



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

NEWSLETTER NO. 25 • AUGUST 2010

www.amigosanimalesgto.org

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A new storage facility for Amigos 1
- Finding their way home
by Sandra Ward 2
- Three recent rescues: Flaco, Milagro,
Diego 4
- A march for animal rights 6
- Finally, a dog show for mixed breeds! 7
- 77 animals neutered during our
April campaign 8
- American donors offer to
match donations 9
- Recent donations and support 9

A NEW STORAGE FACILITY FOR AMIGOS

Over the years our association has acquired a large amount of equipment and supplies needed for our spay/neuter, rescue, and education activities. As we do not have an office, we have relied on volunteers to store most of our inventory in their homes. The medical supplies used in our spay/neuter campaigns are kept under lock and key by veterinarians in our program, as many of those items are controlled substances.

Recently an Amigos volunteer offered us the use of a small building owned by her family to use as a warehouse for our nonmedical inventory. The building is ideal for this purpose, although it needs a cement floor and some minor roof repairs. The Amigos board organized a work party to remove junk that had been



stored in the building, and two donors contributed cement and roofing material.

We are arranging for the cement floor to be laid and the roof repaired. As soon as the building is ready for our use, we will move our inventory from volunteers' homes into the new facility and for the first time will be able to organize the items so that they can be easily retrieved when needed.

We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to this project—the family who donated the building, the volunteers who have been preparing the building, and the anonymous donor.

Photo: Cleaning out the new storage facility





AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

FINDING THEIR WAY HOME by Sandra Ward

There are numerous accounts of lost pets finding their way home. The greatest distance reported to have been traveled by a lost dog was 3,000 miles, from Oregon, where he was lost while his family was on vacation, to his home in Indiana. That case may not have been authenticated, as it was reported in the 1920s. But accounts of many other, less daunting journeys by dogs and cats are common. I can attest to two of them because they were made by animals I have known personally.

Babycat

Before moving to Guanajuato 13 years ago, my husband and I lived on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. There we had two cats, both rescued from the street. Our house was in a forest next to a stream that flowed into Kaneohe Bay. We had a cat door that allowed our cats to go in and out of the house whenever they wished. One day we noticed a beautiful tiger-striped feral kitten with his mother in the woods behind our house. We named the kitten Babycat. Eventually the mother disappeared, but Babycat, now a young tomcat, began using the cat door to come into our house and eat. We did not mind his eating our cats' food, but we did mind his odorous marking behavior, and so we decided to trap him and release him in another part of the island.

We succeeded in trapping him and took him to a small-boat marina on the other side of our city, about 5 miles away. We spoke with the fishermen there, who promised to share their fish with him. Initially I felt guilty about taking him away from his familiar surroundings, but my husband and I soon forgot about him.

Six months later we were astonished when Babycat reappeared on our deck, looking thinner and more

apprehensive but determined to remain. We could hardly believe he had been able to find his way back to us, for that had required not only making his way through a dangerous (for cats) urban area but also crossing two rivers and the stream next to our house, which meant using bridges built for automotive traffic.

A couple of weeks later we managed, with great difficulty, to trap Babycat again so that we could have him neutered, and for a short while he lived with us. He bonded to me but would trust no one else. My husband did not want a third cat, and so I agreed to try to find him a home with friends.

I took Babycat to a family who loved animals and lived in a forested area similar to ours. They agreed to keep him indoors until he accepted them.



Babycat at home at last

He was with them for a month, and all during that time he hid behind a bookcase. One day he managed to escape. When I learned that he had disappeared, I felt responsible for his situation. I searched for him for three months whenever I could find the time, and eventually, with help from people who had seen my notices about a lost cat, I found him. As soon as Babycat saw me and heard my voice, he came up to me and allowed me to pick him up. On our way home he sat in my lap and purred.

After that, although our rule has been that we would have only two pets at a time, my husband and I decided to keep Babycat. He lived with us for the rest of his life, gradually overcoming his fear of people. He died in my arms at the age of 18.

