LINENS FOR ANIMALS IN THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE
LINENS FOR ANIMALS: UNIQUE ORGANIZATION OFFERS COMFORT TO ANIMALS

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A Houston Lab rescue just rented a giant van and went up to pick up a load of "stuff" from Linens for Animals in the Dallas area. I was told that they have a load of pee pads meant for the Rescue Ranch, too!

Rescues, fosters, people with disabled pets--take a look at the order form on the LFA website and get some of the great things that Lori and Mark are getting recycled. All you have to do is make a donation--and arrange for a way to get them from Dallas to you. LFA is now servicing 14 states, I believe!

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My introduction to this organization has kind of a chuckle behind it.

I saw a posting on one of my rescue message boards that there were pee pads available and did anyone want any. Just a few days before, conscious of the ongoing expense and the environment (the waste we were producing), I said a prayer--just in passing as I was cleaning the puppies' pen--asking for a better alternative.

With all of the puppies and incontinent/injured animals at the Rescue Ranch (our little animal sanctuary just north of Houston), I asked the group, Linens for Animals, for 200 pee pads--trying to be conservative. We use at least 12-15 a day...I figured this would last about two weeks. (Any donation really helps and saves our resources for another project.)

Within a few days, we had been granted 277--and they were the washable pee pads not the disposable kind! You could have told me that I had just won the lottery! This was an incredible gift. I realized right away that more people needed to know that this organization exists--and both to get help and/or how to help them in their mission.

This gift did more than eliminate an expense--and allowed RR Angels to check this item off of their lists of our much needed supplies--it allowed us to use pads more freely and to change them more often. It feels like such a luxury to use 20 when I would have squeezed by with less than half of that. (We just use a whole lot more laundry soap!)

I was expecting a box or two of pee pads and instead, got a car load of them--specially transported from the Plano/Dallas area to the Rescue Ranch--over two hundred miles away--with help from a couple of caring volunteers!

When I first spoke to one of the founders of Linens for Animals, Lori Birdsong, I knew that I would like her right away. She was on the phone talking to me and supervising her seven dogs at the same time.

Just chatting for a few minutes to get to know her, she told me that they had three beds in

their bedroom--all pushed together--so the dogs could all stretch out and sleep together with her and her husband. (Hmm...that sounds very familiar!)



This is the back of their newly "decked out" donations trailer--it was ad-wrapped courtesy of Crest Cadillac in Plano, TX--with the Linens for Animals logo and photo which sums up perfectly who they are and what they do! Lori, her husband Mark, and their dogs all work hard to help other animals.



When Lori told Mark that she wanted to move, Mark walked over to his office and locked the door/closed it on the spot (he is a chiropractor). Now, he uses his gift to help animals, too--he has even worked on a doe and an owl!

It started with tennis balls!

Lori (a Texas native--born in Midland) and her husband, Mark, moved to Texas from California almost four years ago. They wanted to buy a house with land for their animals (they now have three acres) and found their way to Plano, a suburb of Dallas.

"I wanted to do something for the animals. I can't do what people do in rescue--but I wanted to do something to help." Lori was playing tennis one day when she noticed that the pros at the Gleneagles Country Club were throwing out the used balls.

"I said "STOP!" I collected the balls and then bought cute baskets. I took them to the shelters. All dogs getting adopted got a ball. Eventually, the shelter workers told me what they really needed were linens to get the animals up off of the cement floor." It took her six months to figure out what to do next.

Linens For Animals Was Born

"I found two facilities in Dallas which process all of the laundry for the hospitals. They

would throw out or "rag them out" for pennies on the dollar. By donating to Linens or Animals, they not only do a good deed but also get tax benefits," said Lori.

They had to figure out how to get the linens from the laundry facilities to her home.

"We bought a ginormous trailer to transport everything. Every week now, we pick up over 10,000 pounds of pee pads, sheets, blankets and other linens." People would line up outside her house at 1 PM on the day of pick-up and can take what they need until the trailer is empty.

