

# OUR COMPANIONS *News*

## We Are Our Companions

Celebrating Our Five-Year Anniversary



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Everlasting Human-Pet Bond

Volunteer and Donor  
Charlotte Kinlock

Questions to Ask  
Before Adopting a Pet

Diabetic Cat Named Bear  
Finds His Pawsitive Ending

Take Me Home - Molly

## Something to Chew On

### The Perfect Sanctuary Dog



When I heard his story, I thought Our Companions could help to rehabilitate him and eventually find him a loving home. But after taking him into my home and working on his behavioral issues, I realized that J.J. could never be placed for adoption. J.J. became a fixture in my home and a symbol for the type of pet Our Companions needed to help most.

While J.J. could not be rehabilitated for adoption, why should a dog like him be euthanized for behavior he learned as a coping mechanism for severe abuse? The only place for a dog like J.J. is an animal sanctuary. The sanctuary alone will not cure the problem of pet homelessness. But in a managed sanctuary dogs like J.J. can live safely and happily.

J.J. taught us many things, not least of which is that not every dog can be rehabilitated to become a family dog. It is because of experiences we had early on, like mine with JJ., that we are committed to ending the unnecessary euthanasia of pets. In this issue, we look back on our history to celebrate our big successes, such as a major gift from volunteer Charlotte Kinlock, and other achievements such as the adoption of Bear, a senior diabetic cat who was twice doomed for death.

Thank you for being a part of Our Companions' past and future.

Susan Linker  
Chief Executive Officer

#### About Our Companions News

Our Companions News is published three times per year by Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary is a leader in the movement to end the unnecessary euthanasia of pets in Connecticut.

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# We Are Our Companions

by Mary deManbey

## Our Companions' Co-founders Look Back...And Ahead

Webster's Dictionary defines a sanctuary as a place of refuge and protection: a consecrated place. That vision of a sacred place for homeless animals began as a dream five years ago. Today, that dream is becoming a reality as Our Companions continues to gain momentum and strength. Under the leadership of committed visionaries and with the dedication of over 130 volunteers, what was once only a paper dream is now an animal care movement that's making a difference.

Just how far has Our Companions come? While the core mission remains the same—providing a no-kill sanctuary for companion animals in need—the philosophy has expanded to create a humane movement to change how we view and respond to the needs of animals. This movement involves many components—from providing educational outreach, animal behavior training and pet rescue and adoption, to influencing legislation to better protect animals. Our Companions News takes a look at the organization's journey over the past five years—what has been learned and how we've evolved. The journey began, appropriately, in a dog training class.

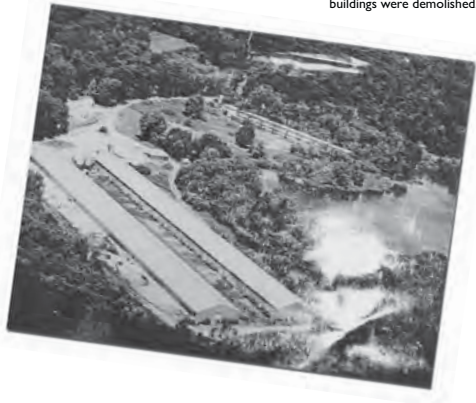
### The Beginning

In 2002, Susan Linker was feeling burned out from many years of working at an animal shelter. Her experience left her disillusioned about the state of animal welfare—where pets are abandoned, then warehoused, until they are either adopted

or euthanized. Although she was no longer an animal welfare professional by day, she spent much of her free time thinking about her experiences at the shelter and how other organizations were beginning to manifest the no-kill philosophy. She was mentally building a place where pets would be valued no matter their age, breed, behavior and condition, and the goal for every pet would be to find a loving home.

That year Susan brought her companion dog, Abi, to a dog training class where she met Marie Joyner. Marie spent many years in the world of conformation dog shows, training and showing dogs. But her experience in that world hadn't prepared her for her newly rescued dog, Jack, a Treeing Walker Coonhound.

An aerial photo of the land in Ashford before the buildings were demolished.



