



(L to R) Johnny O, Biagi, Mike Tattoo, and Joe Panz snuggle up with Cece, a gentle, 9-year-old pit bull mix relinquished by her owner and slated to be euthanized at an overcrowded New York City shelter. Thanks to Rescue Ink, Cece moved on to await adoption at Save-A-Pet.

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Mike Tattoo cradles a kitty cat.

pitch in to build dog and feral cat houses free of charge for needy caregivers. The group is now starting an animal welfare lobbying division, which Robert says will take it "to the next level."

You and What Army? Now operating out of the Save-A-Pet shelter in Port Jefferson, N.Y., Rescue Ink has called on all shelters and rescues in the surrounding area to come together. Robert says that prior to Rescue Ink, "most shelters wouldn't even talk with each other. I mean, they were just at war. ... So now we gave them a little different direction. ... It's actually starting a movement." And that movement has led to more lives being saved. Shelters and rescues now transfer animals between agencies when space is an issue, and when an adopter requests a specific breed, rescues and shelters cooperate instead of competing.

Save-A-Pet's executive director, Lynne Schoepfer, is happy to have the Rescue

Ink team on board. "I think it's an absolutely positive relationship," she says. "They're doing the right thing, they're getting the word out, and they're helping these animals that may not have gotten help otherwise."

The organization's president, Dori Scofield, agrees: "It's been great to be able to take these guys to places I would not want to go by myself, and they can get the job done," she says. "I'm only five feet tall, and sometimes people don't want to listen to me—but they'll listen to these guys."

Perhaps the best wingmen Rescue Ink has are not running a shelter or seizing pit bulls from dogfighters—yet. Robert

says the group really wants to reach young people. "Education is our biggest concern," he says, "because we can only be out there so many days with so many people—and that goes for *all* rescue groups. But if we start educating the young and letting it be known that it's not cool to [abuse animals], you're gonna start seeing a difference."

With nearly 1,200 schools across the nation signed up for the group's humane education program, that's a big difference in the works. Rescue Ink is now working toward a long-term goal of opening branches in all 50 states to spread the word: You don't need a hard heart to be hardcore.

UPDATE:

Save-A-Pet suffered a terrible loss on the night of Aug. 5, when Scofield's house burned to the ground. The blaze claimed the lives of seven of Scofield's dogs and four of her cats. **Save-A-Pet is accepting donations** to help get through this tough period; visit saveapetli.org for details.