

# KALAMAZOO ANIMAL RESCUE

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## KAR Friends

March 2009

### Dear Reader,

The days are growing longer and spring, accompanied by warmer weather, is just around the corner. Yahoo! With thoughts of nicer days ahead, many people begin to think about adding to their family by adopting a pet.

Our feature story covers the importance of choosing the right pet for your family, especially if you have children. We offer tips on how to teach children to care for pets and interact with them, and how children can grow and develop by experiencing the unconditional love of a furry companion.

Be sure to check out our new column, Behind the Scenes. Each month we will profile one of the many dedicated volunteers who support KAR and our mission to rescue dogs and cats. .

Danielle Wallis  
KAR Marketing Coordinator

Lynn Bolhuis  
KAR Friends Editor

P.S. Last month we addressed the importance of spaying and neutering your pets. With the onset of spring it is crucial to have your pets altered before they can breed to reduce pet overpopulation and improve their health and behavior .

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PET FOR YOUR FAMILY

*Integrating Pets and Kids*

By Danielle Wallis

Adopting a new four-legged friend is an important decision in and of itself, but when you have children it is even more crucial that the animal you select be right for the entire family.

Children need guidance and education on what pet ownership entails, and this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the parents. Children need to realize what it means to own a pet, whether that is day-to-day feeding, the cost of veterinary care or the importance of spaying and neutering an animal. They also need to learn to respect the animal and follow the given do's and don'ts of handling our canine and feline friends.

This article will provide some tips on creating wonderful and loving homes for pets and children to co-exist happily together. After all, we animal lovers know that a human-feline or human-canine bond can be one of total unconditional love, trust and loyalty, something we should all experience at least once in our lives. And, this is a wonderful gift to bestow upon our children and allow them to experience it as well.



## OUR SPONSORS

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT PET FOR YOUR FAMILY** (continued)**How old should my child be before we adopt a pet?**

Many experts suggest that a good age for your children to be before bringing a pet home is six; however, you are the best judge of your child's maturity. Pets and children both need parenting and need to learn how to treat one another. A pet is ultimately the responsibility of the parent and not the child.

**How should my child interact with pets?**

- Prior to selecting a cat or dog for your home make sure you do your research. Our local Humane Society in Kalamazoo, based on South Westnedge, has a huge resource of books and reading material for you to use and even borrow. Encourage your children to read about the particular breed or type of animal you are interested in adopting.
- You can "test" your child's behavior around your neighbor's and friend's houses, making sure that all interaction is entirely supervised, of course. A useful technique to help both you and your child is to see the world through that animal's eyes. Realizing this will mean that you appreciate that every animal, even the most docile creature, has limits and should always be treated with caution and respect.
- Dog bites are the number one public health problem for school-age children and they receive 47 percent of all reported dog bites. Two-thirds of these incidents happen around the child's home and by a dog the child knows. It is very important to instill a few guidelines for children to follow to protect themselves.
- Petting animals too much or when eating, for instance, is not advised. Teach your children to heed warning signs (such as hissing, retreating or growling) that mean the animal would like to be left alone. Animals are entitled to their own space and quiet time just as we all are. As Cesar Millan would say when meeting a new dog, "no touch, no talk, no eye contact and wait for the dog to come to you."
- Good advice would be to ensure that your child always asks permission from the owner of the pet before they are allowed to pet it. Children should always leave an injured pet alone and notify an adult immediately.

**How can my child help care for our pet?**

- Allowing your child to help care for a pet teaches responsibility from a young age and instills a feeling of competency and accomplishment. You can choose age appropriate tasks for your child like selecting a new collar, assisting with grooming or carrying a food bowl. Prior to adopting your new cat or dog, write up a contract of your expectations and have your child sign and agree to assist you.
- If you set an example of being a responsible caregiver, your child will follow in your footsteps. Modeling the proper behavior needs to start before you get a new pet. Prior to bringing a pet home, enforce solid rules regarding pet care. For example, insist that children never pull the animal's tail or ears.
- You can also involve your child in pet-training activities, which will make your pet a well mannered addition to the family and teach your child humane and effective communication techniques.

**Reasons for adopting a pet if you have children:**

1. Pets teach children to be responsible
2. Pets can help children develop discipline

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit the "Events" page on our website for upcoming adoption (and other) events.