*"While (building the sanctuary) is an important benchmark, the reality is we need to educate the public that the issues facing pets cannot be resolved by building more shelters – or sanctuaries."*

*- Susan Linker*

## We Are Our Companions, more

When Susan met Marie she recalls that, "Marie had tears in her eyes." Jack was so reactive toward men that he had to constantly be kept on a leash at home. Marie had been kicked out of several other training classes due to Jack's behavior and she knew she had to make it work because, if she returned Jack to the shelter, he surely would have been destroyed.

"We began talking and discovered we shared this feeling that something more could and should be done for companion animals. Serendipitously, we heard about 43 acres of land being given away for the purpose of building an animal sanctu-

ary," said Susan. The two decided to visit Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah, which became the model for their vision of building the sanctuary in Ashford. "Philosophically, we knew how it could work. I had the shelter experience; Marie had the training experience. We both had the passion to do something to stop the unnecessary killing of companion animals. But we soon realized that the sanctuary was only a small part of a bigger plan. We really wanted to create a whole movement to change the status quo of how we perceive and treat our animals," Susan recalls.

Susan quit her job and filed a proposal which ultimately granted the newly formed Our Companions the land in Ashford. Meanwhile, Marie perfected her own method of dog training on Jack, who turned out to be not only a great student but a great teacher.

With the fundamentals in place, Susan and Marie set forth to spread their message.

### Building a Movement

One of the most meaningful lessons Our Companions learned during their research at Best Friends, is that in order

## Our Companions' Firsts

### The First Rescue

Ryan's original family didn't understand his exuberant behavior. Although he was no longer a puppy, he acted like one, nipping and biting at people. His family felt they had no other choice but to tie Ryan to objects whenever he was in the house. Needless to say, this wasn't a good situation for Ryan.

Our Companions was called to find Ryan a new home. The key to making Ryan's next home successful was training him and teaching his family how to manage his behavior. The Burgess family adopted Ryan and four years later he is still a beloved member of the Burgess home.

### The First Donor

The late Katherine (K.K.) McLane had the honor of being Our Companions' first donor. Her generous donation of \$5,000 helped to launch Our Companions. Fundraising has progressed from \$39,000 in 2003, to \$445,000 in 2007. Because of Katherine's generosity and her place as the first donor, the leadership giving society—the McLane Society—is named after her.



Above: Ryan is a member of the Burgess family, thanks to Our Companions' volunteers who trained Ryan and taught the Burgess' how to manage his behavior.



Left: Katherine (K.K.) McLane and her beloved Corgi, Jenny.

to successfully create a no-kill community, rescue organizations need to work together.

It was with this in mind that Our Companions became a founding member of the Animal Welfare Federation of Connecticut (AWFCT). This coalition of no-kill organizations throughout the state provides a voice of solidarity within the animal welfare community and at the state legislature. Currently, a new 501 (C)(4) organization called Connecticut Votes for Animals is being formed to address the need for more aggressive legislative work to protect animals in our state.

#### Successes

Susan cites that one of Our Companions' most notable programs, and one that captures the no-kill philosophy, is the Sterile Feral Program. Many people feed stray and feral cats without sterilizing them, resulting in the proliferation of cat colonies.

The Sterile Feral Program empowers feral cat caregivers to Trap, Neuter and Return these cats safely back to their environment. Commonly referred to as TNR, it is the only humane and effective solution to reduce the population of feral cats long-term.

Our Companions provides the individual training, traps and vet services so caregivers can safely and humanely sterilize the cats. The program is based on Our Companions' core belief that people really do care about animals and want to help, so it is essential for rescue organizations to engage the community with support and solutions. "People feed the cats because they don't want to see them suffer. It's our responsibility to explain that feeding alone will create a bigger problem. And we back our advice up with solid, supportive programs," according to Susan.

Another successful program is the Animal HelpLine, which helps re-home animals who are at risk of being left at shelters or euthanized. If possible, Our Companions

tries to prevent homelessness of animals through education and training. As with the Sterile Feral program, Our Companions' volunteers empower pet owners with information and tools to make the right decisions.

"Initially, Our Companions referred callers to other organizations that operated shelters. But volunteers quickly learned that those same organizations were also at capacity and referring callers to other organizations. We realized that owners had no where to go," recalls Susan. Today, twelve trained Animal HelpLine volunteers handle about 350 calls a month, and each animal is treated as an individual case. Last year, Our Companions found homes for over 491 pets through the Animal HelpLine program and all of this was accomplished with community cooperation and without a shelter.

