

Contest Honors Dog's Story of Survival

A blind rescue dog takes home top prize in a contest to promote awareness for rescued pets.

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Actress Emily Proctor with Rummy

Photo by Alex Berliner, Berliner Studio/BEImages

Life didn't start out easy for a dog named Rummy. The Siberian Husky was so severely neglected that a Houston SPCA K9 investigator removed him from his owner's care after he was found blind, emaciated, and missing clumps of hair. He was later diagnosed with mange, heartworms, roundworms, hookworms, and whipworms.

Rummy was taken to Husky Haven, a Siberian Husky rescue organization, where he recovered from the abhorrent conditions he was found in. Today, Rummy is a trusting, lively and fearless dog with a thick coat of hair who loves people and loves to be petted. Although he's blind, he walks without fear, and an unknowing eye would find it difficult to distinguish Rummy from a dog who can see.

Rummy's somber, yet heartwarming story gained attention after a Husky Haven volunteer, Angie Claussen, submitted his tale of survival to Purina Pro Plan's "Doing More for Pets" contest as part of its Rally to Rescue campaign. Contest officials were scouting for survival stories from rescue organizations in an effort to promote awareness as well as the untold stories of rescued pets and the people who help them.

Approximately 100 stories were submitted and 10 finalists were chosen. Rummy made the cut.

"We had a panel that reviewed all those submittals," said Ken Wilhelm, brand director for Purina Pro Plan and manager for the Rally to Rescue campaign. "The 10 that kind of reached into [the judges'] hearts and had a true connection with them are the ones that were picked. There's one cat and nine dog finalists. They are all winners."

All of the finalists received a year's supply of Pro Plan pet food and a trip to Los Angeles for the grand prize winner announcement ceremony, which took place Oct. 12, 2007. "CSI: Miami" actress Emily Proctor joined Purina officials to recognize the finalists and reveal the winner. Proctor has been involved with the contest from the beginning, and helped choose the 10 finalists.

"I've known these animals' stories for the last year and to get to know them is so special," Proctor said. "I've rescued animals my whole life and so they asked if I'd like to be involved ... People always say, 'Oh, is it fun being on a show and traveling around?' But I have to say it's the perks of the job like this that make the entire experience. I love animals so much ... It's so nice to be asked to help."

The grand prize winner was chosen by popular vote via Purina's Rally to Rescue website. After more than 20,000 votes, Rummy finished on top. Rummy's win means Purina will donate \$5,000 worth of Pro Plan dog food to Husky Haven.

Rummy's new owner is Husky Haven volunteer Lisa Goebel. After Rummy was named the grand prize winner, Goebel humbly expressed her gratitude, but her sunglasses couldn't disguise the tears of joy that overcame her after the announcement.

"This contest has just done so much for our rescue group," Goebel expressed. "Our rescue group is all volunteers ... We were about to go downhill. And then this contest came about and it has brought us so much publicity ... This contest essentially saved Husky Haven."

When Goebel expressed how it felt to see Rummy make this journey and finish on top, she beamed, "fabulous."

The "Doing More for Pets" campaign is an extension of the Purina Pro Plan Rescue campaign, which is dedicated to raising funds and awareness for pet rescue nationwide. The contest kicked off the annual Pro Plan Rally Across America tour. For more information, visit www.rallytorescue.org.

-Heidi Hatch, Associate News Editor for DogChannel.com