### CHOOSING THE RIGHT PET FOR YOUR FAMILY (continued)

3. Pets prepare children for life situations and give them resilience to change
4. Pets can help children learn to deal with medical issues and illnesses
5. Pets teach children how to be respectful and empathetic
6. Pets improve your child's nurturing skills
7. Pets can improve your child's communication skills

Additional Resources:

- ASPCA: [Dog Bite Prevention](#)
- ASPCA: [Kids & Pets](#)
- [Cesar Millan, The Dog Whisperer](#)
- HSUS.org: [Teach Kids to be Kind to Animals](#)
- HSUS.org: [Selecting the Right Pet for Your Family](#)
- [Kaboose.com](#)

### BEHIND THE SCENES

*Volunteer of the Month, Dusty Reeds*

Kalamazoo Animal Rescue's success is due mainly to our volunteers. One of our long standing helpers is Dusty Reeds, who began working with KAR in 1994 as a cat foster. Her love and devotion to animals has resulted in hundreds of cats and dogs being saved and placed in their forever homes. According to Dusty, "the emotional rewards of fostering animals are enormous. There is always something that can be learned from a rescued dog or cat. Each animal is unique and has different needs."



Although she started out fostering cats, Dusty also fosters dogs and has served on KAR's board of directors. Her dedication and desire to help as many animals as possible was the impetus for what has become KAR's biggest fundraising event, the Annual Silent Dinner Action. Dusty's idea for a special event to raise funds to support rescue efforts was birthed over nine years ago. The first event netted \$3,500 to KAR. In 2008, over \$18,000 was raised to help offset expenses for veterinary care, food and other costs associated with rescuing animals.

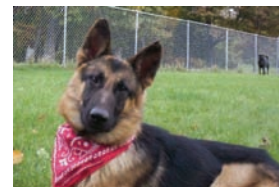
Dusty is no stranger to "working behind the scenes." She is actively involved in the Barn Theatre in Augusta as an associate producer, director and scenic designer. Dusty has called Southwest Michigan home for over fifteen years but has been a devout animal lover her entire life. KAR has benefited greatly from her devotion to saving animals, as have all of the dogs and cats she has rescued over the years.

### DOGGIE DEN

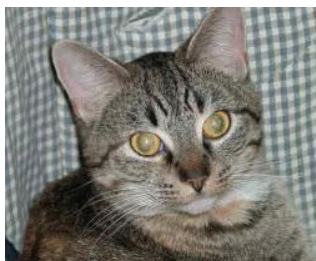
*Shelby the Timid German Shepherd*

By Cassie Keech

I met Shelby, a purebred German Shepherd, three years ago when she was very timid and under socialized. Our first meeting came during a visit to Kalamazoo County Animal Services when I was helping [Save Our Strays](#) take pictures of dogs for the SOS Petfinder web site.



## PETS OF THE MONTH

[Layla](#)[Cinnamon](#)**DOGGIE DEN** (continued)

When we took Shelby out of her cage to take pictures, she just melted into our arms. She was so frightened. Every time we tried to take her picture she would bury her head in our arms. My heart just ached for her. I am a huge German Shepherd lover and I just had to see if I could help her. I knew she would be a challenge because of her fearfulness, but I also new she was worth the time and effort it would take.

I took Shelby into my home as a foster. My husband and I knew we had to be very patient with her. She quickly learned how to play with my dogs and that we only wanted to show her love and kindness. I will never forget the day I was working at the computer when she came over and put her head on my lap. This break through brought tears to my eyes and I cried out of happiness.

I took Shelby to a KAR adoption event at the Wal-Mart on Shaver Road. It was her first pet event and she was very scared. A wonderful family came in to do some stopping and walked over to see our adoptable dogs and cats. They immediately fell in love with Shelby. The Dad had always wanted a German Shepherd and he knew she was the right dog for them. The family had adopted a German Shepherd/Beagle mix a few years earlier and had a Golden Retriever too. The family was committed to continue working with Shelby. The Mom worked out of the home and could devote the necessary time.

Fast forward three years to the present. I just received a wonderful update on Shelby, who is now called Luna. The Rincon family and Luna are doing great! Luna is thriving in her new home. She is loving and playful towards everyone. Luna has come a long way and has learned to trust humans. The Rincon family are "big believers in adopting rescue/pound animals" and they feel that they make the "most wonderful pets." They recently adopted a cat from Animal Services who is "best buds with Luna!"

In the update, the family wrote: "Thank you again for seeing the potential in a very scared and scarred little girl. She is a treasure and a joy. Your work is invaluable and we are forever grateful."

