

New Natchez Pet Mayor To Be Sworn In At Collaring Ceremony On May 10 At Natchez City Hall

Inaugural Pet City Officials Announced In Downtown Natchez Alliance Fundraiser

NATCHEZ, MS, UNITED STATES, May 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It's official: Natchez has gone to the dogs. After several weeks of spirited campaigning the Downtown Natchez Alliance (DNA) announced the winners of their first annual [Natchez Pet Mayor Election](#) on April 27, 2025. With a last minute surge in the polls, the winner was Mary Frances, a beloved black Labrador Retriever owned by Dennis and Darby Short.

The results were announced during a press conference at the William Johnson House, where Natchez Mayor Dan M. Gibson praised the event stating, "in Natchez, we know how to blend fun, tradition, and heart in everything we do," Gibson said. "The Natchez Pet Mayor Election brought joy to our city while supporting vital causes, and it speaks to the bright future we're building together."

Mary Frances is a fixture around town, where serves as the four-legged greeter at "Darby's" — the popular Main Street shop known for homemade fudge and unique gifts. She edged out fellow candidate Roni, a cat owned by the Graning Family, by 321 votes in the final tally.

"Mary Frances has been patrolling downtown Natchez for 12 years as the self-proclaimed unofficial Pet Mayor — and now, thanks to her wonderful supporters, it's official," said Dennis Short. She continued, sharing how the campaign helped promote Natchez far beyond the city



Natchez Mayor Dan Gibson with his new four-legged counterpart, Natchez Pet Mayor MaryFrances. Photo by Andrew Tenbusch.

limits. "I've spent the week wearing my 'Mary Frances for Natchez Pet Mayor' button at market in High Point, NC answering questions about what Natchez Pet Mayor is — and of course, bragging about how wonderful Natchez is as a destination."

There wasn't just a single winner in the election, as Places Second through Tenth were designated to various Pet versions of Natchez City offices. All will be sworn into office at the "Collaring Ceremony" to be held on May 10, 2025 at the front steps of Natchez City Hall, located at 124 S. Pearl Street, at 9:30am. The public is welcome and invited to attend. The full list of winners can be viewed on DNA's website at <https://natchezdna.org/2025/04/27/decision-25-pet-mayor-election-results-announced>.

Elizabeth Greer, Promotions Chair and Board Secretary for the DNA, emphasized the spirit and success of the event, commenting "we knew this event had the potential to be fun, but the way the entire community — residents, tourists, businesses, and even friends across the country — rallied around it was truly inspiring," said Greer. "It brought new energy downtown, showcased the spirit of Natchez, and helped us highlight causes that matter deeply to our hearts."

Lexi Lehrman, of Butter Cakery, whose dog Bean won the "PAWlderman" seat for Ward 3, said, "Being PAWlderman for our beloved city is a responsibility that Bean does not take lightly. We are absolutely thrilled, and we had a blast campaigning."

Kathy Fitch, owner of [Hoofbeats and PawPrints Rescue](#), shared her hopes for Clover, who won the "PAWlderman" seat for Ward 1. "Clover wants everyone to know that she appreciates all of the votes and she will do her best," Fitch said. "She is grateful that the City of Natchez and DNA



Clover, a rescue up for adoption by Hoofbeats & PawPrints Rescue during the Pet Mayor campaign. She was sponsored by Concordia Bank & Trust.



From April 27th, L to R: DNA Director Leah Hunter, Darby Short, Pet Mayor Mary Francis, Mayor Dan Gibson, Elizabeth Greer DNA Board Member, & Norma West DNA President.

are so supportive of the role pets play in making our lives better."

Fitch also noted that Clover, a sweet and gentle dog, is still available for adoption through Hoofbeats and PawPrints Rescue and hopes to find her forever home soon. "Clover also appreciates the chance to raise public awareness about the more than 100 adoptable large adult dogs currently in Miss-Lou area shelters. Any person who adopts one of those dogs will save two lives — both the dog they adopt and the dog that shelter space makes room for. She promises to continue working to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership, including the importance of spay and neuter services and providing Heartworm preventative for all dogs."

The Natchez Pet Mayor Election served not only as a joyful celebration but also as a fundraiser for local causes and to support DNA's on-going revitalization of Downtown Natchez. Overall, \$16,676.01 net proceeds were raised. Twenty percent of the net voting proceeds will benefit local animal welfare organizations: The Natchez-Adams County Humane Society, Hoofbeats and PawPrints Rescue, and Spay/Neuter Natchez.

Norma West, President of DNA, thanked the many sponsors who helped make the election possible, including the local Taco Bell as Title Sponsor as well as Concordia Bank & Trust Company, United Mississippi Bank, and The Natchez Democrat, along with numerous downtown business partners. "Their support helps fuel not only downtown revitalization efforts but also future events that bring joy, energy, and pride to our community," West said.

DNA Executive Director Leah Hunter praised the success of the election and looked ahead with excitement. "Seeing the outpouring of support for the Pet Mayor election reinforces why I'm so excited to be joining the Downtown Natchez Alliance," said Hunter. "Our mission to revitalize downtown is all about fostering connections between people, businesses, and history, and I look forward to building on this momentum."

As for Mary Frances, Natchez's newest and furriest elected official, the Shorts promise her first term to be full of adventures, community spirit, and plenty of tail wags.

ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN NATCHEZ ALLIANCE

The Downtown Natchez Alliance (DNA) is a non-profit entity organized to advance Downtown Natchez as a vibrant commercial and cultural district consistent with the city's award-winning Downtown Master Plan and the national Main Street Approach, a time-tested framework for community-driven, comprehensive revitalization of historic downtowns. DNA became a designated community with Main Street Mississippi Association in 2021 and was nationally accredited by Main Street America in 2024. For more information, visit www.NatchezDNA.org.

ABOUT THE HISTORIC CITY OF NATCHEZ

Founded in 1716, The City of Natchez, Mississippi, prides itself on being the oldest city on the Mississippi, and is dedicated to enhancing residents and quality of life while preserving its rich cultural heritage. The official city website is <https://natchez.ms.us>.

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