

Angels on Earth at Ladybird Animal Sanctuary By Kathryn Shanley

Once in awhile my life is touched by people I believe are like angels on earth. You're probably thinking what a cliché and if I told these wonderful people what I thought of them, they'd modestly tell me they're just like everybody else. But they aren't. People like Lisa Winn, Melissa McClelland, and Janine Stoll, Co-founders of Ladybird Animal Sanctuary who are saving the lives of countless abandoned animals in high-kill shelters. Without the love and dedication of these selfless women, hundreds of helpless and neglected animals would have lost their lives.

The three best friends were singers recording and touring together across Canada as Ladybird Sideshow Project. These compassionate women saw a need to help abused and abandoned animals they just couldn't ignore. They refused to sit back and wait for someone else to fix the problem. So together they started an animal sanctuary in Hamilton, Ontario. Since 2011, Ladybird Animal Sanctuary has rescued 865 animals from shelters with a euthanasia policy. Though their music careers have moved in different directions, their friendship and love of animals has remained strong. I had the privilege of speaking with Lisa Winn, one of Ladybird Animal Sanctuary's co-founders.

"We started with one cat named Oliver and one foster home," says Lisa. Little did sweet Oliver the cat know what a major role his rescue from an animal shelter would play in the forming of a charitable organization that now has over 30 foster homes and the support of many volunteers, businesses, and people in the community. They all share a passion for defending the lives of abused and abandoned animals. Lisa says they visit or get calls from animal shelters to come and rescue animals—dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, hedgehogs, and even farm animals—and place them in loving foster homes until they're ready to be adopted into their forever homes.

Though the ultimate goal for any rescue animal is finding a loving forever home, finding foster homes for these wonderful animals is a vital part of the rescue process. All vet costs, food, and medicine if needed are provided by Ladybird Animal Sanctuary. When you visit their website you'll read the many heartwarming stories of injured and abandoned animals who have been loved and cared for by foster families and adopted by forever homes. Survivors like five-year-old Mickey the Yorkie, a stray nearly blind and in desperate need of medical care; ten-week-old Jenny the cat, a stray missing her back feet; and six-week-old Six the German Shepherd puppy, a stray badly injured after being hit by a car. These stories melt your heart and reinforce the need for ongoing support for Ladybird Animal Sanctuary so they can continue to rescue animals that deserve a second chance at life.

Providing a foster home isn't the only way to help. "Proper vet care and food are really important and can make a big difference to an animal," says Lisa. In terms of supplies she says, "One of our biggest needs is cat litter. And Timothy hay." Puppy pens, crates, carriers and blankets, all in good condition are also accepted and can be dropped off at Dundas Pet Valu and Munchies Coffee House and Barkery on Upper Gage. Lisa says, "One of our dream goals for the future is to have our own physical shelter for animals we rescue."

Lisa would love to take all the animals in need of rescuing home with her when she goes to an animal shelter, but she can't. Members of our community can play an important part in helping save the precious lives of these vulnerable animals. Ladybird Animal Sanctuary has an excellent website at www.ladybirdanimalsanctuary.com with suggestions on ways you can help them continue rescuing animals in need and to learn about some valuable community resources for pet owners and anyone interested in helping animals. But make sure you have a box of Kleenex handy when you read the many incredible stories of the happy and loved rescued animals who at one time were likely abused, neglected and abandoned. And if you're interested in providing a foster home for an animal in need, you can follow the application process on Ladybird Animal Sanctuary's website.

Music and the love of animals brought these women together. Beautiful souls keep them together. Thank you Ladybird Animal Sanctuary.