

Happy Birthday!

► By Michael Mountain

Our work for the animals is a work of the soul.



“Kindness to animals and respect for all life are the only meaningful foundation for a civilized world.”

Somebody just pointed out to me that this is the 10th anniversary of Best Friends Magazine. So I dug out a copy of the first issue of “All the Good News ...” we ever published.

Back then, we didn’t have much good news ourselves. We had a beautiful ranch, a lot of animals that no one else seemed to want, and some very willing people. But in April 1992, our fledgling animal sanctuary was struggling for its very existence, and calls were pouring in from rescue groups far and wide about abused and abandoned animals they could no longer care for.

So whenever we heard any good news about the animals, we would post it on a bulletin board in the staff room.

Visitors to the sanctuary kept asking us to send them a copy of what was on the board. And so, one afternoon, we sat down and compiled the month’s good news into the first edition of *Best Friends* magazine. We ended up with 24 pages, and three of us stayed up all night, printing it out on a big old, clanky copying machine that had just been donated by an old government office, and onto some equally old, brown paper that happened to be lying around.

Flipping through the pages, I see that some of the main sections we have today were in that first edition. But there was no section about the sanctuary (the copying machine wouldn’t do photos!). And nothing about No More Homeless Pets. Indeed, the notion that the killing of millions of dogs and cats in shelters all across the country could somehow be brought to an end had not yet dawned on us.

But we soon discovered that there were rescue groups everywhere that were trying to save homeless dogs and cats from destruction, and a few very progressive humane societies were actively developing plans to go “no-kill.”

Soon, the magazine was becoming the heart of a network of good news about what they were all doing. Such is the birth of a nationwide grassroots effort.

Thanks to you, our members and friends, we’ve grown quite a bit over the past 10 years. We made 50 copies of that first edition, and we’ll be printing 200,000 of this one – which makes *Best Friends* the largest general-interest animal magazine in the country – and maybe beyond.

But it’s still an all-grassroots effort, like the rest of the work of Best Friends. It would be hard to imagine that ever changing.

Also included in that first edition was the St. Francis Prayer. His simple message of kindness to all living creatures, which tells us that “*It is in giving that we receive, and in pardoning that we are pardoned,*” has special resonance as we go to press.

Today, the Catholic Church is embroiled in scandal, and hatred and violence are dragging Jews and Muslims deeper and deeper into a situation that could threaten the very civilization to which these three religions gave birth.

For members of Best Friends, kindness and respect for all life is a core spiritual value and a driving urge. It’s what binds us together, and it’s the only meaningful foundation for a truly civilized world.

Happy 10th Anniversary, and thank you, as always, for making this work possible. 🐾