

Cinderella Pet Rescue

Agency Profile

Everyone loves to hear a good fairy tale, especially when there is a happy ending. We all want to hear "...and they lived happily ever after". No matter what trials and tribulations the main characters experience, as long as they are rewarded with happiness in the end, the story turns out the way we think it should. Regretfully, too many animals will only suffer and never get the chance to have any happiness, much less, a happy ending to their story of misery.

If you spend any time in Hidalgo County, or any South Texas county, you will see a lot of stray animals wandering alone or in small groups. Dogs and cats are dumped daily. You cannot drive down a street or road without noticing the skinny, mangy dogs searching for something to eat. The humane society in Hidalgo County, Palm Valley Animal Shelter, receives about 40,000 animals each year with 80% of them being euthanized. Regretfully, most animals taken there face a death sentence. Too many animals have been left suffering along the road or picked up only to be put to sleep. There have been too few happy endings for these poor animals.

A small group of individuals were motivated to make a difference in our community, to find a way to help more animals experience safety, good health, and hopefully, some happiness. They wanted to provide abused, abandoned and relinquished animals a chance at happy endings to their stories. Various people contributed ideas to develop an organization that could make a tangible difference in the lives of many animals and have a positive impact on the community in general.

Each of the original members of the Board of Directors were actively involved in the organization. The driving force behind Cinderella Pet Rescue is the president of the Board and the individual who acts as Director, Suzanne Herzing. She has donated her time, money and use of her facility to help the animals. With close to 20 years experience in social services, working with human problems (child protective services, family violence, sexual assault, and chemical dependency treatment) and in administration, she has brought a wealth of knowledge to the program. Luckily for the animals in Hidalgo County she has turned her expertise to animal welfare. Always having had a houseful of dogs and cats, Ms. Herzing has been an animal lover since childhood. Now she spends well over forty hours per week working to help the wards of Cinderella Pet Rescue have a chance at a happy ever after tale. Often fostering more up to 20 dogs in her own home, she definitely takes her volunteer work seriously.

There are currently no actual employees of Cinderella Pet Rescue. But, in order to ensure consistency and quality care of the animals, Ms. Herzing personally pays employees to feed them and clean the facility on a daily basis. Thankfully, there are many loyal volunteers who actively participate on a regular basis at Cinderella Pet Rescue's shelter. They do a variety of duties like walking dogs or socializing cats. Others transport animals and/or help out at adoption events. As the volunteer pool grows, more individuals are contributing their own special talents. One volunteer did fundraising by offering items on eBay to generate money to help with the significant overhead and veterinary expense. With lots of "fairy godparents" the goals of Cinderella Pet Rescue are increasingly being met. Yet the needs are many and the resources too limited.

In order to seek support for the services being offered at Cinderella Pet Rescue, the founders chose to incorporate as a non-profit in Texas. And to insure the program was started correctly, the federal application to obtain the 501(c)3 designation was submitted in 2008. By the time the official letter was received showing Cinderella Pet Rescue as a non-profit, more than 25 dogs had been accumulated and were being housed at Indian Ridge Equestrian Center. Use of the space is still being donated until Cinderella Pet Rescue can afford to rent it or build a new facility somewhere else. With several barns, most stalls were converted into kennels. Areas were fenced off into yards for daily turn out. With no source of income, everything was donated or borrowed. However, during the first year of operation over 150 dogs were adopted as well as more than a dozen cats.

Between the numerous website listings and taking pets to PetSmart in North McAllen, more animals are being exposed to potential new homes. At these adoption events, the Cinderella Bus is parked and pens and are filled with dogs and cats for prospective adopters to meet. Applications are accepted for committee review and home visits are scheduled for potential adopters.

However, before the animals are ready to go to PetSmart or even be listed on the CPR website (www.cinderella-pet-rescue.org) they go through an elaborate process. Upon arrival, each animal is examined, weighed, bathed, dewormed and vaccinated. Their health issues are addressed by the Director. If their condition needs further professional expertise the animal is taken to a veterinarian. All new animals are maintained in an isolation area for at least 10 days, (21 for puppies), to insure they do not have any contagious condition. As soon as they are healthy enough, the animal is scheduled to be spayed/neutered. During this process dogs are tested for heartworms and tick borne diseases (Ehrlichiosis, Anaplasma & Lyme disease). Cats are tested for Feline Leukemia and FIV. All age appropriate animals receive their rabies vaccination at that

time or as soon as they are old enough. The animals remain in a recovery area at the shelter until they are ready to join the general population.

