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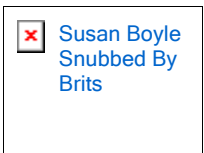
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PEORIA, Ill., Jan. 5, 2010

Guardian Angels for Pets in Need

Abused and Abandoned Animals are the Recession's Unseen Victims; How Foster Caregivers Save Lives and How You Can Help

By Cynthia Bowers

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(CBS) Household pets may be the recession's forgotten victims. When families can't afford them, they're often abandoned. But hundreds are getting a second chance thanks to guardian angels with big hearts, and the American spirit, as **CBS News correspondent Cynthia Bowers** reports.

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Some of the hardest hit victims of the bad economy are abandoned animals whose owners have given them up. Cynthia Bowers shows us one woman has opened her home to over 200 abandoned animals.



Jennifer Brackney, who rescues and fosters pets in need, bottle feeds a puppy in Peoria, Ill. Household pets are among the recession's unseen victims because cash-strapped families often neglect or abandon them. (CBS)

Inside a Peoria, Ill. house is an orphanage of sorts - a place where Jennifer Brackney cares for the homeless. They just happen to be dogs and cats.

"People say you can't help all of them, you can't make that big of a difference," Brackney said. "The way we look at it you may not be able to save everyone but we save one and we make a difference in that dog's life and that puppy's life and that is incredibly rewarding."

Foster a Lonely Pet:

[Foster a lonely pet at Petfinder.com](#)

Adoptions and Other Resources

Adopt a dog or cat, find out how to donate or volunteer and learn about other ways you can help through these organizations.

[Petfinder.com](#)

[The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(ASPCA\)](#)

[Adopt a Pet.com](#)

[The Humane Society](#)

[Foster Pet Outreach \(Peoria, Ill.\)](#)

[Taps Shelter \(Peoria, Ill.\)](#)

[Kitten Little Rescue \(NYC\)](#)

Jennifer was only seven when she made her first rescue, a kitten. Since then, she's opened her home and heart to more than 200 animals.

"We've run across everything," Brackney said.

"Neglect, abuse emaciated. You come across a lot of things that are really hard for us to see."

And it's getting worse. Nationwide, 84 percent of shelters and rescue groups this year are reporting increased numbers of family pets being given up - or worse yet simply abandoned.

Pet shelters say due to the recession, fewer families are able to adopt these abandoned animals. That's why during today's tough economic times, foster moms like Brackney often mean the difference between life and death.

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A puppy named Voight's mom was pregnant and emaciated when she was rescued. Voight nearly died. But with round-the-clock feeding and her homemade incubator, Jennifer believes he just might make it.

"Our foster homes are heroes," said rescuer Cindy Barch.

By that definition, Barch herself qualifies as a hero. She runs a shelter in nearby Bloomington just for great Pyrenees. With more than 1,100 of these magnificent farm dogs across the country looking for families, temporary homes are often a pet's last chance.

"It's a point where we're pulling dogs out of kill shelters at the last moment and not making it to all of them," Barch said.

Even after the fortunate few find permanent families, Jennifer never forgets them, not a one.

She shows pictures recalling her former fosters: Lucy and Charlie Brown; Krista and Karen; and Hazel, one she ended up adopting herself. There was Lilyanne, who's deaf, and Noha, who's huge.

But when you ask Brackney who's luckier - she or her pets - she doesn't hesitate.

"I am the lucky one," she said.

Hundreds of animals may beg to differ.

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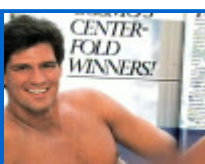
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