

## Giving Thousands of Animals a Second Chance

See how this animal rescue helps find loving homes for 200 pets per month by transporting them to sister rescues in other states.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

[Download Transcript](#) | [Download my FREE Podcast](#)

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Michelle Lewis is co-founder and president of LaMa Animal Rescue in North Webster Parish, Louisiana
- Nominated for a Game Changer award by Maryann K., LaMa Animal Rescue helps find homes for the surplus of pets in rural Louisiana by transporting them to sister rescues in other states
- With the help of LaMa Animal Rescue thousands of dogs and cats have found new homes, traveling from Louisiana to Massachusetts, Maine and Washington, DC
- While they have about 20 fosters caring for animals, only about 10 are active at the same time, so they're always in need of more fosters and volunteers
- In the last month alone, LaMa Animal Rescue transported more than 200 animals to be adopted

Michelle Lewis, co-founder and president of LaMa Animal Rescue in North Webster Parish, Louisiana, is changing the lives of dogs and cats — and the people lucky enough to adopt them. Nominated for a Game Changer award by Maryann K., LaMa Animal Rescue stands for Louisiana (La) and Massachusetts (Ma), because they transport many of their dogs to Massachusetts, as well as Maine and Washington, DC, for adoption.

"Last month, I think we transported over 200 animals to be adopted," Lewis said. She's been in animal rescue for more than 10 years, and at LaMa Animal Rescue, she's not only helping to find homes for dogs in need but also stop the cycle of pet overpopulation via spay and neuter procedures.

### In Labor of Love, Volunteer Fosters Save Thousands of Animals

LaMa Animal Rescue is run completely by volunteers who have full-time jobs outside of the rescue. They're devoting their extra time and energy to give dogs a better life out of the good of their hearts. "We're foster-based, which means we do not have a facility, and we foster these animals in our homes and prepare them for their forever home. And it's hard," Lewis says.

While they have about 20 fosters caring for animals, only about 10 are active at the same time. "So, we're always looking for new fosters," she says. They conduct regular fundraisers to help pay for veterinary bills and transports.

"One of our biggest obstacles is the high cost of veterinary medicine ... And each state has certain requirements to cross the state lines. So, each animal that we help has to meet their requirements as well. Right now, we have a very large vet bill, so we're having another fundraiser tonight."

The group uses two transport companies to bring the surplus of dogs from rural Louisiana to waiting homes in the Northeast. Typically, they transport dogs on a weekly schedule.

"I was able to travel to Maine and Massachusetts in the spring with one of our board members, and we visited everyone. And we met some really nice people and really were more reassured of the success of this partnership," Lewis said. "And we do get updates from adopters. They send pictures and we try to post on our social media, the happily-ever-after that helps the fruit of our labor and puts a warm spot in our fosters' hearts to know these things."

## **LaMa Gives Animals a Second Chance**

Many animals that come to LaMa Animal Rescue were found in abusive, neglectful conditions. In many cases, Lewis and her team are the difference between life and death for that animal. She says:

*"What I love the most is the ever after, the final, the homes. They have their own house, their own children to play with, their own couch to sleep on. They have their own home, because the conditions here that we help these dogs and cats from are pretty horrific at times. And they would have been euthanized if we had not stepped in and said, 'Hey, we'll help them.'*

*We mainly pull from stray holds here. We have a local stray hold. It's a very small town. And basically, just word-of-mouth, people come to my job with a car full of puppies. So, it's never-ending, 24/7."*

They also offer help to the community to break the cycle of overpopulation.

*"If someone is giving away free puppies in the Walmart parking lot, Tractor Supply, we usually try to go snatch them up. And then we offer a free spay to the mother, and we've actually arranged transport and go pick them up ourself, because we are a very poor parish. And we also spay and neuter everything on the premises, because we have a feeling like, 'We're not coming back to this situation.'"*

Fortunately, as the community becomes aware of all they're doing for animals — that they're a safe haven and resource — they're getting more help and more volunteers:

*"We also have a vaccine clinic that we do once a month. We wrote a grant to Petco Love, and they provided us with the free vaccine. So, we do that in the community. And it took a while for the community to realize the level that we're doing and understanding our work.*

*And we are getting more volunteers for fundraisers and people are fostering, or, "Hey, can I go sit out at the vet during an appointment?" Or we have dogs in boarding because we simply do not have enough fosters right now, and they'll go and walk and interact. And so, the word's getting out."*

## A Lot of Heartbreak — But a Whole Lot of Reason to Celebrate

The world of animal rescue comes with a lot of heartbreak, but along with it comes a lot of love and reason to celebrate.

“When we went to Massachusetts in the spring, we attended a reunion event. This one rescue that we send to once a year puts on this big event, and I probably saw at least 30 of the dogs that we have sent over the years came to see me. It was so rewarding,” Lewis says. “And I promise, they recognized me, too ... I hurt for the ones that we can't help, but I celebrate for the ones that we do ... And they do look into your eyes and touch your soul. They do.”

Lewis wants to share the importance of **spaying and neutering** to avoid pet overpopulation, and encourages the world to follow them on social media and consider fostering, adopting, volunteering or donating to their organization. “Any little thing helps. Sharing, following, donating, volunteering, anything is needed,” she says. To learn more about LaMa Animal Rescue, visit their website, **[LaMaAnimalRescue.org](http://LaMaAnimalRescue.org)** or email them at [lamaanimalrescue@gmail.com](mailto:lamaanimalrescue@gmail.com).

---