Daisy

Daisy is a friendly six-year-old dog who lives on a busy street in Puentecillas. The owners of a business on the street provide her with food and water, and they claim her as their dog, although they do not invite her indoors.

I met Daisy two years ago when Amigos de los Animales was organizing a spay/neuter campaign in nearby the village of Paso de Perules. Several of us were putting up notices about the campaign in the area, and we asked the owners of the business where Daisy lives to display one. I noticed that Daisy had had puppies and suggested that they bring her to the campaign. The store owners expressed interest in the campaign, but did not bring her.

I continued stopping to say hello to Daisy when I was in the area and occasionally gave her treats. Last April Amigos held a spay/neuter campaign in Puentecillas. The evening before the campaign I stopped at Daisy's owners' store



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

FINDING THEIR WAY HOME by Sandra Ward (continued)

and told them about the campaign. They said they could not take her because they would not be in the area the next morning, so I offered to take her to the campaign myself if they would promise to pick her up the next afternoon. They agreed. I took Daisy home with me that evening, gave her a hearty meal, and offered her a bed outdoors, as she was afraid to enter our house.

She immediately made friends with our two dogs, and before long was playing with our 11-year-old female, Trajan. The next day I took Daisy to the campaign to be spayed. She spent most of the day sleeping off her anesthesia. At the end of the campaign, as we were preparing to load up our equipment, I realized that her owners had not come to get her. Since she required medication and close observation over the next week, I brought her to our home, and over the next few days she gradually worked up the courage to come into our house. By the fourth night she was sleeping in our bedroom with our other two dogs.

Her manners were impeccable. She required no instruction about doing her business outdoors. She stayed close by me as I worked. She loved going for walks and riding in my car with the other dogs.



Daisy at home (briefly) with us

I had her bathed, vaccinated, and wormed. But our rule has been to have only two pets at a time. So, with much reluctance, after her sutures were removed, I accepted an offer from the parents of one of our board members, who live in Marfil, to keep her until we could find her a real home where she would be safely off the street. They would not bring her indoors, but they have a fenced area where she would stay with their other dogs.

She escaped from them during her first night there, and by 9:30 the next morning was back at our home. She had traveled some 5 kilometers and crossed two busy highways to return.

We kept her for another week, while I desperately looked for a home for her. An obliging family in Paso de Perules whose home is nowhere near a busy street offered to adopt her. I took Daisy there, and the family tried to make her comfortable on their terrace until she could become accustomed to living with them.

Daisy would have none of it. She escaped and this time made her way back to her original home, which was about 2 kilometers away. I found her there, sleeping next to her store, and was greatly relieved that she had not tried to find our home again. That effort might have cost her her life, as she would have had to cross several highways.

The homing instinct

A search of the Internet turned up several entries about the phenomenon of homing observed in various species. According to Wikipedia, "Homing is the inherent ability of an animal to navigate towards an original location through unfamiliar areas. This location may be either a home territory, or a breeding spot." An animal may use true

navigation, which entails recognizing landmarks and works only when the animal is in familiar surroundings, or it may use magnetic orientation (as in bird migration), celestial navigation, olfaction, or topographic memory.

An 1974 entry from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois, provides more detail about what is called the homing instinct:

We share with our dogs, cats and other domestic animals an attachment to a place we regard as home. If one of these animals strays, or is sold to a new owner, or is carried away and abandoned, it acts lost and homesick as it struggles to grope its way back. This is easy to see in pets and among livestock on farms. Surprisingly, many such displaced animals do find their way home, often through miles of strange country.

Less commonly known is the remarkable ability of a wide variety of wild creatures to navigate unknown territory with pinpoint accuracy—birds, bats, mice, turtles, fish, insects, and many others.

