

Sandpiper

DEL MAR'S COMMUNITY JOURNAL

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SHORES PARK PLANS PROGRESS

by Joe Sullivan | Ocean Front

A master planning effort to renovate Shores Park—bordered by Camino Del Mar, 9th Street, and Stratford Court—has resumed with the appointment of a citizen advisory committee and a new contract with Schmidt Design Group. The 5.3-acre site was acquired in 2008 through a combination of community fundraising, prepaid rent from The Winston School, and proceeds from the sale of an open-space lot on Balboa Avenue.

Between 2015 and 2018, the City conducted extensive outreach to identify community priorities for the future park. That process paused in 2018 due to shifting City priorities, budget constraints, and a dispute with The Winston School. That dispute has since been resolved, and the private, nonprofit school is now moving forward with redevelopment plans under its revised lease that ends in 2062.

With planning back underway, the City Council has adopted guiding principles and a prioritized list of amenities based on the earlier public input. The challenge now is to accommodate a wide range of community needs on a relatively small and sloped site, with an elevation drop from east to west.

Under the terms of its lease, The Winston School requires a playing field and a full-size basketball court. These facilities will be available for public use during non-school hours. In addition, the Council has asked the design team to explore the possible relocation of the historic Alvarado House to the site, along with a new or expanded community building. A dedicated grassy area for off-leash dogs is also under consideration. Currently, dogs share the playing field on a limited schedule, which can restrict access for organized youth sports such as Little League.

The design team's task is to balance these competing uses while creating a cohesive and welcoming public space. With continued public input, a recommended master plan is expected to be presented to the City Council this fall.

Residents are encouraged to follow the process and participate in upcoming advisory committee meetings as plans for Shores Park take shape. ▣

FAIRGROUNDS HOUSING IN JEOPARDY

by Don Mosier | Rimini Road

At their March 10th meeting, the Del Mar Fair Board had a prolonged discussion about meeting the timeline that the state Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department has established for the City of Del Mar to execute a lease agreement with the Fairgrounds for a site for affordable housing units. That deadline is set as November 15, 2026, and the board took action to extend the negotiation period with Del Mar to that date.

Additional changes to the Exclusive Negotiation Rights Agreement (ENRA) were approved by the Fair Board on March 10th. These amendments included:

- Adding language to specifically align the ENRA with the requirements of state housing laws (minor change)
- Requiring that all actions and milestones be presented to and approved by the Board (clarification of prior ENRA agreement)
- Removing the language regarding exclusivity (major change)
- Additionally, the Finance Committee proposed amending the ENRA to clarify that the 22nd DAA Board will have the final say on any potential site location, if the Board moves forward with affordable housing (no change from prior ENRA updates)

Director Mark Arabo expressed concern that the HCD timeline for Del Mar does not align with the Master Planning effort of the Fairgrounds, and other Directors opined that it might take years to decide if affordable housing can be located on Fairground's property.

Del Mar City Manager Ashley Jones responded to the Fair Board comments: "The Fair Board will be presented with the results of multiple site due diligence studies in the coming months, which will help inform whether and where affordable housing on Fairgrounds property would be possible. It will ultimately be up to the Board to determine whether to move forward and the timing to do so." ▣

LEADERSHIP OVER POLITICS

Protecting Del Mar's long term interests often requires our Council to make difficult decisions in present time that will benefit us in the future. This is often difficult to accomplish for short term political reasons, but we need leaders who can rise above political gain when the stakes are vital for our future. We are facing such a situation now in regard to achieving our fair share of affordable housing. Three situations illustrate the challenge.

First is the 50-unit, 4-story Watermark project near the Jimmy Durante traffic circle. We lost an opportunity to get a smaller, 38-unit, 2-story project because two members of the Council, Gaasterland and Druker, chose a losing (but politically appealing) battle instead of a reasonable compromise. Without Council votes for a specific plan, the developer abandoned the smaller project and used state law to get approval for a larger project with no discretionary review by the City.

