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ABOUT THE COVER: Tattoo artist Bryan Vigil masterfully crafted a portrait of Rusty and Tuna, two cats available for adoption through Whiskers cat rescue, for our March Pets Issue. Check out our feature on Vigil’s pet tattoos on page 6 and learn about Whiskers on page 8!

Cailey Rohovit

Contributor Limelight
Contributing Writer

Cailey has masterfully written about LGBTQ+ performance artists through *SLUG’s Bold & Beautiful* column in addition to profiles on unique local businesses. Maintaining professionalism but never compromising her unique voice, Cailey’s skill and integrity glows in each piece she writes. Read her feature on local cat rescue Whiskers on page 8!



Ashley Christenson

Contributor Limelight
Photographer

Ashley’s versatility and willingness to take on new challenges makes her an invaluable piece of the puzzle that is *SLUG’s* coverage of events, local businesses, drag queens, artists and more. Check out Ashley’s eye for detail in her photo of *Utah Pet Aquamation* on page 14 and check out more of her work on Instagram at *@ashleychristensonphotography*.



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By James Orme • greaserjames@gmail.com

The relationship between tattoo artist and client is one of mutual trust, and it’s a more personal one than most give it credit for. Bryan Vigil at *Misery & Company Tattoo Collective* asks those who spend time in his chair to give him that trust so he can create something unique. It’s no wonder that Vigil has become particularly known for his pet tattoos. His ability to add such striking elements to each piece lends itself to a unique creation with a warm personal touch, which is exactly what those who are seeking to honor their animal companions are looking for.

“I started painting when I was little, trying to replicate cartoons,” says Vigil. “When I was a teenager, my mom took me to some oil painting classes, so I started doing more realistic paintings. I wanted to make a living as an artist when I was 20 living in Mexico, and it was difficult.” Vigil moved to New York, thinking it would be easier there, but he got frustrated with the process of trying to get into galleries in the big city. “I had a friend who was a tattoo artist and I thought that would be a way for me to make money while I’m still doing my art,” he says.

After Vigil’s aunt bought him his first tattoo gun, he began slowly tattooing people he knew, trying to find a way to subsidize his own art. Always his own worst critic, Vigil gives each of his projects meticulous attention and he’s constantly working to meet the high expectations he sets for himself—ultimately, it’s all to exceed the expectations of his clients.



“Everyone that comes to me already knows my style,” says Vigil, “so they know what to expect and I appreciate the freedom that gives me. I still listen to the specifics that they are looking for and I try my best to incorporate those.” Vigil takes weeks to create an original design, starting by painting a full watercolor piece that the client can then take home and display if they choose.

This may not work for every tattoo or every client, but Vigil says this process is one that works best for him. “If I don’t like the idea they have for the tattoo, I don’t do it,” says Vigil. “I’ll recommend someone else to do it and I feel like that’s better for everyone.” The way Vigil works with colors evokes so much emotion that his style is a natural fit for pet portraits. He prefers to work from multiple reference photos to capture the animal’s personality as well as their likeness.

“I have to respect how important a pet tattoo is for [the client],” says Vigil. “This is a family member to them, so I always do my best to capture their essence and personality as best I can,” Vigil says. “I love doing animal paintings ... I did a few [fox designs] and I started getting asked to do cats and dogs. That all started about five years ago. I really take it seriously because there’s so much powerful emotion behind it. For me it is about creating my own style, and a big part of that is how I can incorporate how I paint and bring my background in other art forms to my tattooing. I’m always trying to evolve and do something new.”

Vigil may work somewhat outside of most people’s idea of a traditional tattoo artist, but he has found a way to connect on a deep level with each piece and person he tattoos, as well as their furry friend. Check out his incredible work on Instagram at [@patrick_cat_tattoo](#).

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GIVING SECOND CHANCES TO CATS IN NEED

By Cailey Rohovit • cearr73@gmail.com

Having been a lifelong lover (and owner) of cats, I have one rule for myself: Never spend time with adoptable cats if I'm not in the position to take one home. After meeting **Jessica Vigos**, founder and executive director of Whiskers, and some of the nonprofit's adoptable kitties, I found it harder than ever to keep myself from putting in an application. Whiskers is a rescue and rehabilitation nonprofit that specializes in finding homes for senior and disabled cats, who make better companions than some may think. "I think that people are like, 'Oh, it's too scary,' but if you have people who are willing to educate you and kind of hold your hand along the way, it can actually be really rewarding," says Vigos, whose passion for overlooked cats is both undeniable and contagious.

Vigos was drawn to cats from a young age watching family members rescue and rehabilitate cats all around her. "I grew up with a grandma who would help stray kitties. I learned how to make winter houses for them, and we really took care of them," Vigos says. After battling addiction and being on the receiving end of help and compassion, Vigos started volunteering for existing animal services. Eventually, she decided to turn her experience with and love for cats into her own animal rescue and nonprofit. Thus, Whiskers was born. "Giving back to the community was something that

was really important to me," Vigos says. "Helping animals in need really resonates with me because we give them second chances and at one point I needed a second chance, too."

It's no secret that adopting a cat can be expensive, especially for senior animals and animals with health issues that may need medications, special diets or extensive medical examinations. Unlike other nonprofits and adoption agencies, Whiskers aims to make adoption feasible for everyone of all backgrounds by covering many costs and procedures before putting their cats up for adoption. "[Some necessary procedures] can cost \$2,000 at a regular vet, which prevents these cats from being adopted in our shelters. Our idea is to get them healthy, do their medical care, and make it so somebody from all walks of life can adopt a senior cat who has already had those things done and not have that upfront cost right away," Vigos says.

