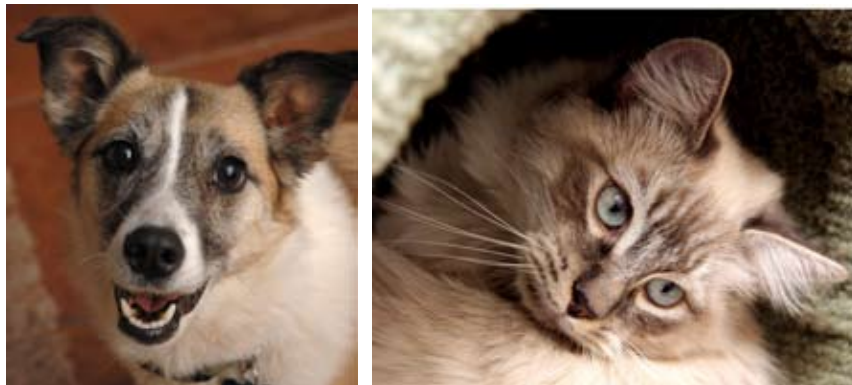

Saving Shelter Pets: How to Network with Rescue Groups



By Dana Salkoski



Best Friends
ANIMAL SOCIETY

About Best Friends Animal Society

Best Friends Animal Society is working with you – and with humane groups all across the country – to bring about a time when there are no more homeless pets.

The sanctuary at Angel Canyon, in the Golden Circle of southern Utah, is home, on any given day, to about 2,000 dogs, cats, and other animals from all over the country. Many of them need just a few weeks of special care before they're ready to go to good new homes. Others, who are older and sicker, or who have suffered extra trauma, find a home and a haven here, and are given loving care for the rest of their lives.

In our home state, Best Friends manages a model No More Homeless Pets campaign with shelters and humane groups, with the aim of reaching a time when every healthy dog and cat that's ever born in Utah is guaranteed a caring home.

And Best Friends reaches across the nation, helping humane groups, individual people, and entire communities to set up spay/neuter, shelter, foster, and adoption programs in their own neighborhoods, cities, and states.

The work of Best Friends is supported entirely through the donations of our members. Through the generous hearts and hands of people like you, we're getting close to the day when there will be No More Homeless Pets.

Thank you for being part of this work of love.

Best Friends Animal Society
5001 Angel Canyon Road
Kanab, UT 84741

Phone: (435) 644-2001
E-mail: info@bestfriends.org
Website: www.bestfriends.org

Table of Contents

Locating rescue groups	3
Assessing rescue groups	3
Evaluating shelter animals	4
Contacting rescue groups.....	5
Getting your animals to the rescue.....	7
Risks of multi-leg transports.....	8
Screening transport volunteers.....	9
Preparing for the transport	9
Petey’s second chance.....	10

Millions of dogs, cats and other companion animals are killed every year in shelters. These animals arrive at crowded facilities daily, either as strays or owner surrenders. Most sit patiently in their kennels, day after day, wondering what they did wrong to end up there. They wag their tails, bark, play, meow, growl – anything to get the attention of potential adopters as they walk by. Some do find that perfect home, but most end up being euthanized.

What can be done to prevent the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals? Many things: develop better spay/neuter and adoption programs, educate pet owners so pets aren’t relinquished to shelters, establish foster care programs, and/or work with rescue groups to help place homeless pets.

This publication is about the latter: how shelters can work with rescue groups to save animals and find forever homes for them. Most public and government-run shelters are mandated by law to accept all stray animals brought in by the public and all pets surrendered by their owners. Many of these municipal shelters are also responsible for animal control, which adds to the overcrowding.

Unlike most municipal shelters, rescue organizations are free to limit the number of animals they take in. Generally, these organizations are “no-kill” – they only euthanize animals in situations such as extreme aggression or the presence of an

illness or injury that is beyond medical help. A reputable no-kill rescue group only accepts the number of animals that they can properly house and support. Also, they are committed to finding the right home for each animal they accept.

