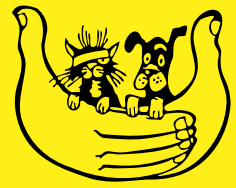


# PAW PRINTS

Issue No. 91 « Spring / Summer 2020

**ASSISI**  
ANIMAL SANCTUARY



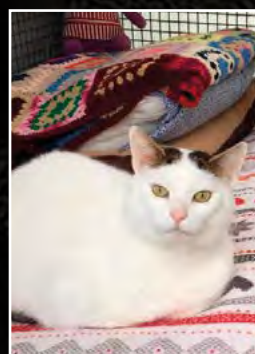
Help for the Helpless

Check out our new Assisi website [www.assisi-ni.org](http://www.assisi-ni.org)



## Taking it to the **MAX**

Meet Max - a four year old black Labrador who was rescued by Assisi then went on to become a Rescue Dog



**Assisi Animal Sanctuary** is Northern Ireland's largest independent Animal Welfare charity, providing shelter for up to 200 companion animals including dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, rabbits and guinea pigs.



# A Message from **ASSISI** CEO

**SO WE START A NEW YEAR AND THERE IS SO MUCH TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2020. A GREAT MANY CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE LAST YEAR AND WE ARE NOT TAKING OUR FOOT OFF THE GAS.**

**T**o ensure we keep the momentum going we now have two new colleagues to help, namely Anna Morton who has joined us with a wealth of professional fund-raising skills and Fiona Hamilton who is taking on the multi skills of Health and Safety, Human Resources and front of house at the Sanctuary. We also have some new personnel in our shops. Georgina Craig has taken on the role of Bangor Shop Manager after the retirement of Louise Farrant who made such a great success of the shop from its inception. We wish Louise well for the future. Our shops in Newtownards and Ballynahinch also have new Supervisors in Claire Chambers and Laura Porter respectively. Now that we have all of these roles in place the shops should be even better placed to increase the invaluable income they generate to fund the animal care work we do. I am also hopeful that we can announce the acquisition of a new shop in our next issue.

The slow decline in the number of animals coming through our doors in the sanctuary over the last few years has bottomed out and the numbers last year improved slightly. We expect that trend to continue despite the ever growing presence of social media. This is in part thanks to the hard work of the staff and volunteers at the Sanctuary and the continued financial support offered by our supporters. Our outreach service providing food and veterinary care to those in need is also being maintained and is an important part of our community approach to welfare for both animals and people. Thank you one and all.

We are also involved in some wider community issues regarding animal welfare, working with other like-minded organisations to better understand the welfare landscape in the North as well as further South and work collaboratively to bring about change. More of this work in later magazines.

An exciting part of our work is placing dogs in working environments such as Police and other civil services as well as rescue services. This work has blossomed and our network has widened to help more dogs enjoy fulfilling and happy lives in a working role.

You will see from this issue, and the last, that we have increased the content with more pages for a better 'read'. From this issue we have once again introduced some advertising which helps to cover the increasing cost of magazine production and we will now produce two magazines each year. However we will be introducing a regular e-news update in between so please do ensure we have your current email address by emailing [anna@assisi-ni.org](mailto:anna@assisi-ni.org). Whilst mentioning communications, please also take a look at our updated website which has just been re-launched. The website is our window on the world and we want to ensure that it is used more consistently and updated on a regular basis so please let us know what you think.

Finally, I must mention those amazing people who are the 7% of the population that leave a gift to charity in their will. Assisi could not survive without the ongoing support

of generous people like you. If you have pledged to Assisi in your will we will be holding a specific event for you or indeed anyone who is thinking they might like to do so to ensure our work can continue long into the future.

I hope you enjoy reading your Spring/ Summer edition of Paw Prints.



**Nigel Mason**  
CEO Assisi Animal Sanctuary

## CONTACT DETAILS

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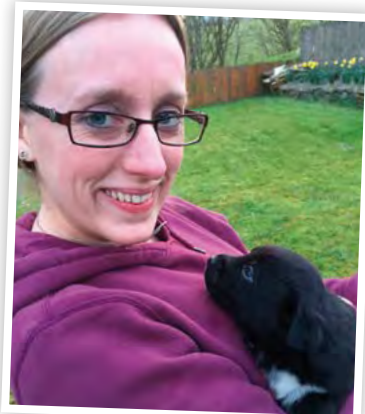


# Meet The Team...

My name is **Fiona Hamilton** and I have been with Assisi Animal Sanctuary in the role of Administration Manager since September 2019.

Growing up, my family puppy walked for the Guide Dogs for the Blind which encouraged my interest in and love of dogs. This in turn lead me to study and gain a National Diploma in Animal Care from Myerscough College in Preston, where I completed modules in dog grooming and kennel and cattery management. My placement helped me gain experience in kennel, pet shop and dog warden work and I even had to wash a cow as part of my practical experience!

After completing my course, I had aspirations of working for Customs and Excise with the sniffer dogs or becoming an animal behaviourist but I was lured into the Hospitality Industry where I spent over 20 years. I started off in bar work which I thoroughly enjoyed and always went back to, but I then got a taste for the Front of House where I started as a receptionist. This evolved over the years and my job roles included Head Receptionist, Front of



House Manager, Revenue and Events Manager and Revenue Analyst in many four star hotels in the North West of England. In 2015 I moved to Northern Ireland and my last role before leaving was Revenue Manager for Hastings Hotels group.

Last year I came to realise that I needed a change and despite missing working in hotels, I feel as if I have a renewed energy in my work as I'm finally where I've always wanted to be. My new role here covers a multitude of responsibilities for both the Sanctuary and our 3 shops. These include managing front office, human resources, administration, health and safety and finance – so there is plenty to keep me busy! But the best thing about my job (apart from cuddling gorgeous puppies!) is regularly seeing the successful re-homing of animals - knowing they are going to a happy, loving home is so heart-warming.