As of early October, things are a little different--orders are filled and the meeting place is not at her house any longer. Organizations place orders, too, from Houston and other parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and even Missouri. There is a four week wait. "People find all new uses for the things we get donated--they make slings for injured animals, throw-aways for distemper cases at the vet..."

April 19, 2009 Linens for Animals became a certified Texas not-for-profit organization. Congratulations!



Since they adopted an animal sanctuary, in Cleburne, TX, people now bring them all kinds of things for the animals--and leave them at their front door!

Their Good Works Don't Stop With Linens

"Mark and I saw dogs needing help (especially in a nearby neighborhood) and we were paying thousands of dollars in other people's vets bills." Then, they met Dedra Shaver.

"We met Dedra on the first day. She was one of the first pick-ups of linens. She has a canine/feline Rescue & Sanctuary in Cleburne, TX. (They now have 55 dogs and 100 cats).

Lori continued, "Dedra never had the money to file as a 501(c)3 to be a non-profit. She continued to amaze me--she was feeding, vetting, adopting...all on two nickels. She was taking care of feral cats--doing TNR (trap-neuter-release) in three counties, too, and managed her own animals. She is like an angle with wings."

"Mark and I decided to "adopt" Dedra Shaver and her rescue/sanctuary is now a part of Linens for Animals. Now on Wednesdays, when we give out linens, people bring us stuff! For nearly four years we did the collections/gave out everything and now we have 155 mouths to feed. We get dog food, cat food, crates, collars, leashes...

Dedra is an amazing kind of person to do what she does..." Lori gushed. She was clearly amazed--and grateful--for all that Dedra was doing to help so many animals.

Update: LFA's new animal sanctuary just had their grand opening in June, 2010! Congrats! Dedra's animals were all moved to the gorgeous new facility where Dedra lives onsite as the manager.



Some of those linens above, wound up at the Rescue Ranch! This is the back of our car--stuffed with all 277 washable pee pads! What a blessing!

...And They Can Help You, Too

Our Motto: If you can see out your rear-view mirror...YOU NEED MORE! We obtain a large trailer full of linens from local hospitals on a weekly basis. They are professionally washed and sanitized twice and are ready to bring comfort where needed!

Our clients range from cats and dogs to beavers, opossums and even calves and chimpanzees!

We also accept donations of dog food, cat food - any animal feed, in fact - plus toys, tennis balls, litter, etc.

We redistribute everything we receive to deserving rescue groups, sanctuaries, shelters, independent rescuers and also the pets of Meals-on-Wheels recipients who need meals too!

If you are a rescue group, shelter, or independent rescuer we would be honored to include you in our donations.



A full view of the newly wrapped trailer...a proud testament of really good works!

More Good Works

Before we said good-bye, Lori shared a little bit about her efforts to help chimps.

"Two and a half years ago went to give out linens to chimps. We don't normally visit, but I was enthralled to see the chimps, so I went. The state had stepped in and the sanctuary was under receivership. What I witnessed, killed me for two years...

Chimps were eating kibble. Chimps don't eat kibble--they eat fruits and vegetables! When a volunteer arrived carrying a donation of fruits and vegetables, which was very rare for them

to see, the chimps, at great physical harm to themselves, were swinging their bodies hard against their cages--just to get attention.

I contacted Labatt Food Services in San Antonio--who is donating a truckload every week of fresh foods! The chimps now carry around their blankies from Linens for Animals!"

(As a writer, I am supposed to remain objective but after hearing this, and envisioning these chimps eating good food and having blankets to call their own, I just wanted to hug Lori right then and there--but we were on the phone!)

In our last minutes together, Lori told me about "three ginormous puppy mill busts" that had taken place in Dallas in the last few months. "Six hundred dogs were pulled out in one day. Linens for Animals had two trailers there and for the first time in their lives, the dogs were on blankets."