



**Best  
Friends**  
Save Them All®

# Forever Friends

FALL 2023

## ELSA'S UNLIKELY LOVE

There was a time when Elsa Nilsson-Canin's love for animals left a bit to be desired when it came to the kind of dog most generally referred to as a pit bull terrier.

"Not necessarily out of fear," she says now, "but more from not knowing them. And buying into people's thoughts: bad dogs, fighting dogs, mean dogs. I bought into that."

It's all very ironic in retrospect, given that these days there's no other kind of dog but a pit bull terrier to elicit Elsa's deepest affections. "Totally addicted," she says. "I absolutely fell in love with them."

Credit a particular dog named Herman, whom Elsa met while volunteering at an animal shelter in California. Herman was at risk of being killed when Elsa stepped in. She took Herman home, where he blossomed into the love bug he was born to be. "He was really quite special," she says. "My No. 1."

After Herman's passing would come her Nos. 2, 3, and 4. And Elsa, who once would have crossed the street to avoid them, became pit bull terriers' staunchest advocate. She bought *The Champions* documentary, which features the pivotal role of Best Friends in the 2008 rescue of the dogs from Michael Vick's dogfighting ring, and invited

over friends for viewings. She also started giving generously as a Golden Circle member of Best Friends, made yearly trips to volunteer at the Sanctuary, and added Best Friends as a beneficiary of her financial accounts. And when she recently learned of The Legacy Challenge to Save Them All, which offers an additional \$2,025 for anybody giving a new or increased legacy gift to Best Friends, Elsa upped her designated gift to qualify.

It turns out those pit bull-type dogs have a knack for attracting the nicest people. "This has been my fulfillment," says Elsa. "The animals."



Elsa and Emma

# LIFE ELEVATED WITH TAMI AND TROY



Tami and Troy

These days, one can usually find Tami Brown hiking or biking up a trail in the Wasatch Range outside her home in Midway, Utah, with her dog Troy trotting close behind. It's a far cry from Tami's former years in the corporate environs of Rochester, New York — and equally far from Troy's homeless history before meeting Tami.

Tami had spent 20 years as an executive at Xerox before deciding she'd had enough of corporate America. "I wanted to do something to live where I wanted to live — to live my personal values," she says. For Tami, that meant starting a vacation-rental business and hiking, biking, and skiing every spare moment in the

Wasatch, where she and her husband, Wayne, moved 11 years ago.

Troy's path took a bit rockier course. An unknown mishap landed him in the veterinary care of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah. And he was still recovering from surgery when Tami happened upon him during a visit to Best Friends' Dogtown.

"He'd been through a lot," says Tami. "He really stole my heart."

Tami took Troy back to her room for a sleepover that night, and that was that.



When Tami went home the next day, Troy went with her. The fostering trial between Troy and Tami's other dogs turned out to be a mere formality, and three weeks later Troy officially joined Tami's family.

Tami also made an even bigger commitment to the animals. With Troy as added inspiration, she named Best Friends as beneficiary of one of her investment accounts, thus triggering The Legacy Challenge — an immediate \$2,025 gift from an anonymous donor to help the nation reach no-kill by 2025.

"I think we all hope we have a long runway ahead of us," says Tami. "But none of us knows." And so it is that Tami is providing for the future while relishing every precious moment with Troy at her side.



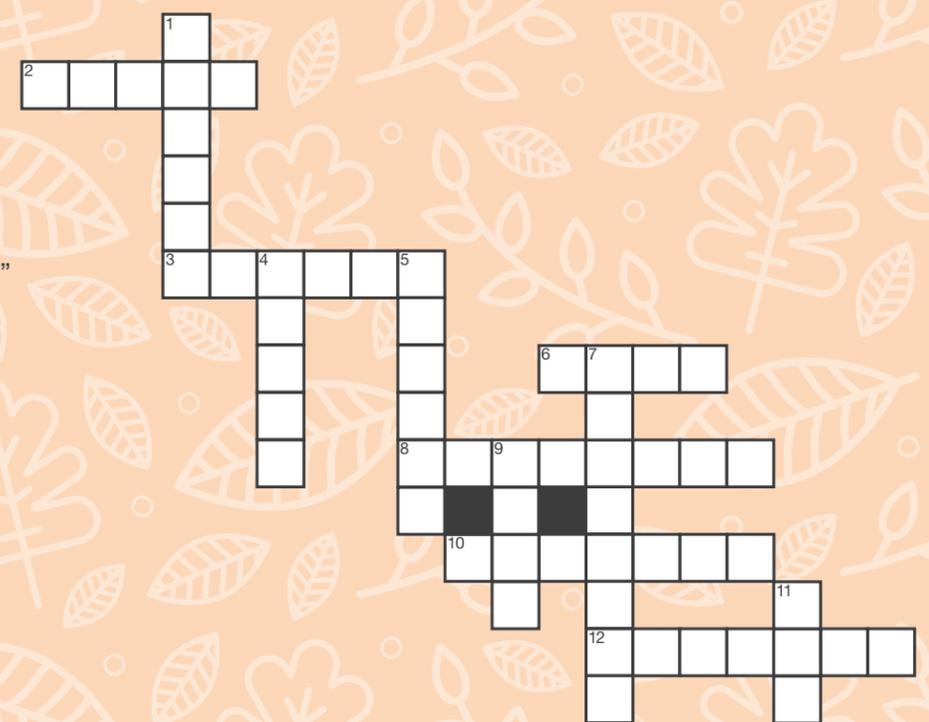
## CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

