



Companionship and Hope in a Year of Adversity

Overcoming adversity is a fact of life for the animals we rescue.



Khloe (left) and Fancy both faced a number of challenges in 2020, but were able to persevere and find their forever homes.

For Fancy and Khloe, adversity was a factor in their lives well before COVID-19 reached Pittsburgh. Living comfortably for the first nine years of their lives with their human mom and dad and two feline housemates, the girls living situation was suddenly upended when the family split up.

As the situation evolved, Fancy and Khloe were left alone – sometimes weeks – with their only visits coming from a pet sitter who would take care of their basic needs. The situation was about to get worse as the only home they ever knew was sold, and they were brought to Animal Advocates. Newcomers are placed in floor-to-ceiling pens with screens and plexiglass so they can acclimate to their surroundings and soon-to-be housemates.

Cats react differently when they arrive at Animal Advocates – some are confident and bold, others timid and shy. It was clear from the start that Fancy was the dominant personality of the pair. Khloe, on the other hand preferred to spend her time in a quiet, out-of-the-way spot. The girls, like the other residents, were now waiting for that right person to come and adopt them. Then, shortly before the pandemic reached Pittsburgh, the Animal Advocates cat caregivers noticed a change

in Fancy. Normally the first to greet them, she stayed in bed and was not interested in food. A vet trip was scheduled, and a mass was discovered in her stomach that required immediate surgery. Fortunately the procedure went well, and Fancy was taken to a volunteer’s home to recuperate before eventually going into foster care.



When 12-year old Murphy arrived at Animal Advocates, it was because he and the family dog did not get along. After a short time at Animal Advocates, it was noted that Murphy seemed to be losing weight and was having intestinal issues. He was diagnosed with Inflammatory Bowel Disease, likely exacerbated by the sudden change in his living conditions. Medications were started and Murphy went to a foster home where he could be monitored. Within a short time, his condition stabilized.

Animals come to Animal Advocates from private individuals like Murphy; as strays; or, in the case of Tony, from other shelters. Tony had an ear and eye infection. In most county- and city-funded shelters, budgets limit the amount of vet care that can be provided. When Tony’s eye appeared to require a surgical procedure, euthanasia was a possibility for this handsome, 4-year-old fellow.

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Murphy in his new home; Tony meeting his new family.

Once Animal Advocates committed to bringing him in, the shelter began medications, and luckily by the time he arrived, his infections were clearing up and Tony was on the way to recovery until a follow-up vet trip revealed severe dental problems. Eight extracted teeth later, and Tony blossomed into the friendly and loving boy we knew him to be.

Fancy, Khloe, Murphy and Tony are just a few of the animals Advocates has helped overcome challenges in this year of adversity. Situations requiring veterinary intervention can be typical of cats that have not received regular vet care, and Animal Advocates is committed to providing that care as long as an animal remains with the organization.

As far as Fancy, Khloe, Murphy and Tony are concerned, their period of adversity has come and gone. Tony has nicely recovered from his dental surgery and has settled in comfortably with his new family and older feline brother. Murphy is a much-loved family member and continues to do well on a maintenance dose of medication. Shy Khloe charmed one of the Animal Advocates' caregivers to the point where she adopted her and she is now perfectly content as a spoiled only cat.

And Fancy? After six months of recuperation and being monitored, she has just celebrated her 10th birthday in her new home, just across the backyard from her foster. 🐾

A Sad Song, Made Better

Young Arlo brought love, laughter, and joy to a family that needed it.



Lucy and Arlo in the backyard; Arlo as an adorable puppy (below).

“Hey Jude Don't make it bad. Take a sad song, and make it better...”

When the pandemic started, few among us could have anticipated how long it would last, or just how sad this song would be. Lucy joined Animal Advocates at the very beginning of the pandemic and the ensuing shutdowns.

She and her family were paired with Arlo, an adorable, 11-week-old retriever mix who had been turned in to a vet's practice. A note in his papers said, “rescued from a bad situation”. When Lucy saw Arlo she thought, “Oh my gosh! My first time fostering and I get the cutest puppy in the world!”.



Even before COVID-19 Lucy and her family had suffered much heartache and hardship over the past few years. She's a single mother to a 7-year-old son, Jude, and her partner, Eric, died suddenly 2 years ago in his early 40s. Also part of the

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Teenage Arlo adjusting to his new life.

household is Lucy's widowed father who is recovering from a bout with cancer, including surgeries and a grueling regimen of chemo and radiation that ended in April of 2020. This family unit was trying to keep each other upbeat and positive. The stresses of being housebound with

limited activities for a 7-year-old and worries about the possible danger of the virus to a senior cancer patient weren't going to help matters. But now they had Arlo.

Puppies are magical. They're always in the moment, curious, clumsy, and hardwired to love everybody they meet. While Arlo's foster family enjoyed his antics and affection, they also worked together to nurture him. Feeding, walking, playing, socializing, and potty training were a family affair.

Jude and Arlo, two bright, inquisitive youngsters, were a natural match. Lucy's dad found a friend too, and he delighted taking Arlo for walks and bragging to his friends about "his smart puppy".

"It was the first time in months all three of us were smiling and laughing together," Lucy said. "Arlo brought as much to this home as this home brought to him."

Not surprisingly Arlo's foster family decided to adopt him and make him a permanent family member. This is a frequent occurrence in fostering. Arlo is about 7 months old now, no longer a fluffy pup, but a handsome young dog with a shiny black coat.

So often the animals we help do as much for us as we do for them. We help them to become healthy, confident companions, and they help us to become as fully human and humane as we can be.

