



## They Still Believe in a Dog Called Hope

An Arizona coalition raises funds by auctioning the work of local artists



LEFT: Bari Mears, president of PACC 911, presents an oil painting of a border collie; the painting went for \$5,500 at the auction. RIGHT: An array of artwork auctioned off at the Hope for the Animals fundraiser. MEGAN PFLEIGER/BEYOND SKY PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2004, a mutt collapsed on a Mexican street.

She'd been a stray so long that mange had rotted away nearly all her fur. Infections clogged her eyes, and part of her tail was missing.

Luckily, an Arizona State student visiting family in Mexico found the dog. The student had connections to the Phoenix Animal Care Coalition (PACC 911), which assists animal care organizations in the Phoenix area by hosting off-site adoptions and raising money for an emergency medical fund that assists approximately 80 rescue groups with veterinary bills for injured or sick animals.

When the student found the stray, she turned her over to a PACC partner back in Arizona. The group took her in and named her Hope. Today, the dog has fully recovered and is enjoying life with her adoptive family. She is a living witness to the help provided by the group's emergency medical fund. And, thanks to

a recent fundraiser, the next time a PACC 911 volunteer rescues an animal like her, there will be money to pay the bills.

PACC 911 devised the Hope for the Animals fundraiser late in 2007. Local artists painted hope chests with animal themes; the chests were then auctioned off at a gala luncheon in January.

Led by president and founder Bari Mears, the group also collected fine jewelry and other donations for the auction. Sponsors included Petco and local businesses. Coalition members sold ads in a 64-page program booklet that contained resources about adoptions, spay/neuter, and pet health care. The fundraiser sold out to a crowd of 450 guests at \$65 a ticket.

The local CBS affiliate, KPHO, sent meteorologist Paul Horton along to anchor the live auction. Throughout the day, Horton urged guests to open their hearts and checkbooks to help animals. And they did: An attractive painting of a border collie, donated by a private

gallery, garnered \$5,500. Another top catch, which included a movie pass and popcorn for two at the Harkins Theatre, brought in \$1,700.

The group also recognized five outstanding volunteers from the rescue community, all of whom received Hope Awards for their dedication to the unwanted animals of Arizona. The Rags to Riches Award honored five pets for the grueling circumstances they survived, while the Lifesaver Recognition Award highlighted animals—including Hope—who'd gotten a second chance because of PACC 911.

"Our hard work paid off in many ways," Mears says. "More people in the community are aware of who we are. The needs of homeless animals are more visible to the public." The event raised \$200,000, all of which went to the emergency medical fund and will help cover the medical needs of many homeless animals in Phoenix this year.