Even after adopting from Whiskers, the resources don't stop coming. The Whiskers team has armed their website with pages of support and information about how to care for different types of cats, all the way from kittens to stray and community cats. Whiskers even offers additional resources for specific adoptable cats. "All of our diabetic cats have been posted on our website, and we offer to pay for their insulin," Vigos says. "We want to



Jessica Vigos founded Whiskers to give often-overlooked cats, such as **Meow** here, a second chance in a loving home.

show people how to care for them, how to feed them, really hand-hold anyone who would be interested in them, and we have never received an application for them in four years." A large part of Whiskers' goal is to educate the community about these cats with special needs and to provide the support that helps get these wonderful cats a loving home. "When someone adopts from us, they are family for life," Vigos says. "They can always reach out to us."

Many people don't adopt senior and disabled cats because of the notion that their medical care will be too difficult or expensive to manage, but that often isn't true (especially with the resources provided by Whiskers!). "It is very possible to take great care of senior cats and to have it not be daunting," Vigos says. "The heartbreak is worth it, and what you receive by giving to them is life-transforming."

To learn more about caring for cats in need and to choose the perfect pet for you, visit whiskersutah.org or find them at [@whiskersutah](https://www.instagram.com/whiskersutah) on Instagram.

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SCALES AND TAILS

DO SNAKES DESERVE THEIR DEADLY REPUTATION?

By Kirby Dorsey • misskirbydorsey@gmail.com

From the biblical serpent inciting original sin to the petrifying Basilisk in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, pop culture positions snakes as sly instigators of humanity's falls from grace rather than innocent bystanders. It's no wonder decades of villain-centric depictions cemented chilling stereotypes of snakes as stone-cold villains rather than shy beings employing self-defense tactics.

Yet ever since childhood fascination unpacked the unlikely brilliance behind reptilian life, **Shane Richins** has rejected stereotypes of "scary" animals. Today, as proprietor of the Utah reptile sanctuary *Scales & Tails*, he steadfastly counters myths misrepresenting snakes as heartless killers.

"People mistake snakes' self-preservation reactions for malicious intentions to harm humans," Richins explains. "But even species boasting exceptional venom rarely attack absent extreme provocation."

In fact, by prioritizing dramatic defensive displays like suddenly darting tongues, swelling hoods and thrashing tails, snakes seek to conserve precious energy while avoiding damage risked by direct combat. According to the *Scales & Tails* founder, even the legendary lethality of cobras and mambas primarily evolved to steer predators away without wasting biological resources on futile fights. "Once people look past surface scares to grasp that snakes don't yearn to randomly bite bystanders, their true charm and brilliance shines through," Richins says.

Richins dedicates his days to dissolving the deepest anxious falsehoods by showcasing snakes' calmer realities—

not blood pressure-spiking fictions. At his family-founded sanctuary's hands-on educational encounters, mythbusting tours position rational understanding as the ultimate antidote for irrational anxiety churned up by Hollywood horror flicks. Carefully controlled interactions allow once snake-fearing visitors to discover snakes as thinking, feeling beings capable of communing calmly when shown basic respect.

So how do snakes stack up as pets? For busy professionals, creative dwellers and gentle souls preferring subtle stimuli over loud voices, snakes could prove to be perfect pets. Reptilian roomies boast a big impact and resilience without demanding big maintenance like daily walks or incessant attention from owners. Simply appreciate these marvels of muscle and magic for their ancient evolutionary excellence rather than expected affection. Cultivating understanding, not unreasonable anthropomorphism, reveals the true charm behind scaly squamates.

Though snakes may not excitedly greet owners at the door like dogs, they can provide snuggly satisfaction through select cuddle sessions. Ball pythons in particular become incredibly relaxed when exposed to a human's higher body heat, often cozily wrapping in loose coils to share the warmth while feeling protected. Just don't expect constant climbs into your lap—give snakes space, and they will periodically reciprocate affection.

"The key thing is [to] not expect snakes to ever 'love' you back in the way a dog, cat or even a bird may demonstrate affection," says Richins. "Reptiles simply lack the emotional capacity for



Photo: Talyn Behzad

Shane Richins fights reptilian stereotypes by showcasing the calmer realities of snakes, such as this albino Burmese python named Kicks.

bonding or feelings like love, at least how humans recognize them."

Overall, even sizable snakes edge out high-energy dogs and aloof felines regarding ease of care alone, thanks to drastically lower demands for living space, direct bonded attention and specialized nutrition. Trade noisy chaos for clean calm companionship selectively offered on reptilian terms rather than according to neediness demanding 'round-the-clock doting.

Ultimately, Richins' myth-busting mission aims not only to dissolve irrational fears about snakes, but to spotlight the scaly splendor long-hidden behind chilling cultural stigma. Through *Scales & Tails*' judgment-free, guided interactions, visitors discover that their slithering neighbors aren't malevolent blood-thirsty horrors, but brilliant beings shaped by 140 million years of evolutionary magic.

Trade misconceptions for deeper wisdom about Earth's most unfairly feared yet wondrous animal kingdom designs. Emerge ready to defend the innocence of reptile refugees rather than recoil from their human-assigned deadly reputations built on false pretenses. If you're interested in learning more about Shane Richins and *Scales & Tails*, visit their website scalesandtailsutah.com.

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Among the various pet shelters in Salt Lake City, *Ruff Haven Crisis Sheltering* is one where customers can receive the highest-quality care for their pets as well as assistance themselves as owners. Dedicated to providing shelter to pets whose owners are temporarily unable to care for them, *Ruff Haven* provides basic care needs and beyond to many pets, including dogs and cats.

One of their recent customers, **Hilary Hall**, was happy to sit down and discuss her history with her beloved pet dog **Dallas**, a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, and to share insights about the specific types of care and shelter that *Ruff Haven* has provided Dallas. Hall was accompanied by Dallas himself during the interview, further showing the familial bond the two have with each other.

Hall originally met Dallas after marrying her now ex-husband, who owned Dallas at the time. As the marriage, which included incidents of domestic violence, eventually came to an end, Hall and Dallas started forming a deep attachment to each other. "Dallas started protecting me," says Hall. "He kind of became my dog."

