



She finds homes for rescued dogs

Teri Kluesener

By Kevin Kelly • kkelly@nky.com • June 27, 2010

NEWPORT - Teri Kluesener went to the pet store for dog food one day about five years ago and came home with a big, lovable mutt named Rufus.

"He's the sweetest dog you'd ever want to meet," she said. "He's my gentle giant."

The pairing was made possible through the Stray Animal Adoption Program, a Newport-based nonprofit volunteer organization founded in 1998 that rescues stray and abused animals and works to find them permanent homes.

Kluesener's ties to SAAP have grown stronger since.

The Delhi Township resident now fosters several dogs at home and volunteers five hours each Saturday at the PetSmart store in Western Hills to help people find dogs that fit their families. She also serves as a volunteer coordinator, helping to train and mentor others who are new to SAAP.

"I think it's awesome work that she does," said Terri Baker, SAAP's president and an animal control officer in Campbell County. "I'm glad she's stayed. I hope she stays for a long time."

The organization has about 65 volunteers, Baker said. Kluesener is part of an even smaller group of permanent foster parents. Each pet is fostered until a permanent home is found.

"That's our biggest issue, because we can only take in as many dogs as we can keep in our houses," Kluesener said. "So the more people we can get to take care of foster dogs for us, the

more dogs we can save."

Kluesener, who works for the Internal Revenue Service in Florence, traces her affinity for man's best friend to childhood. Her father enjoyed hunting squirrels and owned dogs to assist him on hunts.

"I guess the reason I like dogs is they just love you unconditionally," Kluesener said. "They don't care if you're having a bad hair day, if you're wearing last year's jeans.

"They just love you, no matter what they've been through. They're always willing to give you more love. No matter how abused, mistreated, they always bounce right back and just fit right in with the families."

In addition to their work with animal shelters, SAAP has rescued animals left stranded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and 48 dogs and puppies this year from an animal shelter in Eastern Kentucky. Others have been left behind when their owners have died, were turned in or simply gotten loose and went unclaimed.

"A lot of the dogs we get are matted and flea-infested and dirty," Kluesener said.

The animals that SAAP rescues are nursed back

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to health, if needed. They're spayed, neutered, microchipped and placed with a foster home before being put up for adoption.

In addition to the PetSmart where Kluesener volunteers 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays, SAAP also has adoption days at:

Western Hills PetSmart, 2310 Ferguson Road, noon-3 p.m. Sundays.

Florence PetSmart, 1060 Hansel Ave., 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sundays.

Colerain Township, 10164 Colerain Ave., 11 a.m.-3 p.m., first Saturday of each month.

SAAP adopted out more than 800 animals last year, Baker said.



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Teri Kluesener works with the Stray Animal Adoption Program, a Newport-based volunteer group that rescues stray and abused animals and works to find them permanent homes.

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Stray Animal Adoption Program

Founded: 1998

President: Terri Baker

Address: P.O. Box 72040, Newport, KY 41072.

Adoption fees:

Dogs and puppies, \$100; purebred or designer mixed breeds, \$200.

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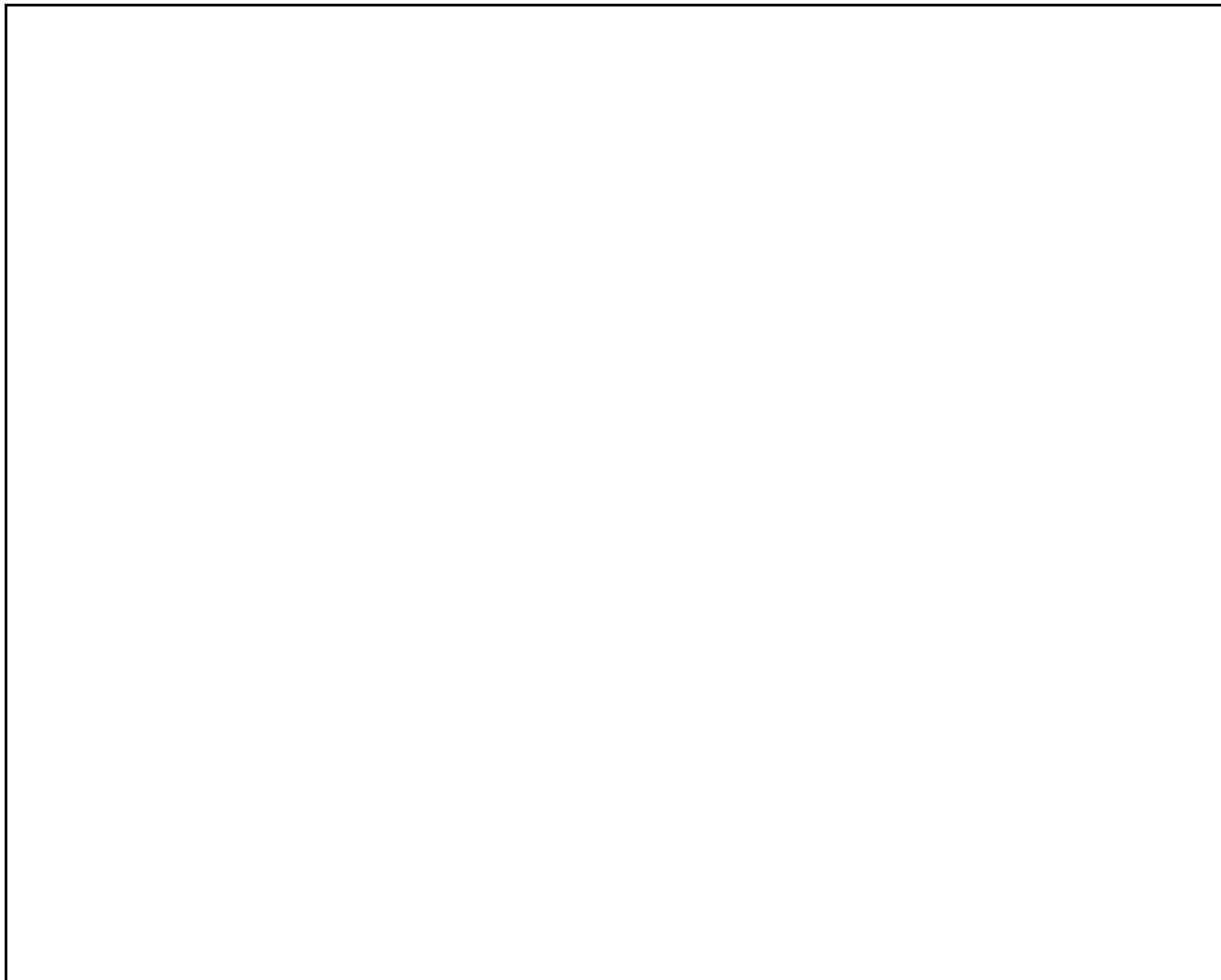
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