

ASPCA Announces 2007 Humane Award Winners

Winnie the cat and Toby the dog are among the winners who will receive awards on Nov. 1.

Posted: October 5, 2007 5 a.m. EDT

When Cathy Keesling rescued Winnie, a days-old kitten, from a farm 14 years ago, she didn't know that the domestic shorthair would someday return the favor. In March 2007, carbon monoxide fumes seeped into Keesling's home from a water pump in the basement. Sensing something wrong, Winnie roused Keesling from sleep by meowing loudly and repeatedly. Keesling called 911, and paramedics revived her husband and son, who were unconscious in their bedrooms. The entire family recovered.

Because of her brave efforts to save her family, Winnie will receive the ASPCA 2007 Cat of the Year Award at a special luncheon on Nov. 1, 2007, at the Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center in New York City. The following animals and individuals will join Winnie in recognition of their heroic actions and their work on behalf of animals: ASPCA Dog of the Year: Toby, a 2-year-old Golden Retriever who performed the Heimlich Manuever on his choking owner, Debbie Parkhurst. ASPCA Kid of the Year: Rachel Distefano, a 12-year-old girl who works long hours to save horses and ponies from slaughter. ASPCA Firefighter of the Year: William H. Smith III, a New York City firefighter with Ladder 58, who rescued a small dog and cat from an apartment fire in June 2007. ASPCA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year: Deputy Dwight Sloan, animal cruelty investigator for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, who investigated the shooting death of Champ, a 5-year-old Palomino horse, and eventually arrested the teen responsible. ASPCA Henry Bergh Award: Tony La Russa, co-founder with his wife, Elaine, of the Tony La Russa Animal Rescue Foundation in Northern California. ASPCA Lifetime Achievement Award: Bill Smith, founder of Mainline Animal Rescue in Chester Springs, Pa., and creator of a billboard campaign targeting puppy mill breeders.

For more information about the award winners and the ASPCA Humane Awards, visit the ASPCA website.