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There are angels among us



Joy Bohannon and her husband Philip Rutherford hold a cat at the Pembroke Animal Shelter after making sure all the animals there are doing fine.

Joe Joshi 02.MAR.06

Have you ever had a dream capture your heart so fully that you were willing to give your time, energy, and resources to follow it? Joy Bohannon and her husband Philip Rutherford have that dream. They crave for a world where people and animals are partners.

The couple from Middlebury, Vt., moved to Pembroke, Ga., in December and have opened their hearts and home to abandoned animals at the local shelter and elsewhere in the county.

They are here with their foster daughter Anna May Harrington and Adam Billings, who helps care for the rescued cats and dogs. Joy Bohannon's mother, JoAnne Bohannon recently moved from Vermont to live in Ellabell, Ga., and together they (let's call them the Angels) have a good network of caring for animals found on highways, in dumpsters, tied to trees and stoned, hiding in dangerous areas, all abused and abandoned, suffering the worst miseries you could imagine. Animals left for dead.

The Angels have since early November last year taken several cats and dogs to Vermont for adoption. They took eight puppies in hand-carry bags on their first flight, several cats in similar bags on another flight shortly thereafter, and 17 dogs in pet carriers which they stacked in the back of a large rental SUV in late January.

"We took all the 18 dogs the shelter then had, kept one at home in Pembroke because the animal was too ill to make the long journey," said JoAnne Bohannon, who with her daughter Joy Bohannon, drove taking turns 18 hours non-stop to Vermont.

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“There was no room in the van to take the cats,” she said.

All the pets were adopted in Vermont, where many families are looking for cats and dogs. The state’s spay and neuter policy means pets are seldom abandoned there.

The Angels, all five of them, are getting ready for their next trip to Vermont, this time taking dogs and cats from the Pembroke Animal Shelter. “Thomas Sanders (who runs the shelter) is very kind to the dogs and cats here” said Rutherford. “He is very patient and really knows how to care for the animals.”

The shelter is again full of dogs and cats. The Angels are there most days, taking care of the animals.

“We are happy to help,” said Joy Bohannon. “Dr. David Howes and Dr. Amy Ahles of Godley Station Animal Hospital in Pooler, Ga. also care for the animals here. They spay and neuter the cats and dogs, so those wanting to adopt the animals pay only for the medicine.”

People wanting to help in any way should call the Angels at (912) 653-2480, (802) 989-0539, (802) 989-1115 or (802) 989-4081. “We welcome all donations — money, animal food, blankets, whatever... We also want responsible and serious volunteers to help the animal shelter or adopt a cat or dog,” said Joy Bohannon.

Abandonment of cats and dogs is a never ending problem that only seems to get worse. Through their 24-7, 365 days a year dedication, the Angels have saved hundreds of dogs and cats, placing them in permanent loving homes.

“We are different from shelters because we work to remove the cause of the problem,” said Joy Bohannon. “Of course, an enormous amount of our time and resources are used to provide rescue services. Our mission is to have every story end happily. To achieve that end, we struggle daily against the crisis of exploding overpopulation and abused animals.”

The Angels say animals provide spiritual qualities such as unconditional love, joy, healing, forgiveness, patience, courage, and gratitude — virtues that are often lacking in our modern high-tech yet low-touch lives.

“We strive to get as many animals as we possibly can to permanent loving homes. We devote ourselves to educating the public on animal welfare issues including actively lobbying for mandatory spay and neuter laws to eliminate the problem of over population and enact anti-cruelty laws,” said Rutherford.

