

From Squalor to Serenity

Rescued from a hoarding case, these dogs are now thriving

BY CARRIE ALLAN

When the sheriff opened the side door of the squalid ranch house in Mississippi and permitted emergency teams inside, Chunk was one of the first dogs rescue teams saw.

The low-slung dog with the big, worried eyes and patchy fur was in the first room, watching nervously as rescuers entered one by one. Wearing respirators to protect themselves from ammonia fumes, rescuers from The HSUS, the Mississippi Animal Rescue League, and United Animal Nations stepped cautiously into the trash- and feces-filled house, going room to room to assess how many animals would need to be removed.

The teams gathered the squeaking puppies who sat in a pen under the red glow of a heating lamp, and lured out the timid dogs who darted through shadows and peered from under the bed. Meanwhile, Chunk paced back and forth, his raw and hairless paws squishing into a floor covered with poop, empty cans, and flattened bags of dog food and Wonder bread.

Local authorities had estimated that the woman running Raven's Hope Animal Sanctuary had about 70 animals on her property. But by the end of that grueling, rainy day in March 2010, rescuers had pulled nearly 200 dogs out of muddy, algae- and feces-laden pens around the property.

Chunk and 69 others went north on an HSUS rig to the Washington Animal Rescue League (WARL) in Washington, D.C. Almost all the dogs were suffering from mange, and many were "fearful verging on feral," says adoption and rescue director Jamie Scotto. They'd rarely seen any human being but the hoarder herself and had been forced to compete for food.

Chunk had terrible skin problems and showed aggression toward other dogs, but shelter staff helped him and other victims from the case come around. For weeks—and in some cases, months—they built positive



associations with humans by hand-feeding each dog.

They also introduced the dogs to leashes, no small task for unsocialized animals. "If you show a puppy how to do it, they pick it up immediately," says Scotto. "But adult dogs who've never been on a leash before? It's a totally different story."

The TLC paid off. Since his adoption and recovery from mange, Chunk looks like a different dog—"more basset-y in the snout," says adopter Dan Metcalf. "He's a great guy—the whole neighborhood loves him."

Chunk is mellower with other dogs now, enjoying his friendship with Daisy, a rescued

boxer Metcalf and his wife adopted when they were expecting their first child and wanted a companion for Chunk. "They balance each other out really well," Metcalf says. "She was isolated; she was tied up in a backyard. ... He's very much a go-getter and friendly, and she's kind of shy and jumpy, but they both sort of bring each other to the center."

Helping dogs recover physically and behaviorally is often a long process for both shelter staff and adopters. But when "they finally make eye contact with you or show signs of recognizing you, it all becomes worthwhile," says WARL behavior and training manager Michelle Yue.

During large-scale rescues, cruelty is often so pervasive that victims can be hard to tell apart: one dog after another malnourished and eaten up by skin parasites, one after another with infected eyes and runny noses, shivering in sickness and fear. Onsite and in the moment, the teams focus on speed and quantity: Get as many animals out as you can, and do it quickly.





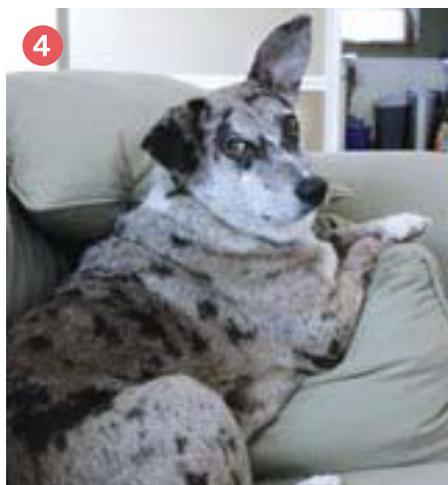
1) Chunk was one of the first dogs rescue teams saw when they entered Raven's Hope Animal Sanctuary in Mississippi—one of nearly 200 dogs pulled from the squalid conditions.

2) Dan Metcalf and Kathy Peacock adopted Daisy to keep Chunk company. Metcalf says the dogs' personalities balance each other out.

3) Carolina and a friend seek shelter amidst filthy conditions on the property of the hoarder in Preston, Miss. Many of the dogs suffered from skin infections and untreated wounds.

4) Yoda—so named because her ears reminded her new owners of the little green sage from Star Wars—found a new home with Cammie Backus's family in Takoma Park, Md.

5) Five months after the seizure, Carolina—now named Gili—leaves WARL for her new home with adopter Madeleine Goldburd. Carolina/Gili was almost totally hairless when she arrived at the shelter, but some TLC from WARL's staff set her on the road to recovery.