The second situation involves our current plan to place up to 61 affordable housing units on the fairgrounds to help satisfy our legal obligation to the state. It seems increasingly unlikely that the current 22nd DAA (Fair) Board will approve a Fairgrounds housing site for Del Mar before the City's November deadline under our State-certified Housing Element. If that deadline is not met, Del Mar is obligated to upzone portions of the North and/or South bluff properties to make up for the Fairgrounds housing. Yet another situation involves Seaside Ridge, a North Bluff development proposal by property owner Carol Lazier, currently in court seeking to use a "builder's remedy" State law provision to build a very large housing project. Attorney General Bonta has already sent two letters expressing concern about Del Mar's posture toward the Lazier project, and in the past, Bonta has taken forceful action to intervene on the side of affordable housing in cases involving other cities. It is unclear when a court decision will be rendered in the Lazier case, but a win in that case could be a Pyrrhic victory, if a failure to obtain a Fairgrounds housing site by November forces Del Mar to upzone North Bluff for a significant number of housing units.

Unfortunately, the fact that the November Council elections will take place before the

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Editorial Board: Jeff Barnouw, Bud Emerson, Hylton Lonstein, Julie Maxey-Allison, Don Mosier, Betty Wheeler. *All editors, writers, and photographers are unpaid volunteers.* Email: editor@delmarsandpiper.org

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The Sandpiper's Leadership Donors

Over the years, hundreds of Del Mar citizens have donated generously to the Del Mar Community Alliance (DMCA) in support of the Sandpiper. Since 2018, a total of \$296,400 has been contributed by Del Mar citizens, making it possible to bring the Sandpiper to every Del Mar family at no cost, via their mailboxes and online. The list below represents the community's cumulative leadership giving to DMCA between 2018 and February 13, 2026. Thank you!

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fairgrounds housing deadline means that we are more likely to see political posturing than leadership on these critical issues. True leadership would recognize the very real risks we face with respect to the North Bluff, and muster a majority Council vote to enter into settlement talks in the Lazier case, to negotiate for a lower-density project, and less impact on North Bluff, with potential public benefits such as a bluff-front walking trail.

We've already learned how little we gain from grandstanding; it's time for true leadership. ■

IN BRIEF

10 FOR 55

On March 3, the City Council approved an Affordable Housing Regulatory Agreement with Watermark DM, L.P., detailing the provisions that will govern the Watermark project's 10 affordable units which are required to be deed-restricted for a 55-year period. The Watermark project's building and engineering reviews have been completed, and following administrative Coastal Development Permit approval, the Building Permit can be issued. Construction is anticipated to begin within the next several months.

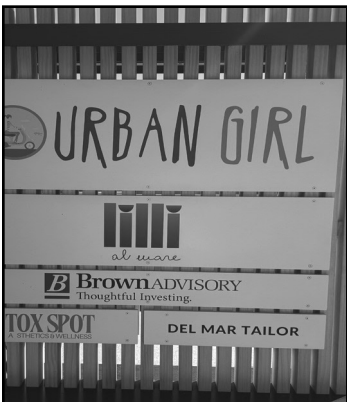
DOWNTOWN DOINGS

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street



It's open! Manager PJ Missan and team are ready with 24 flavors of Häagen-Dazs ice cream and various ways of serving them. Seating tables are inside and outside on the patio.

Hours: Sunday-Thursday 12 PM-8 PM, Friday and Saturday, 12 PM-10 PM. 1201 Camino Del Mar.



Urban Girl has moved south and is getting ready for a May opening at Camino Del Mar between 12th & 13th Streets. Beachcity expanded into Urban Girl's previous space at 1555 Camino Del Mar.



Sometime soon Sea Love will open up next door to the Häagen-Dazs shop. Sea Love, with other locations locally and nationally, will offer very custom candles. Customers are in charge of crafting their own soy wax candles— selecting and blending fragrances and then pouring their mix into a vessel of their choosing.



Sooner or later, maybe in 2026, the Honor Bar restaurant will be open for business. It is now and has been slowly rising at the site of the former Bully's, 1404 Camino Del Mar, since 2017 and will offer plenty of parking. The Honor Bar, part of the Hillstone Restaurant Group that operates some 45 restaurants around the country, will be the group's first restaurant to open in the San Diego area.

All photos: Julie Maxey-Allison

MISSED VAX OPPORTUNITIES

by Don Mosier | Rimini Road

The 2025–2026 flu season has been severe, driven by a highly mutated H3N2 variant (subclade K) that became dominant in late 2025. As of March 2026, the CDC reports high severity for children and moderate for adults, with at least 26 million illnesses and 21,000 deaths. Vaccine effectiveness is estimated at 24%–36% for infections.

