

Taking the Plunge and Committing to Rescuing Animals Full-Time

A Special Interview With Becca Edwards

By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

Dr. Karen Becker:

I'm Dr. Karen Becker, and we are so thankful that Stacy has nominated Becca Edwards for a Game Changer award. And we have Becca with us today to tell us more about the amazing work she's doing, saving animals locally in her county. Becca, congratulations on your Game Changer award, and we're so excited to learn more.

Becca Edwards:

Thank you. Thank you, Stacy, I really appreciate this. So, my name's Becca Edwards and I'm the dog kennel manager here at the Humane Society for Inland Mendocino County. We are located in Northern California, a very rural community. And I'm originally from LA. I've been involved in volunteer work with rescues for most of my young adult life. And when I moved here, I got an opportunity to become involved in the rescue community here as well. And then this job opened up about four years ago, and I took the plunge. I had been working in a different field prior and I was like, "You know what? This is just something I really want to do full-time. I don't want to do it as a volunteer, I want to do this every single day. And I've been here for about four years now. And I get to work with some of the most amazing people and we've built a really incredible team here.

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's awesome. When you arrived, Becca, so it sounds like at least what Stacy wrote that you're working in a county that has a lot of need for what you're doing. And so, can you walk us through how you're approaching the problems in your county and then the solutions or the institutional changes that you've made to be able to help address or remedy some of those issues?

Becca Edwards:

So, we take in about 1,000 animals a year. This year we're actually projected to take in more than 1,000. And for a team of anywhere from eight to 10 staff, that's the lot. We really rely on our community. So, we are very aware that we can do so much more when we have support and a team built to help us. So, we really rely heavily on our foster team. Right now, we have 99 dogs in care and only 17 of those dogs are living on site. So, we really try to push them out and have animals get the chance to live in homes instead of in kennels here, because that just makes so much more sense. I think that's something I've been really passionate about is fostering. I'm a foster myself and I just know animals are so much happier when they're not living at cages.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. So, a lot of times there aren't foster programs set up and you also aren't aware of the people, that you can find in almost every community that will rise up and you kind of build this network of incredibly compassionate, caring humans that you didn't know existed in your area. I

have to assume that as you kind of made the need be known that you needed a tremendous amount of volunteers to get animals out of stressful kennel situations and into homes, where it's calmer, it's healthier, but also those animals get a chance to decompress and see what a normal, loving home environment is like. That's work to have to put that all together.

Becca Edwards:

Yeah, it is a lot of work, managing. And you manage in a virtual shelter, essentially. But if you think about the time, like myself, if I divide myself across 99 dogs per day, that's not a lot of time. So, every time they can get out, it's huge. And even if it's a little bit more work or you're dealing with a lot more people, I think it's so worthwhile. I think it's really important. If you need help, to every day ask for help. If you're not asking for help when you need it, you're not going to make it. So, here, really, I'm the one always screaming, shouting, going on Facebook and saying, "Help!" And people respond. People really want to help, you just have to ask for it.

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's awesome. So, you being now full-time and rescuer, this is your passion, obviously, it's also now your full-time career. When you get up in the morning, what do you love most about your work?

Becca Edwards:

I love just being around people and animals who think the same way as I do. I think I'm really lucky to be here at a shelter where we are all on the same page as far as what we're doing. We're all really passionate about making sure every animal gets a live outcome here. And I couldn't imagine being in a better place surrounded by people who are all thinking the same way and just working so hard to help animals. It's what I've wanted to do my whole life and to be here is really, really nice.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, and the fact that you've cultivated this community of like-minded, passionate souls, that's the difference between wildly stressful rescue work and it being just inspiring to you. So, that makes total sense why you get up every morning fired up, is you have an amazing team of support, but also like-minded people that can support you, but the mission as well. That's beautiful. And you're so young, it's so wonderful. You got another 50 years left, girl, I love this. Thus far in your path, if you could tell the world one thing about the important work that you're doing or if you'd want the world to know one thing, what would it be?

Becca Edwards:

Well, so I think this has already been said many times, but I think it's important to say it again. A lot of people get into this work and they're like, "I'm an animal person. I love dogs, I love cats." But I realized very, very quickly that each animal leaves here with a person. So, you have to be a people person. You can't ignore the human-animal connection. And in fact, your people skills are what's going to help animals the most. So, coming into this, a lot of people are like, "Oh, I love dogs. I don't want to talk to people." But no, you have to. You have to engage them, you have to support them, and you have to be a people person in order to save more lives. You can't ignore that aspect of this work.

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's really important advice, and I agree with you. I think, sometimes, because people can be blessings, they can also be horrific parasites on the planet. I think that recognizing that we do this because we love animals, but we also have to love the other end of the leash to some extent. For us to be the most effective rescuers and the most effective versions of ourselves, we have to love both ends of the leash. So, I think that's really sage wise advice. Becca, if people wanted to learn more about your shelter, about the work that you're doing, even about maybe about some of the animals that are adoptable or to learn more, where would they go?

Becca Edwards:

So, we have tons of information on our website. It's MendoHumaneSociety.com and you can find out about our adoption policies. You can see all of our available animals. You can see all the events we have coming up. Like this week we have Critter Carnival happening, so that's going to be really fun, and just tons of information there. We also have a Facebook page, Humane Society for Inland Mendocino County, and you'll hear a lot of videos of our cat and dog team talking and sharing the animals and showing off the cute friends that we have here ready for homes.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It's beautiful. We are so thankful that Stacy took the time to nominate you and your awesome facility for a Game Changer award. Congratulations, and we're so thankful that you're doing everything that you are doing to save the animals in your environment. We appreciate you very much.

Becca Edwards:

Thank you so much. I appreciate this. This has been really nice.