

Pets Alive Animal Sanctuary Receives Help

Best Friends Animal Society steps in to help care for the cats and dogs at the facility after the shelter's founder passes away.

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Nemo, a cat at Pets Alive sanctuary in upstate New York, will benefit from care provided by volunteers from Best Friends Animal Society. (Photo courtesy of Pets Alive) When Sara Whalen, founder of the 80-acre Pets Alive animal sanctuary in upstate New York, began suffering from cancer, the cats and dogs under her care began suffering too. When the shelter's board of directors recognized that Whalen's health was failing rapidly, they turned to Best Friends Animal Society for help.

After Whalen passed away March 19, Best Friends teams arrived at Pets Alive to assess the situation at the shelter and begin improving conditions for the more than 500 cats, dogs, horses, birds and other animals living there. Volunteers and staff set up new housing for the dogs, allowing the cats more room in the existing shelter buildings. Sick and injured animals received immediate veterinary care, with humane organizations and veterinarians in the area offering their services. Several cats and dogs already have been placed in new homes.

"[The animals] are all feeling and looking so much better already," said Patty Hegwood, Best Friends clinic manager. "And their quality of life has skyrocketed. They're being showered with toys and treats and attention."

During the next three months, Best Friends will work to restore the physical and behavioral health of the animals at Pets Alive, working closely with the existing board of directors and volunteers. Goals for improving conditions at the shelter include:

Providing care and medical attention for animals in need

Rebuilding and renovating the facilities to improve living conditions for the cats, dogs and other animals

Sharing best practices already in place at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah, to help Pets Alive run effectively long-term

"There's a great need for a sanctuary like Pets Alive," said Michael Mountain, Best Friends president. "And it's a beautiful place with great potential. We've heard from dozens of people who want to volunteer their time and their skills to help."