Locating Rescue Groups

Rescue groups are easy to find on the Internet. Some have been helping animals for decades. Others are new and are the result of animal lovers becoming aware of the overpopulation problem. One of the best resources for finding rescue groups is Petfinder.com. While I was the rescue coordinator at a shelter, I would visit Petfinder every couple of weeks and do a rescue search. Petfinder lists hundreds of shelters and rescues across the U.S. You might want to start with a search within your state and then expand the search if you don’t find enough rescues to work with.

Assessing Rescue Groups

Not all rescue groups are reputable. Although the vast majority of the rescues I have contacted are wonderful organizations run by caring, loving people who want to help animals, a small percentage are accepting animals under the pretense of rehoming them. These people want animals to



breed, to hoard, to use in dog fighting, and other reasons too heartbreaking to mention.

So, before working with a rescue organization, you must do a background check and ask for references. Always make sure the rescue does not euthanize because of overpopulation. Veterinarians, other rescues and shelters in the area, local animal control officers and even former adopters are excellent sources of information. Follow through on contacting these people and document what they have to say. Maintain a file on each rescue containing their contact information (address, phone, e-mail address, website), 501(c)(3) status, data from the references and any other pertinent information.

If possible, the first time you use a rescue, transport the animals yourself and do an on-site check. A rescue may look great on paper and talk a good game, but you need to know what's really going on. The first year I was involved in rescue, a group took many of our cats. This rescue was far away and I didn't get to do an on-site check the first time they saved our cats. When I did visit the rescue, I discovered that the cats lived in cages. Some had been there for years. This rescue had wonderful vet references and was very respected in the community, but this was not what I wanted



for my cats. It took a few months, but all the cats from my shelter were eventually transferred to cageless rescues.

There are many different types of rescue situations. Some rescues are actual shelters, some are foster homes, some are both. It is important to know the animals you're sending to rescues. Consider what kind of situation would work best with each animal's personality. Some pets are so outgoing that being in a building with kennels and many other animals will not affect them at all. Other animals are so shy and intimidated that a home-like situation would be most beneficial to them.

After a while, rescues will get to know you and your reputation, and will try to help the animals when it gets down to "crunch time." You will learn to recognize which rescues are interested in which animals. One rescue I worked with was interested in large-breed dogs. Another rescue was only interested in special-needs animals. It is important to develop a rapport with the rescues. Always be honest with the rescue staff. For example, you might love the little food-aggressive toy dog, but a rescue that is a foster situation may not. Trust is very important in the rescue community. Rescues will become like family to you. They can also introduce you to other reliable rescues and transport drivers to add to your database.

Evaluating Shelter Animals

Knowing the animals in your shelter is critical to working effectively with rescues. Any and all information you can glean about a pet will ultimately help that animal get to safety.

When an animal first arrived at the shelter where I worked, a vet tech would fill out an intake sheet. The vet tech would record the name, age, breed, shelter ID number, arrival date and physical characteristics of the animal. Shots and dates administered were noted. A picture of the animal was placed at the bottom of the sheet. After a thorough health check of the animal, any abnormalities were noted. On the back of the intake sheet, staff

made daily observations about the animal's health to help monitor any problems. This sheet hung on the front of the animal's cage and went with him/her if he/she was adopted or rescued. You can use the intake sheet to get a lot of information about a pet.

After the animal had been at the shelter at least 24 hours, I would administer the SAFER temperament test developed by Dr. Emily Weiss. Information about her SAFER test can be found at www.emilyweiss.com/safer.html. It is a wonderful tool for assessing a dog and deciding what type of adoptive home or rescue is best. If an animal doesn't pass the SAFER test, it doesn't mean the pet is not adoptable; it just means that some homes would not be suitable and some behavior modification may be needed.

Note: Dr. Emily Weiss has been a Best Friends No More Homeless Pets Special Guest discussing "Critters for Keeps" and "Animal Introductions." For more information, go to the No More Homeless Pets Community on the Best Friends Network at network.bestfriends.org/nmhp/news.