Thanks to Jack, Marie's rescued dog, the Canine College was founded. This program gives behaviorally challenged dogs

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Photos from Our Companions Formal Announcement at Bushnell Park in 2004.

Left: Gracie shows off her formal attire.

Right: Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal voices his support.

## Everlasting Bond by Lyn T. Garson, CVT

### Grieving a Pet's Loss Illustrates Strength of the Human-Animal Bond

Peg Daigle vividly remembers the day her husband, Jim, proudly presented her with a Weber grill box for their anniversary. The cardboard box was cut out in the front and filled with toy stuffed animals. Sleeping among them was a seven-week-old golden retriever puppy they named Lucas.

For nine years, Peg awoke every morning to the warmth of Lucas. As she swung her legs over the edge of the bed, the bottom of her feet brushed the fur across Lucas' body while he lay in his favorite place on the floor at her bedside. After Lucas succumbed to cancer, the loss of this daily ritual was just one of many painful adjustments for Peg. "The floor was just so cold and empty without him," she recalls.

In her experience assisting individuals with pet loss and grief, Joanne Wholey, a Licensed Professional Counselor and founder of The Pet Loss Support Group in Bloomfield, Connecticut, has found that, "People initially speak most about their difficulty with the drastic change in routines." A feeling of emptiness is left when the responsibilities of daily caring, feeding and grooming and the enjoyment of interacting with our pets is suddenly gone. As one who has grieved the death of five companion animals, Wholey shares her own experience of personal loss. "The hardest part for me has been looking forward to the exuberant greeting and then being jolted by the reality of the deafening quiet."

Losing a forever friend, no matter what the species, is never easy. The loss can be even more profound when those around us seem to not understand the impact, or worse, dismiss our emotions. But American society has slowly become more accepting of the effect the death of a pet has on our lives. Wholey believes this is due to a change from the value society previously placed on animals as hunters, protectors, and workers. "Once we began to experience their companionship, and feelings of well-being just by watching them play, or sitting quietly with them, our perceptions began to shift," says Wholey. "Animals ask nothing of us except for a treat or toy every now and then, and they give so freely of themselves with no strings attached."



According to a 2006 national survey by the American Veterinary Medical Association, over 75 percent of households in the United States own a pet. Nearly half, or 49 percent, of pet owners consider their pets to be family members and 48.2 percent consider them to be companions. These statistics reveal the positive impact

animals have on our lives and the importance of what has become known as the human-animal bond.

The term "human-animal bond" was coined in 1977 by three veterinarians and a psychologist who, along with others, founded the Delta Society. The Delta Society was the first organization to fund formal research examining the importance of animals to our overall health and well-being. Since then, numerous scientific studies have demonstrated both the physical and psychological benefits of pet interaction.

Companion animals are often who we turn to as a support system during stressful periods of our lives. "Our pets are all accepting and endearing. They give their whole existence to their people," says Peg. "Everyone else judges us but our animals just love us with all our faults."

Because of this deep bond, the loss of an animal companion can be devastating. According to Wholey, researchers discovered that although individuals may share similarities with respect to the grief 'process,' each person is unique, grieving in their own time and in their own way. Guilt, denial, anger, depression and sorrow are common after losing a pet, and it is important to acknowledge and express the emotions experienced as a result of ones' loss.

When faced with a pet's euthanasia, responses to grief may be intensified, thereby causing confusion, increased guilt and questioning the final choice. Even veterinary professionals, who often help clients cope with euthanasia decisions in their professional capacity, sometimes question themselves when confronting

euthanasia of their *own* pet. This uncertainty is a normal part of the grieving process.

Looking back, Peg said the one thing that stands out in her mind now was her own lack of objectivity. "It's difficult to come to terms when you have an animal that means so much to you," says Peg. "You

rationalize. You can fool yourself into not seeing things as clearly as you should."

In Wholey's experience, those who must consider this agonizing decision do so out of their consideration for the well-being, comfort, and quality of life of their

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### A New Way to Honor Your Pet Now Online

Life is different after a pet dies. Like many who devote their lives to animals, Our Companions webmaster, Angie Pugliese, has lost a few special friends during her lifetime. Along the way there is always one, like a soul-mate, who tugs at your heart just a bit harder than others and leaves a deeper emptiness behind. For Angie, it was her sweet Ally.

