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Preschool teacher enjoys taking care of pets

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BY AMANDA CREASEY ON SEPTEMBER 6, 2018

FEATURES

For cyclists, joggers and walkers who frequent the neighborhoods surrounding Thomas Dale High School, Melody McLean is a familiar face.

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On any given day in any kind of weather, neighbors can count on seeing her outside walking with a dog or two or three trotting along beside her.

Sometimes, the dogs are McLean's, but just as often they belong to friends and neighbors.

"I love all animals, but dogs are probably my favorite," she said. "I can't imagine life without a dog."

McLean has four dogs. Her oldest, Myah, a hound/Australian Shepherd mix, will be 15 in February.

She also has three cats and several turtles.

A preschool teacher, McLean, also works to help take care of local residents' pets. Most of the pets she cares for are dogs, but she has also been hired to look after cats, chickens, pigs, flying squirrels, fish, snakes and birds.

"I have been taking care of pets for about 15 years. I just love it! Sometimes working weekends and holidays can be a pain, but I'm used to it," she said.

Her love for animals began long before she started helping friends and neighbors. "Animals have always been in my life," she said. "I have pictures of me at two months lying on a blanket with a German Shepherd beside me on guard."

McLean fondly recalls a childhood in the country, where she and her sister "were always rescuing birds, mice and rabbits from the jaws of our cats."

When she was 4, McLean and her sister started rescuing turtles.

"We would find one, and I would feed it, and it would hang around the garden, so my daddy built a pen for my sister and me," McLean said.

These days, she volunteers at Smitty's Cat Rescue.

"The cat population is out of control in this area, and I want to help however I can," she said. "I'm new at fostering. Although I've bottle fed motherless kittens before, I haven't helped a rescue until Smitty's."

So far, McLean loves fostering, "even though it can be heartbreaking when you have a sick animal that doesn't make it. I want to do my part in helping helpless, innocent animals."

Even McLean's dogs participate in coming to the rescue of fellow creatures.

“My dog Myah and I found a naked baby bird in the road on a walk. I guess she fell out of a nest. I planned to take her to a wildlife rehabilitator, but she grew and flourished and I got a bird cage,” McLean said. Unfortunately, the bird died from an injury.

“We are just animal people,” McLean said of her family. “My mom has feral cat colonies that she feeds and my sister feeds raccoons.”

McLean’s paternal uncle “feeds a possum every night.”

It seems that a love of animals runs in the family.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

AMANDA CREASEY

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PHONE

(804) 751-0421

EMAIL

news@villagenewsonline.com

ADDRESS

Physical: 11801 Centre Street, Chester, VA 23831 Mail:
PO Box 2397, Chester, VA 23831

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