Keep in mind that many cats (and dogs) come into a new situation scared and withdrawn – and many times they are misidentified as feral or wild. Animals often need time to calm down before their behavior can be assessed accurately.

There is also a SAFER test for cats. I have worked with many cat rescues. Most are mainly concerned about cats being people-friendly, but some rescues, because of their housing and foster arrangements, also want to know if they are cat- or dog-friendly.

I also used the Meet Your Match program (also at www.emilyweiss.com/safer.html), also developed by Dr. Weiss, to give me an idea of the dog's personality. Meet Your Match evaluates such things as a dog's activity level and friendliness. A cute little sign is provided to place on the dog's kennel for visitors to read. Sometimes that's all it takes to spark interest in a particular animal.

Contacting Rescue Groups

Once I had identified a rescue that I wanted to work with, I would send an introductory letter to them (see the sample letter in the box below).

Dear _____,

I am the rescue/education coordinator at the Somewhere County Animal Shelter in Somewhere, Indiana. I am searching for rescues to help our animals. We are a very small, rural shelter. We have 36 dog runs and 26 cat cages. In order to pay the bills, we contract to do animal control in two counties.

The population of our biggest city is about 20,000. We receive over 2,500 animals yearly. The population is not big enough to adopt all of our homeless animals. The Somewhere Shelter has been aggressively searching for rescues to help.

Our cats are vaccinated with feline 4 and wormed.

Our dogs are vaccinated with parvo, bordatella, distemper and wormed.

They can be viewed on www.petfinder.org/shelters/somewhere.html.

We feel that if we have to euthanize one adoptable animal, that is one too many. We do transport. We would like to work with your rescue. Please let me know if this is possible and thank you for helping our shelter sweeties.

Sincerely,

Dana Salkoski

If I received a positive response to my letter and the references were good, that rescue was added to my database of reputable rescues. Then, each week, after I had selected the animals I wanted to feature, I sent out the rescue pleas. Below is an example of a typical e-mail to my dog rescue groups.

ALL DOGS ARE URGENT!! PLEASE LOOK AT THE LIST AND LET ME KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP.

All sweeties will be on www.petfinder.org/shelters/somewhere.html

DALE EVANS - 1-2 yr old, 55 lbs red husky mix, good with dogs, might be too active for cats, semi-leash trained VERY, VERY URGENT!!

ROLF - 1 yr old, 50 lbs border collie mix, good with dogs, has not been tested with cats URGENT!!! ANOTHER FAVE!!!!

ROARKE - 2-3 yr old, collie/lab mix, good with dogs, has not been tested with cats URGENT!!!

PETTY - 1-2 yr old, 50 lbs pointer/hound, good with dogs and cats MY FAVORITE!!!!

RADAR - 10 months old, 35-40 lbs beagle mix, good with dogs and cats

AMADEUS - 2-3 yr old, 55 lbs border collie mix, NEUTERED good with dogs and cats, walks on leash FRESHLY GROOMED

PAMONA - 1-2 yr old, 45 lbs ret mix good with dogs, not tested with cats yet VERY SWEET!!!

MIDAS - 3 yr old, 60 lbs terrier/pointer mix, good with dogs and cats, walks on leash

MARMADUKE - 1 yr old, 65-70 lbs great dane/shep mix, good with dogs and cats

In the e-mail, emphasize how urgently your animals need help and how regularly your shelter euthanizes. Also, let the rescues know of any special features or adorable quirks that an animal has – anything that will make that animal more attractive.

I would send a similar e-mail twice a week, updating it as new animals came in. I would send a general e-mail with all the available dogs to my all-breed rescues. For the breed-specific rescues, I would tailor the e-mail to the particular breed the rescue was interested in, and include photos of the dogs.

I would also send a list of cats and kittens to all my cat rescues, including information such as whether the cat was declawed or altered, and whether the cat came in with a litter and/or a mom. I never let a rescue take a litter of kittens or puppies without taking the mom. It is an almost certain death sentence for the mom if she's left behind. I also make sure that a rescue knows if there are older or grown litter mates at the shelter.

