

4th Graders Raise Money for Disabled Dogs, Cats

Funds raised paid for wheelchairs for disabled dogs and cats.

Posted: April 9, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

A troupe of Oklahoma 4th graders has managed, through bake sales, pet parades and other means, to raise enough money to pay for pet wheelchairs for two disabled dogs and a quadriplegic cat.

The students' efforts were organized by Kathy Barton, a teacher in Velma, Oklahoma, who has led groups of 4th graders to raising money to help disabled animals for the past few years.

In 2005, the students raised money to fly an injured Dachshund in Tennessee to her new home in Maine and purchase the dog wheelchair she needed to walk again. And in 2006, Barton's 4th grade class raised \$1,100 to provide equipment to dogs in South Carolina and New York.

Barton has worked closely for years with HandicappedPets.com, an organization that teaches that pets with handicaps can still lead happy, healthy lives.

She says she began developing a curriculum focusing on helping pets three years ago. Her 4th graders have learned about handicapped pets; blind pets, pets with cancer, and animals with special needs like wheelchairs, harnesses, slings, pet diapers and more.

"It has changed how these children see animals and people with disabilities and it breathes new life into the pets they help. The class has some children with behavior problems who have exhibited a new level of focus and excitement toward this project."

Among the pets who received help from the 4th graders this year are: Amy, a disabled Chihuahua from Cayce, South Carolina, who was born without front legs. Amy moved by hopping on her back legs until she received her wheel cart. Zach, a 13-year-old Beagle from Melbourne, Florida, who was unable to move around due to a weak back end. Now, in his wheelchair, he moves freely, getting the exercise he needs. Xavier, a 10-month-old butterscotch and cream tabby cat from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, who's unable to walk due to a neurological disorder. Now, in the pet wheelchair he received in March, he's able to get around on his own.

For more information on wheelchairs for disabled pets, visit <http://www.handicappedpets.com>.