2. The Sanctuary's heavenly canyon
3. 2025 goal
6. Degree of difficulty in naming Best Friends as a beneficiary
8. Where naptime is anytime
10. The official welcome here is "Woof!"
12. Dog named for red pie filling

### DOWN

1. Elsa's first love
4. Home of the Sanctuary
5. The \_\_\_\_ Challenge
7. What shelter pets need now
9. Mountaineering mutt
11. Stealth donor extraordinaire



Crossword answers, p. 6

# Rhubarb

## AND THE RECIPE OF JOY

There is perhaps no greater challenge in life than choosing happiness in the face of adversity — and perhaps no better exemplar than one fuzzy-faced dog named Rhubarb.

Rhubarb arrived at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary when he was just a puppy with a hole in his heart and an incurable neurological disorder that left him crawling to get around. Yet the impression Rhubarb invariably left on his daily gatherings of fans was never one of pity or sorrow; it was of unbridled joy for the moment.

“Rhubarb touched the heart of every person he met,” says Erin Menard, one of the pup’s caregivers at the Sanctuary. “It was really his spirit over anything else, despite what life threw at him. He was always so happy, so excited to meet people, to meet dog friends. He radiated joy no matter what.”

During his stay at the Sanctuary, Rhubarb inspired a daily spectacle: Every afternoon there’d come an announcement over the radio: “It’s Rhu cart time!” And the crowds would gather to see Rhubarb pushed up and down the road in his custom wheelchair. “He was a big clown,” says Erin. “He appreciated the crowd. Rhu’s spirit never failed.”

As Rhubarb’s legend grew, his story eventually landed in an email for Shelly and Edo Guidotti, regular donors from Best Friends’ Guardian Angels program. Shelly’s immediate response: “I’m getting this dog!”

On the eve of Rhubarb’s adoption day, Shelly and Edo considered potential challenges ahead. Shelly says, “I remember us the night before at the hotel, saying to each other, ‘Oh my god, can we do this?’ We were afraid we weren’t going to be capable of taking care of his needs.”

Those worries vanished the moment they walked into Rhubarb’s room. “It was like, ‘Oh, hi!’ — like he’d known me forever. He was completely fulfilled,” Shelly says.

Back home in Newport Beach, California, Shelly and Edo found Rhubarb’s strength of character buoying their own. Each got used to carrying the pup — all 70 pounds of him — for potty breaks or to lift him into his special cart to stroll along the Pacific Coast Highway, where passersby would slow down to yell, “Hi Rhu!” Three days a week, Shelly drove Rhubarb to his physical therapy sessions two hours away in Santa Monica.

“People used to ask me, ‘How do you do this?’” says Shelly. “I just didn’t think of it as work. Not once did I ever say, ‘I wish I’d never.’”

Rhubarb’s spirit graced Shelly and Edo’s lives for four years until the pup passed from an illness — and with him forever went an enormous piece of their hearts.

“I don’t think I’ll ever be over him,” says Shelly.