The aftermath, though, is all about the individuals. It is during recovery that cruelty victims become particular. Their eyes, once clotted with infection, become clear and bright. Their fur grows, revealing true colors and hints of breed. They heal, they put on weight, and they discover the thrill of running, the squeaky delights of a particular toy, a love for being scratched in one sweet spot—and the pleasure of finding a new home, where a family spoils you rotten and you don't have to compete with scores of brothers and sisters in order to survive.

One of the last Mississippi dogs to leave WARL was Gili, who had no fur and was "just so uncomfortable for so long that it took a while for our behavior team to get through to

her," says Scotto. But when the traumatized dog met her new family, "she lay down on her back and gave us her belly and wanted to be scratched. This dog just seemed like she wanted to be loved," says adopter Madeleine Goldburd of Washington, D.C.

And while she's still nervous about some things—plastic bags, for example—she loves to run in a field near her house. "She'll go and dart out and do figure eights and make really sharp turns," says Goldburd.

Yoda—named for her expressive ears—found a home with Cammie Backus's family in Takoma Park, Md. "We do a Yoda voice for her ... and she won't actually beg at the dinner table, but she'll make these little rrrrrrr sounds," says Backus, emitting

a noise that sounds like a cross between a moan and a hungry stomach. "We say that's her Wookiee voice."

A blind dog named Wonder is no less shy in conveying her needs. Taken into foster care with Valerie Brehm's menagerie of fostered and owned pets soon after the rescue, her sightlessness made placement a challenge. But the dog worked her charms, and Brehm and her husband finally concluded that she belonged with them. In July, they decided to keep her.

"She's pushy, which surprises me, because I would think she'd be more reserved," says Brehm, who lives in St. Petersburg, Fla. "But when she wants affection, she's right there."

Like all the other dogs rescued and brought to life by so many caring people, Wonder is finally herself—and she is finally home. **AS**

To read about the hoarding case these dogs came from, see "Rescued from Squalor" in the November-December 2010 issue of Animal Sheltering.



It's a Miracle

An abandoned cat in Oregon goes from a locked storage unit to a loving home

It was February, and the owner/manager of a storage facility in Oregon City, Ore., heard meowing as he walked past one of the closed units.

So he ground the lock off the door, and, seeing the source of the noise, immediately called the Oregon Humane Society (OHS) in nearby Portland.

Austin Wallace, an animal cruelty investigator for the shelter, arrived quickly, and peered inside the storage unit to see a cat tangled up in a makeshift leash at the foot of a grocery cart.

Trapped in place by the snarled leash, the emaciated cat had urine burns on his

body, and Wallace saw patches of raw skin where the animal had tried desperately to free himself.

"He quite literally looked like he was dying," Wallace says. "I wasn't quite sure if he was going to make it back to the shelter."

Wallace rushed the cat back to OHS, where a staff member was standing by to collect him and race him to the shelter's emergency clinic. The medical team started treatment immediately, checking his vital signs, giving him fluids, and countering the effects of days—or possibly weeks—without food or water.

Barbara Baugnon, the shelter's marketing/communications director, says the cat's

condition at intake was among the direst of any animal she'd ever seen at OHS. "The cat almost looked *liquefied*" because he was so starved.

The kitty was placed on a careful feeding program, so that he didn't go into shock from eating too much food at once. "He was so hungry, he was biting at the air any time he smelled food," Baugnon says.

The cat's story made the local news, sparking outrage in the Portland area. "This is one of the biggest stories we've had in the 10 years I've been here," Baugnon says. She was besieged by TV and newspaper reporters, as well as by the shelter's Facebook followers, all wanting updates on his status.

Once the cat looked like he'd turned the corner, the staff dubbed him Milagro—Spanish for "miracle."

It turned out that his former owner was Anthony Glenn Johnson, a homeless man, who had left the cat in his storage unit and then failed to return to care for him. Johnson, who said he had found the cat in a field, was sentenced in July to 30 days in jail and ordered not to own another pet for the next five years, according to *OregonLive.com*.

Among those who'd heard about Milagro were Scott and Joanne Godfrey of Portland, longtime supporters of the shelter. Scott volunteers as an adoption counselor, and Joanne has fostered several cats from OHS.

"I saw the story on the news, and it was just heartbreaking, and I thought, 'Well, let's just keep watching [to see what happens]," Joanne says. A few weeks later, the shelter's foster



Milagro was picked up by Austin Wallace, an animal cruelty investigator at the Oregon Humane Society, after the storage facility's owner/manager heard the cat crying from inside the locked unit.



Joanne Godfrey cuddles Mr. Beanfield—formerly Milagro—during a post-adoption follow-up visit to the Oregon Humane Society, so staff members who'd helped nurse the starving and dehydrated kitty back to health could see how far he'd come.

department called her to ask if she would take Milagro. Joanne, who had taken in some special-needs cats in the past, agreed.