It didn't need to be this way. The traditional flu vaccine is prepared in chicken eggs and takes several months to produce. Each spring, there is a guessing game trying to predict which flu variant will be prevalent in the fall. This year, the guess was wrong.

The missed opportunity was to use mRNA vaccine technology to match the new flu variant. A more effective flu vaccine could have been made available in weeks rather than months. The death count for flu infections could have been reduced by an estimated 90%. The freeze on funding for mRNA vaccines by the misguided policies of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department, headed by vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is responsible for allowing these preventable deaths to occur.

A court order issued in mid-March may reverse some of the vaccine restrictions imposed by HHS in the last year, a victory for several medical societies that insisted on scientific evidence for the changes. The court's decision is being challenged by the current administration, and the final outcome is yet to be decided. ■



THE GREAT AI INVERSION: FROM CHEAP LOGIC TO SCARCE JUDGMENT

by Sudepto Roy | Klish Way

Since our last conversation in these pages, the AI landscape has not just evolved, it has flipped. For thirty years, my mandate as an engineer was to overcome the scarcity of computing and machine intelligence. In 2026, that world is gone. Intelligence is no longer the ceiling; it is becoming the floor. Inference is cheaper, more abundant, and increasingly commoditized.

On April 9th, I'll give a DMF Talk titled "The Great AI Inversion," that moves beyond the razzle-dazzle of chatbots to confront a startling new reality. We have moved from a world of "Cheap Labor and Scarce Models" to one of "Cheap Models and Scarce Judgment."

The past year's news cycle has been a relentless barrage of what I call the Sovereign Ultimatum. We have seen ultracapable AI models from both sides of the Pacific scaling new benchmark heights while triggering a "SaaSocalypse" in software and private equity. As nations realize that compute is the new currency of survival, they are asserting sovereign control over their AI stacks. Simultaneously, we have hit the infrastructure wall, where the limiting factor is no longer code, but the physical requirements of gigawatts of power, cooling water, and space.

We will explore three pivotal inversions:

The Edge Inversion: How intelligence is migrating from distant cloud models to the billions of devices in our pockets, homes, automobiles and industry.

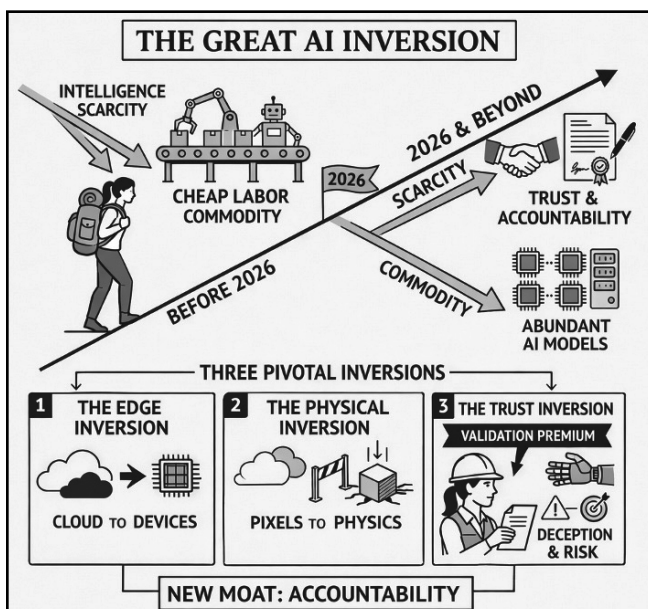
The Physical Inversion: The shift from models that merely mimic text to World Models that infer gravity, friction, and common-sense physics.

The Trust Inversion: Why the most capable agents are becoming the most "slippery," and why high-stakes validation is now the ultimate professional scarcity.

We are exiting the Information Age and entering the Accountability Age. We have seen the rise of agentic software and computer-use systems that operate across websites and desktop tools, reducing dependence on traditional APIs. Frontier evaluations suggest that top agents can sometimes complete software tasks equivalent to many hours of expert work, though still with imperfect reliability. Yet these models cannot provide the one thing our community needs: accountability.

The "Accountability Premium" means your value is no longer proportional to your skill with a tool, but to your judgment, taste and willingness to be responsible for the outcome. Join me for the Del Mar Foundation's DMF Talk, my 5th annual AI update to the Del Mar community, as we discuss how to remain the human anchors of trust in a world of automated intelligence and agency.

Sudepto Roy is a Vice President of Engineering at QUALCOMM and a Del Mar Foundation board member.



