

the ANIMAL PAD

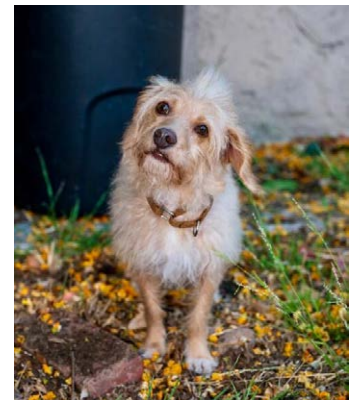
By Judith A. Habert

Photos Courtesy of The Animal Pad

I was lucky enough to learn about this amazing animal rescue in San Diego. Stephanie Nisan, founder of The Animal Pad, had always been an animal lover and she had always hoped to do something that would benefit animals. When she was on the search for a dog to adopt, she found an ad for a dog and, when she inquired, was told that the animal would be killed the following day if not adopted. She was mortified and started researching animal shelters, only to find out that some of the highest kill shelters in the nation are within a two-hour radius of San Diego. "When I discovered this fact I knew I had to do something. I sent out an email to my friends and family and said, okay, I'm starting a dog rescue and I'm not sure what it's going to be called. I'm not sure what it's going to look like, but I'm starting a corporation. Who wants to be on my board? Who wants to help me?" Stephanie started her shelter focused on getting dogs off euthanasia lists, saving them before they would be put down. In addition, The

Animal Pad started rescuing dogs from Mexico. They rented kennels in a facility in Southern San Diego County. There, they would house dogs that they rescued from Mexico, and in 2020, they were able to actually open up their own facility in La Mesa.

This was the beginning of what today is one of the greatest animal shelters I have come in contact with over the past 18 years running this magazine. What makes them so great is, of course, their founder, along with over 500 volunteers who dedicate their time and love to help these animals. The Animal Pad is one hundred percent volunteer, run, and donation-based, meaning nobody is paid in the organization. This is a major fact since everybody knows that whatever work, time, or financial resources that they contribute to the Animal Pad is truly making a difference because it's not going to somebody's salary; it's not going to some crazy overhead. It's going directly to the care of the dogs. The Animal Pad is an equal opportunity center that accepts



dogs in any condition, any age, and any breed.

Lauren Botticelli, Director of Operations, shares, "A lot of the time, we just go down in our van and pick up the dogs that need rescue in Mexico. We work with vets locally to make sure that these dogs are getting the best care they can, and we prepare them for success before we bring them to San Diego."

These dogs are there for a ten-day quarantine period, and their workers, whom they call their Glam Squad, will bathe them, cut their hair, and file their nails while they are there. During this time they can also get to know more about the dogs; they can get to know more about

their personality and their health. The main things they do there are feeding, medicating, and socializing all the dogs. It's the first place that they go to right after wherever they came from. So, it's a big step up for them. For a lot of the dogs, it's the first time that they're actually getting fed consistently, and they're being loved on by people and treated with dignity and respect. We are then called by their TJ Rescuer who lets them know that the animals are checked out and are ready to be picked up.

The Animal Pad had heard about a dog rescue in Mexico that had some questionable practices, and they were hearing some trouble-



Rescues from shut down Mexican shelter

some information about this facility. There was little they could do since they were just a standard rescue. Asia Caluori, Director of Marketing shared, “We didn’t have anything that we could really do to stop them. Until last year, the Mexican authorities actually reached out to us, and they said they wanted to shut down this fake rescue, but they needed our help because they couldn’t take on the dogs; someone had to do it. So, a team of our volunteers actually went side by side with the Mexican authorities and with some of our rescue partners in Mexico and basically did a hostile takeover of this fake rescue. Apparently, they had been conning animal lovers in the US and Mexico who just wanted to help these abandoned dogs. What they did was they would take in really sick or injured dogs and post pictures and info about them on Facebook, claiming to have rescued these dogs but needed donations for the animal’s medical care. They would raise a bunch of money, but it would never go towards the dogs. The dogs were not being fed; they went days without water. It was a really, really sad, horrible condition, and many of the dogs lost their lives.” When I heard about this, I could not believe that there were people out there who would torture animals as they had, and unfortunately, these criminals were never arrested or made to pay for the unbelievable cruelty perpetrated upon these pure, innocent, helpless dogs. The Animal Pad was just glad that they could save so many dogs and remove them from this horrible situation, they were able to save over 400 dogs



Asia added, “We took on the onus of being the advocates for those dogs. They are officially in our care. We’ve basically spent the last year trying to get those dogs all adopted out. And so many of the dogs we currently have are still from there. In addition to the 300 dogs that we have in foster care and the 30 dogs at our facility, we now have a facility in Mexico with about 100 dogs remaining from that fake Mexican animal rescue.” In San Diego, The Animal Pad currently has 25 adoptable puppies and around 340 dogs currently in their care.

The Animal Pad offers several ways to get involved. You can either foster a dog, which means you have no intention of adopting it, but are willing to take the dog into your home to care for it short term. You can foster to adopt a dog, which means you would like to adopt the dog but you want to foster it for a few weeks to make sure the dog is a good fit for you and that you are a good fit for the dog, or you can adopt the dog.

The Animal Pad welcomes volunteers and those who would like to donate to the care of their dogs.

Stephanie Nisan shares, “Obviously, we don’t have private funding, we don’t have public funding. We just get donations from individuals. What people need to know is that no amount is too small. I sometimes see donations of five or ten dollars coming in via Venmo. There will be a note saying,

‘I wish it could be more,’ but what people don’t realize is that we are so grateful for anything they can give us. Anything that they feel comfortable with, and it doesn’t have to be money. It could be fostering or it could just be time spent with our dogs at our shelter. Any type of donation is great!”

If you are looking to add a new family member, take a look at the animals on their site. Some are currently available, but others may still require care from the Animal Pad staff; you can find out more by visiting their site at <https://theanimalpad.org/adopt/>.



Photo by Colorforbreakfast