

## How Kids Can Help Dogs This Holiday

**Children's holiday activities designed with homeless cats and dogs in mind.**

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Two cats rescued by Cathy Grace of Santa Fe, N.M., served as inspiration for a new campaign to encourage children to help homeless pets this holiday season.

"Twenty Ways Kids Can Share the Holidays with Homeless Pets" was a way for Grace to offer ideas for parents and shelters to engage children in caring for animals. Home foreclosures, job losses, and economic woes have elevated the need for donations throughout shelters, and her website offers ways to contribute.

For example, parents can help children set up pet food banks to feed hungry pets in the community. This can be done by teaming with schools, churches, or local youth groups and programs in the area, such as Meals on Wheels, to deliver food to pets.

Another option includes kids in programs in which animals are taken to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or homebound citizens' homes to provide companionship and therapy. As a special holiday touch, kids can include treats for the pets and those they're visiting.

Coordinating a book sale at a library, school, or church can also help raise funds for animal shelters. Tap bookstores or discount stores for donated kids' books, cookbooks, art books, and landscape books.

Children also can sponsor a pet at the local animal shelter by partnering with local schools. One way to gain support might be a creating a Christmas tree with photos of pets hanging from the branches. A note for each photo describing the pet is a way to seek donations.

A competition between classes takes the sponsorship idea one step further. Contest ideas range from which class can collect the most food to which can donate the most money to a local shelter.

Grace outlined low-cost ways to include homeless pets in kids' holiday activities as a way to help ease the costs for caring for the growing number of cats and dogs at shelters, and to give kids the opportunity to give back to their community.