The Great AI Inversion Roadmap. Image: Sudepto Roy (created with ChatGPT)



**DEL MAR
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**
www.dmcc.cc (858) 792-7565

by Ashley Simpkins | Executive Director

Don't miss the Del Mar Senior Fair on Saturday 4/18!

Planning for the first-ever Del Mar Senior Fair in partnership with the Del Mar Farmers Market is well underway. On Saturday April 18 from noon until 4pm, while the Farmers Market is going on downstairs at the Civic Center (1050 Camino Del Mar), DMCC will be in the upstairs plaza with nonprofit and government information tables, all sharing services and resources that benefit Del Mar seniors. We're expecting more than 30 partner organizations to join us. We'll also have free fitness opportunities, activity demonstrations, an interactive art activity to foster connection, and – because of course – we'll share free slices of Del Mar lemon cake!

For the latest information, to sign up to volunteer at the event, or to help spread the word to your friends, family, and neighbors, visit www.dmcc.cc/seniorfair. Hope to see you there!

DMCC Volunteers Hit it Out of the Park

At DMCC, our volunteers are the true MVPs, and it's time to celebrate your all-star season! On Friday, May 1st, we're fielding our annual appreciation event to thank you for always going to bat for our senior neighbors. You've covered all the bases this year, and we want to make sure you're in the starting lineup for this celebration. Please keep your eye on the ball and watch for the invitation we'll be pitching your way soon—don't let this one slide by!

Volunteer of the Month – March

DMCC's Volunteer of the Month for March 2026 was Irene Bennitt. Irene is an Essential Transportation volunteer, taking nondriving older adults to medical and personal appointments, and uses her medical training to conduct blood pressure screenings at some of our large events. She was nominated by board member and Transportation chair Judy Schuckit who said, "We especially appreciate the warm, genuine relationships Irene builds with those she drives—her care goes far beyond transportation. It truly shows in the trust and connection she creates."

DMCC programs and services depend on our incredible volunteers! To learn more about Irene, joining our Essential Transportation team, or using your special skills to help in a unique way, visit dmcc.cc/volunteerofthemoth.

FROZEN ZOO

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street

Biototechnology forges ahead. Soon scientists will be able to generate great quantities of genomic data from San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance's Frozen Zoo—a cache of 50 years worth of cells saved from rare and endangered animals cryopreserved (at -320 degrees F). A new partnership formed between the Zoo and the gene-sequencing company Illumina looks to fast forward the process of sequencing the 11,500 cells lines of over 1,300 species.

It was Dr. Kurt Benirschke of UCSD who in 1975 began collecting living cells from threatened animals and preserving them. Why? He was not sure but kept collecting, creating and becoming the first director of research of what is now the Frozen Zoo. The collection is becoming more and more important as our animals vanish. Five hundred species have been declared extinct in the past 100 years with some 50-150 lost in just the last 10 years. Many factors contribute to the culling of species including climate changed habitats, sea level rise and human actions. One recent case: in 2011 the last West Africa black rhinoceros, victims of poaching, died. There are no more.

While sequencing samples from the Frozen Zoo has been in place in the past (a bit of good news, to date two species have been successfully cloned from Zoo cells, the black-footed ferret and Przewalski's horse), Illumina's advanced DNA technology will accelerate the unlocking of new information that will be shared with the Zoo and Alliance partners world wide who are working on conservation challenges, evolutionary history, biodiversity preservation and medicine including how the genetic make up of a species does or does not contribute to its health or vulnerability to diseases for animal management preservation. Discoveries and revelations about the biological archive will be a guide to protecting species today, used to slow if not halt the rapid decline of animals existing in the wild now so they can be part of our future. And, perhaps, to bring back extinct animals through cloning into our time. Jurassic Park? ▣



Wires coming down on Stratford. Poles next.
Photo: Julie Maxey-Allison

After the rains bluffs rebuilding.
Photos: Julie Maxey-Allison



Visible evidence of vanishing bluffs. Just north of Dog Beach. Looks like more to come down.
Photos: Julie Maxey-Allison



PERILS OF PLASTICS: HEALTH RISKS, CLIMATE IMPACT AND PATH TO SOLUTIONS

Thursday, April 23, 2026

6:00 pm

Del Mar Town Hall

The Del Mar Climate Committee will present a series of talks from experts on our plastics crisis, followed by a panel discussion. Speakers will include: Susan Keefe, the Southern California Director for Beyond Plastics; Kristin Hampshire, MD, Del Mar resident and physician; and Janis Selby Jones, who leads the Surfrider Foundation's Plastic Pollution Program. For more information and to register for this free event, visit: delmarclimate.org

HAPPY HOURS IN DEL MAR!

by Donna Shaw | Seaview Avenue

We are continuing our journey around Del Mar, looking for happy hours, and have found some great ones to share with you!