Outside of Assisi, my life is just as busy and fulfilling with my husband Andrew, our beautiful two year old toddler Connor and our four year old Borador (Labrador x Border Collie) Jackson keeping me on my toes. My favourite place (and Jacksons) is Pickie Beach in Bangor. While Jackson likes to chase balls, dig for rocks and swim, I collect sea glass which I then use in my art and crafts hobby, making jewellery and various other pieces like clocks and framed pictures. So 6 months into the job and I'm very glad I took the leap, moved out of my comfort zone and joined Assisi. I can already see some great changes happening and I feel very fortunate to be part of it.

**Hi there, I'm Anna Morton and I'm the newest member of the team.**

I joined Assisi back in October 19 as the new Fundraising & Communications Manager, a new role and one I was delighted to be offered.

After studying Business and Marketing, I started out my career as a PA to the CEO of a Consulting Engineers where I spent 5 years before leaving to have my family. When I decided to go back to work, I felt very strongly that I wanted to do something that made a difference to society and help those less fortunate in life and so I made the decision to go into the voluntary sector and work for charities and try to help them achieve their goals and ultimately raise money to support their cause.

I have worked in the voluntary sector for over 20 years now, most of which has been in fundraising and a few of the charities I have worked with have been Praxis, Oxfam, Ulster Wildlife and Northern Ireland Hospice.

Having always been an animal lover and a particular lover of both cats and dogs, and living locally, Assisi was one of the charities uppermost on my list of dream jobs and place to work for so when the opportunity arose, I jumped at the chance to work for them.

Working in the voluntary sector is challenging and rewarding in equal measures. I get great satisfaction in making improvements and efficiencies, streamlining and automating processes and discovering new ways to raise much needed funds for the organisation. I also love working with volunteers – it never ceases to amaze me how generous people are in giving their time for a cause close to their hearts. It also astounds me every day when people and companies within the community, donate so generously to support the work we do. So no matter how busy or difficult a day I have, when I think about

what others have done to support and help, and when I think about what we are doing to help the animals in our care, it makes it all worthwhile.

When not working, I love nothing more than spending time with my family, and at every possible opportunity we

will escape to our caravan in beautiful Rosbeg, Donegal (and doggie paradise) where we spend a lot of time going on long adventurous walks, swimming, surfing, kayaking and of course the obligatory trip to the pub for a Guinness and sing song!



I am very excited for what lies ahead – I have already seen some really positive developments and changes within Assisi and believe the future for the organisation is very bright. I look forward to seeing it grow from strength to strength and am thrilled to be a part of it.



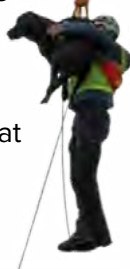
# MAX

## THE WONDER DOG

**In December 2016, a beautiful young 3 year old black Labrador was handed into the Sanctuary as his owner could no longer care for him due to significant health issues. After just a few weeks with us, Max found his new home after being adopted by Ryan.**



Before Max had fully graduated to become an official search dog, Ryan took him to search the area where the family had last seen their loved one. Max got to work sniffing and searching and doing what he had been trained to do.



After just 8 minutes into the search, Max bolted up a lane of an old house where there was an abandoned car sitting and he began scratching and pawing at the boot. Ryan investigated this further and managed to open the boot to find the missing woman inside and in need of immediate medical attention.

Again, Max got to work and very quickly picked up a scent in a specific area which led to the team along with some divers searching the area. The team and divers subsequently recovered the body of the missing teenager.

Although this was an incredibly tragic and sad outcome, it highlights the importance of the work that search dogs like Max do. In this case search teams were able to focus their resources on the area Max had identified and in turn were able to find and return a loved one back to the family as quickly as possible.

Ryan, a full-time maritime officer with the Coastguard had identified a real need for trained air scenting dogs to help coastguard teams on the ground. Not long after adopting Max, Ryan saw he had real potential and subsequently began to train Max in live air scenting. This training can take anything from a year to a year and a half but after a year Ryan felt Max was fully trained and ready to start work searching for missing and vulnerable people with the Coastguard teams.

In October 2018, Ryan got a call in the middle of the night from a family whose fear and worry was growing as their loved one had been missing for over 40 hours. They had heard of Max and the work he had been trained to do and were desperate for help in trying to find their loved one.

Following treatment from medical staff, Ryan was told that had the woman not been found and remained there any longer in the freezing temperatures, she would not have survived.

In 2019, Max and K9 Search and Rescue were tasked by the Coastguard in a search for a missing teenager alongside coastguard teams.



Now a fully qualified search dog, Max, has and continues to be involved in countless searches all over Northern Ireland and is



responsible for finding and returning people back to their loved ones, albeit, sadly, not every case has a happy ending.

He has gone from strength to strength, so much so that Max is now also trained to search coastal, urban and rural areas as well as collapsed buildings for disaster response throughout Northern Ireland.

“He also participates in multiple training exercises throughout the year, showing other teams what his capabilities are”

One example of this is Max being used in helicopter rescues and being able to be winched in and out of them to access difficult areas in certain rescue situations.

Ryan has now recruited an entire team bringing on 5 other dog handlers, our very own Dylan Paton being one of them, as well as support search technicians also trained in water rescue. Also included in the

team are 4 other new search dogs, all in training, one of which was also a rescue dog, this time from Dogs Trust and all learning from the best – Max!

Max is a fantastic example of what can become of a rescue dog and proof that not every dog is affected for life from their past experiences. With the right training, care, support and attention most rescue dogs can become and overcome anything!



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# News from THE WARREN

## Belle & Lilith

Belle and Lilith are two beautiful female rabbits that were admitted with their 4 brothers in July of last year. The boys seemed to find homes very quickly, however the girls unfortunately spent the rest of the year at the sanctuary despite our efforts to find them a home. In January this year, the girls luck finally changed when a lovely family took an interest in them and offered them a forever home! The girls now live in a lovely spacious indoor home, with lots of room to run about and plenty of toys to chew to play with!