Once Hall and Dallas were living on their own, personal circumstances arose and Hall had to consider giving him up so she could work towards emotional stability. Referred to *Ruff Haven* by *Weber County Animal Services* in 2021, Hall was compelled to seek out a pet care facility by a friend who had sent her a video of a local homeless person who had given up her dog. The two were eventually reunited after she became stable enough to care for her pet full-time.

"[Dallas] is a talker, he wants to talk to everybody. He loves to play—a typical dog with a ball," says Hall. "He's a bit of an older dog, so to see him acting like a puppy is pretty fun."

Ruff Haven cares for pets whose owners are facing dangerous situations such as domestic violence, evictions or prolonged hospitalization. In addition to providing free,

basic pet needs for their shelter dogs—grooming, vaccinations, microchips and spaying or neutering—*Ruff Haven* also hosts many community outreach initiatives, including dog food drives, which help ensure that even pets not directly in their care are still fed and cared for. This is especially helpful for the homeless population in SLC, many of whom cannot afford food for themselves on a daily basis.

Evaluating pets and owners on a case-by-case basis, *Ruff Haven* is also incredibly patient with their customers and offers leniency in regards to their short-term shelter policies, including a stay of 60–90 days. In Hall's case, *Ruff Haven* allowed Dallas an additional sheltering period of up to eight months. "They were so patient with me; they knew how much I wanted him," says Hall. "Luckily, I didn't have to have a ton of services, but the fact that they were willing to keep him for six months to a year helped me significantly."

Confident that *Ruff Haven* will be in service for many years to come, Hall expressed profound gratitude for the long-term help that they have offered both her and Dallas, allowing them to continue coexisting happily and providing mutual support for each other. Hall also expressed relief that *Ruff Haven* is continuing to grow as an organization, supporting owner welfare just as much as pet welfare through their facility's ongoing care and community outreach initiatives.

"Obviously [*Ruff Haven* is] trying to get more awareness out there on what they do," says Hall. "They don't do this for the money, they just want to help." To learn more about *Ruff Haven's* commitment to animal and human welfare, check out their website at ruffhaven.org.

RUFF HAVEN CRISIS SHELTERING

Keeps Pets With Their People

By Dustin Hardebeck dhardebeck98@gmail.com

Hilary Hall and her beloved pup Dallas have stuck together through thick and thin, with the help of *Ruff Haven*.



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Skull Preservation and Sustainable Cremation: Alternative Pet Memorials

By Asha Pruitt • asha@slugmag.com

For many, losing a pet is just as difficult as losing a human loved one. Figuring out how to best memorialize their life can be stressful, and the standard options of burial or cremation aren't for everyone. Fortunately, these two Utah animal lovers are in the business of providing alternative ways to keep the memory of your furry (and scaly) friends alive.

"I told him, 'I want to dig up my cat and put him back together,'" says **Sofia Robb**, reminiscing about one of her first dates with her now-husband **Mike Dove**. For the past ten years now, Dove has been crafting memorial artworks with animal remains as the founder of *Skeletal Articulation*, a small business located on the couple's family farm in Morgan, Utah. He works with vets and taxidermists across the country, in addition to local pet owners, who entrust him to preserve their deceased animals.

The process starts with Dermestid beetles, who eat away the flesh section by section—a task which can take months. Next, the bones are degreased and whitened. Dove will then drill holes in the bones and piece them back together with wire. "[The clients] pick the pose; I do my best to match it," he says. "At that point

it becomes sort of an art project." Dove mostly works with cats and dogs, but his biggest project to date has been a horse; other animals in his repertoire include goats, snakes, chickens, goldfish, rats, turtles—even a kinkajou and an anteater.

Dove is often able to determine details about the animal's health; for example, he once discovered fat necrosis on a goat and a heart attack in a dog. "Some people like to know that they had a good reason to put [their pet] down. It gives them relief," he says. As a big animal lover, he knows how important it is to handle their precious companions with care. Learn more about Dove's services at skeletalarticulation.com, from full skeletons (typically \$1000-1200) to skulls, freeze-dried hearts, lucky paws, framed fur pelts and more (from \$100-500).

Skeletal Articulation



Photo: Dominic Jordan

Mike Dove

Utah Pet Aquamation



Photo: Ashley Christenson

Merritt Rinard

When she lost her dog **Trapper** to kidney disease at just six years old, **Merritt Rinard** thought the idea of flame cremation for her sweet pet seemed too harsh. She learned about a more eco-friendly alternative called alkaline hydrolysis, also known as aquamation, but realized that no one on the Wasatch Front was providing this service yet. Rinard took it upon herself to bring aquamation to SLC, and in July 2023—a year and a half after Trapper's death—*Utah Pet Aquamation* opened its doors in West Valley City.

"It's basically mother nature's process, just sped up," Rinard says of the method that mimics natural decomposition. The aquamation machine is close to the size of a commercial dishwasher, through which hot water and alkali salt cycles at a slow, gentle pace. After 24 hours, only the bones are left, which dry out and crumble into ashes within another day or

two. Rinard packages the remains into a biodegradable burlap bag accompanied with a plantable seed bookmark. Meanwhile, the mineral-rich liquid byproduct goes back into the sewer system, which Rinard explains acts as a sort of probiotic for the wastewater.

As far as what kind of animals can be aquamated, as long as it will fit in the machine, Rinard says it can be done. Some of her recent clients have included the owners of a hedgehog, a parakeet and an axolotl. "It takes me back every time," Rinard says, thinking of Tapper. In chatting with pets and their owners, she gets to hear stories about their time together. Rinard believes in providing as many options as possible for grieving pet parents. "How we say goodbye is important," she says. Find out more about her services (\$125-400, depending on the size of the animal) at utahpetaquamation.com.

