

“You saved my pet’s life!”

At first it seemed odd: How could someone who is homeless take care of a pet? But then Genevieve Frederick realized that in a situation like that, maybe the unconditional love of animals mattered even more. And so, she decided to find a way to help . . .

Of the many sights on the bustling streets of Manhattan, one stopped Genevieve Frederick in her tracks: a man with disheveled hair slumped against a building, a beautiful dog snuggled close to him.

Sadly, he wasn’t the first homeless person that Genevieve had seen on this trip to New York. Suddenly, though, she was confused. Why would anyone who could barely feed or take care of *himself* have a pet?

Genevieve glanced back at them, at how the dog gazed up at his owner with loyal, trusting eyes. And in that instant, the Carson City, Nevada, animal lover understood: Perhaps all that man and his dog had in this world was each other. But everyone deserves to be loved. And facing such a hard life, they needed that connection.

Mission of compassion

Even after returning home, Genevieve couldn’t stop thinking about that man and his dog. So she contacted National Coalition for the Homeless—and discovered that as many one in four homeless people have a pet!

In fact, when offered space at a shelter but told they must leave their dog or cat behind, most folks—who’d often become homeless after being laid off or returning from war overseas—chose their beloved four-legged companion rather than a roof over their head.

At first, that shocked Genevieve. Then she asked herself: If I were suddenly faced with homelessness, could I give up my dogs?

Not a chance! They’re my *babies!* she knew. Pets were always there for you, even during—especially during—the tough times. And they never judged. They love you unconditionally. So Genevieve decided: I need to do something to help.

She began contacting veterinarians and owners of pet-related businesses across the country, asking them to set up pet food collection bins. And as word spread, donations began pouring in!

“I’d love to help,” volunteers told Genevieve, packing supplies into their cars to deliver them to soup kitchens, food banks and shelters.

One day, Genevieve was making a drop-off when a woman rushed over, her eyes shining with tears.

“Thank you for helping me take care of my baby!” she cried.

Tears welling in her own eyes, Genevieve smiled. And she wanted to do more. So Pets of the Homeless (PetsOfTheHomeless.org) a nonprofit to provide not only food but also free veterinary care, including spaying and neutering, was created.

Four-legged hope

In the months that followed, whenever Genevieve or a volunteer saw a homeless person with a pet, they offered them everything from kibble to an invitation to attend a wellness clinic so their pet could get medical care, including vaccinations.

One woman, who had been camping beneath a bridge in Tucson, Arizona, noticed her pup, Louie, wasn’t putting weight on one of his legs.

“I don’t know what it is, but something’s stuck in his paw,” the vet determined. Once it was plucked out,



A pup gets treated by clinic volunteers.



A devoted mom waits to have her babies checked.



“The gratitude in the owners’ and their pets’ eyes warms my heart,” says Genevieve.

Louie was given pain meds . . . and was soon back to curling around his mama to keep her warm at night.

For one gentleman who lived in his car, his miniature pinscher, Rain, went everywhere he went—until one day, she just wouldn’t budge from the backseat.

“I’m so worried,” the man admitted. But after Rain received antibiotics, she was back to dancing around her owner’s feet!

Ivory, a calico and tabby mix, lived in a tent in the Maryland woods. “Her meows sound like she’s crying. I think she’s hungry,” Ivory’s mom confided, her voice and her heart breaking. So, after a full checkup, Pets of the Homeless gave her several weeks of food.

Then there was the elderly man in California whose German shepherd was attacked by a coyote. He tugged the pup—who had multiple puncture wounds—10 miles in a wagon to a clinic for help.

To date, Pets of the Homeless has supplied more than 400 tons of pet food and more than \$300,000 in veterinary care to nearly 13,000 animals across America and Canada.

You saved my dog’s life, and she’s the only thing I have left in the world. You’re a guardian angel not only for Girley, but for me! wrote David, a disabled Iraq war vet after they treated his service dog for pancreatitis. And though Genevieve wishes she could find a home for everyone—two- and four-legged—until that happens, she vows to continue making a difference like this.

“When you love a pet, you form a strong bond. You can’t just say, ‘Now that I don’t have a home, goodbye,’ ” she says. “Pets provide comfort, loyalty and, for many of these folks, hope. To be able to help their owners give them everything they need is a blessing to me, too!”

—Kristin Higson-Hughes

“Home is not always a place. Home is with the ones who have our heart.”
ANONYMOUS

Hold a pet food drive!

Genevieve has given out more than 400 tons of pet food to homeless pets! Here’s how you can help:

✔ **Pick a partner!** Your local food pantry may accept donations of pet food like sealed bags of kibble, unexpired cans of food and treats. You can also donate to a nearby animal shelter or rescue group!

✔ **Get the word out!** Share the date, time and location of your pet food drive, plus the types of items being collected. Be sure to mention goals you have in mind and where and when donations will be delivered.

✔ **Celebrate success!** Start a Facebook group and invite other food drive volunteers. You can share exciting news, post pictures and inspire others to keep giving!



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