

Statesman

Firehouse Animal Health Center donates \$10,000 to Season for Caring

By Nicole Villalpando

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Kristine Grace's 13-year-old long-haired Pomeranian Chihuahua, Fanny Brice, had a long list of needed medical treatments: blood work, an ultrasound to make sure that her liver and kidneys are healthy, and most importantly, removing the three remaining teeth she has to take care of dental disease.

When Grace first took Fanny Brice to Firehouse Animal Health Center in June, she received an estimate of about \$1,200 for this care.

"I was really scared," Grace said. "I couldn't afford that."

She had been trying to figure out a way to pull together the money for Fanny Brice's care. Then she heard about the Statesman Season for Caring program and the \$10,000 worth of care that Firehouse had pledged to the program.

Each year, the Season for Caring program features 12 families nominated by local nonprofit agencies, and then helps hundreds of other families served by those agencies.

Grace isn't one of the featured families, but she is a client of Foundation Communities, one of the Season for Caring partner agencies this year.

When Firehouse made a \$10,000 pledge for the third year, it committed to helping the featured families' pets first. Any money left over then could be used for other families served by

the Season for Caring nonprofits.

This year, only two of the 12 featured families needed pet care. Kizzy Jackson's two cats will receive wellness checks as well as heartworm prevention and be spayed, and Nicole Overton's dog, Mabry, got a wellness check and was spayed earlier this month.

That left money to help other families not featured, including Grace.

Grace had a 30-year career in professional horse shows when a chronic illness left her unable to work.

With no money coming in, Grace said she was homeless and living with Fanny Brice in her car and in a tent. Then she heard about Foundation Communities and its apartments for people with lower incomes. "Please, Lord, let me in," Grace said she remembers thinking.

Foundation Communities did, and Grace and Fanny Brice now have a secure place to live.

On Thursday, Grace and Fanny Brice returned to Firehouse. Fanny Brice had an ultrasound and blood work. Dr. Stacy Mozisek walked Grace through what she found in her exam and the ultrasound. They discovered a problem with Fanny Brice's gallbladder, but medication and a change of diet will make that more manageable. Mozisek arranged to have a new low-fat food and medication shipped directly to Grace.

As long as Fanny Brice's blood work comes back fine Friday, she will have dental surgery the first week of January.

"She's a little spitfire," Mozisek said of Fanny Brice, who was named after the "Funny Girl" character, because as Grace said, "Barbra Streisand plays this quirky girl that turns into a diva,

and that's exactly what Fanny is." Plus they have the same color hair, Grace said.

"I'm just excited that this panned out," Mozisek said of being able to use the Season for Caring donation to help Grace and Fanny Brice.

Helping clients and future clients who cannot afford care, "it's everything," Mozisek said. "It goes beyond Season for Caring. We give a ton back to the community, which is why I continue to be here for seven years."

Through the end of last year, Firehouse has donated \$525,000 to local organizations, including many shelters and rescue groups.

"It makes me feel really good," Mozisek said.

"Thank you so much for doing this," Grace told Mozisek.

Season for Caring continues through Jan. 31. While veterinary care has been secured through this donation, the featured families still have many items, such as reliable vehicles, furniture, clothing, groceries and Christmas presents for their children, on their wish lists.

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