Some rescues will want additional medical work done for an animal they have accepted. If the rescue wants to pay for the medical work, encourage them to set up an account at your local vet's office. You can make the appointment and drive the animal to the vet, and there won't be any confusion about billing.

Another option for paying for veterinary services is United Animal Nation (UAN), an organization that will pay for emergency vet care or, sometimes, vet care that cannot be paid for by the shelter or rescue. UAN is a service organization that relies on contributions. You can apply for aid on their website (uan.org), but only once in a 12-month period. It takes about 30 minutes to apply and you will have an answer within 24 to 48 hours. I have received aid for heartworm treatment from UAN and I know others who have benefited from this wonderful organization.

Getting Your Animals to the Rescue

Once a rescue has responded and offered to save your animals, you have to figure out how to get them there. Some rescues will come and pick them up, some will meet you at a halfway point, and some are so far away that you will have to recruit volunteer drivers.

When I first began rescuing, I had no idea what to do about transporting animals long distances, so I asked for help. To my delight, I discovered that there is a huge network of volunteer drivers across the U.S. Help with transporting animals is always just an e-mail away.

When I first started contacting out-of-state rescues, they usually already had a small database of drivers. The rescues helped me set up my transports for the first few months. After that, I had a small pool of drivers who knew other drivers, who knew other drivers, and so on. These drivers and rescues would cross-post e-mails to other rescues too. When it comes to transport, networking is so important!

Soon, I knew how to set up my own run sheet and ask for drivers. A run sheet lists legs, times, routes, meeting places, and the animals needing to be transported. To figure out the route, I used a very helpful book called *The Next Exit* by Mark Watson in combination with Mapquest (www.mapquest.com) or Google Maps (maps.google.com).

I had a local group of volunteer drivers who would do the first leg of a transport. The drivers were on a rotation of once a month and kept track of when their next transport might be running.

Once you have accumulated drivers and rescues, set up appropriate distribution groups in your e-mail address file. Then, for example, if you need drivers north of where you're located, you can just click on that group. It will take time initially to type in the e-mail addresses and create the groups, but once you have them, it will make your e-mail requests so much easier.

If your volunteer drivers have room in their vehicles, contact other rescues along the route. Let them know that you have a transport coming their way and to please look at your urgent list to see if there is an animal they can help. Many times, a rescue will take animals if they know that the transport is already set up.

Below is a sample of the information I would include in a typical e-mail request for volunteer drivers:

DRIVERS NEEDED!

January 20: Somewhere, Indiana, to Somewhere, New York

Sending Shelter (include name, street address, city, state, zip, e-mail address, website, contact name and contact's e-mail and cell phone)

Receiving Shelter (include name, street address, city, state, zip, e-mail address, website, contact name and contact's e-mail and cell phone)

Reason: (such as delivery to new home, foster home, rescue group, etc.)

Passengers:

1. Tanner, 60 lbs shepherd mix, can be tethered
2. Solomon, 60 lbs border collie mix, can be tethered
3. Woodstock, 50 lbs chocolate lab, crate if possible: active

PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING: THIS IS THESE SWEETIES' ONLY CHANCE

Dogs will have distemper, parvo and bordatella vaccinations. They will have been wormed.

Dogs will be traveling with collars.

Drivers will need to provide crates.

Dogs will be altered at the rescue.

Once I have a few drivers in place, I start the run sheet. Here's an example of part of a run sheet:

DRIVERS: AFTER YOU MAKE A PICKUP, PLEASE CALL THE DRIVER YOU ARE TO MEET TO TELL THEM YOU ARE ON TIME, RUNNING AHEAD, OR RUNNING LATE.

