



Foxy was buried at Little Shelter, in her own special area, and a memorial garden is being created in her honor. Little Shelter also set up the Foxy Fund, which benefits senior and special-needs dogs and cats. Money from this fund has helped animals such as April, a kit that came into Little Shelter badly burned and required surgery and skin grafts to save her

"Foxy's brief life enabled her to save her beloved owner's life with no regard for her own, in addition to becoming Maguire's best friend and companion," says Little Shelter President Maryann Chernovsky. "She epitomizes all the stray animals that will be killed due to overpopulation and not enough homes. What would these animals be capable of if only given a chance? Foxy will always be our hero."

DIFFERENT KINDS OF HEROES

When we think of heroes, we immediately think of soldiers who've fought to defend our country, or professional athletes who have accomplished great achievements, or those who have blazed trails in the fields of medicine, science, the humanities and the arts, or even comic book characters. But many animals are heroes too, and have helped mankind throughout the ages. Whether through providing companionship and unconditional love or hard physical labor, giving early warnings or saving lives, all animals prove daily that it's not just dogs who are man's best friend.

A stunning example of the relationship between humans and animals occurred in 1996 when a gorilla made headlines at the Brookfield Zoo outside of Chicago. A 3-year-old boy fell into a gorilla enclosure and was knocked unconscious. Within minutes, Binta Jua, a female lowland gorilla, picked up the boy, cradled him and gently put him down in front of the caretaker's den, thereby keeping him out of harm's way from the other gorillas. (Interestingly, Binta Jua is the niece of the famed gorilla Koko, who successfully communicates with humans through the use of sign language.)

Unfortunately, many people don't appreciate and/or acknowledge the help we receive from animals. Though there are many common house pets that have saved people's lives, we still have the blight of pet overpopulation and feral animals to contend with. Many good pets have been abandoned on the streets only to reproduce more unwanted offspring, or are given up to a shelter, where a pet's fate just might be euthanasia due to overcrowding.

Many animal activists believe that's why it's vitally important to educate the public on the value and importance of our planet's animals, in part by spotlighting some of the incredible feats animals have performed.

FAVORITES OF THE GODS

In ancient Egyptian sculptures and temple wall illustrations, gods were represented in the form of either an animal or plant. Later, those animal gods were combined with human forms, giving different types of animals great significance and presence in Egyptian culture.

"The Egyptians highly regarded their pets," says Dr. Bob Brier, a world-renowned Egyptologist from C.W. Post. "When Egyptians were buried they often had their pets mummified so they could spend eternity with them."

In Egypt, circa 2000 B.C., cats were depicted as helpers to their owners in a domestic role, helping to fish, hunt and catch rats and mice, thus making them highly valued and giving them the right to be considered sacred. Cats that have been excavated from ancient tombs (many were owned by royalty) were found mummified along with several mice to serve as food for the cat's journey into the afterlife. Cats were also considered sacred because they kept mice from eating grain, which at that time was worth its weight in gold. Ancient history tells us that cats were not only kept as pets in many of the homes but were also represented as deities.

Bastet, goddess of joy and protector of women, who presided over all things feminine, especially childbearing, was represented as a being with the head of a cat and body of a woman. During these ancient times, hurting a cat carried dire consequences: Those who



The Egyptian god Horus was often portrayed as a man with the head of a falcon.

intentionally planned a cat's murder were put to death, and if a cat was accidentally harmed, a priest determined the high fine that one would pay. When privately owned cats passed away, their deaths were signified by their owners following a ritual, shaving their eyebrows in a sign of mourning.

In ancient times, many animals were described as gods, from falcon-headed Horus, god of sky, to Anubis, god of embalming and mummification, depicted as a black jackal (or dog) or a man with the head of a black jackal. And let's not forget that more than 4,500 years ago, workers shaped a stone into a lion and gave it their king's face, creating the Great Sphinx at Giza, the largest single-stone statue on Earth. Whether these animal deities were loved or feared, there is proof that animals were highly regarded by the ancient Egyptian civilization and were thus treated with great respect.

