

Nuts About Mutts

Walk into the factory of Modernica, the Los Angeles-based business specializing in reissues of enduring furniture designs by the likes of Eames and Nelson, and you'll find another lovable classic. This one can be found curled up under a desk or making leisurely rounds of the production floor with Modernica's general manager, Lori Weise. Sinbad, a shepherd mix now comfortably in his senior stride, was abandoned six years ago among the factories and homeless encampments that define this rough-and-tumble section of downtown Los Angeles.

Back in 1998, Weise and plant manager Richard Tuttlemondo recognized that the neighborhood's mistreated and abandoned dogs contributed to an unbridled pet population, which in heavily trafficked downtown meant many died from traffic accidents or were found injured on construction sites, and decided to take action by extending themselves and their love for animals into the local community. They gained the trust of the area's largest group of pet owners, the homeless, by offering

food to their dogs, education about animal reproduction rates, and a helping hand. "Homeless people really love their pets, but they just don't have the resources to take care of them in the same way we might," says Weise.

With newfound street cred the two began taking strays and pets to a local veterinarian to be spayed or neutered. It was the start of Downtown Dog Rescue. Today, the small operation that Weise and Tuttlemondo started is affiliated with the nonprofit Friends for Animals and offers a growing list of health, training, and placement services that includes clinics four times a month for pets and their owners at Modernica.

The dog packs along the freeway off-ramps are not gone, but they have diminished, a sign that Weise and Tuttlemondo's work is paying off. But success hasn't slowed Downtown Dog Rescue and its founders can still be found plying the back alleys and wide boulevards around Modernica looking for animals in need, knowing that change happens one dog at a time. ■



Lori Weise and Richard Tuttlemondo rest easy knowing they are able to help their furry friends like Sinbad, at left.