## Theodore

Theodore came to us in December last year. He was originally paired with another male Guinea Pig upon admission, however a few days into their stay at Assisi, we noticed the boys arguing. As there had been more than just one scuffle and a few injuries sustained, we decided it would be best to separate them.

Theodore was neutered and was healing well, he had also been booked but following a further health check prior to sending him home, we noticed he had a very swollen foot!

A vet visit was arranged, and an x-ray taken to ensure he had no broken bones. The outcome was something quite different.

It seemed that Theodore must have penetrated his skin at some point, allowing an infection to take place in the bone (Osteomyelitis).

We were told by our vets that this infection must have been brewing for quite some time, even though there were no noticeable injuries despite multiple health checks. As a result of this infection, Theodore had to have the infected digit (toe) removed.

The surgery went ahead, and Theodore healed very well. Within a week he went to his wonderful new home, to live with quite a number of lady pigs!

**Remember – Health checks are important!**



## SEXING GUINEA PIGS

**In Assisi, when admitting new guinea pigs, we deal with several cases where they have been wrongly sexed. Guinea pigs who have been wrongly sexed, often result in unwanted litters.**

We regularly hear the phrase upon admission, 'We were told when we bought them, they were both the same sex', however upon checking their sexes ourselves, we commonly find we have an entire boar and a sow. If a boar and a sow are admitted together, we must always assume the sow is then pregnant.

It can be quite difficult to sex a guinea pig. If you cannot tell the difference, we strongly recommend you take your guinea to a specialist who will be able to tell you.

Once a male guinea pig reaches 3 weeks of age, they **MUST** be separated from their mum and sister siblings. This is because they begin exhibiting mating behaviours and it is not uncommon for young male guineas to get their own mothers and siblings pregnant. This can be detrimental to their health, as pregnancy often takes a major toll on a female guinea pigs body.

We recently had two herds of female guineas admitted with one single male in each herd. The males were not neutered, and as a result all females, including the babies, were pregnant. Unfortunately not all pregnancies went smoothly. One female was in such bad health that only two of her four babies survived, but even at that, she rejected the remaining two. Unfortunately 2 days into hand feeding, one passed away through the night, and the following evening the last one also passed, even with the staffs best efforts.

It is very important not to underestimate how quickly a young male guinea pig can impregnate a female, and it is situations like these that reinstate how important it is to have your guinea pigs sexed correctly!





# WHY A HUTCH JUST ISN'T ENOUGH



Imagine yourself in a room, with a small window, where you are only able to take two steps forward and two steps to the side. Imagine being in this room for your entire life. Doesn't sound very appealing, does it?



This is the kind of life that many small animals live.

It is a common misconception that a small cage or hutch is adequate for the likes of a rabbit or guinea pig. These small animals actually need a lot more space than people think they do. People who leave rabbits and guinea pigs in to us generally say 'they don't do much' however this is often because they do not have the opportunity to do so in their small space.

We once admitted a rabbit that had lived in a hutch her entire life, and as a result, she had severe muscle weakness as well as arthritis due to sitting in her hutch for so long. As well as physical effects of sitting in a hutch or cage, animals can become incredibly depressed, and if you can imagine yourself as a small animal in a small space, it's easy to understand why.

Rabbits need plenty of room with a space large enough for them to be able to stand on their hind legs, have the opportunity to stretch out, and hop around. Their muscles need to be regularly exercised, much like ours do! Rabbits kept in accommodation which is too small often become bad tempered and difficult to handle. This may be because they are suffering

from skeletal pain as a result of being confined. Too often we have calls to take in a rabbit due to it biting, and when asked what kind of accommodation the animal has, it is most often a confined cage, or hutch with no available exercise area.

If you have indoor rabbits, it is advised they have a room of their own, or alternatively have the room of the house, with all potential dangers (wires etc.) safely hidden away.

A good choice of accommodation

for outdoor rabbits is a shed or Wendy house with a large run attached, or a secure fenced area surrounding, to allow the rabbits to exercise as and when they feel the need. Rabbits then have the opportunity to exert their normal behaviours, and you will be able to witness their happiness as they have the room to hop speedily across their accommodation and throw some interesting shapes, commonly known as binkies! It is important that the accommodation is sited in a shaded area away from direct sunlight, and sheltered enough from the elements! Rabbits must have extra bedding and protection from the weather during the winter months. Ensure the accommodation has strong sliding bolts and is as predator-proof as possible, as rabbits can die of shock from being harassed by domestic and wild animals.



Guinea pigs also require plenty of space! The more space for guineas, the more confident they can be, as when they are living in a small area, the more 'caged in' they will feel. Guinea pigs will also throw some interesting shapes known as 'popcorning' whilst also performing the equivalent to a dogs 'zoomies' around their spacious accommodation! A C+C type setup is advised for guinea pigs, as the size and shape of their enclosure can be altered and extended as you please! Guinea pigs also appreciate a separate 'play pen', giving them somewhere new to investigate! On good weather days these play pens can be set up outside, meaning your guinea pigs can enjoy some fresh air and some grass too! You will however need to make sure they still have places to hide, as they will feel more vulnerable,

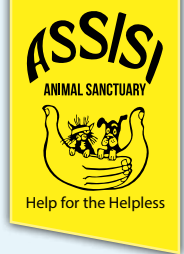
especially with birds flying around! It is advised your guinea pigs are supervised if they are in an outside play pen.

Always consider the amount of available space you have when thinking about re-homing a small animal. It is preferred you do not buy any accommodation before

chatting to staff at Assisi. If you are unsure whether the space you have is suitable, call up to our sanctuary and have a chat with the Small Animal staff who will help guide you in the right direction.



# News from THE SHOPS



## Ballynahinch Shop

**Tricia McKibben – shop manager**

A massive heartfelt thanks to each and every one of our volunteers – without their commitment and dedication, our shop would cease to exist. A very warm welcome also to Laura who has just recently joined the team as our new Shop Supervisor.

