

# Michelle Stoppani

**Michelle Stoppani** began volunteering at Dog Star in August 2016. She fosters, screens and happily steps in wherever she's needed – handling, transporting or walking dogs, stuffing envelopes or volunteering at an event.

“I had been thinking about fostering for a long time and followed many rescue groups on Facebook. Two years ago, I saw a post about Bailey, a Shih Tzu who had been hit by a car in Hartford. They were looking for a foster home and someone who could tend to her after surgery. I was studying for my boards and had taken some time off from work and figured I could do this. Everyone told me that I was never going to be able to let her go. Plus, we already had three dogs (brother and sister Shih Tzus and Giant Schnauzer). One week later, we adopted Bailey!”

After Michelle passed her boards and got settled in her new job as a Nurse Practitioner, she was driving by a Dog Star event and signed up. Michelle and her husband, Aaron, share their Avon home with four dogs – Sally, Harry, Bailey and Caesar. Caesar is a Giant Schnauzer who plays a pivotal role with the foster dogs. “Caesar seems to always know what they need. In the beginning, it's time and space. When they're ready to start playing, he shows them appropriate boundaries and helps to teach them how to be a dog and have fun. He does more work than I do for these foster dogs!”

Michelle loves seeing the dogs transform from shaking, scared dogs to happy, playful dogs. “Every time I'm at an event there's a memorable moment. Recently, we had a dog that was an owner surrender. It was heartbreaking because I knew this dog was confused. At an event, I ran into an old colleague who was there buying dog food. We talked and I told her this dog's story. She applied for him right away and now he's part of their family!”

When Michelle is not taking care of patients or dogs, she stays active with boot camp classes and yoga. Her favorite hobbies are spent with family and friends at the beach or at a vineyard.