

Creating a Positive Impact in the Animals in Your Community

A Special Interview With Molly Goldston

By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

Dr. Karen Becker:

Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker and Carson has nominated Molly from Saving Grace as a Game Changer. And we're so excited Molly is joining us today to tell us more about this amazing organization that she has founded and to give us the backstory about why this passion was burning in her heart, and then also let us know where her organization's going. So, thank you, Molly, for joining us and congratulations on your Game Changer award.

Molly Goldston:

Yeah, thanks for having me. Of course.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It's really exciting. So, for people, listeners, readers, that don't know about Saving Grace, can you back up and just let our community know where, give us the backstory, where did the inspiration from this come from for you?

Molly Goldston:

Sure. Sure. So, I started working in animal sheltering right out of college, about 2001, and just saw what an incredible need it was. We live in an area in Wake County, in North Carolina, where we do have a higher population of people. And I really saw how many animals there were in our state, primarily more of the rural communities, but just how many were coming and that a lot of people didn't have a clue how many there were, what the need was, right there in our own backyard.

So, I started Saving Grace at my local family farm, it's a very unique adoption experience. So, for a lot of people who don't want to go to a shelter where it's just chain link and concrete, it's a bit more of a welcoming experience and an experience where you can really see the dogs mingling, they're out together.

Molly Goldston:

Everybody does have a crate. They have to be crated throughout the day for meals, medication, rest time, that sort of thing. And it's not a home, it's a shelter still. So, we try to let people know that it is a good bridge between being homeless and having a family. So, we have a lot of outdoor space, people can come meet the dogs. They don't necessarily feel like who they don't choose gets put to sleep. So, they do stay until they're adopted. As soon as one is adopted, we then take a dog that's going to be euthanized into our program. So, it is taking dogs that are going to be euthanized and definitely saving them every time one is adopted from us. So, we typically do about 4,000 adoptions now a year. So, it's really busy. During COVID, we did about 4,500 adoptions each year. So, we were crazy busy.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Wow. And how do you get your animals? Are you going to shelters and pulling animals that are the end of their time?

Molly Goldston:

I do. Yep. We work with about regularly about 12 shelters. We work with more than that, but 12 really regularly. Several of them don't really have adoption programs whatsoever. So, there's no vaccinations. There's still no spay/neuter. There's very little available to them. And those are in the areas where the majority of the animals are coming in. North Carolina is still third in the country for euthanasia for companion animals. So, we have a much greater euthanasia issue in our state than a lot of people are really aware of.

So, I go out, I go to those shelters, I visit with the dogs, choose dogs that will be a good candidate for our program and also would be successful in a home. So, I do leave a lot of animals behind. A lot don't get to come. But for the ones that do, they get all of their vetting, we have a spay/neuter clinic on-site now.

Molly Goldston:

That was something really positive that came out of COVID for us, because we rely so heavily on our spay/neuter clinics and our veterinarians to keep these animals spayed and neutered and treated and moving on so the next ones can come in, that when a lot closed during COVID, we had to just figure it out.

So, luckily we have a great partnership with NC State Vet School, which is about 30 minutes from us. And some of their veterinarians pitched in and helped us figure out how to get the equipment, how to get set up really quickly. And we hired a full-time spay/neuter veterinarian, so that really has helped us a lot. It helped us continue to work during COVID and also helps us just move faster in general.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Oh my gosh.

Molly Goldston:

When we can move them again, there's always a dog that's time is running out that is dependent on a space for us.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. The need for the incredible services that you're providing will always be much, much more than what your farm, your rescue, your sanctuary can do.

Molly Goldston:

Oh yeah.

Dr. Karen Becker:

But the fact is that congratulations on this next level of unbelievable improvement in the sense that you have a full-time spay/neuter vet. Because that makes the cycle go so much faster.

Molly Goldston:

It really does.

Dr. Karen Becker:

But that's a huge accomplishment, a lot of planning, a lot of money, a lot of coordination, a lot of moving parts. So, I have to assume that you work with a team of pretty amazing volunteers. Can I assume that?

Molly Goldston:

Oh, we have incredible volunteers. It's really the only reason that Saving Grace is what it is and it works every day.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. And do you do foster care then as well, Molly?