How do they do it? Many of us carelessly say that they have "an instinct to go home", but these are empty words and explain nothing. Experiments and careful observations have thrown some light on the guides used by a few kinds in their homing behavior and on their seasonal migrations. Different ones steer by landmarks, the sun, wind direction, shore lines, valleys, echoes, scent trails, water qualities, a sense of time and distance, or by combinations of these navigating aids.

In short, I have no simple explanation for Babycat's and Daisy's skill in returning to the homes they chose for themselves. I can only marvel at their determination.



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

THREE RECENT RESCUES

Each animal that our volunteers rescue has a story. We haven't the space to tell all of them, but here is a short selection of reports having happy endings.

Flaco

He was so weak from hunger when we found him on the street last November that we were not sure we could save him. Flaco was the name we gave him because it means "skinny" in Spanish. We put him under the care of a veterinarian for about three weeks, and then Julia Salido, one of our board members, offered to care for him until he was strong enough to be adopted. Given the ordeal he had been through, we wanted to be sure he went to a loving home.



Flaco the day of his rescue

Flaco is four or five years old. Julia kept him for several months, gradually putting weight on him. She naturally introduced him to her family—two active young children, two other dogs, and a cat. He got along fine with everyone.

In April we placed Flaco with a family in the village of Concepción, about 20 km from Guanajuato. Their home, perched on a hilltop surrounded by alpine trees, has a sweeping view of the valley below.

Nearby are a few other houses and cornfields. In the distance are the beautiful sierras. The family wanted a dog that would protect their home, play with the children, and keep the husband company when he worked in their fields. By then Flaco was full of energy, and we were delighted to know he would get lots of exercise.

He had to be tied up the day we left him with his new family so that he would not follow us, but we returned again two weeks later to be sure he was happy there.

He greeted us exuberantly. It was clear that he was being treated well and was happy in his new surroundings. He even had a young canine companion to play with. We arranged for the female puppy, like Flaco, to be vaccinated and sterilized.



Flaco with one of the children in his new family



... and playing with his new friend

Milagro

One Saturday evening in July an Amigos volunteer was driving through the village of Valenciana near Guanajuato when a van in front of her car ran over a puppy. The driver of the van did not stop or even slow down, leaving the puppy prostrate and yelping in the middle of the highway.

The volunteer stopped her car, waved traffic around the puppy, and examined the puppy. Fortunately, he had been between the wheels of the van when it knocked him down and, although, injured, did not seem to be gravely so. With help from a bystander, she put him into her car and headed to the nearest veterinary clinic.

It was 6 p.m., and the vets at that clinic had left for the weekend. But their assistant was still there and began calling other clinics in the city. One was still open, and the vet there, Felipe Manríquez, told the volunteer he would wait for her to bring him the puppy. Another volunteer offered to go along and carry the puppy from the car to Felipe's clinic, which is located on a callejon (pedestrian cul-de-sac).

By the time they arrived at Felipe's, the puppy, though bleeding from his gums and head, was able to lift his head and look about. This was definitely a good sign!



Felipe Manríquez checks Milagro's injuries



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

THREE RECENT RESCUES *continued*

Felipe examined the puppy, which was about four months old. He agreed to keep the fellow for several days to be sure he had no internal injuries, and to neuter him if the puppy was likely to make a full recovery.

Sure enough, four days later Milagro, as we decided to call him, had been sterilized and was ready to go to a good home. Another Amigos volunteer agreed to foster Milagro until a home could be found for him. Two weeks later we learned that the volunteer and his wife had decided to adopt Milagro themselves.

Now Milagro gets to sleep on a bed and rides with his owner when the owner makes business calls. "This puppy is a real personality," says says the owner. "He barks a lot. But he's very funny and gives us a great deal of pleasure."



Milagro loves riding in his owner's car

Diego

In June we received a plea from a young German, Barbara Kus, and her boyfriend, Torben, who were spending several months in Guanajuato. They had fallen in love with a tiny kitten named Diego that some school girls had found abandoned on the street and had brought to Felipe Manriquez's clinic, where Barbara had

been volunteering. Barbara and Torben wanted to adopt him, but they were going to return to Germany at the end of July and knew that the long the trip to Germany would be hard on Diego. Besides, they did not know where they would be living once they returned to Germany. So they tried to find him a permanent home in Guanajuato.