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By Aspen English | aspentree56@gmail.com
Photos courtesy of Underdog Rescue



Katy Gullette has made it her mission to care for Utah's dogs in need.

There's a spectrum of dog devotion in Utah. At the base, you've got the newlyweds with their trendy goldendoodle engagement gift. Then there are the seasoned owners, adopting dogs from local shelters and training them well. Climb higher, and you hit the "my-dogs-are-my-children" group, spoiling their pups with specialty diets and outdoor adventures. At the summit? The devoted people who volunteer their time and passions caring for the dogs who need it most—people like **Katy Gullette**.

Gullette is the founder and CEO of *Underdog Animal Rescue and Rehab* in Moab, Utah. Like most pet care organizations, *Underdog* provides veterinary care, spay/neuter and vaccination clinics and adoption services. Unlike other pet care organizations in the state, though, *Underdog* provides these services exclusively to Native American reservation communities.



Underdog Rescue provides free veterinary services to the Native communities of Utah.

"It was a lifelong goal [of mine] to have some sort of animal rescue or sanctuary," Gullette says. When a friend of hers who worked as an animal control officer on the Ute reservation told her about a property for sale that would make the perfect rescue location, Gullette jumped on it. "She said to me, 'I think this is your time.' So I bought the property and turned it into *Underdog*."

Now, seven years later, *Underdog Rescue* is a full-fledged rescue center with 13 full-time staff members. Unfortunately, the task still ahead of Gullette is no easy one. There are an estimated 250,000 stray dogs roaming the Navajo Nation, but Gullette estimates that due to decreased spay/neuter clinics during the pandemic, the actual number could be as high as 500,000.

"It's impossible to adopt our way out of the problem of 500,000 stray animals," Gullette says. "Statistically speaking, you need to have more than 50% of the animals in an area [fixed] before you have a real management of that population."

Underdog Rescue's goal is simple: do the impossible, one dog at a time. Since its inception, the organization has rescued over 3,000 dogs, and with each one comes a little bit more hope—not just for Gullette, but also for the communities *Underdog* serves. "Part of what we've done is [build] trust with these communities," Gullette says. "People want to do the right thing, they just don't [always] have access to what they need."

More than 35% of people living on the Navajo reservation live below the poverty line and around 30% of households don't

have running water. With limited access to funding and water, it can be difficult for Navajo families to care for a household pet, let alone strays. *Underdog Rescue* acknowledges that the hardships reservation dogs face are indicative of larger issues that affect the entire community, and it certainly doesn't mean dogs aren't cared for in Navajo culture.

"Even dogs that live outdoors that are working animals are still really highly regarded in the Native American lifestyle and in culture," Gullette says. "While we do have cultural differences in our fare for animals, Native Americans really value their animals—they value them as guardians, workmates and spiritual guides as well."

Although they have a long road ahead of them, *Underdog Rescue* is determined to continue to do what it does best: community outreach, free clinics and dog rehabilitation. As for Gullette herself, she'll continue to maintain her top-tier dog-loving status by always leaving room in her own home for an *Underdog* foster or two, as long as the seven dogs of her own (**Perl, Jean, Maggie Mae, Jackson, Mei Mei, Frida** and **Sariah**) don't mind.

If you're inspired by *Underdog Animal Rescue and Rehab's* mission, visit underdogrescuemoab.org. From making a donation to signing up as a volunteer, purchasing merchandise, or simply following them on Facebook or Instagram at [@underdogrescuemoab](https://www.facebook.com/underdogrescuemoab), your support extends a helping hand to an underdog in need.



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SLOBBERY KISSES & WELL-WISHES

THE STORY OF PRESTON CHIARO'S THERAPY PUPS

By Kate Neal
ktrulyb@gmail.com

It was a serendipitous morning on the trail when Preston Chiaro and his two-year-old poodle **Fred** came to understand the value of therapy pets. As Fred happily connected with everyone he met, doling out smiles and smooches like they were candy, a fellow hiker suggested to Chiaro that Fred's temperament was perfectly aligned for work as a therapy pet.

Chiaro initially believed that the suggestion required him to train his beloved Fred in the name of service and then relinquish him to another. A noble cause, but he had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

The difference between a therapy pet, an emotional support animal and a service animal is subtle but specific, so it's no surprise that many people are perplexed. The main distinction is that a therapy animal brings comfort to many, while support and service animals are focused on one person. An approachable demeanor is essential to a therapy animal's job: working with its owner and doing what a well-qualified candidate appears to want to do naturally anyway—connect with people. With that contrast, Chiaro saw that Fred had an ability to positively affect those he engaged with, and by proxy, so did Chiaro.

Fred was three years old and working with Intermountain Therapy Animals (ITA) when Chiaro rescued **Rosie**, an amber-colored goldendoodle. Rosie also completed training courses with ITA, and soon both dogs began volunteering regularly and independently. While one pup enjoys a nap at home, the other

dispenses slobbery kisses unsolicited to the masses while wearing a red vest with "Therapy Dog, please pet me" boldly printed across the side.

ITA was founded 30 years ago in Salt Lake with the goal of providing positive animal-assisted interactions to those in need. After expanding to Montana and Idaho, they are now connected with like-minded affiliates across the US, and many are benefiting from what therapy animals like Fred and Rosie offer. Vastly different in their approaches, the dogs came to complement one another: Fred joyful and playful; Rosie well-behaved and intuitive. Still, they both love an audience and wear themselves out to please a crowd.

Chiaro and company make the rounds to ITA-sponsored facilities weekly, presenting friends and onlookers with a slice of happiness during an otherwise mundane—perhaps even difficult—day. The *University of Utah, Salt Lake City International Airport* and multiple hospitals are familiar with Fred and Rosie, where they offer students, travelers and patients a smile. "People react to the dogs; the dogs react to the people," Chiaro observes, unsure which comes first.