It is families like this that keep me doing volunteer work and fostering dogs. I do puppy fostering now, and they are mostly German Shepherd mixes.

**CANINE THOUGHTS**

*In order to really enjoy a dog, one doesn't merely try to train him to be semi-human. The point of it is to open oneself to the possibility of becoming partly a dog. ~ Edward Hoagland*

*I think dogs are the most amazing creatures; they give unconditional love. For me they are the role model for being alive. ~ Gilda Radner*

*I like a bit of mongrel myself, whether it's a man or a dog; they're the best for everyday. ~ George Bernard Shaw*

## KAR LINKS

- ADOPT a [Kitten, Cat](#) or [Dog](#)
- [VOLUNTEER](#)
- Become a [FOSTER FAMILY](#)
- [Senior Cat Companions](#)
- KAR [Website](#)



Make a [DONATION!](#)

## CAT'S CORNER

*Tips for Transporting Your Cat*

By Anne Pancella



As a cat foster, I have transported hundreds of cats to and from veterinarian appointments and adoption events over the years. I'd like to share a few tips I've learned that might make life a little easier for you and your cat the next time you have to transport him.

Typically, the first challenge is getting the cat to go into the carrier. Cats are not stupid -- they see you walk into the room with the carrier, know what is coming, and head for their safe zone under the bed. In anticipation of this, I try to move the carrier into the cat's room the night before and position it near where the cat usually sleeps, leaving the carrier door open. This way, I don't arouse the cat's suspicions with unusual motions or noises when the time comes to put him in it. I try to sweep the cat up and put it in the carrier quickly and firmly before it knows what is happening. This is easiest if you have a top-loading carrier. I can't speak highly enough of top-loading carriers. Lowering a cat into a wide-top opening is so much easier than squeezing it through a smaller front door. And, it is also much easier to get the cat out of a top-loader, especially at the vet's office. These carriers are worth the extra money.

If you only have a front loading carrier, and the cat resists going in it, I recommend securely tipping the carrier up on its back end, door facing the ceiling, and lowering the cat in feet first. Be careful not to crush his paws when you close the door. This maneuver may require two humans.

I always put a towel or blanket in the bottom of the carrier. If the cat gets nervous and pees in the carrier, the towel will soak most of it up and he won't have to sit in it.

In the car, the safest place for the carrier is in a foot well or on one of the seats with a seat belt securing the carrier. I am strong believer that cats travel better if they can't see out the window, so I usually cover the carrier with a towel or blanket. This has the added benefit of muffling some of that pitiful crying that many cats are prone to make while in the car.

Why do cats cry so much in the car? I think it is motion sickness, combined with irritation at being confined. Have you noticed that many cats will stop crying when you are stopped at a light? This indicates to me that they don't like the motion of the car.

It is common sense, but I must add that letting the cat loose in the car is an awful idea, as is trying to transport a cat without a carrier. I'm still surprised at how many people I see walk in and out of vet's offices carrying their cats in their arms. A sudden noise, or a strange animal could spook the cat and they could take off, never to be seen again. At the very least, if you don't have a carrier on hand, put the cat in a pillowcase and knot the top shut and carry the cat in that. I know it sounds strange, but it works fairly well.

Soft-sided carriers have the benefit of being lightweight, but if you use one, make sure all the zippers are secure. Some cats can push these zippers open from the inside and escape. If you have a cardboard carrier, make sure it doesn't get wet (from inside or outside) or the cardboard could fail, and make sure you have followed the assembly directions closely.

Other people probably have their own ideas about what works best for transporting cats, but these tips have worked for me. I hope they help you, too.

**CONTACT US**

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Visit our [website](#)

[Questions or  
suggestions](#) for the  
newsletter?

**CAT'S CORNER** (continued)

Additional Resources:

- [CatHealth.com](#)
- [PurrfectCatBehavior.com](#)

**FELINE THOUGHTS**

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*There is something about the presence of a cat...that seems to take the bite out of being alone.* ~ Louis J. Camuti

*Are we really sure the purring is coming from the kitty and not from our very own hearts?* ~ Emme Woodhull-Bäche

*The cat is the only animal which accepts the comforts but rejects the bondage of domesticity.* ~ Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon

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**About Us**

Kalamazoo Animal Rescue is an all-volunteer, federally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded in 1991 and is funded entirely through private donations.

KAR is dedicated to providing refuge to homeless, stray and abandoned cats and dogs in Southwest Michigan.

Our volunteers give their time and energy to the efforts of rescuing animals and helping them to find permanent homes.