Diego at 10 weeks

There was a further complication: Diego had had a blood test after exhibiting cold symptoms and tested positive for feline leukemia. Although he recovered from the cold and seemed perfectly healthy, Barbara and Torben knew he would need to be adopted by someone for whom his virus would not be an issue. Many cats that carry the virus live long, symptom-free lives. But they can expose other cats to the virus, and they may require special care. Diego needed to find a home where he would be the only cat.

Barbara and Torben sent an appeal to all their acquaintances in Mexico, and their letter was posted on several popular lists serving the Guanajuato community; but no one, it seemed, wanted to adopt a kitten with special needs. They decided therefore to take Diego with them to Germany. This required getting approval from Mexican health authorities and making arrangements with the German airline.

Their flight to Germany was leaving from Mexico City, a five-hour bus ride from Guanajuato. The bus companies they contacted would not allow tiny Diego to ride with them in the passenger section of the bus. Not wanting him to ride in the baggage compartment. Barbara and Torben sent out another appeal, this time asking whether anyone who was driving to Mexico City could offer them a ride on the day they needed to go there.

Again, their request turned up no leads. Undaunted, they arranged for a taxi service based in San Miguel de Allende, called San Miguel Drivers, to take them and Diego to Mexico City. They left for Germany on July 28.

Shortly after their arrival, Barbara reported that despite a quite stressful flight, Diego recovered very quickly in his new home in Germany. Barbara and Torben took him to their veterinarian to have another blood test done. Sadly, he still has the virus in his blood. They are considering what to do since they have a very healthy cat that's 11 years old. Barbara writes, "We'll see how the story of little Diego turns out. We're crossing our fingers that it will end happily."



Diego in his new home in Germany



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

A MARCH FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

Amigos joined animal-welfare associations throughout Mexico on Saturday, May 22, in a peaceful march for animal rights. Participating with Amigos volunteers in Guanajuato were members of the organization Centro de Protección Animal (CEPROA), an organization we have collaborated with on numerous occasions.

The objective of the nationwide marches was to pressure the government to improve the laws protecting animals and to apply tougher sanctions against those who abuse them. Specifically the march organizers advocated educational campaigns to inform the public

about the rights of animals, free or low-cost spay/neuter campaigns in every city, the end of inhumane capture and killing of animals on the part of animal-control centers, greater control over the sales of puppies and kittens, strict prohibition of the sale of wild animals, prison sentences for the those who mistreat animals, and punishment for those who abandon their pets.

About 40 people marched quietly from the Puente del Campaño to the Plaza de la Paz carrying banners and signs urging the humane treatment of animals and their protection against abuse. Some of the signs declared that animals have feelings and deserve our respect.

Others urged people to adopt street dogs instead of buying pets and to not ever abandon a pet. Many people who watched the march expressed their approval of its purpose by nodding to the marchers or giving them a thumbs-up.

Some foreigners in Guanajuato who were sympathetic to the cause decided not to participate in the march out of fear of violating a Mexican law against political activity by foreigners. Local authorities assured us, however, that this peaceful demonstration was not considered to be a political activity. The two local organizations therefore plan to make the march for animal rights an annual event and hope that more people will join us next year.



Lalo Rodriguez, president of Amigos, and Max Sampson, board member, during the march



Demonstrators preparing to march





AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

FINALLY, A DOG SHOW FOR MIXED BREEDS!

Each year Guanajuato has a dog show that features purebred dogs. Prizes are awarded for various categories of breed. The event is very popular, and in recent years Amigos has had a stand at the show offering literature about our program and encouraging people to adopt street and shelter dogs instead of buying purebreds.