At Cinderella Pet Rescue dogs are typically kept in pairs. The combinations are switched regularly to insure good socialization. Some dogs spend half their day in a kennel and half their day outdoors in large runs (average 25'X75'). Volunteers also spend time walking dogs and socializing them.

Following the isolation period and vetting, healthy adult cats are generally introduced into the cat room (12'X24") that was originally two stalls now converted into one enclosure. Kittens are typically kept in foster homes until they are big enough to join the adult cats if they are not adopted first.

As a no-kill shelter, Cinderella Pet Rescue has cats that have been there since the program opened. Additionally, there are also dogs that still have not been adopted. These are typically special needs animals or pets with behavioral issues. However, it is the philosophy of Cinderella Pet Rescue that every pet deserves a happy ending and so each pet is provided with as much love and attention as possible while at the shelter. Hopefully there will be a castle found for every "Prince Charming" and all the "Cinderellas" at the shelter. At Cinderella Pet Rescue we want every animal to have their hairy tail fairy tale come true.

Because of Cinderella Pet Rescue many pets have actually experienced their "happy ever after" life. One example involves a big German Shepherd, Ricky. He was brought to Cinderella Pet Rescue along with another dog by a volunteer who had seen them at a construction area. They were covered with mange and starving. Ricky's feet were so infected that he could barely walk. They were the size of saucers and oozing puss. But he had such a sweet temperament he willingly was carried to the wash rack each day where he received his bath and had his feet soak in basins. After several months of medication and daily treatment, Ricky gained weight and began to enjoy his life.

A lady from central Texas saw the picture of another German Shepherd that had been available for adoption through Cinderella Pet Rescue and made contact about the adoption process. Because that dog had already been adopted the Director of CPR mentioned Ricky to the lady. She wanted pictures and more information. Within a few days, she had fallen in love with a dog she hadn't even met. He looked like her pet of 20 years ago and had the characteristics that she was looking for. She and her husband of fifty years were coming back to Hidalgo County to renew their wedding vows. She wanted to meet Ricky and have him be her "wedding/anniversary" present. The Director made arrangements with another rescue group to do a home visit and spoke to the veterinarian that the couple had used in the past. Everything looked great and the

couple scheduled to come to Cinderella Pet Rescue after their wedding ceremony. When they arrived, it was love at first sight. Ricky seemed to sense it too as he gave her a big hug. A local newspaper documented the event and wrote a story about the Cinderella story that came true. His new owner changed his name to "Prince" as he was now her Prince Charming. Regular reports and pictures are received from his happy owners. A pathetic Ricky came to Cinderella Pet Rescue weighing 36 pounds and left as a prince who now weighs 80. He is loved and spoiled by his family. His hair tail fairy tale came true and Prince is living happily ever after.

Another situation involved a special little Chihuahua. Buggy came to us after being picked up in a neighborhood where he had been abandoned. He had been sitting on the sidewalk for a few days and was weak and frightened. During the intake process it became clear he was about 10 years old and totally blind. In spite of his inability to see, Buggy had a sweet loving nature. He tolerated all of the doctoring and treatment necessary to get him healthy and ready for adoption. Being an older dog with special needs, his chances of being adopted were pretty slim. And yet, when Buggy got neutered the vet tech fell in love with him. When he was brought back to have his teeth cleaned, it was her birthday and she spoke about how much she loved Buggy. Soon he got to go home with her to join her husband and two female Chihuahuas. As if this isn't enough of a happy ending, something miraculous happened. Normally sleeping quietly through the night in bed with the couple, one night Buggy became distraught. He started whining and dancing around the husband's head. He was licking him and poking him to wake him up. When Buggy finally aroused the couple, the husband was disoriented and checked his blood sugar. He had been on the verge of a diabetic coma. According to the wife, if Buggy had not awakened them when he did, her husband would probably have died during the night. She believes that Buggy was a gift from God sent to look after them; their very own knight in shining armor.

Because of Cinderella Pet Rescue, many animals have been saved from starvation, abuse, or euthanasia. And a lot of people have found their forever friends with wagging tails and slobbery kisses. One animal at a time, Cinderella Pet Rescue is trying to make hairy tail fairy tales come true so that more pets will get to live happily ever after.