NEIGHSAVERS

Dogs and cats aren't the only animals in modern times to have performed heroic acts. One encounter with animals having a sixth sense (and an acute sense of smell) occurred in Old Brookville on a hot July day in 1981 when a few horses in the barn at the Gold Coast Equestrian Center started becoming restless in their stalls: They were pacing, and some were kicking the walls and banging buckets.

A few horse owners checked the stalls to find nothing out of the ordinary, hoping that the horses would settle down. But the animals started to panic and whinny, circling their stalls continuously and kicking the walls even harder. The owners realized they were missing something the horses were concerned about, and ran down the aisles to search again. At the very end of the barn, a fire had begun in the shavings pile. The heat from the sun had ignited the shavings from a shovel left on top of the pile, which was uncovered and in direct sunlight. The fire department was called while the horses were let out from the barn to safety.

The blaze was extinguished and the barn and horses, as well as the grooms who lived in the apartments upstairs over the barn, were saved. Barns will go up in flames in a matter of minutes due to the highly flammable wood, shavings and stored hay. If the horses had not alerted everyone and continued to call attention to the fire, that day would have been tragic.

SEE SPOTS RUN

Before firehouses existed, Dalmatians first served as "coach dogs" that bravely protected horse-drawn coaches traveling across the country, by scaring off robbers. As time and technology moved forward, the heroic dogs ran alongside horse-drawn fire coaches to help protect them, by discouraging highwaymen from robbing the coaches, and clearing the road of wild animals so the transport could travel safely. Because the Dalmatians were used to running long distances and being around horses, they were the perfect canines for the job. Their coloring—bright white coats with black spots—was also significant to their heroic work because they were easy to see when sent to run ahead to clear the path for the carriages.

To honor Dalmatians for their heroic service given to us over the years, firemen did not demote the famed dogs when motorcars replaced horse-drawn carriages—the Dalmatian became the mascot of the firehouse.

IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT

Ever wonder how deep an animal's intelligence or intuition runs? One special homeless feline recently proved again that animals are more gifted than one could possibly imagine.

Betty Vita, a shelter volunteer, recently had a stroke and was unable to continue foster care for Tie-Dye, a once-stray male shelter cat that had undergone surgery to remove a cancerous tumor on his face. In February, the Gramer family of Smithtown volunteered to nurse Tie-Dye back to health. But what they didn't know was that 9-year-old, pale orange Tie-Dye was going to have a major impact on their lives.



Tie-Dye alerted her family to a fire about to spread in their home.

"We took in Tie-Dye," recalls Carlyn Gramer. "He was very shy and scared when he first arrived in our home, but thanks to my husband, John, who I affectionately call the 'Cat Whisperer,' Tie-

Dye is now a sweetheart who purrs all day long.

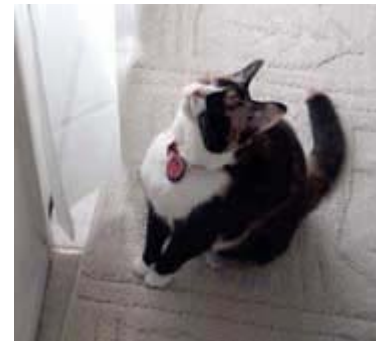
"Two days after his painful surgery, Tie-Dye still just laid in a heap on the blanket in our sr downstairs bedroom. He would not eat or drink," Gramer continues. "At 5 a.m. the next morning, my husband was awakened by a loud, constant meow coming through our upstai bedroom vent. He thought Tie-Dye might finally be hungry. As soon as he got downstairs, I smelled smoke and ran into the bedroom. The outlet and wall under the IV bag I was using give Tie-Dye fluids was black, and sparks were shooting out. My husband quickly turned off the power in our home and discovered that the IV bag had leaked down into the outlet, air starting a fire. My husband removed the outlet and checked inside the wall." If it weren't for Tie-Dye's loud, yowling alert, the house could have easily gone up in flames.

Tie-Dye must now go through chemotherapy for a better chance of survival. Little Shelter is trying to raise funds and find the cat a home.

