

SPOTLIGHT ON ALUMNI SPOKESANIMALS

Excerpts from a recent interview with Walker, Rikki's Refuge Alumni Spokesdog and Official Doggie Downs Greeter and Pollyanna, our newest Alumni Spokescat.



Vincent:

Walker, I saw you were busy at the Furr Fest this past Saturday, almost as busy as me! How do you like being the "Dog Ambassador of Doggy Downs"?



Walker:

Oh Vincent, I love it! I get a chance to meet all the wonderful people who visit Rikki's. They hear my life story, and always seem touched by it. Oh – and I especially like all the extra treats, hugs and head pats I get!

Vincent: I hear you have a sad story to tell....

Walker: Yes, my life used to be hard. I was treated badly at the hands of my original owner; things I have tried hard to forget about. But I can't forget about that fateful day that I was dragged into the woods and shot in the back.

Vincent: Why did that happen? What did you do next?

Walker: Well, I think it had something to do with me being a bad hunting dog, but still I'm not sure what I did to get him so angry. I was in shock, couldn't move for a long time. I finally gathered all the strength I had and crawled back to the porch, hoping it was all a big mistake. But it was no mistake...I was then dragged to a place called Orange County Animal Shelter, where I was plopped down and again my owner said I needed to die. It was horrible...

Vincent: That sounds horrible! But OCAS is a great place to go when you are in trouble. I have been there before and everyone there has a heart of gold.

Walker: Yes, they treated me with love and kindness for the first time in my life. I healed, and then got to go to another wonderful place – called Rikki's Refuge. And the rest is history! Rikki's saved me – just like all our friends here, Vincent! We have all gotten a new lease on life thanks to the generosity in heart and spirit of the compassionate people of Rikki's! I live in Reston now with other Rikki's alumni, but I do volunteer every Saturday to be the official Greeter for Doggy Downs!!!

Vincent: Yes, you now live with one of my old roommates, Miss Pollyanna!!! How have you been, my beautiful friend, since I last saw you at the Charlottesville Vegetarian Festival?

Pollyanna:



Oh Vincent! It is always great to see your handsome face! I have missed you a lot since I moved to Reston and started hanging out with your old Spokescat partner, Gato Noir...

Vincent: Ah yes, Mr. Gato, my fine black cat friend. He'd better be treating you well! How have you been? Is your tail healed?

Pollyanna: My stub tail gets better every day! Yes, it was a hard road to recovery, but the wonderful people of Rikki's Refuge attended to me day and night and never, ever gave up on me!

Vincent: Well, we all fell in love with you from the start. You have such a sweet nature and positive attitude, especially after what happened to you....

Pollyanna: Yes, like Walker I had a hard life. I was dumped in a feral cat community as a little girl, and I didn't know how to fend for myself! It was so scary – but the worst was when those boys lured me away pretending to be my friends. They weren't my friends at all; they grabbed me and kicked me and hurt me, and then the worst thing in the world happened! They cut my tail off! I didn't do anything to deserve that! I managed to run away and hide until an angel named Barbara found me and took me to the vet. It took a lot of treatments but I made it, thanks to the kind people at Rikki's Refuge! And because of kind cats like you, Vincent!

Vincent: We were worried about you for a long time, Miss Polly!

Pollyanna: I am doing very well now, thanks to you. (And Kerry, and Lena and Valerie!). I still remember the words of encouragement you gave to me in the 9th Life Center, when I was at my lowest point. My tail hurt and wasn't healing very fast. I felt so alone and ugly without a tail, thinking no one will ever love me – that's when you said "it doesn't matter if you have four legs or three, a tail or no tail, a scarred back like Walker, or if you are blind like Duke Thomas Peabody. What matters is what you have on the inside – **a beautiful spirit, a generous heart and compassion for all living things in this big world of ours**". Your love got me through the dark days, Mr. Vincent, just like Rikki's Refuge helps all the animals that others have tossed away. It is truly heaven on earth, with a sweet three-legged black tuxedo cat always there to greet you at the door!



Ken contacted Comcast and arranged for a series of Rikki's Refuge shows to air on cable. They were very popular. Watch for more episodes in 2011. Thank you Ken, Hushey, Vincent, Kate, Galvin, Rhonda, Katarina, Sami, Autumn-Skye, Leaper, Tom and Jerry for appearing on the shows. Thank you Ken for making this possible! Thank you Jan for sponsoring the shows and Fred for helping with animals off stage! See the shows on Rikki's YouTube.

For **Pumpkin Hauling Season** this year Candy put on her biggest ever Pumpkin Princess Hat. She spent hours upon hours loading Blue Dog the truck with pumpkins. Big pumpkins, medium sized pumpkins and itty bitty pumpkins. She drove truck load after truck load of pumpkins 100 miles to feed the pigs and goats and Everybody here loves pumpkins. The rest of the year she's driving day old produce and bread on that long trip to the Refuge. And she's always sneaking in extra goodies to keep the Refuge clean and running. She knows the best places to get laundry detergent, bleach and all our cleaning needs. Thank you Candy.

Dennis and Crystal caught pumpkin fever and hauled in trailer load after trailer load, day after day, often arriving well after dark to unload. Corn, straw and gourds showed up by the trailerfull too. During the school year, with the help of the REACH team, they operate a **foodcycling program** at the Spotsylvania high schools, sorting and turning left over cafeteria food into food for the pigs, apples

for the horses, fresh greens for the rabbits and oranges for the guinea pigs. Thank you Dennis and Crystal.

Efforts like these are what make it possible for Rikki's Refuge to operate on ONE DOLLAR A DAY per animal!! Yes, you heard that right: \$1 per day per animal. WOW! Pretty good. Bringing in the pumpkins, produce, bread and such means the animals have **free, delicious and healthy food**. It means **we can put your money to work even harder and stretch it even thinner**. It takes a lot of time, commitment and donated gas to do this. Thanks to Candy, Dennis, Crystal, Deloris, Carl, Jane and Robert for keeping the trucks rolling in.

Would you be willing to make the commitment to pick up produce or bread at a store one day a week - or even every other week - to help the animals? Let me know, there are more goodies out there for us than we are able to haul in.

Mike rolls a lot of product into Rikki's too. Not as often as the produce people, though the loads he brings are gigantic. **8,000 pounds** of mostly dog food at the beginning of the year. **4,000 pounds** of cat food last month. And he's working on **86,000 pounds** of litter right now. Way to go Mike! Thank you.