

To the Rescue

TEXT BY RUTHANNE JOHNSON

Rescued following Superstorm Sandy, 10-year-old Emily shares a moment with Alanna Reagan at Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society in Massachusetts.



LOCATION: Stony Point, New York

ANIMALS ASSISTED: 25 cats

The plea for help came in the weeks following Superstorm Sandy. A woman's home had been destroyed in Elaine Gizzi's community about 50 miles north of New York City. *She has 18 cats, some inside and some ... outside, living in what used to be her garage,* Gizzi had written on The HSUS's online disaster services contact form.

Before the storm hit, the woman had been, for years, caring meticulously for dozens of cats living in the wetland behind her home and nearly a dozen more indoors. Well fed, the cats had two sheds and a garage where they could curl up on cold nights. Her late husband had even built a cattery. All except one hard-to-catch male had been vaccinated and spayed or neutered.

Gizzi remembers a well-maintained property and freestanding garage with colorful flower window boxes, but at the time

she contacted The HSUS, all the windows had been boarded up, and the sheds and cattery were strewn throughout the wetland. The outdoor cats had survived by climbing into the garage's rafters. The indoor kitties had scurried to the house's third floor. Left with no electricity, heat, or running water, the woman had been living with family and caring for the traumatized cats after work, often in the cold and dark.

As an animal lover with rescued cats, dogs, turtles, and even a ferret, Gizzi was empathetic. Her email to The HSUS received a quick response from New York state director Brian Shapiro, who contacted the nearby Hudson Valley Humane Society for on-the-ground help and later found a shelter with room for the cats.

Hudson Valley provided the woman with pet food and supplies. "We also brought other things: coffee, donuts, food baskets. Anything she needed," says president Ann Marie Gaudio. Volunteers trapped and crated in the garage as many of the cats as

they could. One volunteer even bought them self-warming blankets.

By Jan. 12, only a few stragglers still roamed free. Shapiro assisted volunteer veterinarian Eileen Jefferson with blood draws, inoculations, medications, and nail clippings, while Hudson Valley volunteers continued capturing. One little lady named Black Toe proved particularly difficult, evading rescuers by darting into the rafters and behind boxes. Just when the team had given up, the property owner yelled, "I've got her!" And with that, Black Toe became the last rescue of the day. "Here was this cat who had been through a terrible ordeal," Shapiro remembers thinking as she formed a tiny ball in his hands.

The following week, 19 cats were driven to Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society in Springfield, Mass., as six more found homes in Stony Point. Nearly all the Springfield cats have since been adopted, including Black Toe, whose adoption fee was paid for by a kindly donor.



NAME: Rosie

CASE HISTORY: Rescued with 45 other dogs from two dogfighting operations in Kalamazoo, Mich.

The dogfighters referred to her as “white bitch.” Her entire existence was a cutout barrel and a 10-foot circle around the stake to which she was chained. Forced to breed litters for an illegal dogfighting operation, she limped painfully from a broken leg that had never been set. Her deformed head tilted oddly to the side.

But what Adam Parascandola remembers is her sweet resilience. As the HSUS Animal Rescue Team assisted authorities with two cases last August, she tentatively peered out of her barrel, whining as Parascandola approached. “When I sat down,” he says, “she buried her face in my arm.”

Within a month, the newly named Rosie had settled easily into a foster home filled with kids, cats, and dogs, says foster mom Robin Rock, director of Measle’s Animal Haven Pit Bull Rescue and Sanctuary in Dublin, Ohio. “I honestly thought that Rosie would end up being ... a permanent foster because she was not what most adopters look for in a new dog.” Besides being lame and neurologically impaired from an old skull injury, she has broken teeth and a deformed abdomen, likely from nursing numerous litters.

But none of that mattered to Steve Botts, an artist who adopted Rosie after reading her story on the rescue’s website. “I saw this dog and the condition she was in ... and I thought, she is so broken,” he says. “But there was something about her.”

Rosie’s pals now include two other rescued dogs and two cats, plus two tortoises who have lived with Botts since 1968. Her favorite lounge spot is the living room couch, where she can watch him work in his art studio. Together, they’re working on her fear of loud voices, and already, she’s overcome her apprehension of doorways. “One day I looked up,” he says, “and there was Rosie with a tennis ball dumbbell in her mouth. I couldn’t believe it ... this dog who probably never had a toy in her life.”

For Botts, whose life took an unexpected turn when his wife suddenly left nearly two years ago, the dogs have given new meaning to his days. “I was numb and didn’t know what to do,” he remembers. “... I thought I was rescuing the dogs. But they rescued me.”

ON THE iPad: See a video from Rosie’s rescue and artwork from her new owner.

The HSUS’s Adam Parascandola comforts Rosie during a dogfighting raid in Kalamazoo, Mich.



