



Committed to Caring *Joe's Story*

For more than 20 years, I was an active board member and founder of a charitable organization devoted to raising funds to support research to find a cure for a life threatening children's medical condition. Then, about 2 years ago, I decided that I needed to devote myself to some other form of charitable activity—something completely different.

Ironically, I used to drive home from work every night passing The Anti-Cruelty Society without ever really noticing it. Then one evening, it hit me like a lightning bolt. I bet I could do something there.

Although I am a very busy lawyer, I spend several hours each week at the shelter working with the dogs. No matter how tired I am when I get there, or how much else is on my plate, I completely lose myself in the activity, and I am completely uplifted by it. Who would have thought I could get such a charge from cleaning up poop?

My most special experience occurred this past summer when I befriended a female pit bull mix named Lily. I met Lily when I went to take her out of her kennel to walk her for the first time. I was so focused on getting her leash on and getting her out to the courtyard without incident that I did not realize until about 5 minutes later that Lily had only three legs. I later learned that our veterinarians had to remove her right hind leg because when Lily came in, it was fractured so badly that it could not be saved.

Lily and I bonded through the summer. In addition to my regular schedule, I made special visits to the shelter to see her at lunch, and I worked very hard to try to find someone to adopt her. Then, one Friday afternoon, I went to the shelter and noticed that Lily was not in her usual kennel in the corner by the window.

When I went looking for her, I found her in the courtyard with a lovely young lady. When I told the lady that she was hanging out with my favorite dog, she replied that Lily was her favorite dog, too, and that she was there to adopt Lily.

At that moment, I felt the tears well up in my eyes. It was an incredibly emotional moment that I constantly think back on as a source of hope and optimism. In a small way, it reinforced my belief in the notion that anything is possible.

Needless to say, I miss Lily. But, she has a wonderful home. I have been in touch with her mom and have seen many happy pictures on Lily's personal Facebook page. I keep one of those pictures in my office, along with the following quote from Lily (or perhaps her mom):

"Being a three-legged dog poses its challenges. But I take those challenges and make memories for my friends. Ones that they can always smile back on after I am long gone over the Rainbow Bridge. Like the way that I try to kick my one back leg after I poop. The way I use bushes and trees to help keep me balanced. The way I can run faster than many of my four legged friends! The way I can hop better than anyone I know! So if I can do it, anyone can! Make your challenges into great memories. Ones that you can smile back on. Pibble Kisses, Lily & hearts."

It inspires me.

Written by Joe Yastrow

Interested in joining the volunteer team? Visit our website:
www.anticruelty.org/get-involved

Alternative Volunteer Opportunities

Service Learning for Teens:

The Anti-Cruelty Society offers a wide range of home or classroom-based service learning projects for teens. They are ideal for students in need of service learning hours, scouting troops looking to earn a badge, and teachers in search of a classroom project. Projects are broken into categories by activities that take 10, 20, 30, and 40 hours to complete, letting participants mix and match to suit their needs and interests. From crafting toys to hosting ice cream socials, there are lots of ways teens can help The Anti-Cruelty Society.

Do It Yourself Donations:

Whether you're a professional on the go or a senior citizen looking to give back to the community, Do It Yourself Donations are a great way to get involved without the full-time commitment! Volunteers can enrich the lives of shelter pets by creating fun crafts from home. From no-sew to crochet, we have a variety of tutorials that will help you create, and then donate, toys for the animals at the Society.

Street Team:

This group of animal-loving volunteers works closely with our marketing team to get the word out about upcoming events, campaigns, and advocacy calls. Volunteers help spread our message of caring across the internet using social media and throughout the community by hanging posters. If you find yourself short on time, but with a passion for helping homeless pets, this is a great way to get involved.

Special Events:

If you're interested in representing The Anti-Cruelty Society in off-site events, consider training to be a Special Events volunteer. In this role, people from the community act as ambassadors for our organization by attending mixers, outreach parties, and other social meet-ups on our behalf. It's a great way to meet other animal-lovers while helping us spread the message of our commitment to caring.