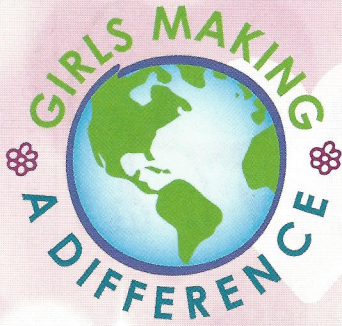


# Demi's Animal Rescue

By Debra Gano



What you ask for often shows up in unexpected ways. For months, my daughter, Ella, had been asking for a pet. Then one day, out of the blue,

a cute little terrier-mix puppy literally showed up at our back door. He had no ID, and for days we looked everywhere for his owner. A trip to the vet determined he had no identification chip, and soon we found that we were caretaking this 9-month-old dog who we named JD (for "John Doe" since we didn't know his name). Days turned into weeks as we searched for who he belonged to, and when no one claimed him, it appeared we had added a new member to the family.

and wardrobe, Demi turns much of her daily attention to advocating for animals who need her help. She's been passionate about animals her whole life, becoming a vegetarian at the age of 8, after



Demi Merritt with JD.

"There are people making money off poor animals that cannot defend themselves, and I wanted to be their voice."

she researched how many farm animals are mistreated and slaughtered. In middle school, she led a successful campaign to give students a choice as to whether they wanted to dissect animals or not, a policy that stands in place at her school today.

"I researched where the animals being dissected are coming from, and how they are killed, and wasn't comfortable with it," says Demi. "Often animals are found or stolen and then sold to companies that inject them with painful chemicals to preserve them to sell for dissections. There are people making money off of poor animals that cannot defend themselves, and I wanted to be their voice. It's important these issues are brought to public awareness."

Demi's idea to create her own animal rescue came after she organized a fundraiser for a local no-kill shelter. "We worked hard to raise about \$800 for the shelter, and even though they were very grateful, after it was

over I really wanted to know how the money was being used to help animals and see the impact. I wanted a more hands-on experience and decided to start my own shelter." So at the age of 14, supported by her parents, Demi launched **Demi's Animal Rescue**, now going into its third year of taking in and fostering out homeless animals, getting them healthy both physically and behaviorally, and finding them good homes.

Demi protesting the abusive treatment of circus animals outside a traveling circus. Says Demi, "Circus animals, especially elephants, are kept caged up in crowded, dirty places and punished very aggressively to train."



We grew very fond of JD, yet also found out a hyper little terrier puppy isn't the best pet for a busy family. JD didn't like being alone for a second, and we soon realized he needed to be in a home where he could get a lot more attention than we were able to give him. Because we adored him so much, it was important that we turned him over to a no-kill animal shelters, and that's when I met **Demi Merritt**.

Demi is the 16-year-old founder of Demi's Animal Rescue, a non-profit no-kill animal shelter in Aurora, Colorado. When we worked with her to help us find a loving home for JD, she impressed me as being a remarkable young woman. At an age where many girls are focused on crushes

Demi's rescue cat Domino gets adopted at one of her adoption/fundraising events!



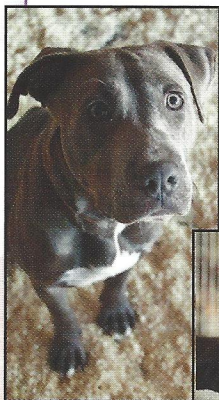


Demi LOVES what she does, but says there are challenges, like getting volunteers to help, finding adopters for her animals, and obtaining funding to support her work. "There's much to do! Keeping up with the vet work these animals require gets expensive really fast," says Demi. "There are SO many animals needing homes. The sooner they get adopted, the faster we can take in more. My goal is to get as many animals as we can off the streets and out of kill shelters or unhealthy homes and into a safe, clean, and healthy environment." ♥

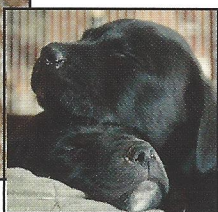
To find out more about volunteering, adopting, or donating to support Demi's cause, please visit [www.DemisAnimalRescue.com](http://www.DemisAnimalRescue.com).

## Success Story!

Demi received a call from a woman who told her about a pregnant dog wandering homeless around their neighborhood for weeks. The woman brought the dog into her garage because it started snowing, but said



Momma Maggie



Two of Maggie's pups

other shelters were full and she couldn't keep the dog or even bring it into her house. Demi's shelter was also full at the time, so Demi found a woman who said she would foster the dog - the only problem was she lived in a tiny apartment.

The day Demi went to pick the dog up from the woman's cold garage to bring to the foster parent, the dog had puppies— 11 of them!

The foster parent was expecting only a few dogs, but she was willing to keep the momma (who she named Maggie) and all 11 puppies while the babies nursed until Demi could make arrangements. Demi's family reorganized their entire basement to accommodate Maggie and her pups, giving them half of it for space for the pups to grow and play, while Demi trained them and worked on finding them good homes. "I was in the basement from the time I woke up until I went to bed. Right when I cleaned up one mess, there was another one!" says Demi. "But I'm happy we were able to save 12 dogs—who knows what would've happened to them?" ♥

*Demi successfully found great adopters for all of the puppies. And Maggie? The foster parent ended up adopting her back!*

# LOSING A PET

By Ella, age 10

After we found good new owners for JD with Demi's help, my mom said we could get a cat since they required less work than a dog. We found a beautiful 6-month-old black kitty at a local shelter and adopted her. We named her Cleo (after Cleopatra) and loved her from the start. I thought about her at school and could not wait to get home to see her. For homework, I wrote a paper about why she is the best cat — here's part of it: "Cleo is a big nut-ball when it comes to stealth, her eyes like lasers when hunting moths, bunnies, and humming-birds, catching but not hurting. She wants to be close to you but not on your lap, well, not unless you're cuddling with her. Then she snuggles her head on your chest and sometimes even lays on you purring. She's a goofy one all right — she'll lay right in the middle of what you're doing to be part of it. She has a great personality!"



Cleo turned one and we celebrated with a fun birthday party in the backyard. But soon after, she started being really tired all the time and got sick. We took her to doctors who tried to help, but she kept getting worse. Then they told us she has a rare disease that she got as a baby that could not be cured. As Cleo got weaker and weaker, we knew it might be best to put her to sleep so she would not suffer any more. It was the hardest thing I ever did! We had a beautiful funeral for Cleo and my friends were there because everyone loved her.

I think about Cleo and miss her a lot, and would never trade any of the awesome time I had with her. She will always hold a special, special place in my heart! As we held her before she died, we asked her if she would guide us to another kitty just as sweet as her—and now we are looking for another special black kitty. ♥