

# Lizzy Talk<sup>®</sup>

*A Newsletter From Lizzy*

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## *An Interview With Chris Stirn*

*By Gail Diedrichsen, Community Liaison for Lizzy's Fund*

Lizzy's Fund first met Chris Stirn, Executive Director of A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter in Naperville, in 2012. While having a true handle on the workings of the shelter, there was no doubt that she had a soft spot in her heart for every animal in her charge, particularly senior dogs. Chris and Lizzy's Fund was the perfect fit. We value her dedication and devotion to animals.

The doorway leading into Chris Stirn's office at A.D.O.P.T. Pet Shelter in Naperville is always open, but gated most of the time. She doesn't block the entry to be unwelcoming. In fact, Chris is an incredibly warm person. The gate safely corrals her furry officemates who are receiving a bit of extra loving care. While Chris performs her daily duties as Executive Director, her breaks make time to scratch butts and give belly rubs. Currently, Louie is her office buddy. "He's in our Blessed Bonds Program because his owner is recovering from an illness. He just wants to be held all the time."

Chris describes how the seniors in the shelter respond differently than the younger dogs. She says it heart-breaking because they show signs of real depression when relinquished. They are overwhelmed, and that's why Chris invites them to hang out with her in the office.

Chris shares, "Anybody that knows me, knows I have a huge soft spot for seniors. These dogs have lived in a home their entire lives and they've been put in the most vulnerable position. They need us the most. It's a meaningful purpose, and we never shy away from taking in an older dog. We do well finding them homes because we promote what's positive about adopting an older dog. For example, most are already house trained



and the adopter knows exactly what they are getting. Understandably, often the question is, 'How long will I have this dog?' We try to alleviate some of that angst by administering full blood panels (as a baseline) so we can inform the adopter of any potential health issues."



Nothing makes Chris's day better than receiving correspondence from someone who's adopted a senior. "Many of these adopters contact us years later just to let us know the dog is still with them and doing well."

"We do not discriminate in taking in an older dog due to medical issues and age. So, sometimes we fall into a situation where the dog becomes a hospice candidate." Chris knows that this is the unfortunate reality, but she and her team will not turn away dogs when they need them most. She believes no dog should leave this world alone and afraid. Besides, she's optimistic and surrounded by other caring staff and volunteers. "We have such kind volunteers, like Debbie Donahue for example, who is caring for Oliver. He's a senior cocker whose owner could no longer care for him. Like Debbie, there are others willing to care for older pets, giving them an opportunity to live out their lives in comfortable homes." Joking, Chris admits, "My office may be nice, but it's not the same as living in a real home."

Chris relates that she is delighted to partner with Lizzy's Fund to make a difference. "Lizzy's Fund not only financially helps with routine medical expenses for senior dogs but also offer foster and end of life care as well. These hospice pets need shelters like ours and programs like Lizzy Care Plus to advocate for them. I cannot say enough about Lizzy's Fund and the help they've given us."

*Did You Know...*

## COVID-19 And Your Pets

There's evidence that companion animals such as dogs or cats can be infected with the new coronavirus COVID-19, according to the World Organization For Animal Health. Cats seem more affected by the virus than dogs.

Visit [www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int) or [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) (World Health Organization) for more information.

Think about becoming an advocate for a senior citizen (people who are the most at risk with COVID-19) by walking their dog. Keep the following thoughts in mind:

- You can be a good neighbor and be safe.
- Carry a hand sanitizer. Use it before and after you pick up the dog from its home.
- Wear a mask and gloves if possible.
- Discourage anyone you encounter along the walk who wants to pet the dog.
- Encourage "social distancing".
- Ask the senior citizen to wash their hands when the dog is returned.



You will be doing the senior citizen a big favor by exercising their dog and keeping them safe at the same time.

Lastly, the shelters and rescues are being flooded with animals surrendered or abandoned during the COVID-19 crisis. Any help that you can provide, either to the shelters or rescues by fostering, or financial help to Lizzy's Fund would be greatly appreciated.



