

Foster homes and volunteers help Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge find loving forever homes for dogs in need

By Amanda McElfresh, amcelfresh@theadvocate.com

This article is brought to you by Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge.

Sharon is proud to call herself a “foster failure.”

She began volunteering with Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge (FOTA BR) when it first opened in 2010. When a major flood hit the Baton Rouge area in 2016, she was one of several people who went to the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales each day to check on the hundreds of dogs who were temporarily housed there.

“I fell in love with one particular dog there. We started calling him Jester because he was really a clown,” Sharon recalled. “I took him home and fostered him. After two weeks, I just couldn’t let him go. We changed his name to Jesse and I still have him today.”

Sharon has seen the same thing happen with others over the years. A family will agree to foster a dog for a few weeks or a few months, but are soon coming back to FOTA BR to fill out the adoption paperwork and make their new furry friend a permanent addition to their home. While not every situation works out that way, Sharon said the organization’s 14 years of success in finding suitable homes for hundreds of dogs can be attributed to the steps it takes to find the right match between pups and humans.

“If you have another dog, you may have kennels, bowls and beds. If not, we provide all of that. We also provide a dog that fits your lifestyle,” Sharon said. “You fill out a questionnaire here that asks about your lifestyle and home setting so that we know what sort of dog to put into foster care with you. It can be short-term, long-term, or a lifetime commitment if you fall in love. Plus, we’re always here to help if there are problems down the road. We are here for the dog’s lifetime.”

Sharon noted that there are other ways for people to help if fostering doesn’t feel right for them. FOTA BR welcomes volunteers at the Dog Adoption House between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays. Volunteer tasks can include exercising dogs, cleaning, taking photos of adoptable dogs and other help. Volunteers age 18 or younger must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Call 225-239-7368 or email friendsoftheanimalsbr@gmail.com to be scheduled as a volunteer.

“We also need people to help with laundry. We generate three loads of laundry a day, but we don’t have a place on site for washing,” Sharon said. “Any of these tasks can also be used as volunteer service hours for Scouts, church groups, students or other organizations.”

FOTA BR is in constant need of temporary foster homes for dogs in its care for overnight, weekend and long-term stays. Visit www.fotabr.org/foster-1 for more information. If you are interested in adopting a dog or puppy, a variety of adoptable animals are available at the FOTA BR Dog Adoption House. All animals are spayed/neutered, up to date on vaccinations and microchipped.

If someone wants to help dogs but is unable to serve as a foster or adoptive home, FOTA BR accepts financial donations to help pay for medication, spaying and neutering, food, toys and necessities.

Visit www.fotabr.org/donate to find out how to make a monetary contribution.

Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge is located at 8476 Highland Road. For more information, visit www.fotabr.org.