

# Mercy Mission For Pets

Nonprofit offers health care, adoptions for animals in need

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The 2-year old Rottweiler loves to be a couch potato, but she wouldn't mind going for a walk if her new owner asks her to do so. Lexi leads a happy life with Kathryn McDonald of Valley Cottage, playing with her new best friend, Maxx, a 3-year old Pomeranian.

Lexi, an 85-pound dog with a friendly attitude and healthy coat, had spent days in a Brooklyn shelter before she came to McDonald's home about five months ago.

During the time when Lexi was looking for a new home and even after she was adopted by McDonald, Lexi has been under the care of animal lovers, including Shari Bach, a founder of Paws Unlimited. The nonprofit organization provides health care, food, and shelter for animals in need.

Bach, a Pomona resident, said that before Lexi was adopted, her organization paid for the dog's medical expenses, including the cost for spaying. Paws Unlimited would be responsible for Lexi's medical expenses for the rest of her life, Bach said.

"The reason that I do this is to thank (McDonald) for taking the dog," Bach said. "She did a great thing by bringing another pet in. And it costs money. If someone is saving lives, I'm going to do what I can."

The organization received its non-profit status in 2003, but Bach's work to rescue animals have more than a decade of history.

Last year, the organization provided medical support for animals that were displaced from their homes because of Hurricane Katrina.

Local veterinarians would contact Bach if they had pet owners who could not afford their pets' medical expenses, Bach said.

In addition to paying for medical costs for animals in need, Bach said, she also had worked to find new homes for more than two dozen cats and dogs who were abandoned by their original owners. When she transfers animals to new owners, she makes sure that the pets get necessary medical treatments and the owners are trained to take care of them.

Like Bach did for Lexi one day this week, she regularly visits the animals in their new homes to see if they have everything they need.

"I've never met a more generous person in my life," McDonald said of Bach. "When it comes to animals, she would do anything."

Paws Unlimited activities are financed by Bach, who works mainly from home for a real estate company based in Manhattan.

"I don't need anything. I have a house. I'm healthy. Everything I do is for animals," Bach said.

Everybody has a passion, and mine happens to be animals."

To realize her dream project -- building a new animal shelter on a 15 acre vacant lot in Kingston -- Bach said she had been saving up the donations that the organization received. She also is applying for grants, although she hasn't yet received any. "It's going to be a place where animals can be comfortable until they find a home," Bach said. "So we can help a lot more animals like Lexi."

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