

## **If You Adopt a Dog or Cat from Stamford Animal Control by Jan 14, You Pay No Fees**

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**Categories :** [Animals](#)

**Tagged as :** [Adoptable Pet 2018](#), [Stamford Animal Control 2018](#)

**Date :** January 5, 2018

A New Canaan woman, through her company, is donating all dog and cat adoption fees at the [Stamford Animal Control Shelter](#) through Jan. 14.

Those who adopt an older dog that's been in the shelter for more than one year will receive two free training sessions to help the animal acclimate to its new home.

During the two-week event, the \$75 adoption fees being waived include the costs of spaying or neutering, micro-chipping and vaccinations.

Here's how the program got started in Stamford:

Cathy Kangas was at a wedding in Palm Beach, Fla. early last month when, after seeing a photo on

Facebook, she had what she calls “a complete meltdown.”

One of her friends had shared a photo of a beagle picked up as a stray at Stamford Animal Control that looked exactly like Ladybug, the little dog [Kangas had rescued in 2016](#).

“My god, we love and trust our dog sitter, and I thought, how could Ladybug have gotten out?” Kangas recalled. “I quickly called everyone, including [New Canaan Animal Control Officer] Allyson Halm, asking could she have got out and walked to Stamford?”

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— This article by Michael Dinan [originally was published](#) by [NewCanaanite.com](#). Photos below and the two sidebar articles below were originally published [by GreenwichFreePress.com](#).

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Her fears soon were calmed: Kangas’s babysitter assured her that Ladybug was safe and happy at home.

But the image of the roaming dog didn’t leave Kangas, and when she returned to New Canaan she followed up with Stamford Animal Control. While visiting what turned out to be a male beagle, Benny, in the city’s shelter, Kangas was struck by what she saw.

“A city pound has no money and for these poor dogs it was like a jail, probably worse than jail,” Kangas said. “They had no beds, so we are supplying beds and toys, but what broke my heart was when Officer [Tilford] Cobb told me, ‘We have two beautiful girls in here, pit bull mixes that have been in here for four years.’

“When I heard that, I said, ‘You know what? I don’t know how we will work it, but let’s try a Free the Shelter [program] and highlight the dogs sitting here right away.’

“They’re not getting promoted, there’s no marketing, and we have to get them out in the public eye.”

She referred to a program where Kangas, through [PRAI Beauty](#) — a certified cruelty-free beauty company that she founded and where she serves as CEO — agrees to pay the adoption fee for any animal adopted out of a shelter or rescue group for a set period of time.

More than 2,300 dogs, cats and other animals have been adopted out through the program since PRAI launched Free the Shelters last summer, said Kangas, who also sits on the board of directors of the [Humane Society of the United States](#).

- **The Stamford Animal Control and Care Center is open for adoptions from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day, and can be reached at 203-977-4437.**

Cobb said right now is “the perfect time of year to adopt a pet from our shelter.”

“Free the Shelters helps with overcrowding and enables people who were thinking of adopting a pet start the New Year off with a new addition to their family,” he said. “We are thankful to Cathy Kangas and PRAI Beauty for this important contribution to Stamford Animal Control.”

### ***SIDEBAR 1: 'Free the Shelters' Elsewhere***

When adoption fees are waved the way PRAI Beauty's "Free the Shelters" program has done elsewhere around the country, “that simple removing of barriers can result in huge success,” Kangas said.

“We are starting a movement,” Kangas added. “Shelter animals can be pedigree or mutts, young or old ... they’re all perfect and need to find good homes. Shelters should be short-term foster homes rather than a long term jail sentence for companion animals.”

Since starting the program started in June, 2,300 animals have been adopted out of shelters across the United States.

“We started with Tampa Bay SPCA where there were 81 dogs. We ran a Free the Shelters event, handled press and social media, and they called me hysterical,” Kangas recalled.

“I thought something was wrong. They were in tears when they said Kathy our whole shelter is empty. They sent me photos of empty cages.”

“We just placed 217 dogs in Atlanta this past weekend,” she continued. “And a guinea pig and a goat!”

### **Benny Gets a Home**

Meanwhile, to Kangas’s great surprise, no one came to the shelter to claim Benny the beagle, who almost certainly was dumped. So she adopted him and he’s now part of the Kangas pack, with Plum the golden retriever and two Rottweiler-pit bull-beagle mixed-breeds named Hannah and Hamish, rescued together from

an abusive situation.

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*See our story last month about Benny:*

- [Meet Benny, a Very Cuddly Beagle — and You Could Adopt Him](#) (Dec. 17)
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“He’s a mischievous little devil,” Kangas said of Benny. “He’s sweet as a bug. He got to me and I felt sorry for him and brought him home to a bed.

“He literally — you could tell — did not want to be outside, he ran through the door, into the kitchen, took a quick sip of water, and he went to that bed and slept for 20 hours. I almost was worried, I thought something might be wrong with him. But he was just exhausted.”

## ***SIDEBAR 2: Some Adopted, Others Available***

Cobb said that since the Free the Shelters event started, there have been three adoptions, including two cats on Wednesday and the adoption of a dog named “Frenchy.”

Frenchy, a Staffordshire Terrier who was surrendered to Stamford Animal Control following a cruelty situation several months ago, has been placed with a trainer with a group called “203K9.”

“Frenchy is a great, smart dog,” Cobb said. Cobb said the trainer plans to use Frenchy for a prison program where dogs are trained.

Cobb said he hopes the Free The Shelters event will result in more adoptions. Currently, he said there are four puppies, including Shay and Bruno, who were featured in recent articles, and a pair of puppies found as strays who shelter employees suspect are siblings.

“They are pent up and not doing well here,” Cobb said, adding that the existing shelter is not ideal. Dogs face each other in opposing rows. “The environment the dogs are in — facing each other, it’s just bad any way you look at it. They get stressed out.”

In addition to the four puppies, who range from a few months old to 9 months old, there is a dog about to have puppies. Currently, she’s housed in the shelter’s office.

“By law we will advertise in the local paper that we have the dog and the owner has seven days to

collect her,” Cobb said.

The notice will go out on Jan. 4, he said. If the dog isn’t claimed, she and the puppies will all be available for adoption.

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***See also:***

- [Meet Coco, a Southern Boxer Mix Who Needs a New Home](#) (Jan. 1)
- [Bruno, a Big, 9-Month Old Puppy, Needs a Home](#) (Dec. 15)
- [Here’s Baby, an Adoptable Dog at Stamford Animal Control](#) (Dec. 19)
- [Meet Shay, a Hound Mix at Stamford Animal Control Shelter Who Needs a Home](#) (Dec. 20)

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