When she met Milagro at the shelter, he was frail and thin, and so weak that he couldn't even lift his paws to climb into a litter box. So the Godfreys had to use a shallow serving dish for him instead. His muscles had atrophied from starvation, and he had lost some of his sight due to the prolonged lack of nutrition. On a diet of high-protein cat food, Milagro slowly regained weight, grew stronger, and became fast friends with the couple's six other cats (all adopted from OHS).

Joanne gave the shelter twice-weekly progress reports, and by the time the foster care department suggested it might be

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- Go to animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces to download a poster about the benefits of adopting a one-of-a-kind mutt.
- To learn more about the Humane Society International internship that Ana Claudia Borges de Almeida participated in, go to hsi.org/internships.
- To see a model of the URI Care Cost Calculator discussed in "Value Added," go to sheltermedicine.com/documents/uri-cost-calculator.
- We couldn't fit into print every response to our Coffee Break question about the best approach to adoptions, so visit animalsheltering.org/publications/magazine/coffee_break.html to read more of what readers had to say.
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time to find Milagro a permanent home, the Godfreys had already decided to adopt him themselves.

The couple felt that "Milagro" didn't quite roll off the tongue, so they borrowed from the title of a 1988 Robert Redford movie, *The Milagro Beanfield War*, and re-christened him Mr. Beanfield.

And the cat who'd arrived at the shelter in a precarious condition now leads the good life, enjoying (accompanied) trips to the couple's garden, exploring the garage, and waiting outside the shower till Joanne's done, so he can take a drink.

"He has such a fat belly," Joanne says of the orange tabby contentedly snoozing by his water dish. "I'm looking at him now, and he just rolled over, and he's got this pooch." **AS**

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She Came a Long Way, Baby

An animal welfare advocate from Brazil learns the ropes at the ASPCA

BY ARNA COHEN



Jennifer Lander, left, director of medicine at the ASPCA's Adoption Center in Manhattan, and Ana Claudia Borges de Almeida return Cypher, a 6-year-old miniature pinscher, to his kennel.

In a brightly lit room outfitted with Formica and stainless steel, Ana Claudia Borges de Almeida watched a veterinarian at the Manhattan branch of the ASPCA examine a recently spayed cat. Thousands of miles from her home in Camacari, Bahia, Brazil, the shelter's clean, modern environment was a far cry from the newspaper-covered kitchen tables in the muddy, impoverished villages that are her usual workplaces.

Borges de Almeida was in New York as part of a Humane Society International (HSI) program that brings animal welfare advocates from developing countries to the U.S. to observe and interact with their counterparts in American shelters, learning approaches they can take back to their home countries to help the animals and people in their communities.

The only shelter serving Borges de Almeida's region in Brazil is an overcrowded, rundown facility 15 miles away in the state's capital city of Salvador. Little more than a warehouse for strays, the shelter offers no spay/neuter services. To help with the rampant animal overpopulation in and around Camacari, in 2007 Borges de Almeida founded AnimalViva, a nonprofit organization providing free spay/neuter surgeries. Relying on grants, donations, and the sporadic services of volunteer veterinarians, AnimalViva has spayed or neutered more than 3,600 owned and homeless cats and dogs in local villages.

The program also includes an educational element. "There is a high [level] of violence toward animals in my community," says Borges de Almeida. "The quality of life for an animal is far from desirable."

To change attitudes, volunteers employ music, art, and theater to teach schoolchildren a kid-friendly version of the "Five Freedoms," a set of necessities many animal advocates cite as the basics of a decent existence for any creature—freedom from pain, freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from fear and distress, and freedom to express their normal behaviors.

Borges de Almeida says she has seen changes over the past four years. The number of animals roaming the streets has decreased, and children are developing more empathy for them. After a project last year in which students took photographs of street animals and displayed them in school, Borges de Almeida noticed a child placing bowls of water around the community, trying to help the animals.

"It makes me think that it's not a long process, that we can make a change using education, get a quicker response than we think," she says.

Interning in New York, Borges de Almeida shadowed staff in key areas of the ASPCA's Manhattan shelter, learning from staff working in adoptions, media, fundraising, and behavior. She was particularly interested in the organization's mobile spay/neuter unit, something she hopes to acquire for AnimalViva. She was also delighted by the ASPCA's cat enrichment techniques. "It was amazing to see little cats watching TV before going to adoption," she says.

The internship program is a much-needed, and much-appreciated, source of training and encouragement for those struggling to improve conditions in countries where animal welfare is not necessarily a priority. The challenges they face—lack of funding, shortage of manpower, need for community education—are the same as those faced by animal welfare organizations here, but the levels of resources and prevailing community attitudes toward animals are often very different. The field experience allows the

interns to establish relationships with shelters that are successfully meeting their challenges and can serve as resources for information and advice.