LEG #1: Somewhere, IN to Englewood, OH (I-70E) - will meet at the Comfort Inn (Englewood Exit #29) 55 mi. (1 hr.) 5:00 am - 6:00 am FILLED BY SHELTER - will be driving the shelter van NEED

LEG #2: Englewood, OH to West Columbus (Upper Arlington area), OH (70E) - will meet at McKinley Field - I-670, Grandview exit 71 mi. (1 hr. 15 min.) 6:15 am - 7:30 am NEED

LEG #3: Columbus (Upper Arlington area), OH to Zanesville, OH (70E) - will meet at the Bob Evans at exit 155 61 mi. (1 hr., min.) 7:45 am - 8:45 am NEED

LEG #4: Zanesville, OH to Wheeling, WV(70E) - Will meet exit 10 off of I-70, Cracker Barrel at Highlands 72 mi. (1 hr. 15 min.) 9:00 am - 10:15 am NEED

LEG #5: Wheeling, WV to New Stanton, PA (70E) - Will be meeting exit 57 off of I-70, Cracker Barrel 71 mi. (1 hr. 15 min.) 10:30 am - 11:45 am NEED

LEG #6: New Stanton, PA to Breezewood, PA (70E;76E) - Will be meeting behind Ed's Steakhouse in Bedford 90 mi. (1 hr. 30 min.) 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm NEED

LEG #7: Breezewood, PA to Harrisburg, PA (70E;76E;81N) - PA turnpike exit 226, Carlisle exit, bear right to RT 11 to Carlisle, less than a mile to the Hoss Restaurant on the left 86 mi. (1 hr. 30 min.) 1:45 pm - 3:15 pm NEED

I send the initial run sheet out about 10 days before the actual transport, and I keep sending it every day until it is filled. Ideally, the run sheet would be completed, with all the drivers' information included (name, vehicle, cell phone and e-mail), several days before the transport. It would then be sent to all involved so they can make any additions or corrections and contact each other. Many of the volunteer drivers know each other; they are generous people who regularly help transport animals across the country.

Risks of Multi-Leg Transports

"Multi-leg transports" are transports divided into multiple sections, with different volunteers driving one or more "legs" of the trip. Although multi-leg transports are common and often an animal's only lifesaving option, there are some risks involved. Each time an animal is transferred to a new individual in a different vehicle, there is a risk of injury to either the animal or the transporter. There is also an increased risk that the animal will get loose and become lost. Transports involving many legs can be stressful, especially in the case of feral, undersocialized or aggressive animals. So, keep these risks in mind when planning multi-leg transports.





Screening Transport Volunteers

The following are some tips from the Best Friends Animal Help department on screening transport volunteers.

Before you allow someone to transport a pet, you'll want to find out as much as possible about the person to help ensure that the transport goes smoothly. Here are some things to discuss with transport volunteers:

- Do they have or have they had pets of their own? Ask them to tell you about their own pets.
- Do they have experience transporting animals? This may or may not be important, depending on the length of the trip or the type of animals being transported. For example, if the animal is a shy dog, and it's a long trip requiring many bathroom breaks, you may want someone with experience transporting dogs.
- Do they have their own transportation? Relying on someone else's vehicle is not a good idea, because if the vehicle isn't available as scheduled, it could cause the entire transport to be restructured.
- What type of vehicle do they have? This is important to know, especially for transports of many animals or large animals.
- Ask what they would do if an animal got away from them. Make sure that the volunteer is physi-

cally able to handle the animals (especially if a large dog is being transported).

You'll also want to check references to help ensure that the person transporting your pets is doing so for legitimate reasons, rather than to steal or sell the animals. (While this may seem farfetched, it does happen.)

Here are some references to check:

- The volunteer's veterinarian
- Neighbors or others knowledgeable about the person's pet history
- Local organization contact if the person says they volunteer for a shelter or rescue

You should also ask for a copy of their driver's license or at least their driver's license number, and make sure they have car insurance. Finally, require that they have a cell phone so they can be contacted during the transport.

Preparing for the Transport

If your shelter is lucky enough to have rescue transport vehicles, fill it with gas the day before the transport. Then organize the crates inside. Tape the name of the animal on the front of the crate. This will save so much time the next morning since you won't have to guess which animal will fit where or who can ride close to whom.

