

Jackie hopes for family to support her dreams

BY AMY FLOWERS UMBLE
THE FREE LANCE-STAR/April 9, 2010

Morgan the dog sits quietly while the needle slides into her skin.

Jacqueline, the teenage volunteer giving Morgan a shot, reaches down and strokes Morgan's white fur.

"Good job!" she murmurs into Morgan's ear. "You did such a good job!"

Morgan, a mixed breed, seems to soak up the attention, then placidly goes back into her gray plastic crate. Jacqueline then wheels Morgan back to the couple waiting in the lobby of the Richmond SPCA.

Morgan will go back to her temporary home for a few weeks, and then she'll be displayed at an event for prospective families looking for a pet.

And after her brief stint helping at the SPCA, Jacqueline will go to her group foster home in New Kent County while she waits for an adoptive family.

At 4 months old, Morgan has a pretty good chance of finding a new family.

But at 17, Jacqueline is running out of time.



Jacqueline gets instructions at the SPCA from Tameka Peters (right) on how to properly care for animals.



SUZANNE CARR ROSS/THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Jackie visits with Darlene at the Richmond SPCA.

Later, at a visiting room in the SPCA, Jacqueline snuggles with Darlene, a 4-year-old chow-shepherd mix.

Darlene's brown eyes light with the affection.

"It's very sad, because she has to sit and wait for someone to adopt her," Jacqueline says.

But Darlene's situation mirrors Jacqueline's own.

Jacqueline wants a family so she can "have support and feel like someone would be there for me and care about me."

She would love to have other siblings and to be part of a churchgoing family.

"I like to go to church," Jacqueline said. "When the preacher speaks, I feel like he's speaking to me personally."

She also enjoys playing basketball, singing, dancing and writing poetry.

Jackie just turned 17 and hopes to go to college. She wants to be a cosmetologist or a nurse.

"Just because you're in foster care doesn't mean you can't be successful in life," she said.

In fact, Jacqueline sees foster care as a positive turn in her young life, which has been filled with turmoil.

"Foster care is not a bad thing; it opens up a new world," Jacqueline said. "You get to meet new people and meet new families. And you have an opportunity to start your life over again and leave the past behind."