

## ASPCA Honors 2007 Dog of the Year

**Toby wins award for performing his own version of the Heimlich maneuver on his choking owner.**

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Photo courtesy of ASPCA The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will honor a dog, a cat and people who work on behalf of animal welfare with its 2007 Humane Awards. The ceremony takes place today in New York City.

The ASPCA Dog of the Year, Toby, hails from North East, Md. His owner, Debbie Parkhurst, was eating an apple when it lodged in her throat. Parkhurst was choking when her 2-year-old Golden Retriever transformed into her rescuer. He pushed her to the ground and began jumping on her chest until the apple became dislodged.

Toby was found abandoned in a dumpster in 2005. Parkhurst saved his life then, and two years later – Toby saved hers.

Winnie from New Castle, Ind., was named ASPCA Cat of the Year for saving her family's life. On the night of March 24, 2007, Eric and Cathy Keesling and their son Michael were asleep when Winnie jumped on Eric and Cathy's bed. She began meowing wildly and bumping Cathy's ear. Cathy woke nauseated and dizzy – and unable to rouse her husband, according to the ASPCA. She called 911; emergency responders found Michael unconscious on his bedroom floor.

The three were suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. The family received oxygen and all have since recovered, thanks to Winnie's rescue efforts.

Sixth-grader Rachel Distefano from Southhampton, N.Y., was named the ASPCA Kid of the Year for her efforts to save horses from slaughter. She works by her mother's side at the Amaryllis Farm Equine Rescue in Sagaponack, N.Y., feeding, brushing and bathing the horses. To date, the ASPCA reports that 51 horses have been saved by the rescue.

William H. Smith III from New York City is the ASPCA's Firefighter of the Year. Smith rescued two frightened animals, a cat and a dog, from a burning apartment on June 24, 2007. Smith's department recognized him with a medal of bravery for his efforts to save the pets.

The ASPCA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award went to Deputy Dwight Sloan of Jefferson County, Ala. Sloan is an animal cruelty investigator and launched a full-scale investigation after a horse was shot while grazing in a pasture. Sloan helped raise a \$10,000 reward, which led to the arrest, confession and conviction of the person responsible.

Tony La Russa, manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, will receive the ASPCA Henry Bergh Award (Bergh founded the ASPCA). La Russa and his wife, Elaine, founded the Animal Rescue Foundation, an organization that works to find homes for pets who have run out of time at public shelters.

The ASPCA Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to Bill Smith of Valley Forge, Pa. Smith started the Maine Line Animal Rescue in 1997. The nonprofit has since rescued and found homes for thousands of animals, including special needs and elderly pets.

The ASPCA selected a committee to choose the honorees after receiving hundreds of nominations earlier this year.