



## A Growing Network

CARE and Colorado show us how transport is done.



It's a Wednesday, and Linda Fox and her copilot, Jed, are driving from Denver to Hays, Kan., to pick up dogs to transport back to rescue groups in Denver. Jed doesn't have a driver's license, being that he's a big Bloodhound-Lab mix, but what he lacks in driving ability he makes up for in transport experience.

Fox, transport coordinator for Colorado Animal Rescue Express based in Denver, talks about Jed while driving east on I-70 in a van filled with empty crates. "He was found wandering in a trailer park and put in a high-kill shelter in Hot Springs, Ariz.," she says.

The rescue group Paws and Claws got Jed out of the shelter and put his photo online, and that's how Fox found him. Fox arranged for Jed's transport to Denver and ended up adopting him. "He's been my copilot for five years now," she says.

Jed is an important dog, Fox says, because "he opened up the doors to move many dogs from that area to Colorado because we'd never worked with this rescuer before, and now we bring dogs every couple months from Hot Springs."

Even though he has a forever home, Jed rides on this CARE transport, which will bring 32 more dogs on the last leg of their journey.



CARE helped Blu's military family pay for some of his bone cancer treatments.

### Partnering up

Fox and Lisa Mendelsberg of the Denver area met at a Golden Retriever Freedom Rescue holiday party in December 2004. "We just really hit it off," Mendelsberg says. "Linda was the intake coordinator for Golden Retriever Freedom Rescue, and I was just doing some local transports." Soon they started transporting together for the Golden Retriever rescue.

They made out-of-state contacts while transporting Golden Retrievers and saw many non-Goldens who could be re-homed back in Denver. "People were asking if we could take Shelties and Labs and Poodles and Schnauzers — all kinds of dogs," Fox says.

"The more we drove, we started helping other breeds of dogs," says Mendelsberg, who is now CARE's program administrator. "It got to the point where we thought we should incorporate and raise money (to transport) all these dogs."

CARE transports any adoptable pet, big or small, purebred or mixed





This cat belonged to an elderly man from Huxon, Colo., who could not afford to care for his pets any longer. CARE helped with TNR, re-homing and paying for his remaining cats.

breed, young or old. Since Fox and Mendelsberg started CARE in June 2007, the organization has transported or supported the transport of more than 23,000 dogs and cats to their forever homes.

## Working together

What really makes CARE succeed is all of the people working together. "This rescue network has to work on trust," Mendelsberg explains. "We have to trust that our shelter contacts are giving us really solid information on that dog. They don't need to sell us on a dog. We just want the truth." If a rescue is not prepared to deal with a dog's medical or behavioral issue, it might not work out, and the trust between rescues is lost.

Mendelsberg says that CARE is picky with the rescues it works with, both sending and receiving, and today more than 100 trustworthy rescue organizations can call CARE a partner.

Reliable volunteers are also invaluable. Approximately 30 regular CARE volunteers fundraise or show up every week in Hays to help load and unload crates. "Finding volunteers who really fit (is a struggle)," Fox says. "When you do a volunteer job, you have to love it."

## Ending pet overpopulation

Although some areas in Colorado struggle with pet



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARE

## MORE THAN TRANSPORT

Colorado Animal Rescue Express started out as transport and then branched out, says Linda Fox, CARE's transport coordinator. The organization also:

- ➔ Donates hundreds of pounds of food and supplies to as many rescues and groups as possible.
- ➔ Donates money to other groups in need. Over the years, the organization has given close to \$90,000 to rural shelters.
- ➔ Has provided routine and emergency veterinary care to almost 3,000 homeless pets through Jake's Fund, which was created in memory of a 3-year-old yellow Lab who passed away while being treated for advanced heartworm disease during his journey to Denver.
- ➔ Supports people who are having difficulty keeping their beloved pets (provides food directly to individuals and making payments to vets), provides spay/neuter services for feral animals on Indian reservations and offers funding for new transport groups.



Reservation dogs

overpopulation, there are still so many homes for pets in the state that CARE can bring in thousands more, and rescues will find homes for them. So what is Colorado doing right?

Fox says that in general, the atmosphere in Colorado is that pets are part of the family and it is important to be a responsible pet owner (i.e., spay/neuter!). Mendelsberg agrees, saying that Colorado is one of the most dog-friendly and

dog-educated states out there.

Fox and Mendelsberg see high pet overpopulation in rural areas where dogs are generally not considered family members, and also in poorer areas, like Indian reservations. CARE goes to these areas to do TNR and to transport animals out. "In my mind," Fox says, "spay/neuter and education are the most important tools anywhere for helping solve the overpopulation problem. People are slowly changing, but you always wish it would be quicker." 🐾RP

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