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Pilot sweeps in for doggie rescue

BY ERIC BRADLEY • EBRADLEY@ENQUIRER.COM • NOVEMBER 29, 2009

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BLUE ASH - If every dog has its day, the day for Piper and her five puppies was Sunday.

That was the day they landed in a Cessna 182 at Blue Ash Airport, the beneficiaries of the kindness of some local animal lovers who didn't want the dogs to die at a shelter in Georgia.

Piper and puppies were saved by the volunteers of Stray Animal Adoption Program (SAAP), one pilot and a whole lot of luck.

• **Photos: Lucky pups**

They were scheduled to be euthanized this past Friday, just six more unwanted animals meeting a common and lonely fate.

By chance, SAAP volunteers were made aware of the impending euthanizing about a week ago. Transportation to move the dogs was quickly arranged as the shelter granted a stay of execution.

Terri Baker, president of SAAP, called the convergence of events "a little miracle."

"They definitely wouldn't have survived," said Baker, who lives in Newport.

The dogs were picked up by Duncan Latta, a Blue Ash pilot, as he returned from a personal trip to Florida.

The rescue ran Latta's total tally of dogs saved to 20 in five trips for Pilots N Paws, a nonprofit group formed in February 2008 to organize volunteer pilots to save shelter animals.

Latta reported that his four-legged passengers all behaved, mostly because they were sleeping.

"The dogs tend to fall asleep once you climb up relatively high," explained Latta. "Every dog I've ever flown has kind of passed out above a thousand feet."

The rescued dogs were resting comfortably Sunday, none-the-wiser about their brush with death.

"Mom's done a great job," said Paula Drake, the Anderson Township resident who contacted Pilots N Paws.

"She's a little shy, though. The puppies are ready to go and they've got the world by the tail at this



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The Enquirer/Amie Dworecki
Terri Baker (center), head of the Stray Animal Adoption Program, Paula Drake, a volunteer, and Duncan Latta, in the Pilots N' Paws program, hold the rescued puppies at the Blue Ash airport, next to the plane Duncan flew to bring the puppies to Cincinnati.

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point."

SAAP mostly takes in local stray animals, said Drake.

But Drake has a friend in Georgia, and when a place opened at SAAP for a dog and puppies, Drake heard about Piper.

"You make a difference wherever you can make a difference," Drake said.

Next up for Piper, an Australian cattle dog mix between 1 and 2 years of age, and her pups is spaying, neutering and a vet check Monday at Colerain Animal Hospital.

Then they'll be up for adoption through the SAAP Web site, www.adoptastray.com, or at the Western Hills PetSmart, 2310 Ferguson Road, during SAAP's weekly adoption program on Saturdays.

In honor of their day in flight, the puppies received aviation-themed names: Bellanca and Cessna are girls; Mooney and Cirrus are boys.

That leaves one more, who got the name of his savior, Duncan.

Latta had mixed feelings about that.

"That's actually kind of embarrassing," he said.

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