Ballynahinch was the first Assisi shop to open and is a thriving part of the local community.

We share much laughter (and some tears) with our many regular customers - some even

call in twice every day, in case they miss a “wee bargain”! The Assisi shop is not just a charity shop. It’s a meeting place for people from all walks of life within the community, where people meet for a chat, browse through our varied and frequently changing stock

and who love animals and want to support the work that Assisi does.

Some interesting donations we’ve been given recently, include a sack

of over 400 golf balls, given to us by a man who lives right beside the sea. He collects the golf balls that are washed up by the sea - sometimes as many as 30 a day! I was wondering how on earth I was going to shift so many golf balls, when a man came in and bought

them all! A very easy £40 made! Another donation came from a man who brought in a 52 year old guitar. He told us about how he’d travelled all around the world with his guitar, busking as he went from country to country. The marks on the body of the guitar showed its years of travelling #every picture tells a story.



mounted glass thunderstorm monitor. It sat at the front desk for several weeks as we did not know what it was. We

would regularly ask

our customers if they could tell us what it was but nobody really knew and people were just guessing what it might be. Until recently, a gentleman came into the shop and knew exactly what it was the minute he saw it. What’s more, it turned out he had been looking for one for over 40 years. He had missed out on the opportunity to buy one a few years back and was truly delighted to finally find another one and be able to buy it. As I say to all my volunteers “it’s like Christmas – you just don’t know what you’re going to get.”

## Ards Shop

**Patricia Moore – shop manager**

Warm welcome from Patricia, manager at the Newtownards shop. I would like to say huge thank you to all our customers for supporting the shop. We have had a good year and raised much needed funds

to help our animals

at the sanctuary. I also would like to thank our volunteers for all their help in sorting and organising the shop floor, we couldn’t do without them and I truly do appreciate the time they give us. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes in the shop; the sorting, cleaning and disposing of goods we can’t sell which are either broken, not working or not complete.

As shop manager it is my duty to try and sell every donation that comes into the shop but sometimes it’s not possible. One of our unusual items we received was a wall



## Bangor Shop

**Georgina Craig – shop manager**

As some of you may know, we had to say farewell to Louise who

had to leave us for personal reasons after being the shop manager in Bangor since the store first opened. We wish Louise all the best for the future. Georgina joined us early in January and has done an incredible job in just a couple

of months, transforming the place – if you haven’t been in recently, it is well worth a visit and you are sure to find a great bargain. A huge thanks must also go to Rhonda, Shirley and the volunteers who





have been stalwarts in keeping the place going during the transition. We wish the team the best of luck over the coming months and can't wait to see how things continue to progress. Work has started in the space above the Bangor shop. Builders are converting this into office space and a few of the staff will be moving down to the new offices in the coming weeks to free up some much needed space at the Sanctuary.

## Meet the Volunteers

More than 300 people volunteer for Assisi, contributing their time every day, week and month throughout the year to help us at the Sanctuary and in our shops. By giving freely of their time, our faithful and committed volunteers, on average, save Assisi over £2,000 each week. But the impact of our volunteers goes far beyond anything financial. Without their support we simply wouldn't be able to provide the level of care or time spent with our animals nor would we be able to run our 3 Assisi shops. Here are a few of our dedicated volunteers and the roles they play at Assisi.

### Jacky Assisi Sanctuary

I started volunteering in Assisi 5½ years ago. I took early retirement from South Eastern Regional College where I was an Admin Assistant for 17 years. As I have always loved dogs it was a no brainier that I would volunteer in Assisi when I left work. I went along to the Volunteers Open Day which was held above the Assisi shop in Ards. It was a very informative day, telling us the history of Assisi. I put my name down to drive the Assisi van or to help in the sanctuary. My first day was a Tuesday and I was put into the Puppy and Kitten units. What a wonderful way to spend

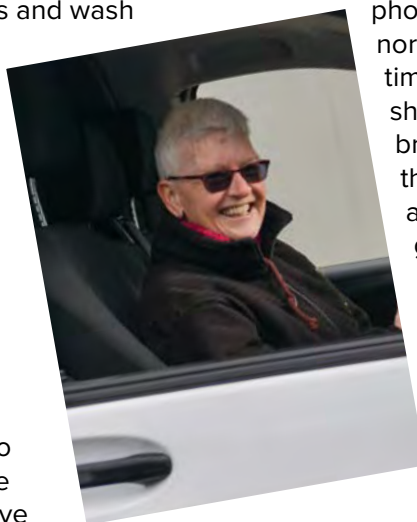
a morning. After a few months I transferred into the dog unit. As a volunteer I clean the kennels, do the laundry to ensure the dogs have a clean supply of bedding and blankets and wash the dog dishes.

The best part was still to come - DOG WALKING. I was in my glory. A couple of years ago I was asked to help with the vet runs. I love doing this as I get to see the rest of the animals on site (Rabbits, Cats and Guinea Pigs). My favourite part of volunteering is to see animals get booked especially the older ones. I am so blessed to have adopted two lovely Westies - Freddie and Molly from Assisi. I feel very privileged wearing the volunteer uniform and driving the Assisi van. I would like to thank all the staff for the terrific work they do. Jacky

### Rhonda

I have been a volunteer with Assisi for the past 10 years and enjoy it very much. I found myself in a position that I had more time to do voluntary work and as animals are my biggest love (other than my husband of course) I wanted to give my time to an animal sanctuary. And so I started with Assisi. I now do a number of different things for the charity:

**Dog Walking** – walking the dogs is a great form of exercise and it is also a great way to get to know and chat with people and I have made many friends over the years. I love spending time with the dogs, chatting with them and



getting to know them and their personalities. When I first started, I kept a notebook of who I walked and wrote a wee bit about each of them and quite often took a wee photo of them too. Now I would normally walk two dogs each time I am over, one might be a short walk depending on the breed or a particular reason, then another dog might need a really good walk so I would go again (good therapy for us both).

