

Voice for Animals ME and NH Article
Draft 0.6

"All I want is a loving home". This is the sentiment of so many animals in the southern United States where the stray population on the streets is overwhelming. In the streets of Houston Texas alone there is an estimated 800,000 - 1.2 million stray animals according to BARC, one of the city's largest shelter. And, there is no end in sight to the problem. Without strict spay/neuter laws, the lack of regulations on breeders and the long year-round breeding season in the South, the problem continues to overwhelm the numerous small and under resourced no-kill animal rescues in the city and surrounding areas.

"It feels like we are fighting a losing battle, but an important one" is the general feel of rescuing in the Houston area. However, in between all the gut wrenching situations of having to turn down rescuing a stray animal that is obviously sick or has broken bones from being hit by a car, there are the highs of being able to save an animal from certain death either on the streets, from an abusive situation, or at a kill shelter where hundreds of animals must be euthanized in order to make room for the never ending flow of incoming ones.

Our small "organization", two of us, rescues dogs, sometimes from the street, sometimes from kill shelters and sometimes working with trustworthy local rescue organizations to help them place a dog for adoption. We rehabilitate our rescues so they can be placed in suitable forever homes. We find fosters for them, perform all the vetting and place them for adoption by families whose needs match the personality and needs of the dog. We place our dogs by having potential adopters become aware of our adoptable dogs on Petfinder, Adopt-a-Pet, Rescue-Me or at local adoption events. In either case, the applications are scrutinized to make sure the adoptive family situation (e.g., fencing, other pets, kids etc.) fits the needs of the dog.

One very effective vehicle for finding potential adopters has been partnering with rescue organizations in the northern United States. In this region, the stray population is much lower and the need for adoptable pets, especially puppies, is much greater. Thus, we have been sending numerous adoptable dogs to Vermont with a great deal of success. These partnerships, however, take a while to develop since they require a trust to be built between the organization sending the dogs and the one receiving them. In these partnerships, it is important that the receiver organization trusts the sender to do the proper vetting so that dogs that are sick (e.g., parvo, heartworms,

mange, distemper etc) are not placed for adoption prematurely. The sender, must also trust the receiving organization that the dogs will be well cared for and that care is taken so that an adoptive family that matches the dog's personality and needs is found.

A recent example of how this type of partnership has worked very well is one my recent fosters, a red heeler named Ella. I was going to one of the kill shelters in the County adjacent to Houston to pick up a husky pup that I had seen on their website. When I was let into the shelter, we passed through the intake room and I saw this puppy with a terrible case of mange. She looked defeated and scared. I had to take her. She would not survive at a high-kill-rate shelter. They simply do not have the time or space to nurture dogs like this back to health. This was back in April and now Ella is a beautiful, healthy pup with the typical intense energy of a heeler. It is always hard to part with our fosters after bonding with them through such an experience but there is more work to be done. So, on June 8th, with all her Demodex mange issues behind her, she traveled to our partner in Vermont, North Country Animal League, to look for an adoptive family. I am happy to say that she was adopted in less than a week!



Another great rescue example is that of Kellan. My rescue friend and partner in this endeavor, Alicia Mccarty, along with another rescue friend, found Kellan, a Dogo Argentino girl. She was found on the streets of the 5th ward in Houston, a low income neighborhood that is often a dumping ground for unwanted dogs and has a large population of strays. In November 2013, Kellan was a walking skeleton of only 52lbs. She also had many huge open bite wounds all over her body. They thought one wound was a bullet wound, which is not uncommon in this neighborhood, because

it was so big. She was heavy heartworm positive and on death's doorstep. Alicia and others fostered her for the local rescue organization Forgotten Dogs of the 5th Ward and she blossomed into a wonderful dog who was adopted directly to a fabulous couple in Pennsylvania. When she left Alicia, she was completely vetted, weighed 90lbs and was pretty spoiled. She is a VERY special girl and will always hold a place in Alicia's heart.





Another great rescue was that of Big John. This American Bulldog was picked up as a stray near La Porte, a small town Southeast of Houston. It was obvious he had a family at one time, but they were never found. He was fat, neutered and just a great dog! The La Porte shelter was in an old building that didn't have air conditioning at the time. Big John was over 100lbs and was miserable in the heat. As soon as Alicia saw him there, she contacted our Vermont partner, Sallie Scott of North Country Animal League to see if they would take him. They usually don't take such big dogs due to their limited kennel space but they were happy they did after they met him! That day Big John took the first big step towards finding a forever home as Alicia pulled him from the shelter. A local foster was found and Big John got the rest of his vetting done. His foster noticed that anytime they were out walking and he saw a family with kids, he would whine and just stare at them. The foster was convinced that he in fact had a family at one time. It broke our hearts because he was such a good dog. They don't come more laid back than Big John. He is just a big old love and everyone that met him fell in love with him! Shortly after, he traveled to Vermont and was adopted shortly after arriving by a wonderful family. He now has three human kids of his own who he adores! Alicia and Big John's family still stay in touch and he has found the perfect home.



And then, there was the case of Myrtle. This poor little baby girl was carried into the La Porte shelter by a man who was holding her by the scruff of her neck and the extra skin on her back. He was surrendering her because he just didn't want her anymore. He was told that the chances were that she would be euthanized were high, because the shelter was full. He still signed the surrender papers and left. Through our social networking, Alicia was sent a photo of Myrtle and she immediately contacted our partner in Vermont who promptly said yes! She was taken to the vet, where it was discovered she was older than we had thought. She was about 5 months of age, was full of worms, dehydrated, and smelled like she rolled in something dead. She was also very underweight and malnourished. She was sent to a foster home where she gained weight, was vetted and spoiled rotten! She went to Vermont in June of this year and was adopted within two days of getting there to a great family!



There are literally hundreds of dogs being saved every month in Houston. But there are many, many more that are euthanized, mistreated and abandoned in our streets. So, the work must go on. There are many more dogs in the process of rehabilitation that will be available this year. As an example, I am currently fostering three lab mix puppies from the same shelter that Ella came from. These are Lulu, Linus and Lucius and they are a riot! They were dumped in a box at a front door and the homeowner took them to the local shelter. They are going through all their vaccinations and will be spayed/neutered before being placed for adoption. They came in weighing about two lbs. and had a lot of round worms and Coccidia. As

soon as their digestive issues were dealt with, they started growing very fast. Lucius, the biggest is now a bit over 10 lbs. I love watching after them and they will be hard to part with when it comes time for adoption, probably in the October timeframe.



Lulu, Linus



Lulu, Lucius & Linus



Lucius, Lulu, Linus

Based on our success with our partner in Vermont, we are looking to expand our network of rescue partners in Maine and New Hampshire so we can place more of our precious adoptable dogs. We are looking for quality adoptions, not quantity. Even if we can successfully adopt out a few more dogs a year, we would be ecstatic and we look forward to working with organizations such as the Voice for Animals of Maine and New Hampshire to make this a reality.