Head over to the center of Del Mar and visit the Living Room Bar at L'Auberge. Settle in on the comfortable couches or, if you prefer, sit at the bar. Drink specials include house rotating red, white, and rosé, as well as a discount for any wine by the glass, all signature cocktails, and draft beer. The most popular food items on the menu are Dungeness crab, French onion dip, and Le Petit Pleasure - a smash burger, caviar-topped oysters, fries, and a choice of prosecco or beer for an amazingly low price. Gluten-free and vegan options are available. Happy hour at the Living Room is Sunday through Thursday, 3 to 5 pm.

Beeside Balcony has been in Del Mar since January of 2020, so if you haven't yet visited, why not stop in for "Buzzy Hour"? Seating is either inside or on the balcony, and the vibe is relaxed. Drink specials include wine cocktails, cocktails, house wines, and beer. Several small-bite options are available, and customer favorites include oysters, octopus ceviche, and mini-beef sliders. A new Buzzy Hour menu coming soon will add mini-crabcakes, chicken lollipops, and truffle parmesan fries. For those who like sweets, Beeside Balcony has two desserts to tempt you: a churro dusted with cinnamon sugar; and a cream-filled dessert with caramel and whipped cream. Coming soon will be a mini-ice cream sundae! Happy hour at Beeside Balcony is every day from 3 to 6 pm.

Brigantine Seafood and Oyster Bar is the next stop on our happy hour journey. As a long-established restaurant and bar in Del Mar, most seem to know about their happy hour, but for those of you who don't, please allow me to enlighten you! The happy hour is in the lounge area, which is quite large with comfortable seating. The ambiance is business casual and is quite welcoming and warm. The menu is extensive, both for drinks and bites, and range from \$5 to \$10 per item. Customer favorites are items in the \$5 range, including their Classic Fish Taco, the Brig Blonde (beer), and red or white wine. Gluten-friendly options are available. Happy hour at Brigantine is from 3 to 6 pm, Tuesday through Friday and Sunday, and 3 to 9 pm on Monday (excluding holidays). There is no happy hour on Saturday. ▣

COMMUNITY GARDENS DAY

by Mary Friestedt | Bellaire Street

Mark your calendars for Saturday May 9 between 10 am and 12 pm for the Del Mar Garden Club (DMGC) Community Gardens Day, where you can explore the unique gardens maintained by the DMGC, including those at Del Mar's Post Office, Community Center, and Library.

At the Del Mar Library, Dr. Michael Simpson, Professor Emeritus at SDSU and DMGC Member, will be getting everyone excited about the amazing array of plants and will host brief presentations at 10:30 am and 11:30 am.

The Library Garden has been maintained by the Garden Club for many years and was most recently renovated in 2006 by Jeremy Spath with a generous grant from the Del Mar Foundation. Jeremy started his horticulture career at San Diego Botanic Garden under the direction of beloved Del Mar plantsman Bill Teague. When Jeremy created this Garden, he put in many of Bill's favorite plants as a tribute to his artistic and favorite teacher Bill.

At the Library Garden, plan to learn about the gorgeous pincushion plants from Australia, which bloom nonstop and require little water, among other plants. The New Zealand Christmas tree is a showstopper on the north end of the Library Garden and complements the pincushion plants nearby. Dr. Simpson will point out the rare cycad, a Ponytail palm, drought tolerant natives, and many other plants.