Ally, an "old soul" cat with a quiet and accepting demeanor, roamed the streets alone in search of food and warm shelter—homeless and frightened—before she found her way into Angie's heart. Trust came slowly at first, then warmth, and safety. Ally had found her forever home.

When Ally passed away recently, Angie searched within for a meaningful way to honor her memory. The answer appeared via the computer screen in front of her—the Our Companions Web site Angie lovingly creates.

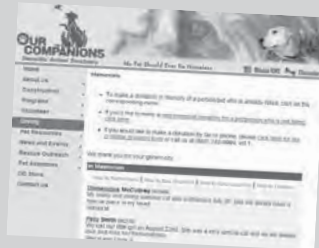
"What better way for me to keep Ally's memory alive than to make a financial

donation to Our Companions," says Angie, "A place where I know my gift will help other cats just like her." Soon, Angie's friends joined in, making donations in Ally's name.

These thoughtful gifts helped Angie through the healing process, not only by demonstrating she had friends who love her, but also by their contribution for animals in need. "It meant the world to me," says Angie, who recognized the importance of continuing the cycle.

Out of her friends' empathy, an idea was born. Angie developed an online memorial portion of the Our Companions Web site for posting tributes and donations in honor of beloved pets. Similar to an online message board, once a tribute is listed, friends and family members can be invited to share their thoughts and memories.

New personalized tributes may be added at any time. A link to the



printable form for donations by fax or phone is also located on the memorial site.

Angie's creation of the Our Companions memorial web page is just one of the many opportunities to honor the precious lives of our animal companions. At the sanctuary land in Ashford, future plans are in place for the construction of a reflection garden which will include a tribute stone walkway.

Life is different after a pet dies. But Angie knows first hand the impact remembrance gifts can have.

## Profiles in Giving by Jennifer Barrows

Our Companions is fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers and donors. Through their stories featured in this section, we hope you will become inspired to help animals in your own way.

### Charlotte Kinlock

When Charlotte Kinlock and her wife, Anne Stanback, recently presented a \$100,000 gift to Our Companions, it represented not only a major development milestone, but also a tangible vote of confidence for the organization and its mission.

"This was the largest single donation we have received to date, and we are grateful beyond expression," said Our Companions CEO Susan Linker.

Anyone's first inclination is to be floored by such a gift. But knowing Charlotte and her bigger-than-life spirit, it's become clear that when she believes in something, she puts her whole heart into it.

"She's an amazing person who gives not only of her financial resources, but of her time and talent," remarked Susan. In recent years, Charlotte has made a tremendous contribution through her involvement on the Our Companions Board of Directors and in facilitating the strategic planning process.

For Charlotte, finding Our Companions was like coming home. Years ago, she had learned about the

well-known Utah sanctuary called Best Friends and was thrilled with the idea of unwanted animals' having a place to go to be sheltered and loved. She dreamed of such a place for Connecticut.

"About two years ago, I picked up a Hartford Courant, and there was an article about a new animal sanctuary planned for the Ashford area," explained Charlotte. "I told Anne that this was an organization I wanted to support and get involved with. We met with Susan Linker, and the rest, as they say, is history."

As Our Companions marks its 5-year anniversary, this monetary acknowledgment could not have come at a better time.

"The most immediate and concrete benefit of this gift is in moving us closer toward breaking ground on Rescue Cottage Number 1," said Susan. "Less tangible, but no less important, is the mental and emotional benefit such a gift bestows. It means so much to be told, 'We believe in this organization, and we share in your dream of its greater mission,' in such a powerful way," continued Susan.

Our Companions is hopeful that this donation will set a benchmark for larger giving by those who have the means and who might enjoy being involved with the organization.

"We will always be reliant on smaller gifts—and we know that they absolutely reflect the same kind of heart-felt generosity exhibited by Charlotte and Anne. Gifts, large or small, all make a difference for the animals," Susan said.

As for Charlotte and Anne, the joy they share can only be matched by the elation they feel to be a part of this organization. "After giving Our Companions smaller gifts in recent years, it was time to put our money where our mouths were," explained Charlotte. "Every capital



Charlotte, Zoey and Shadow.

campaign, to be truly successful, needs someone to take the plunge and say, 'Yes, I believe in you.' I feel extraordinarily blessed that I was given such an opportunity. How many of us get to be a part of actualizing a dream?"