The people do indeed react. One afternoon, as they walked the concourse at the SLC airport, Chiaro heard Fred's name and turned to see a young woman running toward them with her arms outstretched. She buried her face in Fred's neck and cried as his entire body wagged.

The young woman had met Fred and Chiaro at *UVU Hospital* the previous summer, as the woman awaited a heart transplant. She didn't



forget Fred and it appeared he didn't forget her either.

Therapy pets like Fred and Rosie offer brief moments of pure acceptance, without judgment or boundaries. They offer comfort without taking notes and collecting a copay. They dole out fat helpings of happy chemicals related to love, trust, acceptance and even euphoria. But the beneficiaries of the many wet-nosed boops aren't the only ones profiting.

Becoming involved with ITA has been very rewarding for Chiaro, and today he is extensively involved with the organization. Among other things, he is recruiting and mentoring volunteers, evaluating and testing teams and continuing to work with Fred and Rosie. "This is incredibly satisfying work. My job is to make people smile with my dogs. It's just ... cool," says Chiaro, smiling.

If you and your pet, or your organization, would like to get involved with ITA, you can find further details at www.therapyanimals.org.

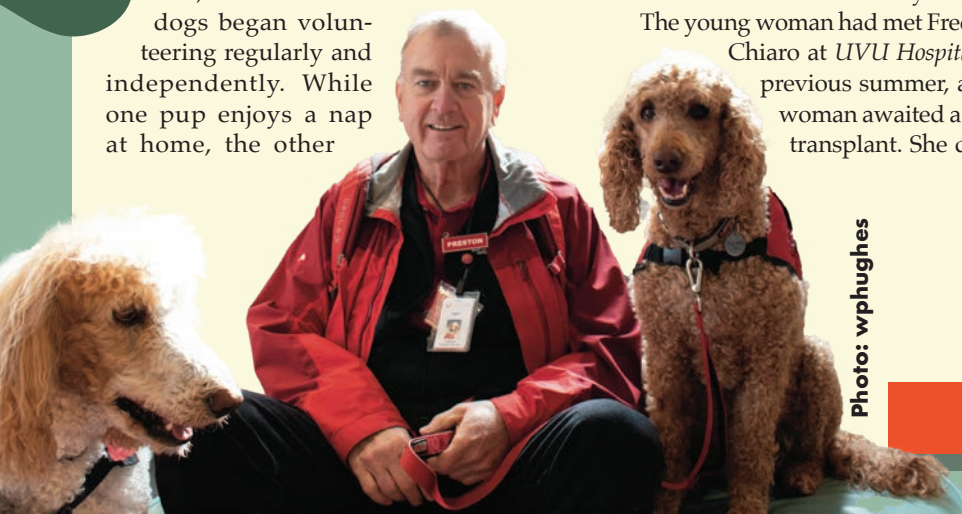
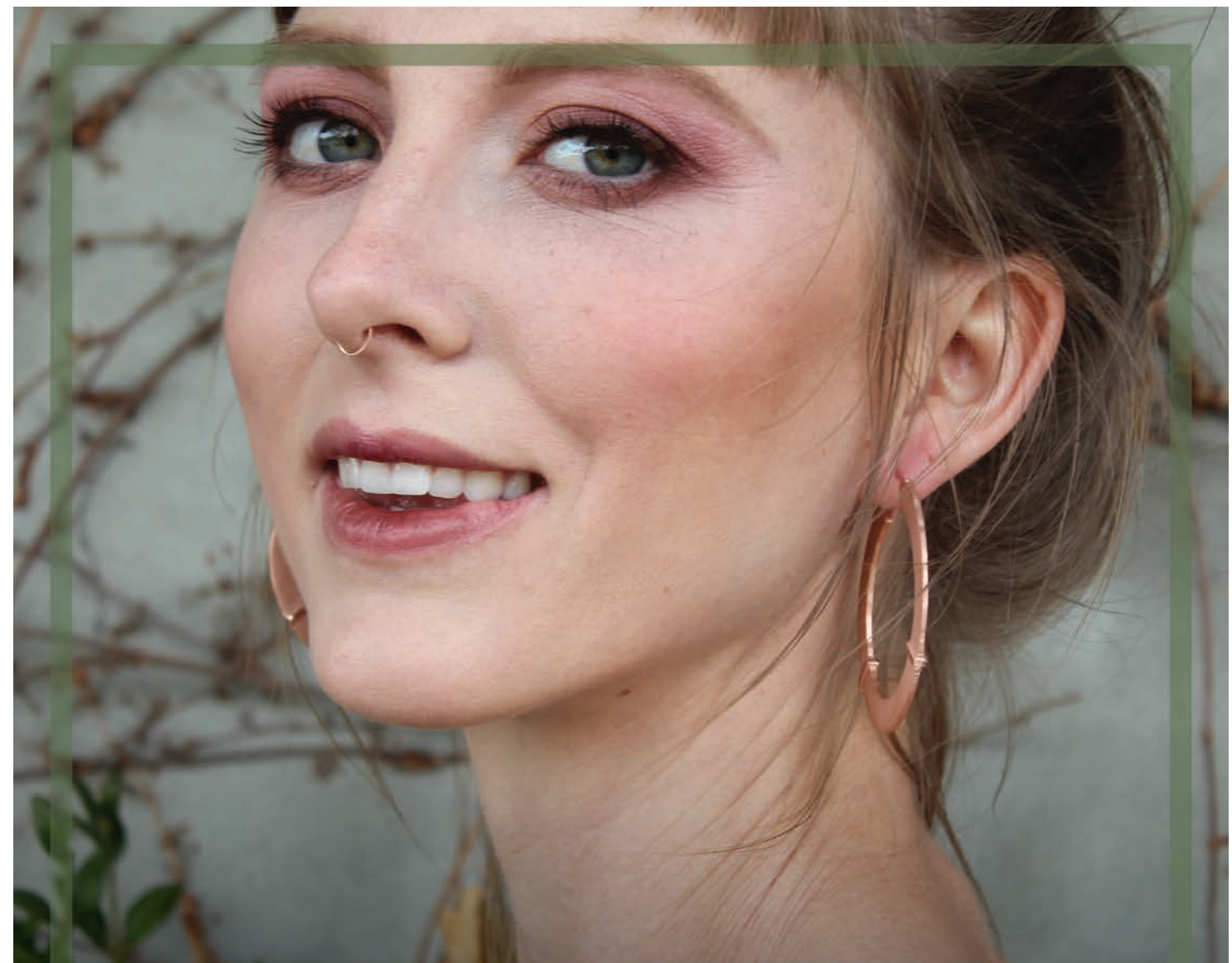


