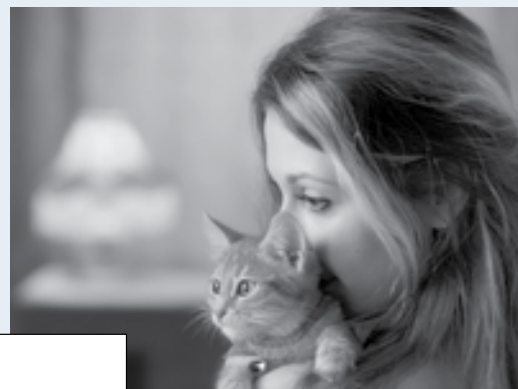


RedRover Relief Program Helps Animals – and Women – in Crisis



By Esperanza Zuniga

“There are so many victims in abusive relationships who don’t leave home because they have nowhere for their pets to go,” said Diedra Davis of the Resource and Crisis Center of Galveston County, Inc. in Texas. “To know that their pets are in a safe place is such a relief. RedRover’s help is potentially lifesaving.”

Last July, a domestic violence shelter in California encountered a situation that was too big to handle: two horses belonging to a woman escaping an abusive living environment. Although the shelter was equipped to house cats, dogs and small animals on site, it lacked the facilities to accommodate horses owned by people seeking refuge.

But turning away the woman and her children – all of whom would benefit from being able to keep their beloved pets, regardless of size – was not an option for this shelter.

Shelter staffer Lori was referred to RedRover, a national animal welfare nonprofit, by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). Upon receiving Lori’s inquiry, RedRover issued a \$500 grant, enough to cover the horses’ boarding for one month at a local rescue.

This case is just one example of many, which is why RedRover has initiated programs to bring direct relief to victims of domestic violence and their pets.

According to the NCADV, more than 70 percent of pet-owning women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their batterer had injured, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or psychological control. As many as 48 percent of domestic violence victims are unable to escape their abusers because they fear what will happen to their pets when they leave.

Because so few shelters have the ability to accommodate pets, victims often feel like they only have two options when it comes to their animals: to leave them behind or to remain with their pets and endure continued abuse.

While the need to include pets in domestic violence services is strong, only a fraction of the 2,500 shelters in the United States report having the ability to house animals on site, according to Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T), a national initiative that guides family violence shelters on how to welcome families with their pets.

RedRover offers two grant programs to address this issue:

- **Safe Escape grants** offer timely financial support to enable victims and their pets to leave abusive homes. Grants, up to \$500, are available on a case-by-case basis throughout the United States and may be used to pay for emergency boarding and veterinary care. For safety reasons, applications must be submitted online by a case worker or domestic violence shelter representative.
- **Safe Housing grants** enable shelters to create space so that pets can be housed on site. Grants, up to \$3,000, are offered on a one-time basis throughout the United States. RedRover partners with SAF-T to help shelters implement the program.

In 2012, RedRover attended the NCADV conference and partnered with organizations like SAF-T and the National Link Coalition to raise awareness about the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty.



Safe Escape grants: Providing peace of mind

Due to increased awareness, RedRover experienced a significant increase in the number of incoming applications for the Safe Escape grant program last year. They received 61 applications for domestic violence victims seeking to escape abuse with their pets in 2012 compared to 27 in 2011. Fifty-five animals were sheltered through the Safe Escape program in 2012, bringing the total nights of pet sheltering provided through the program to 1,500.

In one case, RedRover awarded a \$300 grant to a woman seeking a protective order against her husband, who had threatened to drive her cats into the woods and abandon them. Another applicant finally found the courage to leave her abusive husband, but said she would sleep in her car before she gave up her 12-year-old pug.

A grant recipient wrote to RedRover, "My dog is everything to me; she is all I have left in my life. She is my baby ... You are a wonderful organization to help people in need, at a rough time in their life. You were God sent to me I feel. I can't express my thanks enough. Thank you again."

Safe Housing grants: Keeping families together

In 2012, RedRover distributed a total of \$10,000 in grants to six domestic violence shelters through their newly created Safe Housing grant program. Funds will be used to help the shelters create space to house pets on site with their families, a much-needed solution for families facing domestic abuse.

The following shelters received grant awards in December 2012:

- Alle-Kiski Area Hope Center, Inc. in Tarentum, Pa.
- Blue Water Safe Horizons in Port Huron, Mich.
- Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter in Parker, Ariz.
- Metropolitan Center for Women and Children, Inc. in Jefferson, La.
- Safe Harbor of Northeast Kentucky, in Ashland, Ky.
- Shelter House, Inc. in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

"By supporting shelters with the start-up costs needed to provide on-site pet accommodations, we are creating a more sustainable model so pets can reach safety with their families and provide emotional support for years to come," said Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President and CEO. "RedRover's Safe Housing grants make it possible for victims to receive lifesaving sheltering services, reassured that their pets are protected."

According to grant recipient Deniese Perez, Executive Director of the Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter, "We frequently have women who are reluctant or refuse to leave unless they can take their pets with them call or come to us for shelter. Pets are an important part of their support systems and families; they just need an appropriate place at our shelter. This grant will mean so much to the families we shelter."



RedRover is partnering with SAF-T to work toward the goal of having at least one pet-friendly domestic violence shelter in each state by 2015. Approximately six to eight grants are available in 2013. Applications are due on May 15 and October 30. Learn more about eligibility requirements at www.redrover.org/domestic.

RESOURCES

RedRover provides additional information and direct links to resources at www.redrover.org/dvresources. Find domestic violence programs offering both off-site and on-site sheltering for victims and their pets:

Ahimsa House: Safe Havens Directory
[www.ahimsahouse.org/directory]
(off-site housing for pets)

Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)™:

Directory of Participating Shelters
[www.animalsandfamilies.org/shelters]
(on-site housing for pets)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
[www.thehotline.org]

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [www.ncadv.org]

National Link Coalition
[www.nationallinkcoalition.org]





Founded in 1987, RedRover focuses on bringing animals out of crisis and strengthening the bond between people and animals through a variety of programs, including emergency sheltering, disaster relief services, financial assistance and education:

RedRover Responders volunteers shelter and care for animals displaced by natural disasters, hoarding cases and other significant abuse situations.

RedRover Readers trains educators and volunteers to help children explore positive relationships between people and animals through stories and discussion.

RedRover Relief provides guidance and financial assistance to help pet owners, animal rescuers and good samaritans obtain lifesaving veterinary care.

RedRover Reporters helps local agencies prosecute animal abusers by offering strategically placed financial incentives to encourage witnesses of animal abuse to come forward.

RedRover is based in Sacramento, California.

Learn more at www.redrover.org.