Sarah Wilder

## WALKING THE WALK WITH PLANNED GIVING OFFICER SARAH WILDER

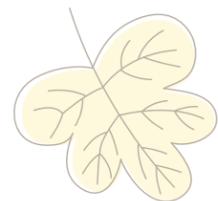
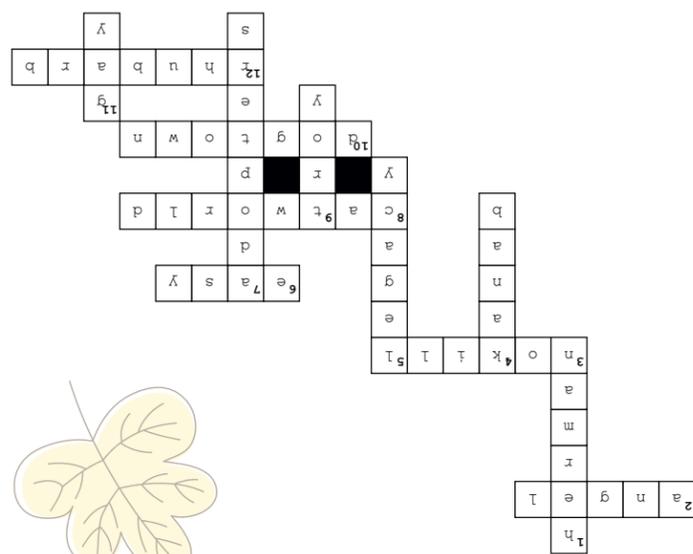


Sarah Wilder has a way of finding animals who are looking for a home. Or perhaps they have a way of finding Sarah. Her family — beyond her husband, Matt, and son, Thornton — consists of former stray kittens Puddin and Juniper, who appeared one morning peering through her back fence. And then there’s Rusty the dachshund from the local park, who came needing a home for the weekend and never left.

Sarah now spends her days working to find homes for many more pets by helping Best Friends members plan their estate gifts — and by practicing what she preaches. “As a new employee, I knew I had to include Best Friends in my plans, so I took The Legacy Challenge as an incentive.”

And?

“It was easy,” reports Sarah. “I went online and made Best Friends a contingent beneficiary of my IRA — no lawyer needed, and it didn’t cost anything. It took five minutes.”



## GAY PARKHILL, STEALTH DONOR EXTRAORDINAIRE

Catherine Gay Parkhill went about her way rather quietly. She never married, lived in a modest condo, always had a dog she adored, and taught third-grade students at the same school in Hollywood, Florida, for 40 years before retiring in 2003. And though each year she unceremoniously donated a generous sum to Best Friends, nobody was prepared for what Gay ultimately had in mind for her animal friends.

Before she passed last year, we learned that Gay had designated Best Friends as beneficiary of her IRAs and life insurance policies, which amounted to an astounding sum in the millions — all of it to be used wherever Best Friends determined the most urgent need for lifesaving.

“I was shocked by the amount she left us,” says Wendy Kaplan, philanthropy advisor for Best Friends and fellow Floridian, who would meet up with Gay about once a year for a walk in the park with her dog. “Mostly what she talked about were her animals. People could take care

of themselves, she would say, but the animals needed help. She liked that we were taking care of the animals no one else would take care of.”

Though she lived and worked most of her life east of the Mississippi, the American West was where Gay would spend her school breaks to relive her childhood memories of summers in southwestern Montana. It was on one of these trips that Gay discovered Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah, and soon thereafter she started giving annually as a Guardian Angel.

“It was logical that she linked her love of animals and her love of the American West to find Best Friends in Utah as a place she could provide a lasting and meaningful gift,” says her nephew Bill.

Though there is no obituary or memorial to mark her passing (by her own wishes), the enormous legacy of care and comfort that Gay left for the animals is the ultimate monument she no doubt intended.



Gay Parkhill



# DESIGNATE, THEN CELEBRATE!

One of the easiest ways to make a difference for the animals is by designating Best Friends as a beneficiary of your financial accounts. Whether it's your IRA, 401(k), CD, money market account, donor-advised funds, or health savings account, all you have to do is visit the website of your financial institution and complete a beneficiary designation form.

You can give as little as 1% or as much as 100% — it's all up to you. (And don't forget: If you do so before December 31 — and let Best Friends know about it — an anonymous donor will make a gift of \$2,025 that will be put today toward bringing the nation to no-kill by 2025.) To help make it even easier, you can get answers to all your questions by simply calling one of our planned giving officers at **435-359-9227** or emailing **[legacy@bestfriends.org](mailto:legacy@bestfriends.org)**.

To name Best Friends on your beneficiary designation form, please use the following address:

**Best Friends Animal Society**

5001 Angel Canyon Road  
Kanab, UT 84741

**Tax identification number:** 23-7147797

**Relationship:** 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Pearl



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