



A Lasting Legacy

Inspired by the legacy of its late founder, Little Victories Animal Rescue continues to offer new beginnings and loving homes to animals across the Tri-State.

Inspired by the legacy of founder Sue Brown, who passed away suddenly in 2013, the area's only no-kill animal shelter begins its next chapter with renewed purpose and passion.

Brown, who served as the president and executive director of Little Victories Animal Rescue for more than 10 years, received a devastating diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in early 2013. With only months left to live, Brown – along with her family, friends, volunteers and supporters – had one wish: that her animal rescue mission would live on.

“Sue pulled me aside at a board meeting and asked me to make sure her dream lived on after she was gone,” says Jack Houvouras, president of the Little Victories board of directors. “Talk about pressure. Little Victories was her baby. It became my top priority moving forward to continue the work that Sue set out to do.”

Following Brown's death in October 2013, Houvouras and dozens of other loyal supporters immediately got to work. The board of directors, now double its original size, hired a site manager to optimize the day-to-day operations

By Katherine Pyles • Photos by Rick Lee

of the shelter, located in Ona, W.Va. Longtime volunteers Betty Dempsey and Sherry Hamel filled the administrative gaps left in the wake of Brown's passing. Brown's son, Garrett Lucas, worked hundreds of hours at the shelter and eventually agreed, at Houvouras's behest, to serve on the board. Donna Wellman, whose financial support in prior years funded the construction of the Donna B. Wellman Adoption and Rescue Center, made a sizable contribution in Brown's memory. Crista Bjornson, senior graphic designer at HQ Publishing Co., designed a new, modern logo for the organization. Countless local businesses provided assistance during the difficult transitional period.

"We have been so thankful to have the support of the community," Houvouras says. "When we needed a new phone system, Black Box Network Services stepped up



Longtime volunteer Betty Dempsey stepped in to assist with administrative work in the wake of Sue Brown's passing.

and donated one. When we were having security issues, Standard Alarm Company gave us a great deal on a new surveillance system. Paris Signs donated our first sign using our new logo. Bulldog Creative Services donated numerous hours as we redesigned the Little Victories website."

Dempsey, the medical director for Little Victories whose weekly appearances on WSAZ NewsChannel 3's "Pet of the Week" segment have facilitated countless adoptions, says her efforts to preserve Brown's legacy are a small tribute to the sacrifices that Brown made herself.

"Sue spent the last 10 years of her life getting Little Victories going and then keeping it going," Dempsey says. "It went from four volunteers who met in her living room to over 100 acres of land, multiple buildings and hundreds of volunteers. It was incredible, and it was

New Little Victories director Rebecca Stanley Crowder brings with her years of nonprofit experience. She says she is committed to seeing the goals set by Sue Brown become a reality.



How you can help



There are myriad ways you can lend a hand to the paws at Little Victories.

Adopt or foster - There are about 250 dogs, puppies, cats and kittens available for adoption at all times. You can also foster an animal, providing a temporary refuge while the staff at Little Victories continues to search for the animal's forever home.

Donate - Little Victories pays for all of its animals' vet work, including shots, heartworm tests, spays and neuters as well as serious care such as surgeries. The vet bills are the biggest expense at the shelter. Become a member and help Little Victories with a monetary or item donation.

Volunteer - Little Victories needs people to clean, feed animals and walk dogs, as well as help with grant writing, photography, fundraising and more. The shelter is growing faster than the list of volunteers, and anything you can do will help.

Become a puppy or kitten cuddler - Puppies and kittens need human touch to become socialized dogs and cats, ready to be adopted into loving homes. Come and snuggle with a cute furry baby.

For more information on ways you can volunteer or help, visit www.littlevictories.org.



Adrianna Battista has volunteered at Little Victories for several years. All volunteers at the organization truly believe in the mission that “every life saved is a little victory.”

how she spent the final years of her life – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I just feel like I need to help in whatever little way I can to carry on her mission.”

“Sue pulled me aside at a board meeting and asked me to make sure her dream lived on after she was gone.”

Dempsey says Brown’s mission was simple: “Her goal was for there to be no more homeless pets. Her dream was to reach a point where sanctuaries like Little

Victories were no longer necessary, where every animal had a loving home.”

When Brown passed away, she left behind a 115-acre farm that provides refuge for more than 100 dogs and cats, with the motto that “every life saved is a little victory.” To ensure that the Tri-State’s homeless animals continue to have a place of refuge, Little Victories Animal Rescue welcomed Rebecca

Stanley Crowder as its new executive director in early 2014. With a heart for animals combined with years of experience in fundraising and nonprofit administra-

tion, Crowder is well equipped to lead Little Victories into its next chapter.

“Rebecca has the skill set to continue Sue’s work and take it to the next level,” Houvouras says.

Crowder’s goals include raising the funds needed to build a large indoor facility for the cats and dogs in Little Victories’ care, rejuvenating the organization’s educational programs on the importance of spaying and neutering and building relationships with other rescue groups in the area to increase adoption rates.

“The vision of Little Victories does not change with my arrival,” Crowder says. “Sue was an amazing woman, and I want to continue the work that she began. I share in her vision, and I want to strive to see the goals she set become a reality.”

Crowder, who previously served as director of development for The Healing Place of Huntington, says she has always found nonprofit work rewarding, and Little Victories’ mission is an ideal fit for her professional philosophy. For Crowder, it is all about knowing at the end of the day that she has made a real difference in the community.

“You don’t have to be an animal lover to love the work of Little Victories,” she says. “We are not only keeping stray cats and dogs off the streets and providing a sanctuary for animals who may not be able to find homes, but we are also making a true difference in people’s lives. We are finding these animals loving homes, where they are treated like family. Our adopted animals are enriching people’s lives and making them happier people, and in that way we are building a stronger community.”

Crowder says community support is vital to the success of Little Victories. The opportunities to help are endless, from volunteering at the shelter to providing foster homes for animals awaiting adoption to joining in Little Victories’ educational, fundraising and collaborative efforts. And, Dempsey adds, the rewards are endless as well.

“Our pay as volunteers are puppy and kitten kisses,” she says. “To nurse them back to health or help them recover from a hard start in life, and then to see their little faces when we find them a forever home – that is our reward.”

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On January 27, volunteers, board members and friends of Little Victories gathered for a volunteer appreciation party in the lobby of the Frederick in Huntington. At the event, Sherry Hamel was named volunteer of the year, and every volunteer received a T-shirt designed by HQ senior graphic designer Crista Bjornson.

