

Muttville Senior Dog Rescue

By Chelsea Eiben

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When people think of rescuing animals, rarely do people gravitate towards senior animals. Muttville Senior Dog Rescue takes that paradigm and turns it on its head.

Beginning out of a residence in 2007, Muttville has become a nationally recognized organization, laying the foundation for senior dog rescue.

This one-of-a-kind bay area organization takes in all abandoned senior dogs and treats each one as if it were their own. Prior to Muttville, a bay area senior dogs' chances of finding human companions was dismal.

The founder, Sherri Franklin, made it her mission to let the bay area know that senior dogs are desirable. Sherri is a longtime animal advocate and volunteered with rescuing dogs regularly at different animal shelters in the bay. Sherri noticed that senior dogs were not getting rescued and were routinely euthanized. Sherri took it upon herself to begin housing senior dogs that needed homes in 2007. In her first year, she rescued 27 dogs, utilizing her own home as a shelter.

In 2011, the mayor of San Francisco declared May 10th as "Muttville Senior Dog Rescue Day." Muttville has received the highest ratings from leading nonprofit watchdog organizations like Guidestar and Charity Navigator. In 2012 senior dogs were finally able to be housed in a facility next to the SFSPCA (San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.) In 2018, Muttville has become a nationally recognized organization, averaging approximately 1 thousand senior dogs rescued annually.

Speaking with Bunny Rosenberg, Muttville's Volunteer and Foster Care Manager, gave full scope of just how committed Muttville is to their pups. In addition to managing the volunteers and foster care program, Bunny also oversees their largest annual fundraiser, Prom. This is

exactly as it sounds - senior dogs dressed in Prom formal wear for all of people to gaze upon.

Bunny began her path with Muttville as a volunteer in 2012. She saw a car, a red VW Beetle, in the parking lot of her gym with a wrap about adopting senior dogs. It stuck in her mind. She decided to speak with the owner, Sherri Franklin. After that, Bunny adopted her first senior dog - a 12 year old Chihuahua named "Hemmy." Bunny never imagined she would like a Chihuahua, let alone an elderly one. However, after some encouragement from Sherri to at least meet with Hemmy, Bunny was sold on adopting him. Bunny said volunteering at Sherri's house Sundays was the highlight of her week. After 2 years of volunteering, Bunny was hired full-time for Muttville in 2014. In 2019, Bunny is being promoted to Director of Community Engagement, where she will continue to provide humane education with youth summer camps, through a partnership with SFPCA. She will also continue to grow the "seniors-for-seniors" program, aka Cuddle Club. They work with other non-rpofits like Little Brothers and Friends of the Elderly, here in San Francisco. Going to work feels like "Going to Disneyland" for Bunny and she even enjoys going to Muttville on her day's off. Bunny currently has 2 senior dogs, a 14-year old named "Small Fry" and an 18-year old pup named "Potato Chip."

When interviewing the founder, Sherri Franklin, it was clear that the person behind this unique organization has a heart of gold. Sherri wasn't sure in the beginning if her vision would be successful. Volunteers helped get the organization to where it needed to be. Muttville's goals are, and will continue to always be, about saving dogs. Their other current goals are to increase community outreach: pairing isolated senior citizens with senior dogs, called "Cuddle Club." Seniors have a field trip from different senior homes in the bay to Muttville and engage with the dogs. Muttville's second goal is to continue to grow humane education with youth, teaching humane empathy. Their third goal is to buy a facility that they can call their permanent "Forever Home" in San

Francisco, since they have been renting the facility they are currently residing in next to the SFSPCA.

The current Muttville facility has turned their upstairs into a veterinary suite. Sherri said that it is her hope to help educate more organizations to do what Muttville does, like provide hospice care and spread the model of cage-free environment to let dogs bond and connect with other dogs. Sherri's home has been the "Hospice House" for dogs recouping from surgery or who are too elderly to be in the Muttville house.

Muttville's funding is oriented around 95% private donations. They only get 5% funding from grants or larger foundations. They do not get any government or city funding. For the 1st year all of the staff, including Sherri, were unpaid volunteers. In the 5th year Muttville finally obtained funding and was able to staff employees. Muttville currently has 19 employees including their full-time on-staff veterinarian. They also rely heavily on their 300 volunteers in the bay area and 100 active foster families. The volunteers are at the facility daily, doing a variety of help, from tending to the dogs to fostering. Muttville is being used as a model for other organizations, including their hospice program and their foster families adopting off-site. Muttville has drafted a manual to provide to shelters, outlining the foster to adopt method.

Muttville is 100% committed to their dogs and the proof is in the energy they display at their facility and in their adoption statistics as presented throughout their social media.

To become a volunteer, visit www.Muttville.com.