**Gardening** – I would try to get over as many days as possible to walk the dogs. While I would be waiting for the staff to get a dog ready for me

I found myself tidying plants or just doing a general tidy up about the place to make it look nice. I buy some plants now and again to brighten up the place for the staff and any visitors who come to the Sanctuary and I will plant these and do some gardening when I am at the Sanctuary either before or after walking the dogs.



**Hampers** – As well as walking the dogs and planting and tidying the gardens, I also make up hampers. I started this about 6 years ago and have made well over 100 hampers to help raise money for Assisi. I

like to find a bargain and when I do, it starts me on a roll or a theme to make up a hamper. This is a real passion for me and I love to make up what I hope are lovely hampers that people are happy to give money to in the hope of winning and ultimately raise funds for the charity. I just love to be able to do something that helps or makes money for Assisi.



# News from THE CATTERY

## Snowball

The lovely Snowball has been with us at the Sanctuary for over 3 years and has been overlooked time and time again. Despite a number of special appeals on social media and the local press, still no one came forward to adopt him.

We wondered if it was because he was so independent or that he didn't really get on well with any of the other cats.

So imagine our delight when someone finally wanted to adopt Snowball. While we shed a few tears of happiness (and sadness), we were a little apprehensive that he might struggle to settle into his new home but thankfully we had nothing to worry about – we received a lovely card and update from his new owners to let us know that Snowball was settling in really well – Snowball has finally found his new forever home.



## Kitten Behaviour

Recently we have taken into our care, older kittens with behavioural issues. Particularly kittens that have problems with people's hands and think hands are to play with or they treat hands as prey. While this is cute when they are tiny kittens and latch on to your hand and don't do much damage, when they get older and are over 5kg of adult cat it is not so nice, is dangerous and can be harmful.

These kittens need to be retrained, regularly teaching them to play with toys but only for short periods of time because they get over excited and revert back to searching for a hand to play with.

If the play gets too rough then all play stops to let the kitten rest, calm down and learn to associate that overly rough play is not acceptable. This retraining takes patience and time and needs to be consistent and regular even after the kitten's leaves us for their new homes.



## Cattery Modernisation

At the start of the year, thanks to a valued and generous supporter who left us an amount of money in her will, we were able to undertake some much needed work to modernise and update the cattery.

We were fortunate enough to have some of our kind fosterers take a number of our cats and look after them until the work was completed.

The upgrading of the cattery was completed within 3 weeks with the previous small cages removed and replaced with much larger walk in pens which has given the cats more space to move around in. It also allows staff and volunteers better access to interact, play and socialise the cats and provide better all-round care and welfare.



Old cage



# HEALTHY HOMEMADE DOG TREATS

## Peanut Butter and Banana Oat Drops

Did you know that oats:

- are best known as a strength-giving cereal
- are an excellent source of antioxidants
- are low in starch
- are a valuable source of minerals, including potassium and phosphorus
- have a high silicon content, making them beneficial to our dogs' bones and teeth
- soothe the gastrointestinal and nervous systems

The following recipe feature oats as the prime ingredient. Using organic ingredients when possible will make these treats even healthier!

### PEANUT BUTTER AND BANANA OAT DROPS

In addition to aiding in training and filling your dog with glee, treats made with carefully chosen ingredients will enhance your dog's health and well-being. The ingredients in this recipe are both tasty and nutritious.

Flax seed is a rich source of anticarcinogens and omega-3 fatty acids, and is low in calories, fat, and sodium. The countless benefits of flax seed include a healthier heart, smooth supple skin, and shiny coat.

Bananas are creamy, rich, and sweet to a dog's palate and provide superior nutrition with several essential amino acids, electrolytes, minerals, vitamins B6 and C, potassium, fiber,

and manganese. Working and performance dogs thrive on bananas because their natural sugars metabolize quickly to provide instant energy. Dogs recuperating from illness or injury benefit as bananas assist in maintaining normal blood pressure, heart function, fluid balance, and digestive tract function.

Peanut butter is another highly digestible and nutritious food abundant in protein, healthy fats, and essential vitamins and minerals. You'll find these peanut butter and banana treats will tempt even the most picky puppies from the very first whiff.

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups rolled oats
- 2 Tbsp ground flax seed
- 2 medium very ripe bananas
- 1/2 cup natural (no sugar or shortening added) peanut butter
- 1/2 cup water

**Preheat oven to 375F, 175°C or Gas Mark 5**

Mix together oats, flax seed, bananas, and peanut butter in an electric mixer. Add water and mix well. Drop 1/2 teaspoon-sized drops onto greased cookie sheet or roll out and cut with a cookie cutter (let dough stand for a few minutes before rolling; it's sticky initially). Bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown.





If you have a pet or you're thinking of adopting one, here's the good news: Having a pet is officially good for you – here are some of the reasons why!

### **Pets support your mental health**

Regular exercise is thought to improve mental health. Furthermore, dog ownership has been shown to improve social networks, with dog owners engaging in more social contact during a walk than non-dog owners. Research has shown that owning a dog provides important 'me time', particularly for those taking on demanding caring roles. The act of stroking a pet, or simply being in the presence of a pet, has been shown to reduce heart rate and blood pressure. Research has also shown that pets can bring wider benefits to family life, especially to high stress families such as those caring for a child with developmental issues. Recent calculations also suggest that pet ownership saves the NHS £2.45 billion a year in terms of reduced trips to the doctor with another study showing dog owners saw their doctor less and took fewer days off sick from work.

### **Pet ownership is good for the heart**

Studies show that pets (particularly dogs) help motivate individuals to exercise, reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases and obesity. A study found that people with dogs and cats had lower resting heart rates and blood pressure than non-pet owners. Other research showed that having a dog in the room lowers blood pressure more effectively than taking blood pressure medication when under stress.