AGGIE THE CAT

In 1989, the Seely family, of Laceyville, Pa., adopted 5-week-old Aggie from the Helen O. Krause Animal Foundation, a no-kill animal shelter in Dillsburg, Pa. A cute calico kitten that was born on a farm and went blind from an eye infection, Aggie brought the Seelys more than companionship. She saved their home—and possibly even their lives.

"I could tell from that first moment I saw Aggie that she was a very special 'soul' and I was determined to find her a good home after she was older," says Lynn Seely. "As it turned out, I grew to love Aggie too much to ever consider giving her up. I wanted to watch her grow and protect her. I had no idea that Aggie would one day risk her life for her human family."



An intruder learned the hard way not to mess with Aggie.

Two years after Aggie had been adopted, enjoying her wonderful life as an indoor kitten, sl showed her adoptive family all of the gratitude a pet can show. Aggie not only gave all of h love and affection on a daily basis, but during one very cold evening, she bravely intercept an intruder.

The Seelys lived in an old two-story house that had a small alley on one side. One night in January of 1992, an intruder broke into their home through an old window. Aggie heard hin and positioned herself on her favorite perch, a 7-foot-tall cat tree. The intruder took a few steps into the room, and it was then that Aggie jumped through the air and onto his face.

"The intruder fell, screaming in terror, backwards out of the window, landing with a thud in i alley. He left behind a souvenir: one of his shoes," Seely says. "I always knew that Aggie h a keen sense of awareness that more than made up for her blindness."

Seely says the scream issued by the would-be robber woke both her and her husband. Th went downstairs to investigate, and found Aggie on her cat-tree, meowing at them when th entered the room. She had blood on her paws and they later found blood on the windowsill

"My husband and I called the police and soon after they arrived, the man's tools were discovered outside," Seely continues. "I can't begin to express how grateful—and astounded—we were at Aggie's brave actions. She had always been a very sassy cat—sh knew no fear—but for her to attack and protect us, we were amazed."

Aggie has since received lots of attention and many special awards for her heroism. Her st has been featured on PAX network's Miracle Pets and she now has a fan club.

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

Service dogs have been specially trained to aid in specific tasks to help humans. Roughly 300 search and rescue (SAR) dogs of all breeds were brought to Ground Zero after the 9/11 attack to try to find survivors, but unfortunately their abilities were needed only to find the dead. However, one very special service dog, Tikva, a 2-year-old Keeshond therapy dog, proved to be a real hero.



Tikva is one of the many 9/11 canine heroes.

During the aftermath, Tikva provided greatly needed comfort to the workers and volunteers—doing what therapy dogs usually do at nursing homes or schools. During this extremely stressful time, Tikva provided companionship to the Ground Zero workers by allowing them to pet her and play with her, thus giving a much-needed morale boost. Tikva distracted the workers by taking their minds off of the nightmarish sights, smells and sounds around them, making them focus instead on a beautiful, loving animal that was there to comfort them during their efforts. But beyond lifting the spirits of the site workers, she also made a rescue.

Tikva made an amazing discovery 18 days after 9/11 by finding Precious, a missing Persia feline. Precious' owners lived in a building on Liberty Street, which had been damaged by the attack. They were away at the time and had hired a sitter to watch their cat. But after the attack, the sitter was unable to gain access to the apartment, because the building had been compromised. While firefighters finally searched the building, Precious hid in fear.

She eventually exited the building, and nearly three weeks later, the building's superintendent was on the roof and thought he heard a cat meowing. Cindy Ehlers of Eugene, Ore., Tikva's handler, took the dog to the building, where she found the cat huddled on the corner of the roof. Precious had suffered eye injuries, burns to her paws and smoke and dust inhalation.

"She probably survived by living on contaminated rainwater that had puddled in the room," says Roy Gross, director of the Suffolk County SPCA. The organization used its state-of-the-art mobile animal spay-neuter hospital (MASH) unit to provide veterinary support for nearly two months for the canines that served at Ground Zero. Services also included medical care for rescued pets.