This year's 14 interns, hailing from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe, were selected from a pool of 40 applications, twice the number as the year before. Participants spent a week at host shelters in Southern and Mid-Atlantic states before meeting up at The HSUS's Animal Care Expo in Orlando, Fla., where they attended workshops and presentations that specifically addressed economic, logistic, and cultural issues with which international animal advocates grapple.

The conference provides the interns a forum in which to share their passion, problems, hopes, and ideas. "I learned a lot and experienced things that I would never had had a chance to see in Kenya," says Isaac Maina of the Africa Network for Animal Welfare. "I was able to meet and interact with many participants, which was real mentoring to me."

Borges de Almeida, too, went home with fresh ideas for fundraising and building a solid volunteer corps as well as a new network of colleagues to whom she can turn for support and assistance. She has stayed in touch with her ASPCA mentor and fellow Brazilian, Fernanda Mara Netto, manager of customer relations at the shelter's adoption center, and stopped in to visit during a vacation trip to New England in July.

The sense of belonging imparted by participating in the internship program is as powerful as the information and skills the interns take away from it. "The international people often feel that they're out there on their own, and they're not," says Donna Pease, international coordinator for Animal Care Expo and the internship program at HSI. "We're in the same boat." **AS**

To learn more about the HSI internship program, go to hsi.org/internships.

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Wild Thing—I Think I Love You

Vermont humane investigator branches out into innovative wildlife control business



A group of curious young raccoons peers down from the rafters at an outdoor shelter at Pine Haven Refuge, one of the wildlife rehabilitators used frequently by JoAnn Nichols of Into the Wild.

Most wildlife removal companies called by homeowners deal with unwanted wild animals by killing them—they're often drowned, gassed, or shot. If they escape this gruesome fate, they're trapped and released into unfamiliar territory, which can be fatal.

JoAnn Nichols is a different breed of wildlife control operator.

In 2010, the Burlington, Vt., resident started Into the Wild, a business that offers homeowners a much kinder service. Nichols practices humane exclusion, an eviction method that requires knowing the species' biology and habits, and using the appropriate materials and approach to solve conflicts without harming the animals.

Nichols—who worked with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife for months to develop a permit for her business—appears to be the first humane wildlife control operator in the state. The department had never issued a permit for an operation quite like hers before, she says.

She also discussed her plans with staff from The HSUS's Urban Wildlife program, which ad-

vocates that nuisance wildlife control operators (NWCOS) practice humane exclusion.

Now, thanks to Nichols—a licensed wildlife rehabilitator with years of experience—so-called “nuisance” animals who get into buildings (such as raccoon or opossum moms seeking a protected place to give birth and care for their young) are getting a second chance to resume their lives in the wild.

In her years as a wildlife rehabilitator, Nichols has gotten calls from upset homeowners who didn't realize the wildlife nuisance company they hired would actually kill the animal after the removal. No one in Vermont was offering a humane alternative, so Nichols decided to fill the void.

Nichols doesn't relocate the animals she evicts. She takes a better approach, as she did last spring when a mother raccoon entered a home's attic vent space. She removed the mother, collected the babies, sealed the entry point, and put the babies in a nest box outside. When Nichols checked back, the mother had relocated her young.

Nichols does a lot of education, teaching homeowners about various species, their unique needs, and their place in the environment. “I think it's important for people to understand how to coexist humanely with animals, and as we build homes and take up more space, it's going to become a larger issue,” she says.

Into the Wild is just her latest effort to help animals. She's also a part-time humane investigator and animal care provider at the Humane Society of Chittenden County in South Burlington. According to Amanda Blubaugh, the shelter's operations manager, Nichols is currently the only humane investigator in the county—Vermont's most populous.

Nichols also runs her own nonprofit, Ivana Iguana Wisdom and Rescue, working with exotic reptiles who have strayed, or been abandoned or abused. She has 30 to 40 reptiles in her house at any time, and her goal is to rehabilitate and rehome them with people who have the expertise and resources to handle them. Among the species present are green iguanas, a bearded dragon, a Chinese water dragon, ball pythons, Columbian red-tailed boa constrictors, and various turtles.

Though she's licensed to rehabilitate a wide variety of species—a list of wild mammals the length of your arm—she specializes in reptiles. “Ever since I was a kid, I wanted a green iguana, and when I moved to Vermont, I saw one that was up for adoption through another agency. ... She lived with me for 10 years before she passed away,” Nichols says.

She decided to start trying to help other iguanas who needed homes, and that led to working with other reptiles. Now, cold-blooded creatures are her hobby.

Joanne Bourbeau, Vermont state director for The HSUS, has known Nichols for 10 years, and says she is a great resource for shelters that need advice on wildlife calls. Nichols gives workshops for law enforcement officials and other humane investigators about how to handle wildlife during cruelty complaints.

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Bourbeau lauds Nichols for her professionalism, her ability to work with a variety of people, and the diversity of her skills. "It's great to have somebody I can turn to" on sheltering and wildlife issues, she says.

