

Downtown's Heroine to Homeless Companions

Sometimes, Lori Weise, co-founder of Los Angeles' Downtown Dog Rescue, wonders why she spends all her extra time seeking out homeless dog owners under bridges and on inner-city train tracks to offer them free dog food and veterinary care.

From time to time, she has questioned her rationale when a crack addict is threatening her life after she found a better home for the person's battered dog. After all, the crack addicts can present great danger and, yes, it can be downright heartbreaking when she saves a pup from Parvo... only to learn that the dog died later after being hit by a car.

But, just when Weise says "no more dogs" because the rescue is at full capacity, a pup like Brandy—found in an Eagle Rock dumpster, covered in glue and her shoulder broken—comes along and kisses her on the face.

"It does get overwhelming when there are no adoptions for three months and two new puppies," Weise says. "Or, the dog fights make me think, 'Why am I doing this, when I'm covered in blood and I have dogs in the vet.' Then I see Abby [a Dome Village survivor who lived through rat poisoning] getting adopted, or I meet some really nice homeless people, and I know it's worth it."

Weise and Richard Tuttelmondo, who both work at the downtown Modernica furniture plant, first began the volunteer program about seven years ago after witnessing the plight of downtown's homeless dog owners.

On the mean streets of Skid Row, there are no places for a stray to find a water bowl and far fewer people to come to the aid of a wounded dog. Some homeless people, however, offer an accessible home to the city's strays, which, in turn, provide their owners with protection and companionship.

"Many people think they should res-

BY ANDREA SERCU

cue the dogs from the homeless, but these dogs give the people purpose," says volunteer Nixon Andrews. "To take them away from the schizophrenic or the depressed person would be a crime. What Lori does is make it possible for these dogs to have good health and a better life, while also helping the homeless."

Only abused dogs and puppies, which face a virtual "death sentence" on the streets, are offered for adoption on the rescue's Web site (www.downtowndogrescue.org) and every Saturday at the Pasadena Petco. Weise also provides the homeless with food, medical attention, bail for dogs picked up by animal control and, for those willing to work, with jobs at the downtown factory.

If you'd like to help, visit www.friendsforanimals.org and click on "Downtown Dog Rescue" for more information.

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