Chief Roy Gross of the Suffolk County SPCA was a large part of the canine-relief efforts at Ground Zero.

AT YOUR SERVICE

Service animals have been known to perform amazing feats. The training involved is detailed and extensive, proving the high intelligence of dogs and many other animals.

"Some SAR dogs are cross-trained to do search and rescue, police patrol work and cadaver work," says the SCSPCA's Gross. "Many departments are trying to get away from [that kind of] three-way cross-training because they feel that it is overtaxing of the animals. Some police agencies will just limit the dogs to patrol work and search and rescue."

The training involved for SAR dogs generally takes a minimum of one year. The dogs are trained in obedience, agility and direct ability, which means the dog is able to respond to voice and hand commands from a distance of 25 yards away from its handler.

"Generally," Gross says, "dogs that do patrol work start training at 2 years old. Some SAR dogs that perform only search and rescue work start training at 6 months old."

A dog's sense of smell is "far superior to a human's," explains Gross. "Their ability to fit into tight locations is advantageous to their SAR efforts. It also reduces the risk to human life. Their dedication and loyalty has proven itself many, many times over. Their ability to locate bodies at Ground Zero was unmatched by human or mechanical means."

Unfortunately, no live finds were made after the World Trade Center attack, Gross says. But many bodies and body parts were recovered due to the ability of the SAR dogs. Only 152

bodies in total were identified at Ground Zero, and SAR dogs recovered most of them.

Many of these dogs are now retired due to emotional or physical exhaustion. For example, Servus, a dog from southwestern Illinois, slid down 20 feet into concrete dust the morning it arrived, while searching the top of a pile. He couldn't breathe after inhaling the debris, and even though Servus was resuscitated, he could not continue to work due to the damage the debris caused to his nostrils. Servus was retired from police work and was still active through age 11, though he had trouble breathing after any physical exertion. He died April 5, 2003.

ESPets

It is possible to train dogs to predict certain medical conditions from cancer to seizures, and several specialized organizations are training animals for these exact purposes. Pennsylvania-based Canine Partners for Life (CPL), for example, is presently training dogs to assist humans through its Seizure Alert Program. Thanks to these dogs, people who suffer from seizures lead a normal life.

"All seizure alert dogs progress through the usual service dog training in obedience and socialization, with an emphasis on particular behaviors during erratic handler activity," explains Darlene Sullivan, executive director for CPL. "The dogs are actually a specialized type of service dog, and are chosen for specific personality and behaviors that indicate that they may be able to use their instincts to alert an individual with a seizure, prior to the seizure's occurrence."

The skill is not a trained one, but rather a reinforced ability. It's a natural skill—an instinct—some dogs have and others don't.

"My personal service dog [Sullivan has chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia], for instance, is around a lot of people who have seizures, and he has no clue that they're coming," Sullivan says. "So, we pick the dogs who we think show the personality and behavioral characteristics to have this natural ability, and then when they actually do alert, praise them and make it a very positive thing for them, which reinforces the skill and shows them that yes, this is what we want them to do and to keep doing."

These dogs protect their owners by alerting them up to one hour prior to a seizure taking place. This allows the person to be in a safe location during the seizure and not get hurt.

"We don't really know how the dogs know," Sullivan states. "We believe here at CPL that the dogs are somehow picking up on the electrical and chemical changes that occur in a person's body before the seizure actually occurs. We think that they must be doing this through their incredible sense of smell, but we aren't positive of that. There's no scientific proof. These dogs tend to be animals that are very sensitive to, and very in tune with, their environment and what goes on in it."

Canine Partners for Life is a nonprofit organization that does more than train dogs for seizure alerts. It also assists people with mobility impairments, placing service dogs with people who have difficulty walking, using their limbs or who are wheelchair-bound. Service dogs, like those at CPL, assist people with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, stroke, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, arthritis and chronic fatigue syndrome.