Of all Nichols' activities, her work with Into the Wild has been the most satisfying. "It's really important for people to understand and become educated about wildlife and how to live humanely with them," she says. "[Wild animals] are such an important part of our environment, and they're worth saving—they add beauty to our world." **AS**



Wildlife control operator JoAnn Nichols—holding an opossum she removed during a call—founded her own humane wildlife exclusion business, Into the Wild, in 2010.



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Taking the Roads Less Traveled

Nonprofit battles pet overpopulation in rural Eastern Pennsylvania

They begin arriving soon after 8 a.m. on a beautiful June day when the Tractor Supply Co. in Hazleton, Pa., opens up. But these early birds aren't birds—they're 23 cats and three dogs.

Their owners have brought them to the parking lot for a low-cost sterilization. A volunteer registers the patients, fills out paperwork, and waits for the spaymobile to arrive.

At 8:30 a.m., the big blue truck pulls into the parking lot. Barb Loch, clinic director of the Eastern Pennsylvania Animal Alliance (EPAA), hobbles out of the driver's seat. Just two months after having one of her knees replaced, Loch prepares for an eight-hour day on her feet.

"If you need both knees replaced, they tell you to do it all at once. Because if you do one knee first, you'll never do the other," she says.

Veterinarian Kim Mah speaks to all the owners when they fill out their paperwork to make sure they understand the risks of surgery. Mah left traditional veterinary practice after 10 years to focus on providing spay/neuter services for EPAA. "I like the routine of doing surgery," she says. "Every animal is a little bit different. The veterinarian has to do anesthesia, too, and there's no such thing as routine anesthesia."

At 9:30 a.m., Loch and Mah enter the truck to begin surgery. The volunteer stays with the cats and dogs waiting in their carriers on the loading dock. The spaymobile has come to the parking lots of the Tractor Supply stores in Hazleton and Wilkes-Barre twice a month for the past year, sterilizing a total of 580 cats and 70 dogs.

Two years ago, EPAA was just an idea in the minds of a group of concerned citizens in Monroe County. The clinic began operations in May of 2009 with less than \$10,000 capital. During the first few weeks, EPAA's two employees didn't know if they were going to get paid, says board president George Kitchen. "All the donations went to buy equipment." The organization had no



Barb Loch, right, clinic director for the Eastern Pennsylvania Animal Alliance, helps veterinary technician Lynn Castiglia administer a shot to a dog named Bella.

money in the bank to pay salaries when it opened its doors.

Kitchen hired Loch to run the new spay/neuter clinic, and says she deserves the lion's share of the credit for making it a success. Loch had already transitioned the Center for Animal Health and Welfare in the Lehigh Valley into a no-kill shelter and started a spay/neuter clinic there. She and the shelter's veterinarian, Lori Milot, resigned from that organization to start working for the newly formed nonprofit EPAA. "It took a community to start this clinic," Loch says. "So many animal welfare groups pulled together to get it off the ground."

In the early days, the clinic used a borrowed surgery table, donated space in an H&R Block office, and an anesthesia machine rebuilt from two machines that were being discarded by a shelter in Philadelphia. "For about \$500 and the cost of some tubing, we got an anesthesia machine worth \$5,000," Loch says.

It helped that Loch had extensive contacts. She received tips on where to buy used equipment from veterinary surgical supply companies. A veterinary practice in nearby East Stroudsburg, owned by doctors Claire and Sammie Thompson, hosted a fundraiser—



Clinic director Barb Loch vacuums fur off a cat she just shaved in preparation for surgery.

Operation Catsnip—and gave the new clinic its autoclave for sterilization of instruments.

Today, the clinic has its own office space in Brodheads ville, as well as the spaymobile, purchased in the first six months of the clinic's operation thanks to an anonymous donation of about \$12,000. With the spaymobile, "It's like having two clinics," Loch says. EPAA also employs a part-time vet, Julie Hoberman, who specializes in cats, and two vet techs, Karen Bowers and Lynn Castiglia. They have a few loyal volunteers who answer phones, schedule appointments, and do laundry. In its first two years of operation, EPAA has spayed or neutered close to 10,000 animals.

The spaymobile usually goes out two times in a week, often traveling far away from EPAA's base in Brodheads ville. "We went to a community in Masthope Mountain near the New York state border that had a feral cat problem," Loch recalls. "It took us two hours to get there."

Reducing the overpopulation of cats is Loch's next big mission for EPAA. "I want to hit the feral cat problem hard," she says. But first she needs grant money, an administrator for a trap-neuter-return (TNR) program, and a few dozen volunteers to trap, transport, and care for the cats. "I have about three more balls in the air than I can juggle right now," she says.