Charlotte is also quick to point out that, in her mind, financial contributions, no matter their size, pale in comparison to the dedication expressed by Our Companions staff, volunteers and the Board of Directors. Indeed, all of these facets are integral to a healthy and vibrant organization.

One major project Charlotte has led (when wearing her volunteer hat) is Our Companions' strategic planning process. Since May of this year, members of the staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors have been meeting twice monthly to look at the structural aspects, mission and programs of the organization. The goal is to formulate a plan that will take Our Companions through the next three to five years. Labor intensive, the work is expected to continue through the end of this year.

"It's very easy in non-profit work, with the never-ending cycle of need, to become more and more reactionary, merely responding to one crisis after another," says Charlotte. "It's important to take a step back and ask some basic questions, for example, 'Are these the most effective and efficient services to address the issues? How can we partner with other groups to maximize resources? What do we do well and how can we do it better?'"

"Unless an organization is willing to take a close look at the issues, it will have only limited success, and it certainly won't be able to plan, execute and achieve a \$15 million sanctuary project. Our Companions' willingness to plan, ask the hard questions and make the necessary adjustments to programs makes the organization unique in the animal welfare world. But then Our Companions is more than 'just' a sanctuary," says Charlotte.

Charlotte believes strongly that through such services as the trap/neuter/return feral cat program, the HelpLine program (which educates callers and helps them find solutions for their animal problems), and its unique canine behavioral programs, the very face of animal welfare is being changed. "Our Companions is a leader of the no-kill movement in Connecticut. In ten or twenty years we will all look back with amazement at the leadership and vision of Our Companions. We are working toward nothing less than changing society's very basic paradigm of how it views and treats animals."

It's an effort to which Charlotte is committed. "I feel so fortunate that I have something of value, beyond money, to offer to  
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One of Charlotte's rescue dogs, Zoey.

*"I help save the lives of animals. What more rewarding work can there be than that?"  
- Charlotte Kinlock*

## Our Companions News by Jessica Beganski

### Our Companions 2009 Calendar Now Available

During the last three years, dozens of Our Companions supporters have had their pets photographed by Studio 970 in West Hartford as part of the "Love Your Pet" fundraiser to benefit Our Companions.

The public was given the opportunity to vote on all the photographed pets to determine who would be in the 2009 calendar.

The votes have been tallied, the calendars printed and are now available to you!

For just a \$15 donation (or more if you can) to Our Companions, we will send you a beautiful, glossy calendar which will remind you every day of your contribution to help needy pets.

To make your donation, visit our Web site at <http://www.ourcompanions.org/pages/giving.htm> or contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext 301.



### Save the Date for Love Your Pet Photo Fundraiser

Missed your opportunity to have your pet photographed this year? Don't worry, you have another chance in February 2009 to have your pet photographed by the artists at Studio 970 in West Hartford. A pet portrait makes a wonderful gift for someone you love, or give yourself the gift of a lasting reminder of your pet companion. A portion of the proceeds will be donated directly to Our Companions so your purchase will also help other pets in need.



Watch for more details on the 2009 Love Your Pet Photo Fundraiser in your e-mail and mail.

# The Companions Fund

When it comes to animal rescue in Connecticut, more and more, Our Companions is becoming the place where people turn for help. This is because they know we will not turn our backs on a suffering animal or one that is facing homelessness.

Guided by our mission of ending the unnecessary euthanasia of pets and led by a team of more than 130 passionate volunteers, we rescued and adopted nearly 500 pets in 2007.

However, sustaining our mission is costly. To meet the needs of our people and pets in the state, we must continue to grow

the organization's Companions Fund. The more we become THE place where people turn, the more money we will need to raise in order to fulfill these needs.

We hope you will consider making a generous contribution to Our Companions, so we can continue to provide critically needed services to the people and pets of Connecticut.

For more information, contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext. 301 or [susanl@ourcompanions.org](mailto:susanl@ourcompanions.org).