### **Animals can help the immune system**

Stroking a pet can have a positive effect on our antibody levels according to a study from a University in America that looked at the difference between petting a stuffed dog, petting a live dog or sitting on a couch. Only the live animal had a positive effect.

### **Dogs help to strengthen social networks**

Forget Facebook. As anyone who has ever said hello to someone in the street simply by virtue of having met them out walking the dog can attest, having a pet can make you more sociable. Researchers have discovered that being accompanied by a dog increased the frequency of social interactions, especially interactions with strangers. Which is very good news for anyone hoping to meet their future spouse in the park.

### **Pets can guard against loneliness**

You don't need us to tell you that there are few finer sights than a wagging tail greeting you as soon as you walk in the door or a better sound in the morning than a purr in the ear. Aside from the social interactions you gain as a result of having a pet, having a constant companion who depends on you for love and affection (and food) can be a great way to head off loneliness. Research has shown that dog owners with high levels of human social support were significantly less lonely than non-owners with high levels of human social support. Pets can provide emotional support, love and affection, all of which were cited as issues in loneliness. The non-judgemental presence of a pet can act as an important source of support, as well as providing company and constancy.

### **Animals can keep you positive**

Interaction with animals has been shown to improve symptoms in people who have dementia. Visits from dogs, cats and rabbits encourage mobility, increase self-esteem, lessen loneliness and reduce depression and stress in older people. Interacting with animals can help reduce the social withdrawal often experienced by people with Alzheimer's and, as touch is one of the last senses to be affected, stroking an animal can have a calming and uplifting effect.



# PHYSIOPET

**Josie McKnight**

**BVMS MRCVS PGDipVetPhys GPCertCPM(&WVA)**

I have been a vet for 20 years, a qualified veterinary physiotherapist for 9 years and I've been practising acupuncture for 17 years. My passion is for rehabilitation and chronic pain management, especially for the golden oldies!

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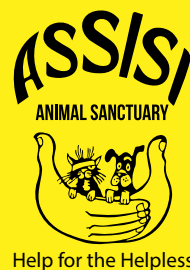
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## Saturday Street Collections:

The Assisi Annual Street Collections have been organised and booked for:

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
Hollywood	4th April	9:30am to 5:00pm
Newtownards	2nd May	9:30am to 5:00pm
Bangor	4th July	9:30am to 5:00pm
Belfast	18th July	9:30am to 5:00pm
Hollywood	19th September	9:30am to 5:00pm
Newtownards	17th October	9:30am to 5:00pm
Lisburn	4th December	9:30am to 5:00pm

Please contact Joan on **07900 782870** or email [Joan@assisi-ni.org](mailto:Joan@assisi-ni.org) if you can give an hour or two of your time to help at any of our street collections. Thank You! Please note: Events are subject to COVID-19 as to whether they will go ahead or not. please check our website for further information.

## Other Events

**Pet Nose Day** – Mount Stewart – Saturday 22nd April – Assisi will have a stand at this event – please come along and visit us.

**Quiz Night** – Pickie Bowling Club, Broadway, Bangor – Friday 22nd May – 7.30pm – 11.00pm

**Annual General Meeting (AGM)** – provisional date Wednesday 27th May – 7pm – 9.30pm – Venue to be confirmed.

**7th Annual Poker Run** – Motorcycle ride – Pit Stop Bangor – finishing at Assisi Animal Sanctuary, with BBQ & light refreshments, Tombola and Prizes. – Wednesday 17th June – 6.00pm – 10.30pm

**Cinema Night** – Thursday 15th October – Tonic Cinema, Comber – film and time to be confirmed.





# FUNDRAISING UPDATE

## Charity of the Year

We are delighted to report that Assisi has been chosen as Allstate's chosen Charity of the Year 2020. Allstate staff will be undertaking various fundraising activities to raise money throughout the year. As well as this, the staff are planning to undertake practical help at the Sanctuary and in our shops – with plans to rebuild the education room, help out with painting and gardening, walking dogs and taking over our shops for a day. They are also interested in doing a staff run street collection in Belfast.



## Charity Partnerships

Bullhouse Brew Co. based in Newtownards have partnered with Assisi to create a beer called Pooch Hooch. The beer tin is branded with the Assisi logo and Bullhouse are kindly donating 20% of all proceeds from the sale of this beer to our charity. The Pale Ale, which was launched at the end of January, is available in local independent off sales and bars across Northern Ireland. We can recommend it as a great Ale.

County Down Spectator have very kindly given us the opportunity to promote some of the animals in our care that need adopting. Each fortnight, they publicise selected animals and as a result we have seen some of our long term animals recently be adopted. Huge thanks to Paul and the team for their support – keep your eye out for our piece in the Spectator every fortnight.



## SANTA PAWS 2019

In the run up to Christmas, we held 3 very successful Santa Paws events in each of our 3 shops with a great turnout at all 3 stores. Dogs and cats of every shape and size had their photos taken with Santa and raised over £3,500 for Assisi. Huge thanks to Diane and Tony for all their hard work and support in making Santa Paws such a huge success!

## Retail Gift Aid

Our shops have recently had a new system installed to help develop our Retail Gift Aid scheme. If you are a regular donor to any of our shops, please speak to the staff to find out more about the scheme. If you have never donated goods to any of our shops, please do consider having a declutter and dropping anything you no longer need or want into your local Assisi shop and at the same time, sign up to the Gift Aid scheme. If we are collecting items from your house, ask Tristan our driver – he will be more than happy to give you a form. You will receive a new Gift Aid card and all the donations we sell on your behalf will be worth an additional 25% which will generate so much more vital income to fund the work at the Sanctuary.

## CHRISTMAS SALE

Our Christmas Sale took place at Bangor Abbey Church on Saturday 30th November where all sorts of stalls presented their wares and raised nearly £2,000 for our work. Special thanks to all who helped out, selling goods, providing teas, coffees, mince pies and cakes. We couldn't do it without you.