CANCER RESEARCH AND CANINES

Thanks to their acute sense of smell, dogs are now being used in research to detect certain types of cancer, such as melanoma. U.S. researchers have data determining that dogs can use a human's breath to pick up lung, breast and pancreatic cancer, and scientists in the United States and Great Britain are studying dogs' ability to detect prostate cancer by smelling urine.

At Cambridge University Veterinary School, researchers Donald Broom and Barbara Somerville also believe that dogs can smell cancer, and are working to prove it. They cite 11 cases where a pet dog picked up the disease by acting anxious and upset, and one case of breast cancer picked up by a dog was a very small malignancy that would have been

undetectable unless screened. When the growth was removed, the dog became disinterested. But three months later, the dog sniffed again and became agitated. The woman was sent back into surgery because a tiny spot of cancer had not been removed.

Gill Lacey is another believer. Trudi, his Dalmatian, detected a cancerous growth by smell years ago. Trudi sniffed out a mole on Lacey's leg that turned out to be a malignant melanoma. After Lacey's surgery to remove the deadly form of cancer, Trudi confirmed that the cancer was gone by showing no further attraction to Lacey's leg. Similar stories are increasing every day. Until recently, the medical profession dismissed such anecdotes. They're not so sure these days.

"There are mixtures of chemicals—[although] very likely to be just one—that are reliably associated with the cancer but are not present at all or not present in sufficiently large amounts or in the proper ratios to be recognized as cancer in urine from normal individuals," says Dianne Beidler Walker, a researcher from Florida State University in Tallahassee. "How dogs do this is bound to be as complex as what it would mean to understand how they track someone through the woods."

Scenting out cancer is basically the same process used with dogs as when the target is drugs or explosives.

"You present the target to the dog," Beidler Walker explains, "and reward the dog for indicating that he smells the target by making some clear response. Then you introduce 'blanks' and discourage the dog from making the target response. Over time the dog indicates the target properly a high percentage of the time and also [usually] does not make the target response when non-target stimuli are presented."

The exact details of how this is done depend on whether the situation is more like the melanoma case (tissue samples are used in training and then people are tested to prove that training worked) versus the way these dogs will be trained to detect bladder or prostate cancer.

"With the latter, we will build on the threshold method we have and then transition the dog from the target being a single chemical—n-amyl acetate, which smells like bananas—to urine from urological cancer patients," Beidler Walker says.

TWICE IS THE CHARM

Another act of animal bravery comes from Sundance, a companion pet owned by a family from Farmingville. This honey-colored golden retriever has proved his heroics not once, but twice.

"It was a warm sunny August afternoon in 2003," recalls owner Michelle Passalacqua. "I was getting ready for a backyard picnic with my daughters Kaila [7] and Sara [3]. Sara said she was going to play in the ball pit that they had recently received, while Kaila and I ran in and out of the house getting the food. There was nothing to worry about because Sundance was with her."



Sara (L) and Kaila Passalacqua pose with their golden retriever Sundance, who has heroically come to the aid of his family not once, but twice.

Just as Passalacqua was gathering up some drinks for the girls, she heard a commotion outside: Sundance was barking loudly and Sara was crying. Passalacqua ran outside to find a frightening sight—there was a snake

on the ground, a python. Sara was screaming, standing on top of the picnic table. Passalacqua quickly checked both Sara and Sundance, who was disheveled and foaming the mouth. Passalacqua yelled to Kaila to call for help.

"Then I checked the snake by nudging it with a broom, and noticed bite marks behind the snake's head and, thankfully, it was dead," Passalacqua says.

She remembers being given important advice by relatives in Florida a few days before about snakes and ball pits, but "I thought they were crazy," she says. "Dangerous snakes on Long Island? I guess you never know."

This wasn't the only time that Sundance has come to the family's rescue. He also stopped Peeping Tom who was watching Passalacqua through a backyard window. It was a late summer night at the end of September in 1996, when Sundance was only about 7 months

"When I saw a man, who was wearing a hood, looking in at us, I screamed, grabbed the phone and dialed 911," says Passalacqua. "Sundance immediately broke through the screen door and attacked the intruder by biting his legs and ankles. The man screamed in pain and fled while Sundance chased him. I followed after all of them while on the phone with 911, and watched the man jump our backyard fence. The police came and took a report but did not locate the unknown man. Sundance probably saved my life that night as well."