The spaymobile makes monthly visits to A Pocono Country Place (APCP), a residential community in Tobyhanna, to do TNR. APCP serves as an example of how hard it is to find volunteers to help run a feral cat TNR pro-

gram; only about six women volunteer to help with the program in a community of 13,000 people. They trap over the weekend and transport the cats to the community's clubhouse. The spaymobile comes on Monday, the male cats are released on Tuesday, and the females on Wednesday. The volunteers have to feed the cats and clean up the clubhouse over the four or five days of the TNR.

"We would like to do it more than once a month, but we need more volunteers," says APCP board member and TNR coordinator Eileen Lawrence.

A few days after the clinic at APCP, the spaymobile was parked in the parking lot of the Hazle Beer and Deli in Wilkes-Barre, a regular stop on its schedule. Carol Coffee, who owns the deli, has been running her own TNR program for 10 years. One winter, there were so many cats living in the creek bed next to the deli, Coffee decided she had to do something. She estimates that she has sterilized about 2,000 cats since then—often using money out of her own pocket—without ever starting a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Asked how much she has spent in 10 years, Coffee replies, "I have no idea." A conservative estimate of the cost to spay 2,000 cats is at least \$50,000. She and EPAA now work in tandem to battle local pet overpopulation, and the organization has lifted some of her burden.

A flier by the cash register inside the deli reminds customers that the EPAA spaymobile will be in the parking lot once in June, twice in July, three times in August, and every week in September. Even the local Petco store tells customers to bring their newly adopted pets to the Hazle Beer and Deli if they need a low-cost spay or neuter.

Before Coffee found EPAA, she took homeless cats to a local vet who gave her a wonderful discount, though he cautioned her that she might not be making a difference for all the money she was spending. "He told me, 'You're spitting in the ocean,' and I said, 'Somebody's gotta spit.'" **AS**

Kietryn Zychal is a freelance writer and do-gooder at large who lives in northeastern Pennsylvania. Check out her website at kietryn.com.

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Cat Lady Takes on IRS—and Wins

Court decision emphasizes right of animal welfare volunteers, especially fosterers, to deduct expenses

Jan Van Dusen, a 59-year-old former family law attorney in Oakland, Calif., claimed more than \$12,000 expenses as a charitable deduction on her 2004 tax return—money she had spent housing, feeding, and providing medical care to scores of foster cats living in her home.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) said “No.”

That dispute led to years of wrangling between Van Dusen, a longtime fosterer affiliated with Fix Our Ferals and other Oakland-area nonprofit animal welfare groups, and the IRS, eventually leading to a 2009 showdown in U.S. Tax Court.

In June, Judge Richard Morrison finally ruled in her favor: The decision allowed her to take a charitable deduction for most of the expenses she incurred.

“I was just stunned. I was so shocked,” says Van Dusen, who represented herself in tax court.

The outcome came as a relief to Van Dusen, and it also has implications for volunteers around the country. The decision will affect how the IRS treats the millions of dollars in tax deductions that volunteers take each year, in order to be reimbursed for money they spend on behalf of all kinds of IRS-recognized charities.

The case is clearly a personal victory for her, but it doesn’t set a legal precedent so much as it offers clarity on the law that’s already on the books, according to Lester Thompson, a senior manager in federal tax services for Ernst & Young who has led workshops at Animal Care Expo to help animal shelters and rescue groups to better understand tax rules.

The IRS asserted that Van Dusen’s care of the foster cats was a personal activity, and that it wasn’t possible to discriminate between what she was doing for her own seven cats and the many foster cats in her care—in effect, that all of them were just her pets.

“But [the judge] said that it was clear that those feral cats were part of a program



being operated by Fix Our Ferals, and for that reason, it was in fact a charitable activity,” he says.

Van Dusen offered a variety of records—carbon copies from her checkbook, credit card statements, receipts for pet food and cleaning supplies, utility bills—to show her expenses, but they didn’t distinguish how the resources were allocated.

“She’s not buying separate food for her pets and separate food for the other cats; they’re all comingled. And comingled recordkeeping presents a challenge,” Thompson says. “The IRS likes to be able to identify what portion of every expense is deductible and what’s not, and the case documentation shows they had a problem with her recordkeeping.”

The judge ultimately decided that 90 percent of her veterinary and pet supply expenses, and 50 percent of her cleaning supply and utility expenses, were used for Van Dusen’s care of the foster cats, and allowed that portion to be deducted.

One sticking point was that Van Dusen didn’t know that in order to claim deductions of \$250 or more, she needed not only a canceled check, receipt, or other record; she also needed a letter from the affiliated charity, acknowledging the expense on its behalf.

Because she lacked such a letter, her claimed deductions for several big-ticket expenses—namely, veterinary bills—were disallowed.

Still, Van Dusen got most of what she wanted, and her case serves as a reminder to shelter fosterers, TNR folks, and rescue volunteers: Keep good, clear records and receipts for your good works, and you may be able to keep more of your money.