# Spotlight On Oliver

By Gail Diedrichsen, Community Liaison

Although Lizzy's Fund original mission was to provide financial care for senior dogs in shelters and rescues to enable them to become healthy and adopted into loving homes, sadly sometimes that is not reality. Lizzy's Care and Lizzy's Care Plus programs have been established to care for those unfortunate senior dogs that cannot be adopted. Lizzy's Care is a permanent or long term foster program to support the dog and pay for its care to ease the financial burden that falls on the shelter or rescue. Lizzy's Care Plus is an enhancement of the previous program and provides hospice care for the dog residing with a foster provider. Our goal is to provide a pain free environment and loving home, for however long is necessary. Following is the story of Oliver, a Lizzy Care Plus beneficiary.

Sometimes when senior dogs are relinquished to shelters for rehoming, terminal medical condition are discovered. Potential adopters who are looking for a family pet may be hesitant to take on a healthy senior, let alone a dog near the end of its life. There's a special place in Heaven for people who adopt senior dogs, and especially for people who open their hearts and homes to care for a hospice dog.

Oliver, a sweet cocker spaniel, belonged to an elderly owner whose life circumstances changed. Heartbroken, the man worried his beloved Oliver would not do well in a shelter. Thinking it was the kindest option, he made the difficult decision to humanly euthanize him through A.D.O.P.T Pet Shelter in Naperville.. Chris Stirn, Executive Director, took one look at Oliver's soft soulful eyes and suggested an alternative option. Chris offered to place Oliver in a permanent foster situation, and Oliver's appreciative owner agreed.

Chris is fortunate that an incredible volunteer, Debbie Donahue, stepped up to foster Oliver. Oliver is incredibly sweet and easily won the hearts of her entire family, including Debbie's 10 year old granddaughter who visits Grandma and Oliver some weekends.

Debbie's lifestyle reflects her all around good nature. She's involved with her church, volunteers at a senior center, and has been a valuable volunteer at A.D.O.P.T. for 11 years and counting. After retiring, she wanted to help even more. When a huge litter came to the shelter, she fostered 2 of the 8 puppies. Debbie shares how her granddaughter stayed with her to help care for the puppies. "She decided Grandma should keep both. These puppies were only 3 months old and already weighed over 25 pounds each. But, had I fostered all 8, she would have wanted me to keep all 8." Although Grandma loved the puppies, she knew they were NOT the best fit for her family and luckily they were both adopted within a week. Thinking back to the puppies, Debbie jokes, "Oliver and I are a perfect and better match...both old and slow."

Debbie grew up with a cocker, named Taffy, so when she saw the shelter's blast, announcing the need for an emergency foster, she thought it was a sign. "Because my first childhood dog had been a cocker, and I was being given the opportunity to make my first dog in retirement a cocker, it just seemed appropriate that I should foster him. It was meant to be. AND, of course my Granddaughter insisted, we keep him." This time, however, Debbie agreed with her.





“Oliver is a 12 years old slowpoke in the morning who picks up speed in the afternoon.” Debbie walks him slowly everyday so as not to exert his heart too much. He’s on medication and his coughing is a bit better. He no longer coughs while he’s sleeping. She says, “He’s very hard of hearing unless I say the word C-O-O-K-I-E, then he hears me! It’s selective hearing; just like being married.” All kidding aside, Debbie describes Oliver with such tenderness, “This old boy has become such a part of our house, our family, and such a big part of our everyday life. The neighbors love him, and even the cat wants to play with him. She encourages him. But, he just follows her down the hallway and that’s the extent of it!”

Fortunately, this sweet cocker spaniel will be surrounded by such caring people when his time comes. Oliver has incurable heart issues that, according to his cardiologist, give him 6 months to a year to be totally loved and spoiled rotten by the Donahue family.

Humbled by kindhearted Debbie and her family, Lizzy’s Fund is only too happy to assist financially for Oliver’s care. We wish every old dog could be as fortunate as Oliver. Lizzy Fund appreciates supporters who make this wish come true for so many senior dogs like Oliver.



**Lizzy’s Fund** is an IRS approved not-for-profit charity that provides financial support to senior canines, aged 7 and older. The Fund is named after a little long-haired Chihuahua named Lizzy, who after her owners discovered Alternative Care Medical help, lived to 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> after vets gave up on her at age 9.

**Would you like more information on Lizzy’s Fund?**

Visit [www.lizzysfund.org](http://www.lizzysfund.org), or follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

*Donations are gratefully accepted, please consider helping a senior dog today!*

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