Hero pet Sundance is now 8 years old and in good health. He has been quite the asset to the Passalacqua family, and has helped raise a feral kitten and a baby raccoon. He periodically cleans the family cat and "likes to hold down our big German shepherd and groom him as well," Passalacqua adds.

Sundance has also been recognized for his great contributions to his family by being named the 49th Kibbles 'n Bits "Dog Hero of the Year."

ONE WITH THE EARTH

And finally, from South Asia, and as far away as Johannesburg, South Africa, reports have come in describing wildlife, especially birds, that sensed the impending tragedy of Dec. 26, 2004, and fled to higher ground, alerting humans to flee as well, before the destructive earthquake and tsunamis hit.

"Most bird owners will testify to the great ability birds have to communicate," explains Dr. C Darby, an avian specialist for the Center for Specialized Veterinary Care in Westbury. "Most birds are prey animals. They have to use all of their senses to the maximum in order to not be eaten by predators. Birds use the five senses that they have to maximum effect and that allows them sufficient notice to avoid a natural disaster to some extent. The ability to fly also makes escape much easier."

When the earthquake hit the Indian Ocean, it agitated the ocean life, which alarmed the birds which in turn agitated the land animals and finally alerted some human inhabitants of the area.

If we took heed of the ultraperceptive animals around us, the lives of so many humans and companion pets could be saved in the future.

We have been blessed with the comfort and joy that pets and animals bring to us every day. We have witnessed and read accounts of animals that have become national heroes by saving the life or lives of humans or other animals. But still there is euthanasia in the shelter due to overcrowding. Still there are far too many cases of neglect and abuse, over-breeding and abandonment of pets. All of the heroic stories above are a representation of what each and every animal brings to us—the gift of a sixth sense, impeccable instincts and unconditional love.

Those interested in helping Tie-Dye should contact Jodi Record of Little Shelter, 631-368-8770.

Aggie the cat has a fan club and gets e-mail at cataggie@usa.net. Her owner, Lynn Seely, also wrote a book about her pet: *Cat Aggie—The True Story of a Courageous Blind Cat*. Visit www.laceyville.com/aggie for purchasing information and more.

For more information on the Suffolk County SPCA, contact Chief Roy Gross, Suffolk County SPCA, 363 Route 111, Smithtown, NY, 631-382-7722.

For more information on service animals, contact Darlene Sullivan, Canine Partners for Life 610-869-4902, ext. 15, dsullivan@k94life.org, www.k94life.org.

For more on Little Shelter, contact Jodi Record, 631-368-8770, or Carlyn Gramer at 631-318770, ext. 206.

Five Super-Hero Pets

By Kenny Herzog

KRYPTO THE SUPERDOG

Superman's canine pal was sent off to space by Jor-El in a trial run for Superman, only to have his rocket hit by a meteor and land on Earth years later with superpowers. He now has his own show on the Cartoon Network, Krypto the Superdog, and fellow super-pets like Streaky, Supergirl's pet cat, and Ace the Bathound, join him for adventures.



BLIP THE MONKEY

Blip actually made his debut as Space Ghost's sidekick during the superhero's Hanna-Barbera cartoon. The cuddly monkey could travel with ease through space, render himself invisible via his belt and communicate through a special insignia on his chest.

ACE THE BAT-HOUND

The wily German Shepherd was found by Batman and Robin after its master was kidnapped, and was soon outfitted with a nifty mask and brought along on their escapades.



ITTY

A tiny, starfish-like organism rescued by Green Lantern, Itty would first aid Hal Jordan, only to morph into a menacing humanoid blob, before eventually returning to the side of good.

TOPO THE OCTOPUS

Aquaman's eight-limbed pal's powers were derived mostly from his multi-armed advantage, such as when he used his tentacles as coils to launch Aquaman upward in "The Menace of the Electric Man."



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