

Field Trip

BY ALEXANDRA KLEINKOPF

Red Lake, Minnesota

The organization: Red Lake Rosie's Rescue

Website: redlakerosie.piczo.com

Established: 2004 by volunteers on an Ojibwe Indian reservation

Handles: About 500 animals per year; half sheltered, half community animals

Resources: Four committee members, 22 remote volunteers, zero paid staff

Funding: Grants from St. Paul's Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation, and Bob Barker's DJ&T Foundation; volunteer-run garage sales and fundraisers

Seeing the forest for the trees: A few years ago, Karen Good was picking up every stray that crossed her path on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in Northwestern Minnesota. She wasn't an ACO—in fact, there were no animal control agencies or animal care organizations on the entire reservation, a chunk of land the size of Rhode Island. But while the elementary school science teacher felt compelled to do her part, it didn't take long for her and a couple of kindred spirits to realize that it wasn't enough.



Spay/neuter is a crucial component of Rosie's Rescue, which has partnered with RAVS and the Neuter Commuter to put a dent in Red Lake's dog and cat overpopulation.



Get 'em while they're young! Founder Karen Good tries to impart humane education into the endeavors of Rosie's Rescue, since rescue alone is not enough.

"Pulling puppies out of the Dumpster or off the street wasn't really going to help," Good says. "We had to get to the root of the problem, which was neuter/spay, because clearly we had an overpopulation problem, and there were so many animals that were not being vetted."

And so Rosie's Rescue was born, named after the dog Good rescued in 1998, who went on to lead a happy life as a therapy dog in a retirement home.

Getting to the roots: The realities of life on the reservation affect every aspect of animal rescue work. While Good acknowledges the community's top-notch habitat preservation efforts, she notes a host of malaises that plague the 9,000 residents—widespread poverty, 39 percent unemployment, and high levels of domestic abuse and gang activity.

"One of the things we remind people [on the reservation] about is that ... our background and our roots and our culture would say that we need to respect all living things," she says, "but we're drifting from that, and so we're trying to make a connection to that to the people." Good does her best to impart humane education in her science classes by offering children hands-on experience with the animals, which she says appeals to their learning style.

Unfortunately, not every child is reached by Good's doings. The rescue recently took in a stray shepherd mix whose ears had been doused in gasoline and set aflame by local children—sadly, not an un-



Dogs are housed in six separate two-pod kennels like this one, and are given several hours each day to romp in the wilderness of the Red Lake reservation.

usual occurrence. Good says the reservation has a tribal code against abuse of any kind, but that animal cruelty cases have taken a back seat to combating domestic violence. Fortunately, local health fairs provide Good and her colleagues a chance to explain the close connections between animal and human abuse.

Natural resources: On the reservation, an animal who reaches the age of 3 is considered old. Life expectancy, Good explains, is reduced due to neglect, abuse, and the common attitude that dogs and cats should "forage" for their survival. Most of the animals rescued are diseased, starving, dehydrated, or injured. Surprisingly, Good has managed to keep euthanasia rates low: She says of the estimated 500 animals rescued in 2007, only 10 were euthanized, some of whom were mortally injured.

Good provides cats with indoor housing, and dogs with six outdoor two-pod

kennels, each with a central indoor area. When the freezing Minnesota winter rolls around, dogs are bedded heavily with oat straw (known for its good insulation), and kennels are wrapped in tarps. Dogs are also taken for a romp in the rescue's wilderness several hours each day for ample socialization and exercise.

The animals are not adopted directly out of the rescue, but are instead turned over to shelters and rescues. Pet Haven Inc. of Minnesota has taken in Rosie's dogs since December of last year. "They have been very easy to place," says dog adoption director Celayne Jones. "Every single one we've gotten—and there have been more than a dozen in the past few months ... they are all just really good-natured dogs."

Rosie's Rescue has also partnered with community clinics and local vets to help care for their animals. "Because of our economics and our isolation and distance to vets, our people had never really vetted their animals much," says Good. By enlisting the help of Animal Ark's Neuter Commuter, the Animal Humane Society of Golden Valley, and The Humane Society of the United States' Rural Area Veterinary Services for spay/neuter, the rescue is also making a dent in the reservation's overpopulation problem.

Sowing the seeds: "I would say you see less dead animals on the road, we see less animals at the dump," says Good. "We see people coming back to clinics with their neutered and spayed animals to get shots, and the animals are in better condition."

And while the good example of a few is spreading throughout Red Lake, another community has gotten wind of it. Looking to emulate the Rosie model, Good says a South Dakota reservation is now focusing on companion animal rescue and working to establish a shelter.

Good hopes the concept, like floating dandelion seeds, will continue to spread and germinate ... with a little help from the winds of change.

Stretch Your Budget With Ryan's!



**Ryan's Has The Items You Need:
Kennel Leads, Disinfectants,
Stainless Steel Dishes, Flea & Tick
Control, Equipment and 1000's More!**



**RYAN'S
PET
SUPPLIES**

Best Prices... Best Brands...™

©2008 G&G Distribution Inc.

**1(800)525-7387
www.RyansPet.com**

**Call or Log On For
Your FREE 212 Page
Catalog Today!**

Heart of the Earth Animal Equipment

EST 1996 800-526-1644
Fax: 605-892-2044
E-mail: traps@animal-traps.com
Catalog upon request

Business & Government purchase orders welcome

High quality animal control management equipment, traps, covers, gloves, nets, restraint poles, dens, snappy snares, graspers, snake tongs & hooks, many more items available.

Equipment praised by police, vets, animal control, humane societies, zoos.



Volume Discounts 10% to 15% & more

www.animal-traps.com