



TAIL TALK

Gloria Dauphin

Couple's love for dog leads to organization

When an animal companion enters our life, what you often find is the story of not only a friendship, but a remarkable love story. Such is the story of Metairie couple **Kristie and Johnny Sullens**, their beloved canine companions Angel and Romeo, and the organization they founded, Save-An-Angel.

Angel, a 7-year-old Carolina yellow dog (aka American dingo) came into the Sullens' life in 2004 as a stray puppy that Johnny found near their apartment in Oklahoma. But as anyone who has brought a stray into their home knows, it often feels as if the animal has found them.

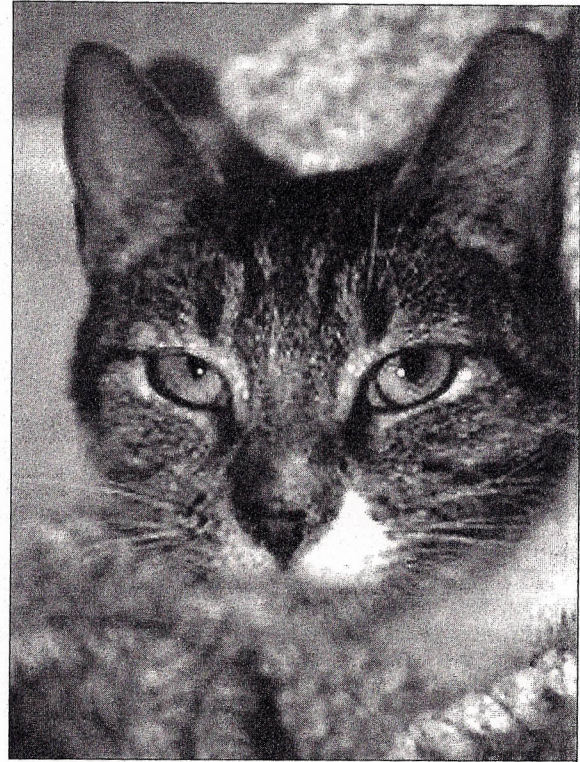
"I grew up in the country, and I had seen many stray dogs," Johnny said, "but none of them had ever seen me back. She was sort of perched on the dewy grass, one ear flopped over like a cartoon bunny. It was as though she had been waiting for me."

For Kristie, it was also an instant connection. "She trusted me instantly and she was so sweet and cute. It was love at first sight," Kristie said.

The Sullens already shared a home with their first dog, Romeo, when Angel arrived. For the next several years Kristie, Johnny, Angel and Romeo carved out a life together. Romeo and Angel were inseparable. When Kristie and Johnny were married, Romeo served as the ring bearer, and Angel was the flower girl.

In September 2009, when Angel was only 5, she was diagnosed with lymphoma. The Sullens were devastated, especially when learning that traditional chemotherapy had a cure rate of less than 4 percent.

Then they learned about the Canine Bone Marrow Transplant Program at North Carolina State University. They were determined to do all they could for Angel, and began fundraising,



Leona, a year-old gray and white cat, is very laid back, likes to snuggle and would love a nice couch to lounge on all day. To meet Leona, kennel No. A13789280, or any of the other pets available for adoption at the Louisiana SPCA, visit the shelter at 1700 Mardi Gras Blvd. in Algiers, call 504.368.5191 or go to www.la-sPCA.org on the Web. Shelter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays through Saturdays, and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

saying lots of prayers, contacting other animal lovers and making lots of sacrifices along the way.

In May 2010, just days before her sixth birthday Angel received a bone marrow transplant. She remains cancer-free today.

But what also makes this an amazing love story is what the Sullens have taken from this experience to help other animals and their families.

They created Save-An-Angel; a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping dogs like Angel by providing canine cancer education, support and access to state-of-the-art medical treatments. The slogan for the organization is "Diagnosis Cancer ... Destination Cure!"

There are a number of canine cancer organizations that offer financial assistance to families for the pets' treatment. The group's resource page, which can be found at www.save-an-angel.org/resources.html, is filled with links.

And if you take this love story full circle, it brings you back to the core of what makes the human-animal bond so enduring. "Dogs are our mirrors, and that also makes them our greatest teacher. They live in the present, so every moment has the

potential to be better than the last. We can learn a lot about our dogs by observing that in ourselves," Kristie said.

To learn more about Save-An-Angel and find out about upcoming events, including the Pawty 4 Pancake event Dec. 3 at the Old Iron Works in New Orleans, visit www.save-an-angel.org.

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This Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., it's the 2011 Friends Pet Fest at Lafreniere Park in Metairie.

Friends Pet Fest is the Friends of the Jefferson Animal Shelter's Fourth Annual all-breed, all-species, companion festival and pet adoption event where pets can bring their families for a day of fun, education, food and entertainment.

Admission is free. Pets in attendance should be over 3 months old, and must be leashed.

For more information visit <http://www.friendspetfest.org>.

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Gloria Dauphin writes about pet-related issues. Send news, events or questions to gloriatp@la-sPCA.org; fax to 504.368.5108, attention Tail Talk; or write to 1700 Mardi Gras Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70114.