Photo: wphughes

Preston Chiaro with his two dogs, Fred and Rosie.



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“RUFF”



Photo: Logan Sorenson

Shalyn Karician and Kristin Maloney are passionate about maintaining the compassion and integrity of professional dog hiking.

BUT REWARDING

A Look at Professional Dog Hikers’ Daily Lives By SLUG Staff

In a city known for its stunning mountain trails, many hikers naturally want to include their four-legged friends in outdoor recreation. For those of us who may not have the time to take our pups up the canyons, professional dog hikers take the wheel to give our beloved canine companions—and themselves—regular outdoor adventures. While frolicking around in nature with puppies in tow may sound like a dream for many, those who hike dogs for a living know that it’s hard work that requires experience, resilience and great care. **Kristin Maloney, Shalyn Karician** and **Marianna Wilson** are Salt Lake City-based professional dog hikers who’ve shared their experiences with SLUG.

Marianna of Happy Tails Dog Hiking says that dog hiking is a profession that “fell into [her] lap” as she was figuring out a type of work that would accommodate her own needs, as well as those of her dog who suffers from extreme separation anxiety. Shalyn and Kristin’s lifelong love for animals landed them both jobs in the pet care field, which eventually transformed into the opportunity to take dogs on hikes, and led to Kristin turning it into her own business, Adventures with Woody. All three assert that hiking dogs has been

more positive than any previous job. Kristin says, “It’s hard not to smile when you’re on a beautiful trail surrounded by happy dogs.”

Shalyn finds that dogs’ unconditional love and excitement is energizing after working in the service industry. Marianna says that breaking into dog hiking “checked off a lot of boxes that [she] regard[s] as essential for [her] quality of life.” The regular sunshine, fresh air and the satisfaction of providing a dog, and their owner, a positive experience is invaluable. Marianna says that the mountains have been a source of healing for her, and she’s grateful “for the ability to positively impact the lives of the dogs [she is] entrusted with.” Kristin and Shalyn share this sense of gratitude for having the trust of dogs and owners alike.

These hikers start their work days early—between 6:30 and 7:30 a.m.—planning out hiking routes based on the weather and the limitations of the dogs they’re hiking that day. For Marianna, her average daily hiking distance is about four miles. Dogs are given the chance to explore and play while still being kept in check with training commands to “maintain cohesion within the pack,” says Marianna. Shalyn likes to bring plenty of treats for positive reinforcement.

Increased crowds on trails cause concern for all three hikers. Irresponsible owners lead to dangerous situations, resulting in amped-up trail restrictions. This makes the work of dog hiking more challenging. All three place great value on “display[ing] respect and care for the open spaces and trails that [they] frequent,” says Shalyn and “having as little impact on the spaces [they] are so fortunate to spend [their] days in,” adds Marianna.

If you’re a potential client looking to sign your dog up for regular hikes, the training your pup receives at home is critical. Kristin says that “the dedication of dog owners towards their dogs’ training truly makes a big difference in how they behave on the trail,” and that patience and understanding with dogs’ differing personalities is essential. Marianna believes that “every dog is teachable” and that they learn best from each other.

If you’re interested in pursuing dog hiking for work, Shalyn emphasizes that prior experience with dogs, such as volunteering at a shelter, is essential. Jumping in without proper training can damage the reputation of the dog hiking industry through negative experiences for dogs or clients. Through all the muddy paws, poop and wildlife encounters, these hikers show great “skill, integrity and courtesy”—their love for animals and the outdoors makes it all worth it.

Follow Kristin and Marianna’s businesses on Instagram at [@adventureswithwoodyslc](#) and [@happytailsdoghiking](#), respectively. Follow Shalyn at [@_sun.of.mercury_](#) and see her happy dog clients at [@aarfpetcare](#).



Photo courtesy of Marianna Wilson

Marianna Wilson finds healing in nature and has great respect for it as she spends time with dogs on the trails.

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THE MEDICINE COMPANY

(Left to right, top to bottom): Shawn Davis, Lonnie Blanton, Mac Wray, Chandler Seipert and Bryant Adair make up rock 'n' roll outfit The Medicine Company.

The Medicine Company and Graveljaw Keaton are co-headlining March's *Localized* showcase at Kilby Court on Sunday, March 10 with very special guest Emily Hicks! Doors open at 7 p.m. for a night of whimsical alt-country for only \$5! This event is sponsored by Riso-Geist.

By Austin Beck-Doss
austinbeckdoss@gmail.com

About a decade ago, the three core members of SLC-based rock 'n' roll outfit The Medicine Company bonded over a shared foundation of '70s musical influences. **Bryant Adair**, **Chandler Seipert** and **Mac Wray** were fresh out of high school, and while **Macklemore** and **Bruno Mars** were topping the charts, the young squad buddied up around the valley listening to **Led Zeppelin** and **Black Sabbath**. After years spent playing in separate blues bands—the **Baker Street Blues Band** for Wray and Adair and **The Arvos** for Seipert—the boys reunited to form The Medicine Company (or MedCo) in 2019. Now, after two full-length albums and a series of bassists and drummers come and gone, MedCo is rolling into their next phase with the same core values and fresh sonic intentions.