## The Cost of Rescue



- A single animal hoarding or neglect case can cost up to **\$7,000** depending on the number of animals and the severity of the circumstances.
- Orthopedic surgery can cost up to **\$3,000** per operation.
- Canine heartworm treatment can cost over **\$1,000**.
- Spay & Neuter surgeries, with vaccinations and treatments cost **\$110** for cats and **\$250** for dogs.
- Rescuing a pregnant cat and raising her litter of kitten can cost **\$600**.
- Providing a Trap, Neuter, Return rescue operation for a colony of feral cats can cost **\$800**.

# Marie's Den by Kari O'Brien

## Five Questions You Must Ask an Animal Rescue Organization Before Adopting

A successful adoption and the integration of a homeless animal into your home can be an extremely heart-warming event for both human and animal. It is an experience that is filled with affection, delight and life-long devotion.

The achievement of a rewarding adoption often hinges upon working with a reputable animal welfare organization. Though well intentioned, some organizations lack the training, support and resources to rescue animals and effectively place them in homes. When an adoption goes wrong, not only does it affect the family and the animal but other potential adopters may be deterred in the future after hearing of another's negative experience.

Marie Joyner, Our Companions Canine Operations Director, suggests that before you adopt any pet, ask the following questions about the rescue organization's practices and pets.

### *Are dogs evaluated by a trained and experienced Dog Evaluator prior to adoption?*

A trained evaluator will assess a dog for many things, including fearfulness, resource guarding, aggression, sociability, prey drive, basic manners and dog/dog skills, and will make recommendations on the type of home best suited for the dog. Without such an evaluation, a dog may be placed in an entirely unsuitable home which could have life-threatening consequences.

Marie recalls one heartbreaking story where a couple adopted a dog who was possibly never evaluated by an experienced evaluator. "If Murphy had been properly evaluated, the evaluator would have quickly discovered that the dog was a resource guarder and should not be placed in home with small children."

"Furthermore, the adoptive family would have known what to do and what not to do with this dog," says Marie. The couple was unaware of Murphy's behavioral issue and one day, while he was quietly chewing on a tennis ball away from everyone, he bit a child after the owner invited a two-year-old child to pet Murphy. After pressure from their neighbors, the couple had to give Murphy back to the rescue organization to be euthanized.

### *Where is the pet currently living?*

Rescue organizations will place pets up for adoption who are either in a shelter, a foster home or in the home of the current owner. Where the pet is currently living determines how much stress the animal is under, what kind of care he/she has received and whether a trainer's evaluation is effective.

In most cases, the best place for the pet to be is in his/her original home where the pet's true behavior can be evaluated.



Marie Joyner and her training partner, Jack.

Pets in a foster home are living in a home environment which is preferable to a shelter. But just because the dog is in a foster home doesn't mean an evaluator can get a true picture of his/her behavior. Marie recalls one situation where a dog was in a foster home with fifteen other dogs. "The dog's behavior in that home was very different than it was in a home where he was the only dog."

### *Will I get to meet the pet in person before adopting?*

If you adopt a pet without meeting him/her in person first, you are relying entirely on another person's opinion of the pet's temperament and health. In some instances, the rescue organization placing the animal for adoption hasn't met or evaluated the dog.

**Has the pet received full veterinary care?**

No matter where a pet comes from, either a home or shelter, it is crucial that he/she be evaluated by a veterinarian, tested for heartworm and internal parasites, vaccinated for rabies and other common dog ailments, treated for fleas and ticks and spayed or neutered. A dog who is being transported from out-of-state needs to have a health certificate.

**Does the organization offer training after the adoption, or will they re-home the pet should it not work out? Do they follow up with you after the adoption?**

For many adoptive pet owners, their relationship with the rescue organization ends the day they take the pet home. Most rescues don't have the resources to provide long-term assistance, such as training. Some rescues will not even offer to re-home an animal if needed. The result is animals entering the shelter system more than once or being euthanized for lack of alternatives.

**What happens if my dog bites someone?**

Dog bites are a significant risk for rescue organizations. If a dog they placed bites someone, their typical response is to

either tell the family to keep the dog and do training or euthanize.

Rescue organizations should be lauded for their efforts in placing homeless animals. Just because an organization does not follow the above recommendations doesn't mean you should not adopt from them. But asking these questions before you adopt a pet will help you to make an informed decision.

### Our Companions' Adoption Method

Our Companions follows a six-point adoption process for all pets to ensure successful adoptions.

