



New Dog Daze pet food pantry cares for animals affected by recession



Ruth and David Sturgis, owners of Dog Daze pet shop in North Syracuse, with two of their dogs, Harley (left) and Kolesto (right). They have established a charity named Hardeko Helping Paws Pantry for pets, after three of their dogs, including Derby who has since died.

Newsletter Spotlight By Amber Smith/The Post-Standard

Ruth Sturgis loves animals.

When she learned that in 2007, at the start of the recession, rescue groups received 4 million animals from Americans who could no longer afford their care, and that rescue groups anticipate 10 million animals to be abandoned this year, Sturgis was amazed. "Those are staggering numbers. I said 'I've got to do my part.'"

Sturgis and her husband, David own [Dog Daze Healthy Pet Shop](#) in North Syracuse. Now they also operate Hardeko Helping Paws Pantry, a charity that offers "free food and medicine to pets of proud people who have fallen on hard times.

"We're going to give you the food, and we're going to encourage you to pay it forward," Sturgis explains. Recently the pantry helped a family, whose mother and father had lost their jobs, continue to feed their dog. They hope people choose some volunteer work, or make donations to the pantry once they are back on their feet as a way to pay the good will forward. In addition, Hardeko is pairing with Dog Daze and food manufacturer, Vet's Choice to donate respirators specially made for dogs and other animals who are victims of fires. Some volunteer fire departments in Central New York already have the respirators, but many do not. "We know we're going to need at least 10 of them, if not more," Sturgis says. "We'd like to cover a 10- to 15-mile radius from the store. We're just going to start from there."

She said the respirator kit contains a training DVD and manual and a bright orange webbed leash for firefighters to use in leading dogs to safety during overnight house fires - when dogs may lack leashes or collars. It also has three sizes of masks. The smallest are designed to work for cats, ferrets, birds and other small animals.

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How can you help?

Three ways:

- *Donate food, beds, crates, collars, any sort of pet care items to Hardeko; call 410-1278 for details.*
- *If you know someone on the verge of giving up their pet for financial reasons, steer them to the pantry at 309 South Main St., North Syracuse.*
- *If your volunteer fire department in Central New York lacks animal respirators, ask the department to notify Hardeko. The pantry will donate several respirators in the coming months.*