Still riding the high of a recent sold-out show at *The State Room*, MedCo is in the process of developing a new album defined by "heavy psych-rock, doom metal and a darker sound." The band's most recent release, *Risk It for the Biscuit*, arrived in August 2023. Its groove and jam sensibilities are now a closed chapter, but the record remains as conclusive evidence of

MedCo's deep creative pockets and Adair's devilishly original songwriting. Track one "Queen of Hearts" opens with the lines "Out here in hot sun / Pretending to do my best / On a scavenger hunt for / Pieces of happiness." Adair's lyrics are crafted of layered humor and sincerity—a poetic fusion of **Frank Zappa** and **Robert Hunter**. His choruses are simple enough for sing-alongs but personal and literary too, if you listen closely. "When it comes to songwriting, a lot of my music comes from really dark moments in my life," says Adair. "But I have a personal philosophy to never leave darkness on its own. I try to mix it with something light and hopeful, because that's how life is."

A catchy example comes on "Rusted in Misfortune" from MedCo's self-titled first album: "I was rusted in misfortune / That was when you thought you knew me then / I was busted, I'm not broken / Find the strength to pick myself up again." Though Adair plants the bulk of the buds that bloom into finished MedCo songs, the group's creative process is collective and organic. "We realize that it's ultimately more difficult to operate as a truly collaborative unit," says Wray. "A lot of bands nowadays are glorified solo projects—one guy plus a bunch of hired guns. We all

contribute ideas to MedCo, and we make sure to give each one a chance." Seipert also pens lyrics, and he and Wray often co-compose guitar melodies and song structures. "Friendship comes first," says Seipert. "We've been tight for years, and we trust each other's opinions."

After coming of age along the Wasatch Front and playing SLC venues for ten-plus years, Seipert, Adair and Wray feel at home in the scene, but they're also eager to branch out and tour. "We've benefited a lot from the supportive atmosphere here," says Seipert. "Now, with our next album, we hope to hit the road and see what's out there." MedCo's revamped sound hasn't yet left the rehearsal room, but based on the band's first two albums, it's sure to be stocked with timeless guitar tones from Wray and Seipert and plenty of lyrical whimsy and introspection from Adair. **Lonnie Blanton** (drums) and **Shawn Davis** (bass) will provide the rhythmic scaffolding.

"We're lucky to make music with our closest friends," said Adair. "That allows us to evolve individually and together and worship at the altar of the song." Find The Medicine Company on their Instagram @medcoband and don't miss their *Localized* set on Sunday, March 10 at Kilby Court.

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Graveljaw Keaton incorporates the influence of the mountains into his hypnotic, instrumental tracks.

By Austin Beck-Doss
austinbeckdoss@gmail.com

Armed with a hollow body Gibson and a stripped-down pedal board, Graveljaw Keaton creates looping melodies as layered and expansive as a smokey sunrise over Mount Olympus. His performances are intimate and raw, sinking into his grooves and baring his soul to his audience, who listens like a cozy fly on the parlor wall.

After performing for a decade with **Poet Bones** and other bands, **Keaton Stewart** rolled out Graveljaw in doses over the course of 2023, a few tracks and live shows at a time. “I cultivated ideas slowly, but it has taken off rapidly,” says Stewart. “It immediately became my full-time gig.” His portable gear and easy-to-enjoy, wordless compositions are ready-made for a variety of venue types—from restaurants and bars to small stages and theaters. Ten years ago, Stewart was playing in a hardcore electronic band at Warped Tour. Compared to much of his previous work, Graveljaw is quiet and soothing—fit to pair with a solo, introspective road trip across the Great Basin rather than a mosh pit. “When I was managing a music store, I was always looking for tunes to play that myself and others could enjoy throughout the day,” says Stewart. “I started gravitating toward calmer, lo-fi music.

Stuff like **Hermanos Gutiérrez** and **Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio** sunk in deep.”

Stewart has a hunch that his foray into the instrumental isn’t random and may be a response to the context that we’re living in. “With COVID and war and all the crazy shit happening, people seek a kind of lullaby,” he says. “I’ve admired artists who find a way to transcend into this expressive place without lyrics, and I wondered what it would sound like if I attempted the same.” Some of Stewart’s earliest memories are tied to the pursuit of making music, such as repeatedly rewinding the “Johnny B. Goode” scene from *Back to the Future*, closing his eyes and imagining himself strumming the chords. He procured his first electric guitar at eight; by high school he was playing shows at *Kilby Court*.

Stewart has released eight singles as Graveljaw Keaton since last May and the steady stream is set to continue. Rather than shoehorning his sound into existing genre terms, Stewart has coined his own. “I call it ‘Wild Soul,’ which is a meld of blues, funk and classic rock with Western sounds,” he says. As for the saloon-style, outlaw slide guitar found on several Graveljaw tracks, Stewart acknowledges he’s a product of his surroundings—including a childhood

spent mostly in Spanish Fork. Standout single “the fenceline” opens with a rhythmic march that he recorded outdoors while hiking with a friend in Colorado. “The mountain influence is in the music—in some cases literally,” Stewart says.

When playing live, he recreates the rugged cadence of “the fenceline” with gritty, staccato palm muting. Stewart performs sitting down, bent over his guitar as his head rolls side to side like an unshakable metronome. He brings his own chair and lamp—the same ones he uses to rehearse at home. “That was the whole idea for the live show—to capture thoughts from the living room,” he says. “I keep everything as organic as possible.” Aside from his looper and a simple reverb, Graveljaw Keaton’s unique, warm-yet-menacing tone comes entirely from his own hands. Melodies like “love letters” and “patina” showcase Stewart’s ability to concoct rich, dynamic textures without complicating the equation.

