

## All In The Family

**Read another touching Rescue of the Month story about the Grant County Humane Society and Suzy.**

*By Justin W. Sanders*

Suzy On a spring 2004 evening, a badly injured, black-and-orange kitten appeared on a gas station's doorstep in Elbow Lake, Minn. The kitten was rushed to the local Grant County Humane Society (GCHS).

"She should have been euthanized, the way they found her," remembers Janet Nitke, the tiny shelter's lone employee. "She had a broken pelvis in three places. [The veterinary staff] had to amputate."

Sadly, GCHS lacked the funds for such a procedure. Heartbroken, Nitke called her daughter in Denver for solace, Denise Rouse. She also emailed Rouse pictures of the young cat with one leg sticking out at an unnatural angle. Rouse was moved to take action.

"When I saw that leg," Rouse says, "I decided I was going to take up donations in Denver to get her surgery."

To raise money, Rouse set out change jars at businesses and resold thrift store collectibles for a profit. Soon, she raised more than \$700 for GCHS and the surgery. The kitten emerged from the operation healthy and active.

"They got her all fixed up," Rouse says. "Then I went and got her."

### Just Incredible

Almost two years later, Rouse reports happily on the rescued cat's health, whom she's dubbed Suzy.

"Suzy is the most wonderful pussycat on the face of the earth," she says. "She has got more personality than a hundred people I know, and she gets along great on that leg. She's just incredible."

Rouse's experience with Suzy was so positive that she continued her long-distance involvement with the GCHS shelter, joining her mother in the ongoing struggle to get cats and dogs off the streets.

### Family Ties

Founded in 1998 by local Deborah Boeddeker, GCHS is a shining example of what happens when a community bands together. With no facility of its own, the shelter's entire roster of dogs and cats receives foster care, and is housed and cared for by a loyal crew of 12 volunteers, including one veterinary technician.

"We're hoping to grow, but the fact that we are small limits us with grants," Nitke says. "But we'll keep trying. It'd be nice to get them all under one roof."

In the meantime, Nitke, a lively 72-year-old, continues providing caring pets like Suzy with loving homes, transporting GCHS animals to Petco and other adoption venues on the weekends and posting their profiles on the Internet. Her daughter, Rouse, travels up from Colorado periodically to work the shelter's booth at the annual state fair and participate in other fundraising functions. Even without a home base, their efforts helped 38 of 40 cats and kittens find homes in 2005.

Justin Wescoat Sanders is a freelance writer living in Portland, Ore., with two cats, Purrlina and Squeak.

### How You Can Help

Want to donate or volunteer with the Grant County Humane Society? Here's how you can contact the shelter:

Grant County Humane Society (GCHS)  
P.O. Box 3  
Elbow Lake, MN 56531  
(218) 685-6220