

Be Kind to Animals Week
What Rescue is about

This is one of the most wonderful heartfelt stories I have ever heard. I just had to share it with all my Boston Friends. If you get emotional about rescue stories grab yourself a BOX of tissues. If you don't usually get emotional you might want to grab at least one tissue...

This is what rescue is ALL about! The unconditional love of a rescue pet...is like no other. I have a store bought pup and she is a runner...the rest of mine are rescue - they don't run; they know what they got...and they wouldn't trade it for anything.

Thank you,
Jennifer Barrett

A friend of mine from Midwest BT Rescue wrote this for her local paper and she is allowing me to crosspost. Not only is she a talented writer but think this is a wonderful story of rescuing a puppy mill BT. Hope you all enjoy too.

Once again it is Be Kind to Animals Week. It seems fitting this year that I write to you about Ruby, the Boston Terrier who taught us about kindness-and living life to its fullest.

Ruby started out as our foster dog. Within days she became our forever dog. However, for Ruby and me, forever wasn't long enough.

As near as we can tell Ruby was born in the mid 1990's in a hellish condition in the United States we call a puppy mill. The mill was in the hills of Kentucky. It was typical of all mills. A large cold pole barn built for one purpose-money. It would have been horrible for any dog but especially for a Boston Terrier. For Boston's are bred to be a companion dog and to be loved.

She was a perfect dog to a "miller"-- marked perfectly, wonderful temperament and she produced puppies. She lived there for about eight years, void of love and human contact. Her only contact with people was food and water. It was loud, cold, and scary. But nothing compared to the loneliness. All the miller came for was to take her babies. She was given no health care and no attention.

About the time she turned eight she could no longer produce puppies, and half of her teeth were rotten. She was heartworm positive, and had never been given any shots or any medical care. She was dumped at a shelter. Typical millers, after all of the money she had made them, they could not even kindly euthanize her. Puppy mills are legal in every state in the United States. Over two and a half million puppies are born into puppy mills each year. Puppy mills should be outlawed.

She was a Boston Terrier with no name, scheduled to be put to sleep in a shelter in Kentucky. Then her miracle occurred. Someway, somehow, Gwen Eder of

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Midwest Boston Terrier Rescue heard about her. Ruby was very ill, and like the many Gwen chooses to save needed medical care but mostly love.

Midwest Boston Terrier Rescue spent more money on Ruby to make her well than they would ever recover from adoption fees and donations, as is the case with most rescue dogs.

Then our miracle occurred. It was the Tuesday after Labor Day 2003. Gwen called and said, "I have a little puppy mill girl, will you take her?" We said, "yes." It was nearly five years ago on that Tuesday that Ruby came into our lives with more moxie than anyone I have ever known. For someone who only weighed 18 pounds, she took up more space than a 150-pound Great Dane.

Ruby needed to fit 14 years of life into the five that would remain for her. Because truly that is when Ruby's life began. She was naughty. For a long, long, time she was very naughty. When you live in a crate you miss the social graces learning period that most home raised puppies receive during their early training. It took nearly a year for her to learn some of those social graces, others she never learned. And that was ok with us. In those five years she loved us more than we had ever been loved.

We soon learned that the quickest way for Ruby to get our attention was via the kitchen table. She would jump up onto the table to be closer to us. For a long time we would gently remove her from the table, none of the other dogs ever got on the table. But with her, we were more than tolerant. Life was like a parade to our Ruby. A big huge parade that never ended.

Everything was wonderful in her life. She had many things most take for granted, like her yard, pillows, and a lap, sleeping with her Mom and Dad, and unconditional love.

Ruby was with us for about a week when I asked my co-director at Boxer Haven, Nancy, what kind of a home Ruby should have. I had just written her bio for petfinder. It said she needed a mom and dad to love her and a big yard and pillows but no cats. My friend Nancy simply said, "She is not leaving; she is home right now." And she was right. That night we decided to adopt her. In rescue we call that a foster failure. It happens to us all. We say we are fostering, and then one of them wiggles into our heart and never leaves. So it was with Ruby.

Gwen was thrilled when I called her. To Gwen, Ruby had found a home. It took us almost a year to make our puppy mill girl as close to a "normal dog" as she would ever be. For nearly five years she taught us the meaning of kindness.

All six of our dogs are very special. They do special things, like Therapy Dog Work and have obedience titles, and they visit the sick and children.

And as much as we love them, they love us. We will tell you that you have never been loved like a rescue dog will love you. There were over thirty-five rescue dogs who came and went while we had Ruby, and she graciously helped them all get well and find new homes.

Puppy mill girls do not ever take anything for granted. Especially love.

Ruby taught us to slow down and take walks. She taught us that papers for high school poetry could not properly be graded without a dog in your lap.

She taught us that one of the most wonderful things in the whole world is the gift of a dead mole on your pillow in your bed, with a Boston Terrier dancing around your head till you notice the gift. She taught us that a Boston who weighs 18 pounds can scale a 6-

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foot fence like a cat, and that they can learn not to. And that even though they are very ill, the place to go potty is outside.

Ruby loved everyone who entered our home, and she loved her doctor. But mostly she loved us and her five brothers and sisters. Late this winter Ruby started to have seizures from a brain tumor. After two weeks of medical issues, her human children who baby-sit her, "the Bunce-kids", came to visit her on Thursday night. She was very sick and was having difficult time breathing. For one last time our Ruby made them smile as with all of the effort she had she once again landed in the middle of the kitchen table so she could be close to them. It had been quite some time since that had occurred.

That night, her breathing slowed, and her heart got tired. We held her all night. The next morning her wonderful Doctor, Don Hitzemann helped her cross the Rainbow Bridge. We held her.

In just less than five years she taught us more about being kind to animals than anyone we have ever met. You would think that still having five dogs would ease some of the pain, but it is strangely quiet now. We all miss her.

Ruby taught us that you should never take anything for granted. You should always have time for walks, for laps, for love, and for your family. So during Be Kind to Animals Week take the time to hug your pet. They deserve it and so do you.

Bio: Debra Jean-MacKenzie Szot is a resident of the Big Rapids Michigan area. She is a long time lover of animals. She lives with her husband David on his families original farm. They are both active in their community, where Debra manages a printing shop and David teaches high school. Debra teaches dog obedience classes and does individual canine consultations for training and behavior issues. They have two grown daughters, four Tennessee Walking Horses, four cats, two Boxers, two Boston Terriers, a Collie and a Scottish Terrier. One of the Boxers, the Collie, the Scottish Terrier and one of the Bostons are therapy dogs and visit locally where people need smiles. They belong to Therapy Dogs International, West Michigan Therapy Dogs, Boxer Haven Rescue, Midwest Boston Terrier Rescue, and Mecosta County CARES.