



"Bottle babies are just different, they are special."



The Bottle Mama

BY PATRICIA STEHLING

ONE MORNING IN 2014, AN AMBULANCE WAS CALLED FOR J.R. Nicholson, new owner of a beagle named Buddy. Nicholson wasn't feeling well, and, unbeknownst to the ambulance driver, Buddy had hopped onto an outside step of the vehicle as it drove away, not wanting to leave his owner. After a passing motorist got the attention of the driver, Buddy was let inside the back of the ambulance to be with Nicholson. After being treated, Nicholson and Buddy headed back to their ranch. The story of the ambulance-riding dog made Buddy an international celebrity and inspired an animal rescue that now bears his name—Buddy's Animal Rescue.

"Buddy came to me as a rescue before we officially formed a rescue organization," said Terry Hensley, executive director of BAR, amidst a houseful of animals. Someone who knew Hensley and her love of animals asked her to help re-home Buddy, who looks like he has a smile stuck on his face. Buddy found that home on Nicholson's ranch in Mason, and they became constant companions.

BAR began with Hensley and a group of volunteers passion-

ate about at-risk animals.

"Our agenda is to be a facilitator," she said. "We have made connections with other rescues in other towns that we can facilitate between and network."

Now they're the only rescue organization in Mason County that bottle feeds neonatal orphans, tiny kittens with their umbilical cords still attached and newborn puppies whose eyes are still closed.

"There are very few people who have the luxury of time to bottle and have the passion to do it," Hensley said. BAR not only cares for animals at this crucial stage but helps them find forever homes through weaning, training, socializing and adoption.

BAR also accepts animals that are facing euthanasia at shelters. They do not accept abandoned animals or those that owners want to surrender, unless the animals are orphaned neonatals. Hensley's home often becomes a kitten care center, complete with distinct areas for kittens in different stages of development before their adoption.



"I have a system with the kittens; sometimes they still have the umbilical cord attached and they are cold, so we need to warm them up. We feed them every two hours; we call that the kitten nursery," Hensley said. "Once their eyes are opened and they are aware, I move them into my kitten room in a playpen-type area, and they begin to get litter-box trained, and I want them to get used to all the dogs and all the household sounds. Once they are too big for that and can start getting out, then I have a higher pen with a larger play area. Once they are too big for this area, they are pretty much litter-box trained, and they have the run of the house. Once they are spayed or neutered and have their shots, they are ready for adoption."

One of the goals of BAR is not only to help animals in need but also to pair foster animals with local senior citizens in an effort to brighten their lives. BAR covers all the costs associated with the care of these animals, and weekly visits from a BAR volunteer ensure the animals' needs are met and provide a social outlet for seniors who foster.

"We would like to be able to find more senior citizens to foster cats," Hensley said. "We had a friend of ours whose cat died and she was so upset. I told her, 'We have a cat you can foster for us,' and she loved that cat. That way, it is a ministry: You get her involved, you have people going to see her, and she has something to love. It is a win-win."

While BAR puts a great deal of time, effort and love into caring for animals, the rescue group also works to educate the public about the need for population control in reducing the number of at-risk animals. BAR offers scholarships for cat and dog spaying and neutering in Mason County.

BUDDY'S ANIMAL RESCUE
buddysanimalrescue.org
 P.O. Box 1721
 Mason, TX 76856

In order for this nonprofit to keep making a difference in Mason County, it needs the support of the community.

"Our biggest fundraiser is our Krispy Kreme doughnut sale," Hensley said. "We have it the first weekend of hunting season—we preorder and then we will go up the night before and pick up the doughnuts early the next morning. Last year, we got 400 dozen. We also try to do two garage sales a year to raise money, and we are looking into doing grants in the future."

Individuals can donate to BAR directly through its website, buddysanimalrescue.org, or through Amazon. Search for "Buddy's Animal Rescue" and find a list of items the organization needs.

Adoption is not an act every family is in a position to undertake, but that doesn't mean you can't be a part of the rescue process and improve your community and the lives of animals in need in your area.