Molly Goldston:

We do. We have a huge foster program. So, we have about 500 volunteers in total. So that's our volunteers and our fosters. So, we get lots of puppies. We get lots of moms with puppies. And to be able to offer those up for adoption, they have to have at least two to three vaccines and be old enough to be adopted out. So, because we are in a sheltering area with such overpopulation, there is a little bit higher risk of disease.

So, we send all of the puppies to foster where they are for at least typically about a month. If they're newly born puppies, until they're 10 to 12 weeks and have their vaccines. And that way, when they come back and they go up for adoption, then the adoptive family doesn't run as much of a risk as they would pulling a dog straight out of a shelter where we might not have no idea where it was from or what sort of vaccine status it has.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I'm so proud of you. As a proactive veterinarian, all of this incredibly hard, difficult work that you are setting up now, just wait, girl. Because in a decade, you'll be able to visibly see the impact, not just for disease reduction, but for population control. Everything you're doing now, you are a light to your local community. But it will be the state, your state numbers are going to drop because of the program which you have put into place, which I hope is wildly rewarding to your soul. Because the difference you're making in your community is profound.

Molly Goldston:

It is.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It is. And I'm glad that you know that. When you wake up in the morning, Molly, there's so many things, so many reasons why you started Saving Grace and so many reasons that you're thankful. But what do you love most about the work that you're doing?

Molly Goldston:

I think seeing how happy the people are when they adopt. And we've been doing it long enough now is every week I get a letter from a dog that has passed away. And I know people think that's really sad, but to me I think what a great life that dog had. And you know, these people are so wonderful. They often make a gift in its name or they bring whatever supplies it has back to us so that other dogs there can use it.

Molly Goldston:

And to me, that dog had a great life. It died with someone who loved it instead of alone in a shelter. So, I love seeing how great they go on to live their lives after adoption. And hopefully everyone we adopt out, we hope goes out to show, not just that family, but the neighbors and everybody just how great shelter dogs can be.

So, we try, we try to do a really great job, not just for each animal and for us, but to really promote the adoption process and encourage people to go out and adopt. And that there are great pets. They surely take some transition time, sometimes, but there's a lot of really, really adoptable, highly, highly adoptable animals that need home still.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. Very important words. If people wanted to look at some of those highly adoptable, adorable, wonderful forever soulmates that are available, where would they go to find that information?

Molly Goldston:

So our website is SavingGraceNC.org. We have all of our information there. We also have great social media on Instagram and Facebook. We are funded solely by donations. So, anytime anyone makes a donation, that helps provide care to our animals. I would also say that probably about 40% of our adults are heartworm-positive in our area. That is a huge challenge for us. We do provide the treatment, that costs about an extra thousand dollars per dog.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Very expensive, very expensive.

Molly Goldston:

It's really expensive. And that has been a real struggle for us to try and provide that. But we really want to be able to take in the animals and say, "If you are a great dog, healthy otherwise, and a great family pet, we want to be able to offer that adoption." So, you can make a donation through our website and we also have an Amazon Wishlist there.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Perfect. If you could tell the world one thing, Molly, or if you could share, if you would want the world to know one thing, what would it be?

Molly Goldston:

I would say to check out the volunteer opportunities in your neighborhood and just see those who are in need, whether it's animals or people. You know, like I said, when I first started sheltering, I had no idea the need that was in our state alone. Just a couple hours away, things can be very, very different.

And you know, before getting an animal, just visit that home. If it's a breeder, there are great breeders out there, and just go visit, check out, see where they're coming from, how you feel about that. And if it's a rescue too, we encourage people to come and not even necessarily have a certain pet in mind, just come visit us, see what we have, see who you like, see who you feel is a good match for your family and not necessarily be focused on a breed as much as a companion.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Very wise words. We are incredibly thankful that Carson nominated you for a Game Changer Award. You're changing the lives of the animals and the humans in your local environment, in your surrounding communities, and soon to be your state. And this is all because you are wildly dedicated and passionate about taking care of animals in need right where you are. And so, we're so thankful for everything that you're doing, and congratulations on your Game Changer award.

Molly Goldston:

Well, thank you. And thanks for giving us the chance to speak out and tell other people what we do.