Place a towel or blanket in each crate. If there's an accident along the way, cleanup will be much quicker and easier. Also, pack paper towels, rubber gloves and trash bags.

Transporting a lot of animals can be done – it just has to be planned carefully. I have done a rescue run to Pennsylvania with a van of 40 cats and I drove 30 dogs to Chicago in one van. I have become a true lover of the bungee cord to secure the crates in place. They make packing crates in a van so easy and help make room for more animals to be transported.

Also, 24 hours before the transport, take the animals you're transporting off the list of animals available for adoption at the shelter. Too much planning has gone into this to change things at the last minute.

Take food away from a traveling animal the night before the transport. No one wants to deal with potty messes or vomit on the trip. I always tape a huge note on the front of each traveling animal's kennel explaining that he/she is leaving the next morning and shouldn't be fed.

Make sure each dog is wearing a collar. This is a must when more than one driver will be handling the animals. If you cannot afford collars, ask the rescues to send some. Most rescues are gracious enough to help however they can.

Send all paperwork with the animals, including the intake sheet, any documentation of medical work the rescue has paid for, and a blank follow-up form (stating when the animal was altered by the rescue and adopted from them). The follow-up form will be sent back to you by the rescue. Organize the paperwork by putting all the information for the rescue in a manila envelope. Write the animals' names on the envelope. If more than one rescue will be getting animals, have a manila envelope for each rescue.

The shelter I worked for also sent a sheet that listed all the rescues and all the animals involved in that day's transport. The driver of the second leg would sign off on it, giving us another record of who was on the transport.

On the day of the transport, I had a copy of the run sheet and my cell phone with me at all times. You never know when a driver might need another driver's information, have car problems, want to call and tell you how great the animals are doing, or, as in one case, report that a dog got loose during transfer. The "fugitive" was eventually apprehended but it was important for all drivers to know that the transport was running late and that they needed to be extra careful with this dog.

In a perfect world, of course, no animal would throw up, potty or get loose during a trip, but things happen. I like to leave leashes on the dogs in the crates so it is easy to move them from one vehicle to another. Cats should never be transferred from one crate to another. Invest in cardboard carriers or use old plastic crates so the cats remain in the same carrier the entire trip. If the carrier is large enough, include a disposable aluminum pie pan filled with litter.

When the transport has been completed, always send an e-mail thanking everyone involved. These wonderful people gave their time and used their own vehicles, at their own expense, to help animals get to safety, so let them know they are appreciated. If you get adoption follow-ups from the receiving rescues, share that with the drivers. They will have had their favorites during the trip.

Finally, save all your run sheets because they'll be a valuable resource for upcoming transports.



Petey's Second Chance

Rescue work is so important: You're saving the lives of animals who would otherwise be euthanized. Here's my favorite rescue story:

Petey was a one-year-old blue heeler. Local animal control was called to Petey's home because a neighbor suspected neglect. When the officers arrived, Petey was tied up to a trailer. His only shelter was under the trailer. He was shy and defensive. Petey was brought to the shelter and a "CAUTION" sign was put on his kennel.

For days, Petey's only contact with humans was when his kennel was cleaned and he was fed. He stayed in the back of the kennel and was considered a bite risk. He was scheduled to be euthanized, but then the kennel manager saw something in Petey's eyes. She began spending a few minutes each day with him.

After a couple of weeks, Petey began to open up. He would come to the front of the kennel, wagging his tail. The kennel manager decided to try fostering Petey. She took him home and introduced him to her family – her husband and two boys, a basset hound and a huge Lab. Petey flourished. He was kept in a large kennel when no one was home, but he was allowed out when there was human supervision. Petey would do laps, as fast as he could, around the large yard. He also learned how to ride a four-wheeler. He would throw his head back and ride around with a big silly grin on his face.

Life was good for Petey, but it didn't last. The parents were divorcing and the family was splitting up. The kennel manager and her children moved to an apartment that didn't allow dogs and the father didn't have time to spend with Petey.

