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replaces 45-year-old seats

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A tail-wagging tale of Charleston businesses



Chewy, 9, runs with his toy at Elk City Cycles in Charleston on Oct. 28, 2025. He often convinces customers to play fetch with him for as long as they'll let him. See more photos on our website, wvgazettemail.com/multimedia.

Shop dogs give customers more reason to return

By RICK STEELHAMMER
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THEY'RE LIKE Walmart's "people greeters" who welcome customers into their stores, only they come equipped with tennis balls and chew toys instead of blue vests and name tags — not to mention an extra pair of legs.

Charleston's shop dogs might lack the linguistic skills of a box-store greeter, but their wagging tails, playful demeanor and unabashed joy at new human encounters more than make up for it.

Take Chewy, the canine customer service associate at Elk City Cycles.

"We met when I was three steps inside the store," Rich Ford of South Charleston, a first-time visitor to the business at 613 Tennessee Ave, said last week.

A tail-wagging Chewy dropped the stuffed carrot squeak toy he had been holding in his mouth at Ford's feet and made eye contact with the new customer.

"I had been in the store for maybe 10 seconds, but I ended up playing catch with him for the next 10 minutes," Ford said.

"All he cares about is meeting people and playing catch with them," said Chris Huckabee, Chewy's owner and the proprietor of the bike shop. "He will let you pet him, but playing catch is what he really wants. He sits by the door all day long, waiting for someone to play with him. He'll do almost anything to get you to throw his toy so he can go get it."

But if business is slow, Huckabee said, "he has a bed with a stash of toys in it under the work bench" where he re-



Weston, 7, sits on the floor with his ball inside Bear Wood Co., in Charleston, on Oct. 23.

"I had been in the store for maybe 10 seconds, but I ended up playing catch with him for the next 10 minutes."

RICH FORD
Talking about Chewy the dog at Elk City Cycles

laxes during breaks. The 9-year-old shop dog was part of a large litter Huckabee rescued and found homes for. "His mom was a wiener dog and his dad was a Jack Russell mix," Huckabee said. "I've been bringing him in to work with me for about five years." When not on the job, Chewy enjoys chasing squirrels at Huckabee's Elkview-area home or riding in his four-wheeler and golf cart. But

the idea of playing fetch-the-toy with people rarely leaves Chewy's mind.

"He likes to sleep with a toy in his mouth," Huckabee said.

A dog party at Kin Ship Goods

"Chewy's great," said Hillary Harrison, co-owner of Kin Ship Goods, a few stores up, at 617 Tennessee Ave., from Huckabee's bicycle shop. "He walks in here about once a week to shop for dog toys,"

with Huckabee following a few paces behind, sans leash.

"Chewy walks right up to the display rack, looks at what's there, and lets you know what toy he wants," Harrison said.

Chewy also checks in with Kin Ship's resident shop dog, Frankie, a 3-year-old female beagle-chihuahua mix, and her part-time associate, Dolly, a 1-year-old long-haired miniature dachshund owned by Craig Rife, the shop's shipping manager.

Chewy gets along well with the Kin Ship dogs, "but he and they seem kind of indifferent to each other," according to Harrison. "Chewy seems to be more interested in people and toys than other dogs," she said, while Frankie and Dolly enjoy playing

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asks SCOTUS
to block order
on SNAP funding

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Data center fight grows

Opponents cite cost, health surrounding development

By MIKE TONY
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Morgan King felt she had to acknowledge something during a meeting her advocacy organization, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, held Wednesday evening that focused chiefly on anticipated data center growth in West Virginia.

"If you asked me a year ago what I would be working on this year primarily, or what ... Citizen Action Group or communities would be concerned about, I would not have guessed data centers," said King, the group's climate and energy program manager, during the group's virtual Climate Committee meeting.

But a fight against momentum toward buildout of data centers in West Virginia has intensified in recent days, with division growing between residents and community advocacy organizations like West Virginia Citizen Action Group who fear environmental health impacts from planned data centers and West Virginia political leaders wanting to boost the state's power capacity profile through them.

That power play, led by Gov. Patrick Morrisey, comes despite evidence data centers — warehouses that can store thousands of servers and other digital infrastructure to support large-scale data processing — are poised to further increase electricity bills already rising at an uncommonly sharp rate in West Virginia.

"Nowhere in the mission or charter of the [West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection] does it state that you will ... enforce the agenda of the sitting governor," Candice Grigsby of Point Pleasant said at an Oct. 7 meeting the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection held at the Mason County Courthouse on a still-pending air quality permit application proposal for a planned organic material-fueled industrial facility in Mason County linked to plans for nearby data center operations.

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