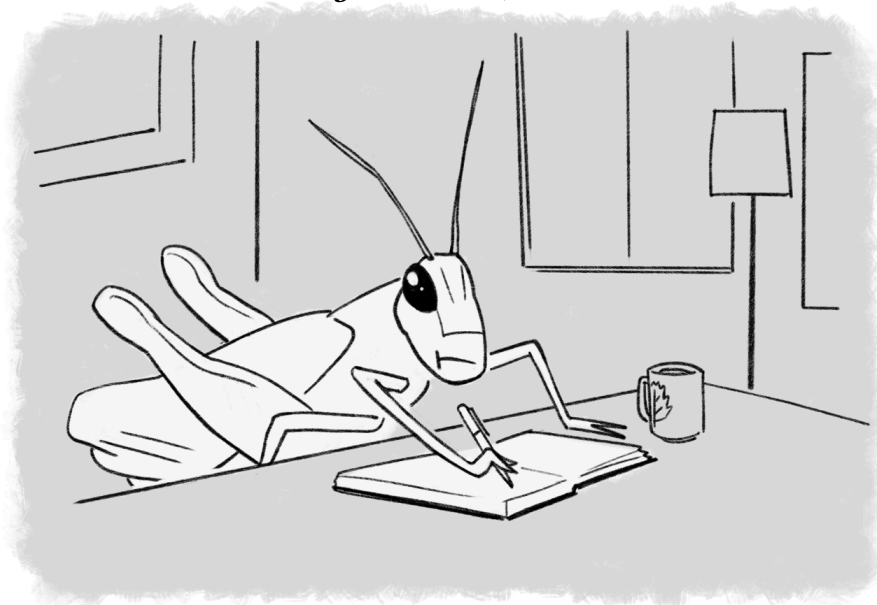
This is Buddy Carl C.

A couple of months after I rescued Buddy, my 6 year old nephew asked if his middle name could be Carl—so why not? I adopted him in April of 2018, and every day since then has brought me so much joy. He's taught me about unconditional love, compassion, and responsibility. He showed me how much I've grown in this program because I am a responsible independent woman today. I was scared I couldn't take care of him by myself after a toxic ex and I broke up. Sometimes we can't see our own growth. I never would have guessed that my sweet boy would show me how the promises have come true in my life.

He's a rescue who rescued me. ■

Comic Corner

by Eddie E., NY



"I'm resentful at: Ants..."

THE BACKDOOR

aaHOMEGROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Group Conscience Meetings

Wednesday September 25th @ 7:00 PM EST

Saturday October 26th @ 11:00 AM EST

Thursday November 21st @ 8:00 PM EST

Saturday December 28th @ 12:00 PM EST

NEWCOMER RESOURCES

- New to AA: [Is A.A. for Me? | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- A Newcomer Asks: [A Newcomer Asks | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- Big Book: [The Big Book | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: [Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Book | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- Sponsorship: [Questions and Answers on Sponsorship | Alcoholics Anonymous](#)

OUR NEXT ISSUE: SERVICE

We are seeking articles that explore the powerful connection between service and sobriety, highlighting personal experiences, insights, and the transformative impact of helping others on the journey to recovery.

We also welcome content of any length on *any* recovery related topic, including original art, poems, personal stories, recipes, AA-related book reviews, jokes, pet pictures, and advice.

Please send your submissions to communications@aahomegroup.org. We look forward to featuring you in the next newsletter.



WE SHALL BE WITH YOU IN
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT,
AND YOU WILL SURELY MEET
SOME OF US AS YOU TRUDGE
THE ROAD OF HAPPY DESTINY.