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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37215

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Happy Thanksgiving!

I always love stories about those who strive to include others in their holiday celebrations. The family that takes an extra pie or basket of homemade rolls to their neighbors. The person who ensures their coworker, who might otherwise spend the holiday alone, gets invited to dinner. All those who spend Thanksgiving volunteering at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, hospital, or assisted living facility.

That's why I was so happy when I came across this lovely Thanksgiving story. It's about people working to bring the holiday to a surprising group: Over four hundred shelter dogs and other pets in southern Utah.

With less than 5,000 residents, the city of Kanab is small in size but rich in highlights. It's a gateway to numerous national parks and monuments and has been the shooting location for countless Hollywood films, including *Planet of the Apes* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

It also contains the largest no-kill animal rescue sanctuary in the United States.

The shelter is home to 1,600 dogs, cats, birds, bunnies, horses, pigs, and other animals that have been orphaned or abandoned.¹ On any given day, there are around 400 dogs alone at the sanctuary that either have medical issues or were abused by previous owners.

Once upon a time, the pets at the shelter spent Thanksgiving alone, as most of the staff would take the day off to be with their families. But, while carving turkey or watching football, their thoughts would turn to those they were closest to who *didn't* have any holiday plans: The furry friends and canine companions at the shelter.

So, the staff decided to bring Thanksgiving to them.

Each year, the shelter hosts a special feast for their shelter pets. People all over the community donate time and food to the animals. One donor frequently contributes anywhere from 500-700 *pounds* of ingredients!^{2&3} Of course, it's not good for animals to eat most human food. So, every Thanksgiving, a local chef takes the ingredients and spends roughly *twenty-six hours* transforming them into a gourmet meal for the dogs to eat. They even factor in each dog's individual nutritional needs! Then, the chef personally delivers the food to the shelter. Every pet gets its own meal. Just like humans, each has their own preferences and habits. Some dive right in and eat *everything*. Others are more fastidious, intending to savor every bite. But one thing they all have in common is that each receives a generous helping of pumpkin pie to end the meal. (I'm starting to wish that *I* could get invited to Kanab each Thanksgiving...)

It takes a ton of work, a lot of time, and a significant amount of money to give these pets their own special Thanksgiving. But for the staff at the sanctuary, and for many of the people in the

community, it's hard to imagine a better way to spend the holiday. As the chef, Shon Foster, says, "Once [the pets] see the food and start to eat, you can see the excitement throughout their whole body. I get to be a hero for a day! It's kind of emotional."²

Here's how the sanctuary supervisor, Kayla Riding, describes it: "Watching them enjoy this meal is just the best feeling. It really makes our hearts soar."³

And Ali Waszmer, who takes care of the dogs at the shelter, puts it like this: "It's so important to us to give our dogs as many family-like experiences as possible. To see our dog residents enjoying a tasty holiday meal is incredibly meaningful to us."¹

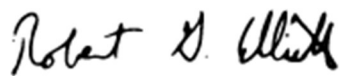
It takes a ton of work, a lot of time, and a significant amount of money to give these pets their own special Thanksgiving. But, when you think about it, the same is true for us, isn't it? Some of us will travel hundreds, even thousands of miles to be with family. Some of us will labor in the kitchen for hours, even days, to get everything ready. But we do it not just because it's tradition, but because of what that tradition gives back to us. Thanksgiving is a chance to connect with others. A chance to see family members we don't often get to see. A chance to better know our neighbors. A chance to make life a little easier for those less fortunate than us. We travel, we work, we cook, we prepare, and we gather because it's a chance to open up our homes and hearts to those around us.

And the more we let others in, the richer we all will be.

That's why this story really got me in the holiday spirit. Our pets and animal companions love us unconditionally. They love us on our best days and our worst. They love us whether we're old or young, healthy or sick, wealthy or poor. All they ask for is love in return. This Thanksgiving, I'm especially grateful for the animals in our lives and for the people who care for them. And I'm grateful for *all* those who strive to share Thanksgiving with others.

The world we see on the news isn't always the gentlest place. But in every community, there are people working to make it a little kinder, a little warmer, a little more inclusive. Thanksgiving is a day to remember that, and to give thanks for it. So, on behalf of everyone here at &Partners, I wish you a very happy Thanksgiving spent with the people you love...and a warm and tender holiday season.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Elliott, CFP®, MS
Vice President



Sarah L. Emmerick, CFP®, MS

¹ "Best Friends Animal Sanctuary," <https://bestfriends.org/sanctuary>

² "Thanksgiving Dinner at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Kanab," November 23, 2022. kslnnewsradio.com/1979436/thanksgiving-dinner-at-best-friends-animal-sanctuary-in-kanab/

³ "Best Friends Animal Sanctuary hosts Thanksgiving feast for adoptable dogs," November 22, 2023. www.abc4.com/news/southern-utah/best-friends-animal-sanctuary-hosts-thanksgiving-feast-for-adoptable-dogs/