It's a winning proposition, and a much better and happier song. 🐾

The Cost of Animal Care

Vet bills are Animal Advocates largest expense, so we gave our supporters the ability to equate their gifts with tangible donation levels related to actual procedures:

SPONSOR LEVEL	AMOUNT	PROCEDURE
Best Buddy	\$300	Kitten or Puppy Vetting
Furry Friend	\$200	Dog Spay or Neuter
Puppy Pal	\$150	Adult Dog or Cat Vet Check-Up
Cat Companion	\$100	Cat Spay
Feline Fan	\$50	Cat Neuter
Canine Colleague	\$25	Rabies Vaccination

Adversity, Resilience, & Doing the Impossible

Every success strengthens our commitment to our mission

Adversity is inevitable, but so is rising to the challenge. As St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." Woven into the nature of rescue work at Animal Advocates is adversity and, at the same time, the deliberate actions that lead to joyful outcomes.

Doing what's necessary to restore the sight and provide a loving foster home to Lily Dove, a blind miniature schnauzer found emaciated and terrified on a busy highway. Doing what's possible by rehoming thirty-three kittens in six months, all fostered by one volunteer family. Doing the impossible in performing the highest yearly totals

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Animal Advocates 2020 Appeal

Leading with the Heart



Adopters, Fosters, and Volunteers are the lifeblood of Animal Advocates. Their time and your help makes everything possible.

of admissions and adoptions in the history of Animal Advocates.

Every animal who is given a second chance serves to strengthen the resolve and dedication to the mission of Animal Advocates. At the heart of that mission is a belief that the relationship between human and animal is an important bond that improves the physical and social well-being of individuals and the community. And every animal – regardless of age, adoptability, or prior medical conditions – deserves compassion and sanctuary.

Since 1984, Animal Advocates has weathered myriad obstacles by remaining committed to its core values and mission, and always putting the animals first. 2020 has present-

ed unprecedented challenges. Following the mandate of local and state officials, the Thrift Shop – a main source of funding – was closed for three months. Various in person fundraising and adoption events were scaled back or canceled.

Requests for assistance in rehoming cats and dogs, unfortunately, continue to climb as individuals face hardships and the heartbreaking decision to surrender an animal. The ramification of the closure and impact of the pandemic will be felt for the foreseeable future.

Now more than ever Animal Advocates needs your help. Every aspect of the major programming at Animal Advocates – the rescue and rehoming of companion animals – is

conducted by devoted volunteers, as are all administrative and facility management responsibilities. This enables the majority of all funding to be directed toward caring for rescued animals’.

For the past 36 years, resilience, selfless dedication by volunteers and the generosity of donors have made it possible for Animal Advocates not only to get through hard times but to thrive during and after them.

We understand that many people are struggling at the moment. If you can find it in your heart and budget to donate to Animal Advocates, it will go a long way toward ensuring care of animals in need, now and into the future. 🐱

Cats Rescued



2020

has been the most successful year in our history, despite the unique obstacles it’s presented. With continued help from wonderful people like you, we’ll be able to help even more animals in 2021.

Dogs Rescued



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Advocates Volunteers Get More than they Give

Selfless volunteers pour their heart and soul into helping animals



Volunteering at Animal Advocates means the world to the animals, and enriches the spirit of all who help make a difference.

At the heart of Animal Advocates is a dedicated team of volunteers. From providing daily care to cats at headquarters, to staffing the Thrift Shop, to fostering animals in their homes, Animal Advocates volunteers do it all!

With no paid staff, it is the resourcefulness and commitment of those volunteers that has ensured Animal Advocates' ability to fulfill its mission and allowed us to save countless furry lives since 1984.

The sheer number of volunteers who have opened their hearts to animals in need this past year is astonishing. And for many, volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic brings a sense of normalcy and connection in the absence of typical social gatherings.

The simple act of walking a foster dog or snuggling with a resident cat offers a break from the stress of the day. **THANK YOU** to all our volunteers for your unwaver-

ing commitment to the cats and dogs of Animal Advocates. If you are interested in joining the Animal Advocates volunteer team, we welcome animal-loving individuals who want to share their time and talents with us.

Visit our website and navigate to the "Get Involved" section to view volunteer requirements and an online application. We've also included an application in this letter to make it easy to get started.

Volunteer Voices: What does Advocates Mean to You?

"I remember around March when things were closing down due to the virus, I was feeling very concerned about cat care and wondering what the 'powers that be' would feel about us doing our duty for the cats. When I heard on the radio that volunteer work was considered Essential, I felt a certain amount of relief and even pride that what we do for the beautiful cats and dogs is Essential. Of course, We already knew that!!!"

- Kathy Strand

"Our weekly visits are always fulfilling. The opportunity to work with this truly dedicated all volunteer staff is something that we enjoy. After we lost our two beloved cats, we were looking for something to fill the void, and we found it in this wonderful organization, Animal Advocates ... Everyone associated with Animal Advocates has one goal in mind, the health and safety of our rescued cats and dogs, kittens and puppies. Saturday night is our "date" night, especially during this pandemic. We get to spend a few hours with an ever changing roster of cats and kittens who only want one thing - to be loved. What could be better!!!"

- Kathleen & Raymond Pfeifer

"No matter how stressful the work week is, I always know that my Sunday night shift at Animal Advocates will be exactly what I need to recharge and unwind. Going to see the cats is like going to the most amazing party in which the guests are always interesting to get to know, fun to talk to, and are very good looking! I find great comfort and joy knowing that each Animal Advocates resident is shown unconditional acceptance, care, and love."

- Gianina Downs

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