

Humphrey Brings Hope to Angel's Gate

By Natalie Townsend

Take a look around Angel's Gate Animal Hospice, and there are animals that have been given a second chance at life and a chance to live in peace. Every animal at Angel's Gate was abandoned, abused and left terminally or physically ill. Angel's Gate was created after the owners met a special dog named Humphrey and decided to give him a second chance at life.

Humphrey, a black and white Shih Tzu, was found by Susan Marino and Victor LaBruna while making a routine visit to one of the neighborhood animal shelters in October 1993. He was brought to the shelter because he was injured in a home accident and his owners thought he was a lost cause. Humphrey had two cracked cervical disks that left him paralyzed in the hind legs. Since the shelter did not have the funds to give him the proper surgery, he was going to be euthanized. Marino and LaBruna met Humphrey and decided they would adopt him. Marino recalls the decision to adopt Humphrey.

"Here is this sad animal that is told he has no reason to live. We knew Humphrey had more life to live, and we wanted to make sure that he had a loving permanent home with all the care and support he needed to get better," said Marino.

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Humphrey sitting in his favorite spot by the patio.

They wanted to make sure he got the surgery and treatments he needed to walk again. After surgery, Marino and LaBruna were told that he would never walk again. Fortunately, no one told Humphrey. After six months, he began to scratch with his hind legs and a few months later he walked up steps. Not only can Humphrey walk, but also he can run short distances. Humphrey's recovery gave Marino and LaBruna the idea to create a permanent home for animals, like Humphrey.

"Humphrey made such a wonderful recovery and gave us the idea to create this permanent home for terminally and physically ill animals that need that second chance at life," said Marino.

Angel's Gate started with the adoption of cats and dogs, but Marino quickly made the decision to open the home to every kind of terminally

and physically ill animal.

“I had a friend who mentioned a goat that was tied to a tree in her neighbor’s front yard. The goat was given to her neighbor as a gag gift and he didn’t know what to do with it. The second I heard that story, I went right over to her neighbor and took Ned (the goat) home to Angel’s Gate. I knew from that point on we couldn’t limit Angel’s Gate to just cats and dogs,” said Marino.

After Ned came to Angel’s Gate, the hospice was never the same. Angel’s Gate quickly became a melting pot of animal life from dogs to cats and virtually everything

in between. Since Humphrey’s arrival in 1993, Angel’s Gate has been able to care for more than 200 animals, making it the largest shelter of its kind in the country. Animals are brought in from every part of the country, and the owners hope that Angel’s Gate will inspire more people to create animal homes modeled after theirs.

“It is my dream that Angel's Gate will become a model for animal hospice care all over the country. For the past 16 years, we have been bringing animals to Angel’s Gate from all across the country. We hope to inspire more animal homes like Angel’s Gate,” said Marino.

Since Angel’s Gate has opened its doors to more types of animals, it lacks the space to house and care for all of the animals. Currently, Angel’s Gate, which is Marino and LaBruna’s four bedroom home, is home to 32 animals, and is cramped for space. It is not uncommon for the 14 cats at Angel’s Gate to take up an entire bedroom. Recently, the couple bought a 2,500-

square-foot ranch house on an acre and a third of land located on farm-zoned property in order to expand Angel’s Gate’s services.

“The new ranch is under construction, and I know it will provide us with the adequate space to house all of the animals. Our new ranch will give the animals more room to enjoy the outdoors and will put more space between us and the city. We hope to fit all of our animals and be

able to take at least 10 more when construction is complete,” said Marino.

Angel’s Gate’s owners look forward to its new endeavors and are thankful for each animal that it has been given. Hum-

phrey brought purpose to the lives of Susan Marino and Victor LaBruna and hope to animals in need all over the country.

The work of Susan Marino and Victor LaBruna is never ending. Angel’s Gate relies only on donations to provide care to its animals. The organization is always in need of more monetary donations, sponsors and volunteer workers.

“We are so thankful for our local supporters. However, as our organization grows so do our expenses. We hope the community realizes the importance of its volunteer efforts and ask that each citizen within our community gives some of his or her time and money to Angel’s Gate,” said Marino.

More information about Angel’s Gate Animal Hospice and how to sponsor an animal is available at the organization’s Web site at www.angelsgate.org.*

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