He was returned to the shelter where I was the rescue coordinator. This shelter euthanized animals when overcrowding occurred. It was my job to try to get as many animals as possible into rescues. I knew

Petey was going to be a hard sell. He was extremely active and could be cautious, withdrawn and shy with new people. Petey was not the cute, friendly puppy everyone wants to adopt.

Petey languished at the shelter for almost a month – with no potential adopters even looking at him – but then a rescue in Matawan, New Jersey, agreed to take him. This rescue was 12 hours away, so a transport was arranged. Petey would travel the first leg with a group of other dogs from the shelter.

My friend and I met at the dark shelter at 5 am to load up all the dogs. We had a total of 10 dogs going on the trip. Petey was housed in an outside kennel. When my friend opened the door to get him, he bolted. Petey had always liked to run fast, and he took off at top speed. We chased and called, but Petey paid no attention. He was so excited to be free and able to run.

After trying to catch him for about 30 minutes, we gave up. We had other dogs we had to load and a schedule we had to stick to. I was crying as I went into the shelter to get the last of the dogs. This was Petey's only chance for a home.

We came out of the shelter with the last dog. As we approached the van, we could make out a small shape sitting next to the open door. It was Petey! He had gotten his exercise and was ready to go for a ride. Relief swept over both of us as



we packed up our little fugitive and started on the journey.

The six-hour trip was pretty uneventful. I had set up the crates so Petey was right behind my seat and I could pet him during the ride. We were 30 minutes away from our meeting spot when we received a phone call. The person who was to meet us had an emergency and would not be there. We could either turn around or drive an additional six hours to deliver the dogs. My friend and I agreed to keep going.

We finally arrived at the new meeting spot after nine hours of driving. Petey was as good as gold. He had slept most of the way, but when he woke up, he had this goofy look on his face. Petey was excited to get out of the crate. He ran around on his leash, sniffing and barking at the other dogs. Petey was put in another crate and driven off to his new foster home.

I thought this would be the end of my contact with Petey. But, no ... in the weeks that followed, I got many e-mails about Petey's wild behavior. He would chase his foster mom's cats all over the house, even across the top of the dining room table. I thought there was no way he was going to be adopted, and the rescue group wondered if maybe they had made a mistake accepting him.

But then, a few months later, I received an e-mail from the rescue. Petey had been adopted! Petey's new family lived on a farm with horses, cats and another cattle dog. I contacted them to see how Petey was adjusting.

Petey's new family said that he is a natural herder and was trying to herd horses on the first day. I was so happy to know that Petey had a family that loved him, a dog buddy (a rescued red heeler named Piper), animals to herd and lots of room to run. Petey's new owners debated about changing his name, but decided not to. "Petey has experienced a lot of loss and change," they said. "Keeping his name is a good way to ensure that he doesn't lose everything he knew."

I am so thankful that Petey has such a wonderful home. He is special to me – and an inspiration. There are so many dogs in shelters who don't get the chance at the happiness that Petey found.

Rescue work is demanding. Sometimes it is extremely rewarding, sometimes heartbreaking. Always remember, though, that you are helping the animals to find a better life and a forever home. It is my belief that there is a home for every animal: It just may be hours and miles away.

Dana Salkoski has been working in animal rescue for the last six years. She started by volunteering at her local animal shelter. After walking dogs for a year, she began contacting rescues to save animals in danger of being euthanized. She did animal evaluations, contacted rescues and coordinated transports.

In the four years that she was responsible for coordinating rescues, the shelter sent over 4,700 animals to safety. She is currently the assistant director at Animal Rescue Fund (ARF) in Muncie, Indiana.

Want to help more animals locally? Join the Best Friends Network!

The Best Friends Network comprises thousands of animal lovers and organizations across the country, all working to help animals in their own communities to bring about a time when there will be no more homeless pets.

To join or to learn more about the Network, visit our website at network.bestfriends.org.