Van Dusen plans to keep fostering. “Yeah, people usually don’t get completely out of this,” she says, though she’s trying to get her numbers down. “I think a friend of mine is dropping a cat off—excuse me.” **AS**

To read the entire decision, go to ustaxcourt.gov/InOpHistoric/VanDusen.TC.WPD.pdf.

Trends in Animal Welfare Salaries

BY PATTY GOODWIN

How have salaries and benefits for animal welfare positions changed over the years? Through its partnership with Mountain States Employers, the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) has been collecting “pay intelligence” for 18 years, to help animal welfare professional leaders ensure they are paying comparable or better wages than industry best practices.

The 2011 survey had a record 148 participants reporting salary data for 44 positions. We extracted 20 positions that have been consistently surveyed, averaged the base salaries, and looked at the percentage increases for the last 10 years compared to 2011. Positions were sorted into three categories—Top Management, Supervisory, and Clerical/Technical. Table A displays the three categories and their average percent increases compared to the 2011 weighted average salary.

Top Management positions include CEO/executive director, assistant director/

deputy director, veterinarian, head of operations, head of fund development, and head of human resources. Supervisory positions include head of community relations, shelter manager, animal control/field operations supervisor, kennel/animal care manager, and volunteer manager. Clerical/

Technical positions include animal control/field officer, humane educator, executive assistant, data entry clerk, accounting assistant, publications coordinator, dispatcher, animal care attendant, and adoption counselor.

On average, there is not a substantial difference between the three categories. When comparing data, Top Management has had the greatest gains in average salaries, but Clerical/Technical positions have shown higher average increases over the last two to four years.

Base salaries are only part of total compensation packages. Also collected in the



SAWA Conference Schedule

- 2011 Annual Conference, Burlingame, Calif., Nov. 13-15
- 2012 Management Conference, St. Louis, Mo., June 13-15
- 2012 Annual Conference, St. Petersburg, Fla., Nov. 4-6

SAWA surveys was the percent of employees eligible for bonus/incentive pay. On average, more employees are eligible for bonus/incentive pay than they were 10 years ago; with average annual pay increases being so low over the past few years, employers are using bonuses as a method to reward top performers and recognize achievement of specific goals. For the Top Management category, an average 35 percent are bonus/incentive eligible in 2011 versus 31 percent in the 2001 survey; Supervisory an average 30 percent versus 28 percent; and Clerical/Technical an average 25 percent versus 20 percent 10 years ago.

Compensation is one of the top reasons employees will stay with an organization. As shown in Table B, turnover for 2000, 2002, and 2004 remained high for all areas, but overall has gone down steadily.

The total for all areas includes categories not listed above. Participants calculated turnover rates based on the formula of total number of separations for a year divided by the average number of employees during the same year.

For a copy of the complete 2011 report, visit tinyurl.com/2011SAWASalSurvey. The report includes salary data for 44 surveyed positions and is displayed by annual budget and geographic location; it also includes data on benefits and personnel practices. **AS**

Patty Goodwin is the director of Surveys of Mountain States Employers Council Inc. and a SAWA member.

Table A: Weighted Average Percent of Increase

	LAST 2 YEARS 2009-2011	LAST 4 YEARS 2007-2011	LAST 6 YEARS 2005-2011	LAST 8 YEARS 2003-2011	LAST 10 YEARS 2001-2011
TOP MANAGEMENT	4%	10%	18%	26%	32%
SUPERVISORY	5%	9%	20%	19%	29%
CLERICAL/TECHNICAL	7%	11%	19%	21%	28%

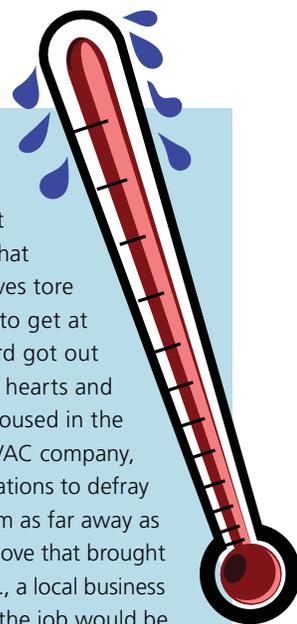
Table B: Average Staff Turnover (full-time employees only)

AREA	2010	2008	2006	2004	2002	2000
ADMINISTRATION	14%	17%	17%	17%	35%	18%
ADOPTIONS	28%	36%	34%	46%	49%	58%
FIELD OPERATIONS	18%	26%	22%	26%	45%	33%
ANIMAL CARE/KENNELS	37%	47%	47%	63%	63%	69%
VETERINARY SERVICES	24%	27%	23%	42%	46%	47%
ALL AREAS	29%	33%	33%	36%	47%	46%