“When I’m working on a tune, I play it over and over and over again to work out the kinks,” he says. “Like magic, it seems to come together.” Catch him at *Kilby Court* on March 10 for *Localized* and follow him on Instagram at @graveljawkeaton.

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Emily Ard

Photos by John Taylor
john@visionfoto.com

A mother of 16 spiders, Emily Ard explores the darker side of fashion through her love of Halloween, heavy metal and style icon Elvira. Keep up with her spooky looks and unique pets on Instagram at @emyafterdark_. Read the full story on SLUGMag.com.



"The first time I was all decked out looking spooky was for a 'Thriller' dance recital. I did a zombie look with blood all over. I felt awesome ... I like blood and looking scary!"

"Most people I know are terrified of spiders, and when I tell them how many I own, they look at me like I'm a psychopath!"



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Ma & Paws Bakery, a local, holistic pet bakery, graciously provided SLUG with two dog-friendly treat recipes. Contributing Writer Katie Hatzfeld tested them out at home and her dog, Blue, shared his thoughts on the homemade treats that made his day the best day ever.

What a boring day, I thought from my bed in the living room, head resting against my paws. It was already midday and all I'd done so far was eat breakfast, told to "go potty" out in the rainy yard and cleaned my nails. My human was in the kitchen, like she usually is, making banging noises and yummy-but-forbidden smells. She had told me "go to your bed" and then "stay," but that was a while ago and I wanted to investigate.

I wandered into the kitchen, sniffing for crumbs. I propped my nose on the edge of the counter, where the food lives, and smelled yogurt and peanut butter. She was mixing together scoops of the on-your-best-behavior snacks and a carton of blueberries lay open next to them. This counter was short to me, and without jumping I could've licked the whole bowl clean. My nose twitched.

"Blue, out of the kitchen, bud," my human said, glancing over at me. I took two steps back. Maybe she didn't mean it. She turned and looked at me sternly. "Blue, out." She pointed back toward my bed. Ugh. I walked over slowly, looking back half-way to see if she'd forgotten the command. After a few minutes, I decided to go downstairs to the cool-tile hallway for a nap. I woke to the sound of my name.

"Blue! Come here!" called my human. I bounded upstairs, wagging my tail when

The Magic of a TREAT

A DOG'S REVIEW OF PET-FRIENDLY BAKED GOODS

By Katie Hatzfeld
katiehatzfeld@gmail.com

I saw her. She held a brown thing in her hand—"TREAT!" I thought. I sat as neat as I could, perking my ears forward for a new command. "Go to your bed," she said. I leaped across the room and laid down on my bed, ready to jump up at any moment. "Good boy," she said, giving me the treat.

It was bumpy and soft like a human cookie. I dropped it first to sniff: oats, applesauce, cinnamon and egg, I detected. I bit into it—YUM. The rest I almost swallowed in excitement and licked my lips, looking up at my human for another one. She walked back to the kitchen, opened the freezer and pulled out an ice cube tray. "Come," she said.

She handed me a cream-colored cube with a blueberry on top. The minute it hit my tongue, all I tasted was cold. I set it down and licked it curiously. Greek yogurt, applesauce, peanut butter. Even more yummy! I chewed it in the blink of an eye then cleaned the melted yogurt off the floor with a quick swipe of my tongue. I looked back up at my human—she smiled and scratched my ears. What a great day, I thought.



Illustration by Keelie Grasley - (@keeligrasley)

PUPSICLE	BLUE'S BISCUITS
1 cup plain Greek yogurt	1 cup dry oatmeal
¼ cup applesauce	½ cup applesauce
½ cup nut butter of your choice	½ teaspoon cinnamon
Handful of blueberries	1 large egg
Mix ingredients and pour into ice cube tray.	Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Plop a blueberry or two into each cube.	Mix all ingredients.
Freeze until hard (4+ hours) and serve!	Line pan with parchment paper.
	Make drop cookies from a spoon.
	Bake for 20–22 minutes and serve!

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Nabihah Iqbal	3.19
Orange Soda	3.20
Shadow's Peak	3.21
Metalachi	3.22
Devendra Banhart	3.23
Guava Tree	3.27
Bone Throwers: Release Show!	3.28
FREE SHOW! Persona 749 + Drusky + BOBO	3.29
FREE SHOW! Heartbreaker Indie Dance Party	3.30
Saxsquatch: Bigfoot Ravel	4.01
Brutus	4.03
Drunk in June	4.04
Sweet Nonsense: Taylor + Sabrina Night!	4.06

METRO MUSIC HALL

Spring Fling: Club Mungo, Angie Petty, Detzany, CHERRY	3.01
FREE SHOW! Acacia Ridge	3.02
KUAA Presents: Otoboke Beaver	3.04
Sleepytime Gorilla Museum	3.05
GO AHEAD AND DIE	3.06
FREE SHOW! Uma Fuzz	3.07
VIVA LA DIVA: Broadway Dival	3.08
VIVA LA DIVA: Broadway Dival	3.09
Ticket To The Moon: ELO Tribute	3.13
Be Our Guest: Disney Dance Party	3.15
Throb Zombie / Megami	3.16
Gloryhammer	3.20
Darkest Hour	3.21
Emo Night	3.22
VIVA LA DIVA: Broadway Dival	3.23
VIVA LA DIVA: Broadway Dival	3.24
Health	3.26
Marrio Suzanne & The Galaxy Band Greatest Hits!	3.29
Temptaxxxions: EARTH ANGELS	3.30
KUAA Presents: Kid Francescoli	4.03
Flotsam & Jetsam	4.04
Dirty Loops	4.06
Upon a Burning Body	4.09
Quiet Desperation: Pink Floyd Tribute	4.11
Popscene Presents: Talking HeadsNite! 80's Dance Party	4.12
Andrés Cepeda	4.16



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