

You deserve

Good things!

Let spring  
jump-start  
your  
success!

Spring isn't just a season; it's a state of mind you can choose to be in anytime. So leave that "wintry mix" of doubts and disappointments behind. It's time to plant a new dream, water it with hope and watch your happiness grow!



# Everyday Hero

Proof that it only takes one person to make a difference

## Hospice nurse finds loving homes for patients' pets

The last wish of a dying woman compelled Joanne Bonicelli to create a nonprofit that has cared for and rehomed more than 1,300 beloved pets of terminally ill people

Working as a hospice nurse, Joanne Bonicelli spent years offering comfort to dying people. Then, in 1998, a request from one patient changed her life. A young woman in her 40s had a fluffy white dog named Jasper, who never left her side while she was at Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

One day, the woman called Joanne to her bedside. "I don't know where Jasper will end up or who will care for him when I am gone...it's just too painful to bear," she told Joanne as tears streamed down her face. "I can't die in peace worrying what will happen to him...can you euthanize him in my arms as I pass?"

The heart-wrenching request stunned Joanne. She asked a veterinarian about what they could do, and after meeting Jasper, the vet's eyes welled with tears at the prospect of putting down a healthy dog. *There has to be a better way*, they both agreed.

Joanne reached out to friends in the community, and found a loving home for Jasper. And his owner knew she could pass in peace, knowing he was loved and cared for. But the dilemma

stuck with Joanne, inspiring her to begin fostering and rehoming more pets of people who were terminally ill or could no longer care for their pets. Soon, the nonprofit Safe Place for Pets ([OurSafePlacePets.org](http://OurSafePlacePets.org)) was born. *We will do everything in our power to honor the promise we make to a dying person*, Joanne vowed.

As word spread of her mission, volunteers like a chaplain, an estate attorney, rescue advocates and a veterinary technician, jumped on board to help.

Before long, Safe Place for Pets was able to offer each animal veterinary and dental care, while foster families help them adjust to life away from their former owners. When the pets are ready for a new home, Joanne and her team of more than 70 volunteers and two part-time staff members work hard to find the perfect adoption match for dogs, cats, rabbits, salamanders, birds and even a mule. To date, Safe Place for Pets has rehomed over 1,300 pets—and has impacted even more lives.

*Seven weeks after my mother's death, my father was involved in a bad automobile accident, leaving him completely incapacitated, one*



"I'm honored that they trust us with their beloved pets," says Joanne

daughter recently wrote. *They had two adored Persian cats. Safe Place stepped in and found them a home where they could be together for the rest of their lives. I'm forever grateful.*

Even the new adoptive pet parents are equally as touched. *I love Gus immensely. He is a constant joy and has enriched my life so much*, effused a woman who gave a dog from Safe Place a forever home.

As for Joanne, she is amazed at the impact Safe Place for Pets has had on hundreds of former owners, pets and families. She is in awe of her wonderful volunteers who sometimes drive through snowstorms to transport the pet of a dying person.

"I'm honored that the animals let us take care of them, and I'm honored that the people who have these beloved animals trust us enough to know that we're good for our word and that we'll do right by them," Joanne says. "If you do the right thing, everybody wins." —Jen Reeder

**Has a person or animal come to your rescue?** Email the story with your name, phone number and a photo to: [WWFeatures@WomansWorldMag.com](mailto:WWFeatures@WomansWorldMag.com). Or mail to: Everyday Hero, *Woman's World*, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. By submitting your story, you are granting *Woman's World* permission to use it and your photo in the print magazine, on our website and/or in future special issue publications. Due to high volume, we are unable to return submissions received.