You can go home again. Devastation rained down from the sky in April when tornadoes swept across the South, destroying property and taking lives wherever they touched down. Judy Pugh of Tuscaloosa, Ala., was at home when a twister struck; an interior wall fell on her, which she says is the only thing that kept her from being carried away. Though her house was leveled, she and two of her three cats survived. Her third cat, however, was nowhere to be found. Pugh visited the wreckage every day, hoping against hope that 10-year-old Cadie would turn up. And here's the twist to this twister story: One month after the tornado hit, a meteorologist from Channel 42 in Birmingham, Ala., was interviewing Pugh in her yard when Cadie strolled up the front walk. Pugh scooped him up and burst into tears. "I have everything I want now," she said. "I have all three cats." Cadie was not wearing ruby slippers and couldn't say whether a Good Witch had tipped him off on how to get home.

Coldhearted thieves leave shelter in a sweat. It wasn't dogs or cats who were targeted in a robbery at the Animal Welfare League in Chicago on June 30—it was the air conditioner. During a miserable heat wave that jacked temperatures into the 90s for days on end, thieves tore apart the Wabash Avenue facility's two rooftop units to get at the valuable copper piping and coils inside. When word got out about the theft, residents and businesses opened their hearts and wallets to make sure that the more than 100 animals housed in the shelter would not be in danger. Trane Inc., a national HVAC company, lent the shelter portable air conditioning units, and donations to defray the \$25,000 cost of replacing the system poured in from as far away as Hawaii and Alaska. In all, \$32,000 was raised, but in a move that brought executive director Linda Estrada to tears, the Corrigan Co., a local business called in to do the repairs, told her to keep the money; the job would be done for free. "These three brothers, the Corrigans, were wonderful," says Estrada. "It was the hottest days that they were up there morning, noon, and night working, donating all their time." The brothers also arranged for the Carrier Corp. to make a gift of the massive air-conditioning units, enabling Estrada to put the donated funds toward giving the nearly 80-year-old building a sorely needed update.



Free-fur-all. Lollypop Farm had it all—cats, counselors, customers. The only thing missing on July 7 was ... adoption fees. The fur flew when the shelter, also known as the Humane Society of Greater Rochester, held a one-day "Priceless Purrs" adopt-a-thon, waiving adoption fees for all cats, including kittens. Adopters flocked to the shelter and its two satellite adoption centers, often waiting for up to two hours for the chance to take home a dream furball. "We did not get one complaint," says Gillian Hargrave, Lollypop's vice president. "They totally understood that this was a big day and there would be a wait." By early afternoon, all 34 of the shelter's available kittens (4 months and younger) had been spoken for, and by the end of the day another 74 juniors (5 months to a year) and adults had found new homes for a grand total of 108 cats, a record for one-day adoptions at Lollypop. People who arrived at the tail end of the day didn't go home empty-handed—they received a coupon for a free adoption to be redeemed within one week. Though a bit apprehensive that waiving the fee might attract people adopting "for the wrong reasons," Hargrave found she didn't need to worry. "People who just want a free cat aren't willing to go through what can be a two- to three-hour wait, a sit-down with a counselor, and [everything else] they have to go through in order to get a cat," she says. She also found that almost every adopter made a donation at the completion of the process. The adopt-a-thon was so successful that another one is already in the works.

Express yourself. Having trouble finding the right words to convey your emotions? Never fear, use your ears! Inspired by cats, who have no trouble relaying their feelings through their ears, the country that brought us sushi and the Walkman now presents Necomimi! A mash-up of the Japanese words for “cat” and “ear,” the device from Neurowear consists of an electronic headband sporting oversized, fuzzy, cat-shaped ears that move in response to the wearer’s brain wave activity. The ears flop down when the wearer is relaxed and spring to attention when the wearer is excited by something, like eating a doughnut or looking at a cute guy. The developers claim that products like this could ultimately be helpful for those who are verbally disabled, easing frustrations by helping them show feelings. We’ll just stick with our mood rings, thanks.



New baby news. It’s not your typical new baby announcement. Age: 6 years, Weight: 10 pounds, Length: 24 inches, Eyes: Gold, Hair: Calico. It’s a furbaby announcement! Pet parents can send one of their own by adopting a pet at one of the 3,800 shelters that are members of the Iams pet adoption center network during the company’s 12th annual Home 4 the Holidays campaign, which runs from Oct. 1, 2011, to Jan. 3, 2012. They can then broadcast their joy online by visiting Iams’ Facebook page and downloading a customizable announcement to share with Facebook friends and family. For every announcement shared, Iams donates a bowl of food to pets in need. Those who aren’t quite ready for pet parenthood can still get in the act—Iams also donates food for every “Like” the page receives during the campaign and for the purchase of specially marked bags of Iams cat and dog food. Shelters interested in joining the Iams adoption center network can get more information at animalcenter.org/home4theholidays.

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