



2026

Paw it Forward & Santa Paws



When we launched our Santa Paws holiday pet gift drive in 2024 and our Paw It Forward pet food drive in 2025, we were really pleased with the response. When we held each a second time, we were blown away by the absolute outpouring of support!

With the help of our long time partners Over Easy at the Depot, Memorial Animal Hospital, Twin Lakes Veterinary Hospital, North Water Brewing, and Brimfield Insurance Group, in addition to new friends The Great Life Vet and Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, we delivered a van full of donations to the Center of Hope and Kent Social Services for distribution through our Doggie Bags program. North Water Brewing even hosted a launch party for us to kick off the pet food drive, donating \$1 from each beer sold as part of their Good Beer Doing Good initiative. We also received several generous monetary donations towards the drive, including from the Wellington Eagles. We are so grateful to Olivia Pilon for suggesting the annual food drive and our friends at Axxess Family Services for administering this program with us. (Side note: we collect pet food and supplies throughout the year to support these programs as well as other local rescues. Please reach out if you'd like more information.)

In Memoriam: Mayor Jerry Fiala and First Dog Jewel

As we plan for Dog Days this summer, our hearts are heavy knowing that Mayor Jerry Fiala will not be there to kick off the event. Jerry was more than our mayor; he was our friend—a devoted dog lover and tireless supporter of the Madonio Animal Trust from the beginning. He served on the original planning committee for the inaugural Dog Days of Summer in 2015. Jewel was a candidate in the first Top Dog contest and proudly walked in the parade each year. Jerry passed away last fall, and his beloved Jewel passed away this spring. Rest easy, Jerry and Jewel. You will both be deeply missed.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT – The Salopek Family



If you've ever been to Dog Days, then you know the Salopek family. Tanya, Danielle, and Matt, along with practically family members Debo and Abby, are fixtures each year. Whether they're selling beer tickets and T-shirts, signing people up for the parade, or handling the heavy lifting, there is a Salopek for every job. They also generously sponsor the event each year. Thank you, Salopek family, for all you do!

Forever Fern

We were thrilled for our friend Carley Kruse, owner of Evelyn Dickerson Hair Design, when her beloved Chihuahua, Fern, won the 2025 Buddy Sessions Top Dog contest in a landslide. We are also grateful to Don Schjeldahl and Bob Mayfield, owners of North Water Brewing, for offering a beer-naming incentive for the contest. It was a joy to celebrate with Fern and her family—including dad Bill and sister Lucille—when *Forever Fern* launched in early September. Although Fern passed away later that year, she will be fondly remembered as the Top Dog who took it all in stride.



RESCUE SPOTLIGHT – Tree City Cats



Tree City Cats is a Kent-based cat rescue founded by Diane Geisler, Pamela Mattson, Jeff Jones, and Rachel Jernigan. Officially established as a nonprofit in early 2020, the organization has been caring for unwanted cats in Kent and the surrounding communities since Rachel and Diane first met in 2015. Their mission is rooted in compassion: to reduce the number of unwanted cats born outdoors, find safe and loving homes for the cats they rescue, and support community members who care for stray cat colonies by helping ensure the cats are sterilized and vaccinated. Since those early days, Tree City Cats has rescued and fostered nearly 1,000 cats who may otherwise have suffered. This life-saving work is made possible entirely through the generosity of the community. Tree City Cats can be reached via Facebook and Instagram.

Let's Hear it for the Bands!

A particularly important part of Dog Days is the musical acts that we feature each year.

This year, we have three outstanding groups to provide music throughout the day.

The DB Band

Kicking off the day at 11:00 AM, The DB Band brings a lively mix of rock 'n' roll standards and original songs. Led by Dick Bowling, the group features former members of FOG (Fat Old Guys) and performs throughout Portage County. The band has released five original CDs and is currently working on its sixth. Returning this year is guest vocalist Mary Sterpka Delaney, formerly of the Measles, whose harmony work can be heard alongside Joe Walsh on songs such as *Walk Away*. Arrive early to enjoy a set full of familiar favorites and local talent.



Long Time Gone

Back by popular demand, Long Time Gone returns with the close harmonies and classic sound that audiences love. Inspired by Crosby, Stills & Nash, the Byrds, and Buffalo Springfield, the group is known for polished covers and seasoned musicianship. Its members have performed with nationally recognized artists including Alex Bevan, Michael Stanley, and Pat Dailey, and their set also reaches into the music of Judy Collins and Joni Mitchell. Long Time Gone takes the stage at approximately 1:15 PM—an ideal soundtrack for lunch from the food vendors.



Rio Neon

New to this year's lineup, Rio Neon is a longtime Kent-area favorite with more than four decades of local performance history. The band blends jazz standards, swing, and folk—delivered with rich vocal harmonies and outstanding musicianship. Featuring Jack Dialasandro, Sally Kandel, Jim Kooser, Red Michel, Bob Smith, and Robin Stratten, Rio Neon has been part of the Kent music scene since the 1970s. Their repertoire ranges from the Great American Songbook to local songwriters and original compositions. They take the stage at 3:00 PM—and may be the only band with two ukuleles.



Special thanks to these local businesses, each of which sent a crew of volunteers to help us from set-up through tear-down at Dog Days last year.



With Gratitude

-Excited to share that our dear friends Greg & Barb Miner Morton have once again made a very generous donation, and we are working on a new project which we will announce soon!

-Thank you to friends and family who honored our sister-in-law/aunt Barb Madonio by donating in her memory. We appreciate your support Mike & Sue!

-Our condolences go out to the family of Emma Scott Stoll, an animal lover who passed away in March. Her daughters Renee Powell and Colleen Stoll chose to honor her memory by requesting donations to our Trust. We are humbled by their generosity.

How Can You Help? We're glad you asked!

If you are interested in making a donation, either towards the general fund or to be dedicated to a particular project, checks can be made payable to the Portage Foundation, indicating Madonio Animal Trust in the memo line, and sent to: The Madonio Animal Trust • 1204 Tallmadge Road • Kent, Ohio 44240
All donations go into the Trust or to one of our charities ~ All expenses, including this newsletter, are covered by the Madonio family.

If you would like to volunteer at the next Dog Days of Summer, contact us at 330-673-4919 or madoniofamily@gmail.com

•web/madonio-animal-trust.org •facebook.com/madoniofamily

•instagram.com/themadonioanimaltrust



Scan Me!

