

CatChannel Exclusive: Meet Authors Linda and Allen Anderson

Learn more about the inspiration behind their latest book *Rescued: Saving Animals from Disaster*.

By Stacy N. Hackett

(From left to right) Sparkle perches on Linda Anderson while she holds Cuddles. Taylor poses next to Allen Anderson. Sunshine perches on Allen. (Photo courtesy of Linda Anderson) Why did you write *Rescued: Saving Animals from Disaster*?

There is an underground world of animal rescuers that most people don't know exists, yet their stories and experiences are remarkable. These generous souls do good work everyday — bringing joy, comfort and compassion to people and animals. We hope our book will draw positive public attention and help animal rescue organizations find volunteers, donors and new staff so they can continue serving so unselfishly.

The experiences after Hurricane Katrina provide a portal into how animal rescue works, because this disaster was followed by the largest animal rescue operation in history. We were determined not to lose the wisdom that volunteers, organizations and individuals gained for how to protect animals and save animal family members. We wanted to offer the most current and practical information possible to save lives in the future.

What was one of the most touching anecdotes you heard while compiling information for *Rescued: Saving Animals from Disaster*?

One of our favorites was in the chapter called "Katrina to Katrina." Truck drivers, a reporter, residents of a Midwest community and New Orleans' Hurricane Katrina victims worked to save the life of Kitty-Kat, who made it through the hurricane with his human companion, Keith. When Keith was brought to a bus, carrying only a small bag of belongings and Kitty-Kat, the driver wouldn't take him, because his company didn't allow pets on its buses. A truck driver offered to take the cat with him on his truck so Keith could reunite with his wife, Barbara. Kitty-Kat traveled thousands of miles and was helped by hundreds of strangers. At the end of this story, the family reunited with Kitty-Kat through the help of the last truck driver who had him. Her name was, ironically, Katrina.

What is your writing process?

We conceptualize, research and organize our projects together. For the series of anthologies, we hold a contest to gather stories from all over the world. We work from outlines and take turns writing first drafts of individual chapters. Allen specializes in interviewing and following up with people whose stories will be in our books. Linda does much of the editing and works with editors and publicists at the publishing company.

What has been the feedback on *Rescued: Saving Animals from Disaster* so far?

It won the USA Best Books National Book Award in the Animals/Pets category. *Rescued: Saving Animals from Disaster* is recommended by the American Humane Association, Best Friends Animal Society, United Animal Nations, ASPCA, PetSmart Charities and Pets 911, among many other organizations.

Do you own a cat (or cats)? Tell us about them.

We are owned by two cats, Cuddles and Speedy. We adopted Cuddles, a black and white tuxedo, from an animal shelter. Because she has so many opinions, we gave her an advice column in our book, *Angel Cats*. Our tri-colored tabby cat Speedy was an abused kitten. He remains somewhat shy, but he is an alpha cat and rules the house very serenely.

Do your pets influence your writing?

Our cocker spaniel, Leaf; cockatiel, Sunshine; and cats, Cuddles and Speedy, are our inspirations. We learn so much by watching their interactions. The animals are usually nearby while we write, with Cuddles sprawled out on top of the computer monitor and the dog and Speedy at our feet. Sunshine sings to us and watches from his perch.

Were certain parts of the book more difficult to write than others? Which ones?

As we listened to rescuers tell us about their experiences, we were often moved to tears by their painful memories and frustrations. They typically felt that because so many animals need rescuing, they couldn't do enough. We would remind them of the starfish story. It goes like this:

A little boy walked along the beach where thousands of starfish, as far as the eye could see, had been tossed ashore by ocean waves. He picked up starfishes one at a time and threw them back into the sea. A man watched for a while and then asked the boy why he was spending so much time and effort rescuing starfishes when there were too many for anyone to save. The little boy held up one starfish before returning it to the ocean and said, "It matters to this starfish."

So it is with the gargantuan tasks of animal rescue — it matters to this starfish.

Stacy N. Hackett is a contributing web editor for CatChannel.com and the former editor of *Pet Product News* magazine. She lives in Southern California with her husband, James, children, Kayla and Parker, and two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Evita and Carson.

In May 2007's *CAT FANCY*:

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