

# Pet & Equestrian

## Foster mom gives a dog final refuge

By KRISTI PIHL  
Reporter

When she came to the shelter as a stray in April, Stubbs was in bad shape.

The 8-year-old basset hound's eyes and skin were infected, and she was losing the hair on her back.

Connie Parker, of Camano Island, took Stubbs into her home as a foster, while Camano Animal Shelter Association (CASA) prepared the dog for adoption.

CASA staff decides whether to foster an animal on a case-by-case basis, said Allison Zinnato, CASA staff member. Small dogs and older dogs tend to fare better with a foster home. And animals who are sick are also fostered, said Kim Thompson, an employee with CASA.

Although Stubbs was the name shelter employees gave to the basset hound, Parker said she started calling her Betsy. Betsy responded when Parker called for her cat, Boots, so she guessed the dog's name must have sounded similar.

The first time Parker met

Betsy, the basset hound was in a kennel, communicating with her signature barks.

"She was telling a story and I didn't know it," Parker said.

After taking Betsy home, Parker realized the dog was sick.

"She was drinking water like crazy," she said. "She just wasn't right."

So Betsy took a trip to the vet, and Parker and CASA were told she had cancer that had started in her kidney and liver and spread to her chest, Zinnato said. Betsy had a heart murmur, an enlarged spleen and thyroid issues. The vet gave her one month to live — max. Betsy had four.

Betsy is the first dog with a terminal illness to come to the shelter that Zinnato said she has seen in the year she's worked at the shelter.

When Parker first took Betsy into her home, Parker said she thought she would have her just until they found Betsy's "forever" home.

The shelter had a list of three people interested in adopting her, Thompson said.

But when Betsy's health problems were diagnosed, all backed out. Two of the three had recently lost basset hounds, and didn't feel up to losing another pet so soon, Zinnato said. But one sponsored Betsy and sent a monthly donation to help pay for her care.

So instead of being adopted to her forever home, Betsy found her final refuge with Parker, Thompson said.

Betsy was watchful, smart and stubborn, Parker said.

"She knew what she liked," she said.

And what she liked, was belly rubs, Parker and children.

Parker discovered Betsy's love of children while they were on a walk. A school bus came by, and Betsy took off toward it, she said.

Betsy also snuck next door to visit the 5-year-old girl who lived there, Parker said. When Betsy didn't want to leave, the girl would take a treat in her hand and walk her back to Parker's yard.

Betsy visited the shelter once a week, Zinnato said. She played



**Betsy, a basset hound, loved children and her caretakers.**

with some of the smaller dogs.

She was the office speed bump, Thompson said. Betsy greeted everyone who came in, and followed around any children visiting the shelter. She made herself at home and slept under the front desk.

As she stayed with Parker, Betsy's eyes and hair got better, and her hair developed curls, Parker said.

"She was looking wonderful," she said. "The only problem was, she had cancer growing all over the inside."

Parker said she knew it was time when Betsy had trouble breathing and she started panting. Betsy was put to sleep at the end of July.

Although Parker said she was hesitant at first about having a dog in her home she knew would die, she is glad she did.

"I really loved her," Parker said. "She was a wonderful dog."

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## Top 10 cats and canines

According to the American Kennel Club and the Cat Fanciers' Association, the following are the top dogs and cats, based on registration numbers in 2007 in the Seattle area:

### Dogs

1. Labrador Retriever
2. Yorkshire Terriers
3. German Shepherd
4. Retrievers (Golden)
5. Beagles
6. Boxers
7. Dachshunds
8. Poodles
9. Shih Tzu
10. Miniature Schnauzers

### Cats

1. Persian
2. Maine Coon
3. Exotic
4. Abyssinian
5. Siamese
6. Ragdoll
7. Sphynx
8. Birman
9. American Shorthair
10. Oriental