# GETTING THE RIGHT PET INSURANCE FOR YOUR ADOPTED PET

When we get a pet, it very quickly becomes part of the family and we would be devastated if anything happened to them and as such we will do anything to protect them. However, just like us, animals of all types can suffer from illnesses and accidents that are out of our control. This usually means a trip to the vets and a hefty bill which can amount to hundreds sometimes thousands of pounds.

I speak from experience as my 5 year old chocolate lab x weinmaraner recently tore her cruciate ligament in not just one but both her back legs. After x-rays, operations, laser treatment and medication, the vet bill amounted to over £4,000 – thankfully I had pet insurance which covered the most of this hefty bill as finding this sort of money would've been very difficult indeed.

Pet insurance can help you cover the cost of veterinary care but it's important to note that not all pet insurance is the same.

**When shopping around ask the questions below to help you compare policies:**

**Did you know?**  
You are more likely to claim on your pet insurance than your car or home policy!



- » Will the policy cover congenital, hereditary, behavioural and dental conditions?
- » Am I able to purchase any of the products or is my pet too old for some policies?
- » Will they provide continuous cover for illness and injury from my 4 weeks free insurance?
- » Will cover for illness start straight away?
- » Is there a monetary limit on how long the policy will cover ongoing conditions?
- » If I claim will my premium increase?

## There are a number of different types of pet insurance

### Lifetime Policies

- This is where cover is provided up to a set amount for veterinary fees and refreshed each policy year.
- There is no time limit on how long you can claim for each illness or injury as long as you renew the policy each year without a break in cover.
- Ideal if your pet develops an ongoing condition such as arthritis or diabetes.

### Maximum Benefit Policies

- Cover is provided up to a maximum amount per condition (e.g. £3,000).
- Once you have claimed up to the maximum amount, that condition is excluded from the policy.

### Accident Only Policies

- Does not cover for illness.
- Will provide a fixed sum of money for each accidental injury.
- Injuries may only be covered for the first 12 months.
- Often only cover a certain amount of accidents.

### 12 month/Time Limited Policies

- Cover is provided up to a maximum amount per condition.
- There is a 12 month limit meaning conditions will only be covered for the first 12 months.
- After 12 months the condition will be excluded from the policy.

## Benefits of Pet Insurance

- Peace of mind in the event of illness or injury
- Financial help to cover the cost of unexpected treatment
- Able to make decisions based on what is best for your pet without worrying about the cost of treatment
- Improved treatment options and outcome for your pet

## Other things to consider

- **Excess** – check what excess applies to your policy
- **Additional cover** – ask the provider to give details on what they offer by way of additional cover
- **Pre-existing conditions** – get the right policy from the start - switching to a new policy could cost you more

and will unlikely cover any pre-existing conditions or illnesses your pet has had

- **Price** – don't just shop around for price alone – policies will likely increase as your pet gets older and some increase your premium if you claim while others don't.



# OUTREACH

The Assisi outreach scheme, now in its 3rd year was the brainchild of one of our trustees and long term volunteers, Rosemary Glendinning.



The idea of the scheme came about because there was a clear recognition that we were not alone in our animal welfare work. There are plenty of like-minded people and groups who can benefit from our help just as we benefit from help from supporters, donors and volunteers.

We identified that there were individuals and families throughout our community who were struggling to make ends meet and provide food for themselves, their

families and their pets.

We also know that human welfare charities regularly come into contact with vulnerable people with companion animals. Pets can be a literal lifeline to so many homeless people or people living on their own in Northern Ireland,

but the cost to feed and maintain them is not something their owners can afford.

Whether Assisi rescues and re-home's a companion animal or it is saved by another charity doesn't ultimately matter. What's most important is the animal's welfare and wellbeing. We are often at maximum capacity and we see other much smaller shelters united by the same causes and goals.



These smaller rescue and shelter initiatives work just as tirelessly and just as passionately as we do. Often they are run by single individuals who cannot find the time

to go out and fundraise to seek the support they so desperately need.

The core of Assisi's values is to promote a culture where we are caring, compassionate, inclusive, passionate and animal centric and our mission is to keep as many animals as possible in their homes and with their owners.

So we provide in-kind support by way of food and basic medical supplies. Our work has contributed to the care and wellbeing of hundreds of animals and their owners in Northern Ireland every year, and is something of which we are very proud.

**REACHING-OUT**  
Homeless Support  
073795532298

Certificate of Appreciation has been awarded to Rosemary and everyone at **ASSISI OUTREACH** for all their help and support to Reaching Out Homeless Support. Without you all we would not be able to do what we do. (26th December 2019)

**From:** Brendan McCrory  
**Sent:** 28 January 2020 16:57  
**To:** nigel@assisi-ni.org  
**Subject:** Assisi/SVP



**Dear Nigel**

*Now that the year end madness is over I wish to thank you and Assisi most sincerely for your assistance provided to SVP Clients over the preceding 12 months, and beyond.*

*We sometimes meet Clients whose only company is their pet, often struggling to put food on their table, or heat the house. We've even met folks who would ensure their pet was fed ahead of them. It's impossible to over emphasise how important your scheme is to those that need it, and on their behalf, and the Society's, I thank you again.*

*Every success in your future fund raising efforts.*

Kind regards

**Brendan**

Brendan McCrory (Society of St Vincent DePaul)



# Volunteers

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**



## Support Groups

We are looking to increase the number of Support Groups located throughout the province reaching into communities and helping to raise vital funds to support our work and the animals in our care.

We're always on the look out for enthusiastic and motivated individuals who are empathetic to the work of Assisi to join a group or start up a new group.

### Support groups are responsible for:

- Organising local events
- Receiving donations from local people on our behalf
- Giving local talks and presentations
- Helping with street collections
- Placing collection tins in local shops
- Promoting local fundraising initiatives, such as coffee mornings, walks, quizzes etc.

