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Giving Voice for the Animals

Friends host annual fund-raiser.

By Sharon Allen Gilder/For The Almanac

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Tim Dillingham brought more than his expertise as a catering event manager to the Friends of Montgomery County Animals' (FMCA) annual luncheon fund-raiser held Nov. 21 in The Bolger Center's Benjamin Franklin Hall. He was accompanied to work by his beloved canine, Maggie, a nine and a half year old West Highland Terrier. Dillingham is no stranger to animals. He grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio and since moving to the Washington area 12 years ago, has helped rescue dogs all over the region. He said, "I've always been sympathetic to animals' plights."



Photo by Sharon Allen Gilder
Tim Dillingham with Maggie

Maggie was not only a show stealer during the fashion show component of the luncheon, she was among a cast of animal-loving souls who gathered to support the 34-year-old Montgomery County non-profit. The luncheon featured 11 boutiques, a fashion show and a silent auction to raise needed monies to help the animals.



The Friends of Montgomery County Animals' models in CAbi fashions are, from left, Lori Viers, Charlie Wilson, Susan Cameron, Deneen Wilson, Edee Perry, Deb McDonald, Laura Salisbury, Linda Sillin, Melanie Williams, Adrienne Tavakolian and Ellie Brown.

FMCA has been a humane voice for dogs, cats and horses since 1974. The group is comprised solely of volunteers. Yearly membership dues are \$30. Since the organization has no shelter to consume funds and relies on foster and adoptive families, 95 percent of all monies raised are earmarked to assist four-footed friends.

BOARD PRESIDENT Claire Proffitt told the gathering of 125 women and men, "In these uncertain economic times, all charities fight an uphill battle to raise money." She urged federal employees to designate FMCA as their charity of choice during the Combined Federal Campaign National Capital Area's (CFCNCA) drive. FMCA's CFCNCA number is 44491.

Independent CAbi (Carol Anderson by invitation) consultant Charlie Wilson headlined the fashion show. She was a guest at FMCA's event last year and looked forward to returning. Wilson joined the chorus of other attendees with her love of animals. She has a 12-year-old chocolate, standard Poodle named, Gabriel. "I met so many wonderful people last year and renewed old acquaintances. And, I'm one of the few people in Potomac that love deer. They're so sweet. But, I do have a six-foot brick wall around my yard."

Potomac resident, Cissy Grant joined daughters, Lyne Morgan and Gaines Hurdle at The Surrey's boutique. The Potomac landmark known for its fine saddlery and tack, displayed a treasure trove of fun and fine gifts for all seasons and reasons. Grant, who is usually on the other side of the pen said, "You're talking to a dog fanatic. I grew up with Dalmatians. They're fun and playful." She added, "When you see spots before your eyes, you know they're real. It's a Dalmatian."

FORMER STATE Sen. Jean Roesser, who in the past has served as an FMCA model, said she supports the group, "Because it's such a worthy organization, especially now. With animals, just like people,

there's a great need and Friends makes a tremendous contribution to the community in caring for and finding homes for the animals that we all love."

Potomac muralist Sandy Klingenberg, also noted for her detailed house portraits, has three Persian cats she adopted through Friends. She said, "I love Persian cats and Claire directs me to them." Klingenberg shared the story of her rescue cat named "Boo" who had been a breeder's cat for eight years. Boo had been kept in a cage and never saw daylight. "When I got her, I thought she had cataracts because of her reaction to light." Boo enjoyed 11 years in Klingenberg's household until she died in 2007 at the age of 19.

Sara Lee Greenhalgh reminisced about her history with The Bolger Center's property. She revisited horseback riding in the '60s and '70s when the land was owned by the Sisters of Mercy. "A caretaker came after us on a tractor. He didn't want us riding through the fields. We rode on the periphery of the fields, around the edges. It was kind of like cops and robbers. We'd just gallop away from him." Greenhalgh was on the board of Montgomery County's Humane Society from 1966-1970 where she assisted in the rescue of a herd of five abandoned Shetland ponies. She said, "I've been a member of FMCA forever. I've taken care of animals my whole life." She lost her last horse five years ago to old age and now provides food, lodging and nurturing to one indoor cat and two feral cats in an outbuilding on her property. As Greenhalgh noted, "The cats just come."

Janet Wooschlager, who donated a doll house cottage for the silent auction, drew inspiration from a quote by Victor Hugo, "As the purse is emptied, the heart is filled." Wooschlager said, "Creating whimsical doll houses fills me with so much joy knowing that our furry friends will benefit from the donation."

PROFFITT TOLD the gathering of animal lovers, "Again this year, FMCA has chipped away at one of its primary goals, the reduction of animal overpopulation. FMCA's Fix-It Fund has supported 83 Trap/Spay-Neuter/Release cases. Although adoptions for all humane groups are down, FMCA has placed 175 cats and kittens and four dogs have received veterinary care, including Sandy, the service dog featured in our latest newsletter. Thirty cats owned by individuals or families facing economic hard times have been spayed-neutered or received veterinary care through FMCA."

FMCA member and horsewoman, Beth Garagusi characterized the upbeat mood voiced by fellow members and guests. "I look forward to this every year. It's like an actual whole day of everything here in one place, eating, shopping, friends and animals. All I need to do is ride my horse here and I'd have all my favorite things."

For more information visit: www.friendsofmontgomerycountyanimals.com.