



Best Friends ANIMAL SOCIETY NEWS

Recreating perceptions at Best Friends

By Jennifer Hayes

Best Friends is known as a place of healing and sanctuary for homeless animals. However, it also offers those same benefits to humans every Monday, when the girls from Re-Creation Retreat volunteer at the Sanctuary.

Re-Creation is a local residential treatment center offering teenage girls the knowledge and skills to get their lives back on track. With service an important part of the program, groups of girls have been helping at Best Friends since 2008.

"There are a lot of things we do in working with animals that are the same things we do working with people," says Re-Creation owner and clinical director Randy Soderquist. "It's an opportunity for our students to provide service, but also to learn more about themselves, make choices and hopefully be able to take that knowledge and information and help change the world."

Groups from Re-Creation provide valuable service every week. They rotate among various animal care areas, helping with everything from building trails to crafting rabbit treats, to cleaning up after parrots. These gals are there to work!

It's no surprise that their favorite part of the weekly experience is socializing with the animals. Kayla loves the rabbits. She calls herself a "rabbit whisperer" and enjoys distributing treats. But even the rabbit whisperer occasionally has to coax the bunnies to come over—like the time she had to wait several minutes for Rosemary to approach. Her patience not only paid off with Rosemary, but it is also applicable in other areas of her life.

"The bunnies really helped me with my relationship with my mom," says Kayla. "When I was

trying to feed the bunnies that didn't want to come to me, I had to remember that I think differently than they do and I have to be patient and allow them to come to me when they're ready. And that applies to my mom, because we've had relationship problems in the past and I just have to be patient."

Alish has also helped herself through her service to animals. "I've learned a lot about myself," says Alish. "(Once) I was walking a really big dog and was pretty intimidated by him. But he ended up being really sweet. I thought sometimes people are like that too. Sometimes they act and look tough, but really the outside doesn't count. It's really the inside, and once you get to know them, it's usually a totally different kind of perspective."

Every week while working with the animals, the girls discover more about themselves and their relationships with others. They have also learned a great deal about the plight of homeless animals. Kayla already has plans to volunteer for a local dog shelter when she returns home, and Alish wants to add a four-legged friend to her family.

"I realize there are so many other animals out there who need a loving home," says Alish. "Since (volunteer-

ing at) Best Friends, I'm so motivated to adopt from a shelter. I really want to share my love."

The Learning Experience at Best Friends offers internships, veterinary externships, and welcomes all kinds of groups, from Girl Scouts to senior citizens, to volunteer at our Sanctuary. We specifically tailor a trip that will be fun, educational, and memorable, balancing group activities between service projects, talks about issues that impact animals, tours, and hands-on activities with our animals.

The Learning Experience also provides groups with special guided tours and custom experiences throughout the year. From groups of children to groups of seniors and everything in between, we'll work to create a group visit to remember.

For more information about Best Friends' Learning Experience, or to reserve dates, please email learningexperience@bestfriends.org.

Remember to get your pets fixed by four months of age to prevent unwanted litters. Best Friends offers low cost spay/neuter services to the community. Spaces are limited and fill up fast. Please call 435-644-2001 ext 4210 to schedule an appointment.



This bunny is in seventh heaven. Photo by Sarah Ause Kichas.

Castle running G2G Ultra to save millions of shelter pets

By Susana Young

Gregory Castle, CEO Best Friends, has been a runner all his life. He gets great enjoyment from it but does not consider himself an athlete ("...too grandiose a label," he says). He played rugby in high school in England, but insists he was not very good at it. Castle has completed 17 marathons, including three Boston Marathons. His wife Julie was his catalyst for running marathons. They have run several marathons together.

Castle approaches running as a sort of meditation – to clear his mind. "If I am facing a problem and need inspiration, I find that if I think about it at the beginning of my run, then put it out of my mind, helpful thoughts and solutions come into my head as I'm running. I can't explain this and don't need to understand it, but it is a huge part of my motivation for running," said Castle.

A few years ago, Castle did the Rim-to-Rim (traversing the Grand Canyon from North Rim to South Rim) in about seven hours. "It was quite a challenge, but pales in comparison to the very significant challenge of G2G," Castle says. He is excited about the Grand to Grand Ultra, expects to cross the finish line strong and looks forward to the adventure. The daily challenge of distance and time is one thing, but for Castle, the day-after-day, back-to-back marathons that G2G demands, will be his greatest challenge.

To prepare to meet that



Castle jogging with some of Best Friends dogs. Photo by Molly Wald.

challenge, Castle trains almost every day of the week, running five hours or more at least one of those days. He likes to run with his German Shepherd, Shadow, but that limits him to about six miles. So most days, Castle is training solo. He also does strength training, and feels his upper body needs to be stronger to carry a backpack containing a week's worth of needed food and equipment.

Castle expects to do a mixture of running and walking on the G2G route. He is not used to trail running, so he is spending more and more time off the road. He plans to wear gaiters to keep out the sand. One of the biggest concerns is getting blisters. He has a special foot cream he uses and has not yet experienced blister problems (and hopes he doesn't). He is also not experienced with camping, and is unsure about the experiences involved in that aspect of G2G.

He has a nutrition coach (a biochemist Castle describes as a "fitness maniac"), whom

he reports to weekly. His coach is helping ensure Castle carries the right nutritional mix in his daily ration of dehydrated food. He is experimenting with a variety of options.

"What's required to complete an endurance event like G2G is similar to the marathon task of our Best Friends vision to 'Save them All.' It takes the same kind of meticulous planning and hard work to go the distance," Castle says.

At age 72, Castle will be one of the oldest running the G2G this year. What really motivates him to endure the rigorous training and physical challenge of G2G? "I wouldn't have entered G2G if it weren't for the fundraising aspect for Best Friends. If people can come into an arena of inspiration by someone doing something as extreme as G2G, I've certainly achieved my aim."

To help Castle meet his fundraising goal, please go to <http://bestfriends.org/gregorysrn>.

Best Friends network partners receive \$503,000 in grants

Best Friends doesn't just talk about saving lives, the Utah-based organization puts their money where their snout is.

In fiscal year 2014, Best Friends has given its No More Homeless Pets Network Partners nearly \$503,000 in grants to support 3,190 adoptions, 9,416 spay/neuter surgeries and a kitten nursery program

to save the lives of 1,200 newborn kittens.

The grants, averaging more than \$9,000 each, will support the specific efforts of 55 Network Partner groups across the country for projects such as providing spay/neuter surgeries for pets of low income pet owners, increasing cat and dog adoptions by offering reduced adoption fees, and saving the lives of orphaned, newborn kittens who need to be bottle fed.

"Best Friends is proud to work with more than a thousand shelters and rescue groups across the country who believe as we do, that every animal is an individual, a life worth saving," said Gregory Castle, chief executive officer for Best Friends Animal Society. "There's no more worthy investment than putting money toward helping our partners save the lives of animals in their communities."

At a cost of just \$36.45 per animal, Best Friends also leverages other available resources and works with groups to maximize the impact of these investments not only to save lives, but also to save taxpayer dollars. Money spent on adoption and spay/neuter gets animals out of shelters and into homes, and reduces the



Castle competing in a Boston Marathon. Photo courtesy of Best Friends.



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