ANIMAL RESCUE UPDATES



The drug bust was two years in the making. And when authorities found 45 dogs chained throughout three properties in northeast North Carolina in early February, they quickly realized they’d stumbled onto a major dogfighting operation. They called The HSUS for help and discovered another 35 dogs on two more properties. The HSUS helped collect evidence—heavy chains, weights, performance-enhancing drugs, and after-fight medications—and transported the dogs to emergency shelter, funding their care while the courts determine custody.

It’s remarkable the places raccoons can find to hole up—like the rotten porch eave of one Washington, D.C., home. When the owner called The HSUS’s Humane Wildlife Services for help, director John Griffin discovered a masked bandit lounging inside the football-sized opening. The raccoon tentatively loped away after some light hazing, and Griffin covered the hole with wildlife-proof screening and a one-way door, in case someone else was still inside. Sure enough, later that night, HWS’s remote camera caught a second raccoon emerging after his buddy returned for him.

Every year, Society Hill Veterinary Hospital selects one charitable organization to support on behalf of clients who’ve provided outstanding pet care: teeth cleanings, wellness checkups, vaccinations, and more. Paying homage to military clients, the Philadelphia facility gave last year to PACT for Animals, a nonprofit helping deployed military personnel with foster pet care. This year, The HSUS’s Superstorm Sandy efforts caught the hospital’s attention, as several clients adopted pets rendered homeless by the storm. In March, Society Hill donated \$2,940 to The HSUS’s disaster relief fund on behalf of 146 exceptional pet parents.

FOLLOW THE \$

Pork producers are being forced to underwrite lobbyists trying to block animal welfare reforms.

 Required to pay into a “checkoff” program ostensibly created for the National Pork Board to promote pork consumption.



 Includes 67,000 producers, among them small family operations that oppose factory farming.

40¢ of each \$100 sold goes to

 Created with the help of the National Pork Producers Council, which wrote the rules under which it operates.



 Pays the NPPC for its own discontinued “Pork, the other white meat” slogan; prohibited from lobbying.

\$3 million a year goes to

 Spends millions of dollars a year fighting animal welfare reforms and protecting industrial agriculture.



 Sued to keep the checkoff payments flowing when producers voted in 2000 to end the program.

The decisions didn't make sense.

After spending around \$500 million on advertising that featured “Pork, the other white meat,” and after transforming that slogan into a valuable asset, the National Pork Board chose to pay for those words a second time—promising \$60 million over 20 years to a lobbying group called the National Pork Producers Council. The stated purpose was to keep someone else from using the slogan. But who besides the pork board would want it?

The pork board's actions then grew stranger still. Upon retiring the “other white meat” slogan in favor of a new one, the board failed to exercise a termination clause, electing to continue making annual \$3 million payments to buy the rights to words it was no longer using.

The only possible explanation, attorneys with The HSUS's Animal Protection Litigation section concluded, was that the purpose of the payments wasn't to purchase the slogan at all; it was to disguise the illegal use of producers' money.

A 1985 federal law created the pork board to promote pork consumption, requiring pro-

ducers to pay it 40 cents of each \$100 of pork sold. The law stipulates that “checkoff” money should be used only for promoting and marketing, not lobbying. But under the suspect arrangements that caught The HSUS's attention, the National Pork Producers Council has reported getting as much as a third of its budget from checkoff money spent on the “other white meat” slogan. The money helps fund the council's policy work on behalf of corporate agriculture and factory farms, much of it directed against HSUS-backed reforms to end extreme confinement, including state-level bans on pig gestation crates and an agreement with the United Egg Producers to end the use of barren battery cages. Many of the pig farmers paying into the checkoff program actually support these reforms.

A lawsuit filed by The HSUS last fall against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which supervises the checkoff program, asks the court to end the unlawful payments. “From a business standpoint, there's no way to justify this,” says HSUS attorney Matt Penzer. “It takes producers' money and diverts that toward policy issues.”

The lawsuit is one in a series of challenges to what The HSUS and other big ag critics see as misuse of pork—and beef—checkoff money. The HSUS has also filed a complaint with the USDA's Office of the Inspector General about \$20,000 the pork board gave the council to become a National Pork Producers Council Alliance Partner.

In August, with the help of HSUS attorneys, Mike Callicrate of Ranch Foods Direct brought a lawsuit charging that the Cattlemen's Beef Board had steered \$200 million in the \$1-per-head checkoff money it collects to a lobbying group called the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. The checkoff money underwrites nearly two-thirds of that group's budget.

“We have lost 42 percent of our cattle producers in this country. We lose [another] 1,000 ranches a month,” says Callicrate, who has long fought against factory farming's takeover of the industry. “They are using our [own] money against us.”

— Karen E. Lange