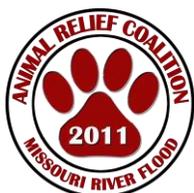


How Do You Top This?

2011 in review

What a year! For most of us, 2011 would not be considered a banner year, unless of course, you happen to be in that so called 1% of America's 'financially fortunate.' Even then, with all of the political and economic upheaval surrounding us, good news seemed to be in short supply and virtually everyone was affected by the anxiety waiting for whatever national economic disaster was coming next.

You can imagine what that kind of atmosphere does to charitable donations. It's like a giant sponge that dries up everything. Now, couple that with an ever increasing number of pet owners in financial duress who are no longer able to care for their animals and you have an idea of the difficulty most animal welfare organizations faced going into 2011. We were certainly no exception.



As the year began, the number of owner surrenders continued to multiply while our financial resources rapidly diminished; and then, an act of nature occurred that would further increase the stress and workload on our already strained volunteers: The Missouri River flooded. Read on to learn how flooding occurring 150 miles from Central Iowa directly affected RVAS.

The flooding was creating crises within animal shelters and rescues all up and down the Missouri River. Shelters were being inundated with animals from the flood zone creating a severe shortage of food, medical care and basic supplies. Raccoon Valley Animal Sanctuary and Rescue was called upon to help and organize an emergency supply campaign to aid those besieged shelters and rescues. Thanks to our Director's organizational efforts, hundreds of families were able to keep their animals instead of surrendering them to overburdened shelters through the [Animal Relief Coalition](#). We're extremely proud to say that the Coalition is still active in aiding families to keep their pets at home. A wonderful example of how animal welfare organizations can work together for a common cause.



Over the course of 2011, RVAS handled well over 3800 cases involving everything from animal abuse, abandonment, owner surrenders due to divorce, foreclosures, illness and death, even hoarding. We thought that we'd seen and experienced just about everything until a case came to us that would amaze animal lovers around the world. WHO-TV's Emily Carlson broke the story of: "*HEROIC HOUND: Two kittens were left on a rural road to die, but one special dog named Reagan came to the rescue.*" The story went viral and the rest his history. And that's how the world met Skipper 'N Tipper, who, together with their canine friend Reagan, became internet sensations and brought international attention to RVAS. Ironically, Skipper and Tipper were turned away by numerous local shelters...but *not* by RVAS. You can read their entire story at <http://raccoonvalley.com/SN/Bagkitties.html>



And then there was Sandie, a canine with an almost unbelievable story. Pregnant and suffering from a shotgun wound to the face, she was dumped at a shelter where, after giving birth to 9 puppies, she and her babies were infected by the deadly Parvo virus. All 9 puppies were lost, but Sandie managed to recover only to be adopted by a family that elected to confine her to a garage for the next 10 years. Her case of neglect and ignorance went unnoticed by friends of the family, their co-workers and even Sandie's own veterinarian for years. But when RVAS was notified of the situation, we leaped at the chance to save her life! There's more to her story here: <http://raccoonvalley.com/SN/Sandie.html>.



Another memorable case was K.C. A sweet senior dog who found himself alone after his owner passed away. Unable to soothe his brokenhearted spirit, family members made the painstaking decision to search for a better home for K.C., one where he might be happy again. Due to his age, other organizations passed on the chance to help K.C. One organization went so far to tell the family that the only thing they would do was to euthanize the little dog for them. RVAS accepted the challenge and began our re-homing process to find K.C. a new, forever home. Sure enough, a miracle happened when a woman who was desperately searching for a dog to replace one that tragically passed away leaving her father's spirit broken saw K.C. on our website. It turned out they were a perfect match! Now both K.C. and his new owner walk 3 miles a day and are inseparable!

As the year was coming to a close, RVAS was asked to rescue an unknown number of cats and kittens that had been left behind in an unheated garage after their owner passed away. After assessing the situation, RVAS began the slow and painstaking process of *humanely* capturing, removing, vetting, transporting and finding placement for 22+ felines ranging from the ages of 2 months to 2 years all the while keeping the entire operation as stress free for the cats as possible. It wasn't easy, but worth it knowing that we helped fulfill a dying woman's last wish to save the lives of her beloved pets.

In keeping with our mission of helping people keep their pets rather than surrender them to shelters, our trained volunteers have dedicated thousands of hours developing shared solutions with pet owners and their families. We have become leaders with our Rehabilitation Program, utilizing re-homing services only when absolutely necessary. This program has proven to have a direct and positive impact on shelters and rescues by keeping the numbers of relinquishing owners significantly lower and keeping those pets that already have a home, *in their* home!



Incidentally, we are extremely proud to announce that our Director, Linda R. Blakely, was recognized as one of the top 25 most influential [PET PEOPLE OF 2011](#). She's in good company with celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, Justin Bieber, Rachael Ray to name a few.

So, how do you top a year like this?

We'd like to share our leadership in the animal welfare industry when it comes to innovative thinking and finding solutions to save lives, but it takes hard work and dedicated volunteers; and of course, your support! Your [tax-deductible contribution](#) will help us continue making an impact in our communities...and in our State!

Thanks for being there for us ... and the animals we serve.

We Have Living Proof...There *is* a Better Way!