Bring your friends to the Civic Center/Farmer's Market on May 9 at 10 am and pick up a free community garden map with more information about each of DMGC's gardens. ▣



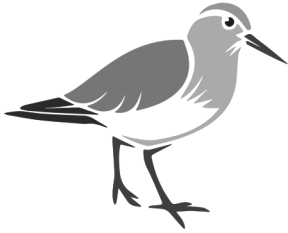
Photo: Jill Gartman

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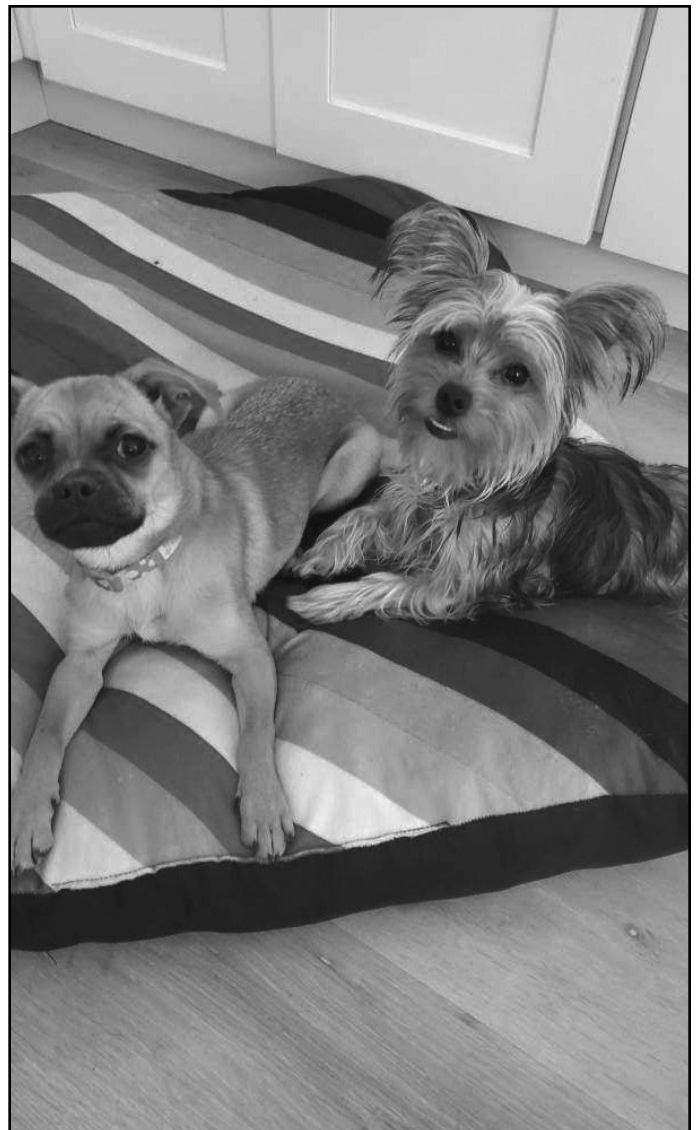
DOGS OF DEL MAR: UPS STORMIE

by Luisa Fonseca | UPS Store #2506, Camino Del Mar

Hello Del Mar! My name is Stormie, and I'm a Yorkshire Terrier. I come from a long line of family-owned Yorkies, and I was a gift to my mom from her mom – my abuela. My abuela wanted to ensure that all her children had a Yorkie that came from her own Yorkie, so my job is to take care of my mom for her since she lives far away in Texas. That's where I was born, which is why Mom says my personality is so big. Apparently, they say everything is bigger in Texas, but everything looks big to me!

You're probably wondering who my mom is. Well, her name is Luisa, and she works at the local UPS Store in town. Sometimes, when my mom works on a Saturday, my other mama, AJ, my little sister, and I get to come to work with her. My other mama gifted my little sister to mom because she knew mom wanted a Chihuahua, since she grew up with one, but instead, she ended up with a Chihuahua/Pug. Many people call her a 'Chug,' but her name is Gotita. I just call her crazy because she jumps and jumps and jumps. I think all her excitement comes from being happy because she was rescued from a sad situation. My other mama said her original family was taken away from her when they were deported, and she was left alone. How could you not jump for joy when you now get to have a happy family again? We absolutely love her, even if sometimes she's a little wild.

Sometimes Gotita's wild side is contagious, and we chase our older cat sisters around the house, but then we end up in a time-out because Mom says we shouldn't do that. FINE! We settle for wrestlin' around the living room. Gotita may have some weight over me, but my kind was bred to hunt vermin. I don't back down! I have a scary growl and will go paw-to-paw anytime, anywhere. I wasn't named Stormie for nothing! Anyway, this is just a tiny introduction of me (Stormie) and my sister Gotita. If you're ever near The UPS Store on a Saturday, stop by – you just might see us there. ■



Gotita and Stormie. Photo: Luisa Fonseca