This year the group Pro Vida Felina proposed a dog show for mixed breeds and, with the enthusiastic support of the organizations Centro de Protección Animal (CEPROA), the city's Animal Control Center (CECA), and Amigos, co-sponsored a dog show called Concurso Super Mestizo de Guanajuato in the Los Postitos Park. The event attracted around 150 spectators and participants. The many mixed-breed dogs in attendance were extremely well-behaved.

The aims of the competition were to dignify the image of mixed-breed dogs, to combat discrimination against them, and to show to advantage their abilities, aptitude, and behavior. Toward this end the City's canine rescue team offered a demonstration of the abilities of highly trained rescue dogs, both mixed-breed and purebred, to find and save victims of disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes.

The event featured live jarocho music by the group Son del Monton and the sale of T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, and food and beverages to raise money for the sponsoring groups.

Instead of the usual categories for judging the contestants, there were prizes for the super mestizo of Guanajuato, for the dog that most resembled its owner, and for the best-costumed dog. (The use of noxious materials such as paint and adhesive were prohibited.) The entry fee per contestant was 50 pesos (about US \$3.90). Prizes included cash, a diploma, and, in the case of the first-prize winner, a trophy.



Super Mestizo contestants line up

Some of the winning contestants were hilarious. The dog that won for the best costume came as a Harley motorcyclist.



Winner of best costume category and proud owner

The show's sponsors had stands with materials about the city's regulations for protecting domestic animals and encouraging the adoption of street and shelter pets. Some shelter dogs were adopted during the event. The sponsoring organizations plan to have a Concurso Super Mestizo each spring. Our hope is that it will become even more popular than the dog show for purebreds.



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

77 ANIMALS STERILIZED DURING OUR APRIL CAMPAIGN

On Sunday, April 25, we held our first spay/neuter campaign of the year in the village of Puentecillas, sterilizing 77 dogs and cats—74% of them female dogs. Nine veterinarians and vet technicians volunteered for the campaign, providing this service to pets owners unable to afford the customary charges for sterilization.



Volunteers loading equipment for the April campaign

The campaign was our 24th since forming Amigos in 2002. A second campaign for 2010 will be held later this month, and a third toward the end of the year.

We chose Puentecillas for the spring campaign because of its large population of street dogs and also because it agreed to support the campaign by offering us a suitable building and lunch for the volunteers. The campaign took place in the village's community center. We had the use of several rooms, which community members cleared and cleaned for our use.

Volunteers who participated in the campaign are listed in the last section of this newsletter. Besides the veterinarians, technicians, and Amigos members, 15 students from the city's main high school helped during the campaign, thereby fulfilling a major part of their community service requirement before graduation.

During the week before the campaign, volunteers distributed posters and flyers announcing the event.



Left: A Puentecillas dog owner with two puppies and their mother



Above right: Dr. Miguel Ochoa and Verónica Mares shaving an anesthetized cat in preparation for surgery

On Saturday, April 24, a team of volunteers loaded up vehicles, drove them to the campaign site, and set up the equipment. On Sunday during the campaign, volunteers registered the cases, assisted the vet in the anesthesia unit, partnered with the vets in the surgical unit, tended to animals in the recovery unit, laundered soiled surgical drapes, talked with pet owners about the proper care of their pets, ran a rummage sale, and packed up the equipment at the end of the long day. Community members did the final clean-up after we removed the equipment.



Dr. Moisés Rivera operating on a dog with assistance from Julia Salido



Dogs in the recovery unit in Puentecillas were kept warm on cardboard and under blankets



High school students washing soiled surgical drapes

We thank everyone who helped make the campaign a success. Special thanks go to Guanajuato's Urban Health Center for donating medical supplies, to the Puentecillas community leaders and members who supported our efforts, to the many volunteers who cheerfully dedicated themselves to the campaign, and especially to the veterinarians who gave us their one day off from regular work to spend many hours on their feet performing surgery.



AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

AMERICAN DONORS OFFER TO MATCH DONATIONS TO AMIGOS

Three American supporters of Amigos have offered to match donations, peso for peso, up to the value of MX \$10,000 pesos or the US equivalent (approximately US \$786) provided the donations are received by October 31. The donations may be made by check to our US affiliate, Amigos de los Animales de Guanajuato, Inc. (see address this page); by PayPal to our US affiliate; or by direct deposit to our Mexican bank account. If choosing to make a direct deposit to our Mexican bank account, please contact us and we will send you the account information.

The donations may be earmarked for education, rescue, or spay/neuter. All will be acknowledged. Those made by US donors to our US affiliate are deductible from US federal taxes.

Recent donations and support

We depend upon the donations we receive from our supporters to provide services to the community. Our sincere thanks go to the following donors and volunteers for their recent support:

Best Friends: Carolyn Crowder, Sandra Ward

Benefactors: Diane Carter, Mariana Grobet, Ron Mann and Sandra Ward in memory of Esther Ottosen

Family donors: Amy and Jennifer Harber

Individual members: Martha Roberts

Governmental support: Animal Control Center of Guanajuato, International Airport of the Bajío, Municipal Health Directorate, Urban Health Center of Guanajuato

Donors-in-kind: Anonymous donor, Berenice Ayala, David Chavez Chavez, Julie García, Amy and Jennifer Harber, Don and Martha Roberts

Other donors: Nina Johnson, Isaac Musselwait

April campaign volunteers: Adanari Alfaro Lugo, Paty Almanza, Sarahi Elizabeth Álvarez Morales, Sharon Anton, Berenice Ayala, Bernardo Calzada, Hernán Carrillo Barrientos, Vicente de Paul Barrientos Palafox, Octavio Centeno (DVM), Juan Esteban Díaz Sánchez, Stephanie Dunbar, Manuel Elías (DVM) María Alejandra Gómez Barajas, Gustavo Gonzáles, Itzel María Guzmán Torres, Patricia Estefanía Hernández Pacheco, Maru Herrera (DVM), Verónica Mares, Liliana Abigail Montes Rancel, Miguel Ochoa (DVM), Amanda Daniela Olvera González, Laura Andrea Pérez Ortiz, Virginie Pautrat, Fancisco Javier Quintero Camacho, Juan Benjamin Pérez Pérez, Yunven Malinalli Pimentez Saucillo, James Pyle, Maviela del Carmen Ramírez Villegas, Andrea Elizabeth Rangel Morales, Victoria Rangel Castillo, Victoria Rangel Muñoz, Moisés Rivera (DVM), Eduardo Rodríguez, Gustavo Rodríguez Venegas, Jared Rodulfo Rodríguez, David Rogers, Héctor Miguel Ruís Zarate, Gilberto Salazar, Julia Salido, Max Sampson, Kathy Snelling, Juan Jesús Vargas, Sandra Ward, Dra. Citlali Yebra, members of the Puenteillas community

Other volunteers: Berenice Ayala, Berny Calzada, Stephen Carew, Ri Chan, Barbara Kus, Verónica Mares, Virginie Pautrat, Tom Reavley, Martha Roberts, Eduardo Rodríguez, David and Heather Rogers, Gilberto Salazar, Julia Salido, Max Sampson, Sandra Ward

Special thanks to Sandra Ward for writing this edition of the newsletter, to Tom Reavley for translating it, and to Heather Rogers for formatting it.

AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES
de Guanajuato, A.C.

amigosanimalgto@yahoo.com
www.amigosanimalesgto.org
Apdo. Postal 6, Guanajuato 3,
Gto. 36082, México
Tel. (52-473) 734-2307

Our affiliate In the United States:
AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES
de Guanajuato, Inc.
256 West 10th Street, No. 4D,
New York, NY 10014
Tel. (240) 252-1229

Our affiliate in Canada:
MEX-CAN PET PARTNERS
marlene@mex-can.org
http://www.mex-can.org/
1362 Pembroke Street,
Victoria, BC, Canada V8R 1V5
Tel. 011-52-473-732-0815