1. All pets available for adoption are either in local shelters, local foster homes or are living with their original family.
2. Every dog is evaluated by an experienced evaluator who determines the most suitable home.
3. Every pet is thoroughly vetted, spayed/neutered and is given Distemper combination and Rabies vaccines. They are also treated for the prevention of internal and external parasites. Dogs also receive a Heartworm and Lyme test.
4. We screen all applicants for adoption through an application, home check and provide a neutral location for the prospective family (and current pets) to meet the new pet.
5. After adoption, dogs can attend a free eight-week training class and adoptive families can call our trainers anytime for assistance after the adoption. Our trainers check in with families during the first week, and then at two-week, one-month, two-month, six-month and one-year intervals to ensure a smooth transition. Furthermore, our trainers are available for in-home visits after the adoption.
6. If an adoptive family can no longer keep a pet, we will re-home. If a dog has bitten someone, we will evaluate the dog and if possible, re-home.



# A Pawsitive Ending by Jessica Beganski

## Bear

Bear is a very lucky black cat. Just before the holidays in 2006, a woman called Our Companions desperate for help. Her mother had just passed away and she was being evicted from her home where she and her mother were living with their eight senior cats.

In conjunction with local animal control, Our Companions was able to negotiate a temporary solution. The cats were allowed to remain in their home while new homes were found. Five of the eight cats were adopted while the other three, all with medical conditions, could not be placed quickly.

Bear was among the cats who were not adopted. Overweight and diabetic, ten-year-old Bear was taken in by his previous owner who had found another place to live. After a few months, the twice-daily insulin shots and medical expenses became too burdensome and the woman felt she had no other choice but to euthanize Bear.

Just before bringing Bear to her veterinarian, she decided to contact Our Companions again. Bear earned another reprieve when Our Companions went to work trying to find him another home.

Around Valentine's Day of this year, Denise Worster heard Susan Linker on the radio, describing how she had a black long-haired, senior, diabetic cat up for adoption. The year before, Denise had said goodbye to her longtime companion,

a black long-haired cat named Merlin. Denise missed Merlin terribly and her husband was looking for a long-haired black kitten to help mend her broken heart.

Although Denise and her husband were originally thinking about adopting a kitten, Denise was drawn to Bear's plight. Not only was he the perfect color, Denise and her husband could relate to Bear's health condition – they are both diabetic. For Denise, it seemed like fate. "Who better than two diabetics to take care of Bear," Denise remarked.

When Denise took Bear home to meet her five other cats and two dogs, he seemed to fit right in. "We put him in a large dog crate with the room door open so everyone could get used to each other," Denise recalls. After a few days with the crate door closed, they opened the door and Bear began spending more time outside the crate in the room and eventually outside of the room. "My other pets welcomed him like he was just another one of the kids."



In one additional way, Bear is a perfect fit into Denise's home. Shortly after adopting him, Denise talked with Bear's original owner who told her that he was born on July 29 and shares the zodiac sign of Leo with both Denise and her husband.

At the time of his adoption, Bear was grossly overweight. With proper nutrition and regular insulin shots, Bear is thriving in his new home. When asked if the insulin shots are difficult to give him, Denise says that Bear purrs loudly when he's getting his shots. "He seems to know I'm helping him."

*Note: Just before publication, Bear passed away unexpectedly from a condition unrelated to his diabetes. Diane and her family find comfort in knowing Bear's short time with them was the best in his life.*

Bear is happiest when being held, by his doting mom, Denise Worster.

From Page 3

a second chance by utilizing volunteers to teach owners how to better manage their dogs and create a home environment where the dog can remain a part of the family. According to Marie, "We learned through one of our first rescues (see sidebar) that sometimes owners give up their animals because of behavior problems that could be resolved easily through education. Most people care about their dogs and want to keep them." Our Companions offers on-going, low-cost training classes focusing on dogs with behavioral issues. In addition, our volunteer trainers will provide in-home consultations and training when needed.

Our Companions' goal is to prevent dogs from entering or re-entering shelters. Susan observes that dogs often have behavior problems that land them in shelters where there is little or no follow-up once they are adopted. Much like the Sterile Feral program and Animal HelpLine, the Canine College program engages the community to help their pets and find effective solutions, rather than abandoning them in shelters.

