

Dog inspires city to help local strays

By Elizabeth Billips True Citizen Associate Editor



STAFF PHOTO BY
ELIZABETH BILLIPS
Mayor Jesse Stone with
Daniels and Old Fella.

An old dog is at the heart of a new effort to help local strays.

As Old Fella's tale of rags to riches (see story, page 1) sinks into the hearts of readers throughout the states, his owner, Waynesboro resident Richard Daniels, says he wants to put the attention to good use.

A book about Daniels and his dog, "Old Fella: A Long Journey Home," will hit the stands soon, and Daniels says a percentage of the proceeds will go to the city's animal shelter.

"It's a big project, but I would love to see our shelter come to the point that we don't have to kill any animals," Daniels told Waynesboro City Council with Old Fella at his feet. "My hope and prayer is that through this dog, we can have a better shelter.

Last September, Daniels rescued Old Fella from a campground and nursed him back to health with hopes of finding someone to adopt him.

Daniels ultimately became attached to Old Fella and kept him for his own.

But during the process, he abruptly learned that the dog was considered "un-adoptable."

He was old, had health problems and was part chow.

"The word 'chow' just says 'no' when it comes to adoption," Daniels said.

When you look at Old Fella now, you see a gentle old dog who tolerates children, knows his manners and wants to please.

One of Old Fella's fans, Daneen Cooper of S.C. says "Old Fella has captured so many hearts not because he is one *in* a million ... but rather one *of* millions."

Old Fella's story has brought new attention to the billions of unwanted, uncared for animals that live in hunger and sickness; and, as a result, his followers are following Daniels' example.

Texan R.K. Smith wrote in to say she's made plans to volunteer at a no-kill clinic, and a couple from Oregon have rethought their plans to buy a puppy.

"Instead of looking to purchase breed specific, we will instead do a rescue," they said.

Waynesboro Mayor Jesse Stone is behind Old Fella all the way.

He and his wife Amanda had already adopted several dogs displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and both hope Waynesboro's canine celebrity will open up new possibilities for local adoptions and ways to celebrate responsible pet ownership.

Monday night, Mayor Stone signed a proclamation declaring June 22 "Old Fella Day" and took a moment from the council meeting to introduce himself to Old Fella and pat his head.

"Being the Bird Dog Capital of the World, it's appropriate that Waynesboro be dog friendly," he told him.