There are various benefits of becoming a friend/member of an Assisi Animal Sanctuary Support Group:

- You will help raise the profile of Assisi
- Meet new people and get involved in your community
- Have support from a dedicated fundraiser
- Share new experiences and have fun
- Learn new skills: volunteering can help you learn new skills and gain experience which you can add to your CV.

Our Bangor and Ards Support Group meet regularly and organise various fundraising events throughout the year. This year they are planning a couple of quiz nights and cinema nights as well as street collections in Ards, Bangor and Comber. Look out for more details of these events and when they are taking place on our Facebook page and on our website.

**If you are interested in getting involved, starting up a new Support Group or joining an existing group, please contact us on 028 9181 2622 or email [info@assisi-ni.org](mailto:info@assisi-ni.org)**



# News from THE KENNELS

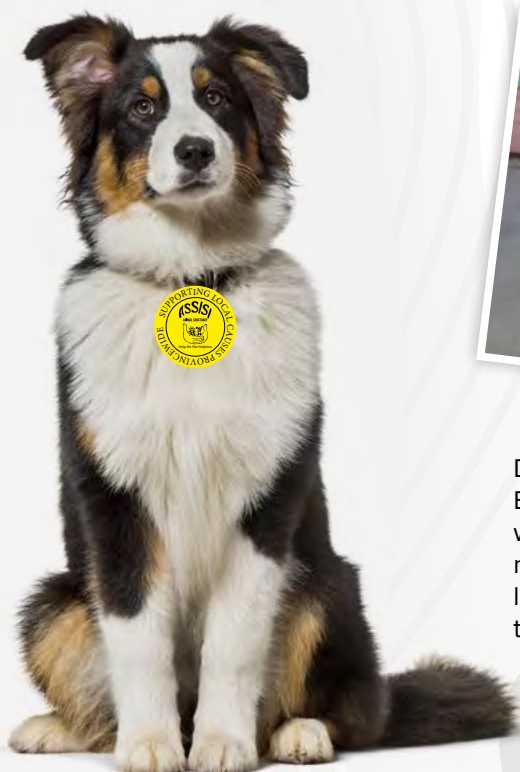
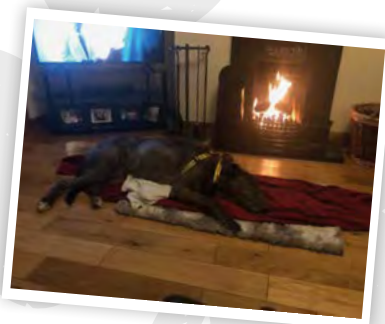
We have recently had some of our long term dogs go to there forever homes in the past few months.

## BRU

Bru is an 8 year old Deerhound Cross who was previously in the pound for quite some time before we got a call informing us that in the next hour Bru would be put to sleep if we didn't help. Needless to say, a number of staff rushed to the pound in order to prevent this happening and thankfully made it in time and were able to bring Bru safely back to the Sanctuary.



Bru has spent 6 months with us here at the Sanctuary and during this time was continually being overlooked due to his size and age. However, we are delighted to report that Bru has just recently been adopted by a lovely family wanting to give an older dog the perfect retirement home. During the home-check our staff even noticed a sign on the door of the spare room made by the children saying Bru's room.



Delighted to report that Bru has settled in really well and is loving his new home especially lazy evenings in front of the fire.



## RUFUS

Rufus is a 10 year old, 3 legged Jack Russell who had previously been in Assisi 5 years ago (when we had to arrange for him to have an amputation due to an irreparable condition to his leg ) and had recently, sadly had to be returned due to family circumstances.

Rufus had some behavioural issues and has spent about 8 months in the Sanctuary and people seemed to be put off by his medical conditions. Again, we are delighted to report that a wonderful woman came up to rehome Rufus and spent a lot of time here at the Sanctuary getting to know him and letting him get used to her, until such times as Rufus was comfortable going home with her to spend his the rest of his retirement with his new owner.



We currently have some more long term dogs booked and are keeping our fingers crossed that all goes well and they find their much deserved forever homes!

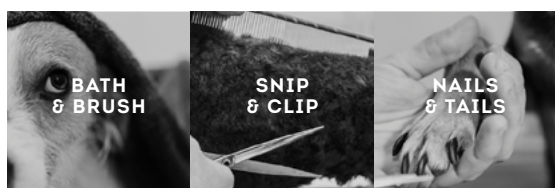
As this goes to print, Dylan will be travelling to London for the assessment of our Dutch herder litter – this has been a very exciting experience for everyone at the Sanctuary – there will be more to follow on this story in the next edition of Paw Prints!





Our new grooming studio at Whinney Hill offers exceptional dog grooming services, performed by experienced professionals and with the utmost care and attention.

For enquiries or to book an appointment, contact us on the numbers below.

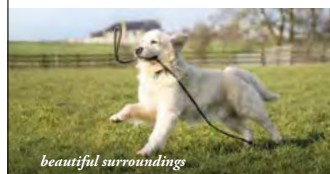


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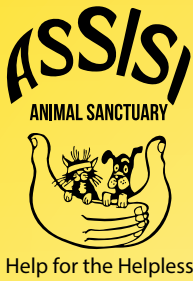


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# YOU can make a difference

**L**egacy Gifts are the biggest form of income for Assisi Animal Sanctuary and make a huge difference to the care that we can provide for animals in our Sanctuary.

Assisi receives no government funding and relies entirely on donations from our supporters.

Making a Will is easy and not expensive, however we urge people to seek legal advice to ensure everything is done correctly.

Please consider naming Assisi in your Will today so that we can continue to improve our sanctuary and provide exceptional services, care and support to more animals in need.

If you require further information about the charity, how the sanctuary works or how your money would be used to benefit the animals in our care, don't hesitate to contact us.



[www.assisi-ni.org](http://www.assisi-ni.org) | NIC 104594