

A Note from Juana ...

Dear Friends of Straydog,

A longtime supporter of Straydog recently used the word "unique" while referring to our shelter and organization, and it caught my attention and made me start thinking about what this supporter meant using this term to refer to us.

Is Straydog unique because we care for our dogs just like our own pets at home? Is it because we consider our residents as family members, sacrificing the possibility of leading normal lives ourselves in order to give our doggies all the medical and caregiving attention they need? Perhaps this supporter was also referring to our insistence on providing a large kennel for each pair (or set) of kennel mates so they have room to run and play as they would if they had their own back yards at individual homes.

Although working at Straydog is very difficult, never-ending and exhausting, we caregivers and kennel team members love to work here for the exact reason that Pat Arnold did--the extremely gratifying reward of seeing happy, healthy doggies truly enjoying life, dogs who in most cases would not have survived if they hadn't somehow crossed paths with Straydog. We will always continue doing exactly what Miss Pat taught us to do for her doggies, and this care and treatment continues to keep Pat Arnold's dogs healthy and happy. (We employees always referred to Pat Arnold as Miss Pat, by the way, tho she would often tell us to call her just Pat.)

Whenever we are overcrowded and running out of funding (which is almost always) and a desperate new rescue comes along, I remember the words Pat used every time she encountered another helpless homeless dog: "What about *this* one?" This is really our motto (or our maxim or mantra). Now every time I hear someone say that this rescue mission is all so futile because there are just too many of the homeless to save them all, I find myself repeating Pat's words, "But what about *this* one?" And I walk around the Straydog campus looking into the unconditionally loving, appreciative eyes of each and every doggie we've rescued, and as I stop and visit with each dog, I say to myself, "Yes, what about *this* one?"

Continuing to operate Straydog Pat Arnold's way is a tribute to Miss Pat. Straydog is her legacy. And I promised Bill that I would keep on helping in every possible way I can to continue with our mission just as Pat did. I love this place, and this shelter is part of my life now.

I worked with Pat Arnold here at Straydog, and I learned a lot about her doggies directly from her. I learned exactly what she did and how she did it. She was always so exact on everything she did, and so demanding that we helpers follow her way, and today we continue trying to follow her way.

Now we have all Pat's responsibilities and duties, and we will continue to do everything just like Pat wanted everything done. Her last words: "Take care of my dogs while I'm gone!" define our mission, and we honor that and vow to follow her directive.

When Straydog got deep into debt last summer, we put a moratorium on new rescues, and with the help of Melissa and Erin and all our wonderful Adoption Day Volunteers, we greatly increased our efforts to adopt out more dogs faster. Since July we have adopted out over 25 dogs, lowering our total population from 120 dogs down to 95 dogs, and we have taken in no new rescues. This has reduced Straydog's expenses and has helped us get out of debt. For a few months we didn't even allow ourselves to think of the question, "What about *this* one?" And for some reason no new rescues came our way.

On December 7th a man named Jim (who had rescued Puppy Fudge several months ago and had brought Fudge to us) called saying Fudge's mother (who belongs to an irresponsible neighbor of Jim's) had given birth to another litter of puppies whose fate was in great jeopardy, as the "owner" was intent upon leaving the puppies and their mother outside loose to fend for themselves. This "owner" insisted on keeping the mother for his 9-year-old daughter, but he told Jim he didn't care what happened to the four remaining pups. (One of the original five pups had already been run over by a car.) We decided our moratorium on rescues must end, and we jumped in the van and went to pick up the pups. On our way to Jim's house (some 15 miles from Straydog), where the puppies were being kept temporarily, we almost ran over a stray Chihuahua mix who was trying to cross the road. The Chihuahua seemed so afraid that we didn't think he would come to us as he jumped over a fence and started to go into the woods. We stopped the van and got out and called to him, and to our surprise he came running out of the woods and jumped back across the fence like a deer and then ran to us and jumped into our arms. Caregiver Mary, who was with me, and I looked at each other and recited Pat's words,