Learning Steps Are Building Blocks

As Our Companions moves into the next phase of its development, the organization is preparing for progress by looking back at what has worked and planning for the future. Our Companions' staff, a select group of volunteers and the Board are developing a strategic plan to guide the organization through the next three-five years.

According to Susan, the biggest challenge is changing the way we view and react to our pets. "When we started this organization, we thought the sanctuary was going to solve all our problems. While it's an important benchmark, the reality is we need to educate the public that the issues

facing pets cannot be resolved by building more shelters – or sanctuaries. When you are euthanizing 35% of animals in shelters who are basically healthy, it's clear that education and prevention are."

Continued on Page 14



The Hartford Courant's article announced Our Companions' plans to build the sanctuary and featured Damon Scott's infamous pug kiss.

From Page 13

Perception is just as powerful as the actual rescue. One of the strongest statements about our upcoming sanctuary is to physically manifest our no-kill philosophy. All animals at the sanctuary will be rescued, rehabilitated and re-homed. If they never find a home, the sanctuary will become their home and they will not be destroyed.

Everlasting Bond, more

From Page 5

beloved animal companion- that comes from a place of pure, unselfish love.

Memorializing a pet is an important part of the healing process and should not be dismissed or viewed as trivial. Peg says the handmade oak urn she has for Lucas' ashes holds a place of honor on their

Susan says that Our Companions first cottage will debut next year and that ultimately 16 cottages will shelter about 2,000 companion animals each year. Our Companions has also been building the human infrastructure and currently has five employees (3 full time and 2 part time), an 18-person Board of Directors and over 130 active volunteers.

fireplace mantel and is a resting place of beauty, which brought her comfort and healing.

There are many other ways to pay tribute to a beloved pet, such as planting a tree or flower garden, assembling a photo album, writing a story or poem, or by making a memorial donation to help animals in need.

Profiles in Giving, more

From Page 7

Our Companions. It sometimes feels like my entire professional life has led me to this point, where the skills and experiences I have gained over the last 30 years now allow me to help those I've cared about my entire life—animals. Indirectly, I help save the lives of animals. What more rewarding work can there be than that?"

Susan Linker reflects, "We all love working with Charlotte—her enthusiasm is infectious." Susan is hopeful that Charlotte's future involvement might include channeling this enthusiasm to help inspire additional major donors.

"Once they get to know Our Companions, they won't be able to say no," says Charlotte. "It sure worked for us. It's an easy sell—how can you turn down an organization with this kind of leadership and such a worthwhile mission?"

"We strive to practice what we preach. It's the work of the animal welfare community to lead the no-kill movement by example. This means not only condemning the unnecessary killing of animals, but to engage, empower and provide the community with real humane options for them and the animals they love."

Peg still misses the "smile" Lucas greeted her with whenever she returned home, even if she was gone only 10 minutes. She misses Lucas snuggling in her lap while she knitted and the yarn lay across his face. But reliving these memories provides comfort and will always keep Lucas in her heart.

We thank you, Charlotte and Anne, for your steadfast dedication to animals and for choosing Our Companions as a recipient of your generous public giving. Most of all, we thank you for sharing our dream—the dream of ensuring that no pet should ever be without a loving and supportive home environment.

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# Take Me Home



**Good Golly, Miss Molly!** She sure likes to eat, but who can blame her? Perhaps she values food so much because when she was abandoned, she went days without eating. Luckily, she found a colony of other cats that had a kind human providing them with food.

It was very unusual that a cat with a collar was found at a feral cat colony feeding station. Our Companions volunteers took her to the vet, where they determined she had been spayed and was very friendly.

Through her adventures, Miss Molly has decided she doesn't care too much for the company of other cats. However she does enjoy petting, brushing, playing with catnip mice, cuddling, being held, looking out the window and sitting in your lap. She is chatty and instead of meowing, she practices her bird calls with chirping noises. Molly has tested negative for FIV/FelV and is up to date on her vaccines. She is approximately four years old and is a short-haired tabby.

Miss Molly has been living for more than one year in a foster home where she is isolated—not an ideal location. She is ready to find a home of her own.

Please contact Andrea at 860-242-9999 x6 or [andrea@ourcompanions.org](mailto:andrea@ourcompanions.org) for more information.



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