FAMILY

Utah Pets now Have a Safe Place to Stay If Their Owners Start Treatment for Alcohol or Drug Abuse

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A nonprofit animal shelter partnered with the largest addiction program in Utah to keep pets safe for up to three months while their owners undergo treatment.

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Bella is one of the pets that have a safe place to stay while her owner is going through a difficult situation at home.

This small black and white cat, whose name isn't really Bella, but rather a pseudonym given to protect her owner, is housed by a foster with Ruff Haven Crisis Sheltering.

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They offer free-of-charge, short-term housing for pets while their owners are dealing with treatment from addiction, struggling with homelessness, getting away from domestic violence, etc.

Helping Owners of Pets Have One Less Worry on their Minds

The nonprofit partnered up with Odyssey House, the biggest comprehensive program for addiction in Utah, to enable three months of free pet housing while the owners are getting treatment.

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According to the foster coordinator of Ruff Have, Beth Henry, this is person-based and person-led. When the owners finish their treatment and have a safe place where they can be, as well as stability, their pets go back with them.

To bring a pet there, the owner has to apply and provide documents of their current situation.

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Then, the pet is briefly assessed (weight and general condition). The vaccination status is also checked out and they make sure the animal has the needed vaccines or is scheduled to get them.

The next step is matching the pet to a foster. The client can check in on their pet once per week through a text. The Ruff Haven also asks fosters to share photos and videos of the pet so that the clients can see how their pet is doing while they're away from each other.

There are also clients who have in-person visits with the dog. The foster will drop them off at the Dogs All Day facility and the owner can see them there.

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According to Henry, this is a great boost in their morale. There are some animals kept at Dogs All Day because the person wants to see them all the time.

Pets may be the reason why so many owners remain in bad situations because they're worried that their animals won't get the needed care if they're not with them, explains the CEO of Odyssey, Adam

Cohen.

Already a Popular Program That Has Helped a Lot of Families & Their Pets

The new program is already witnessing success.

Since the opening of Ruff Haven in 2020, June, they've helped out 320 families and approximately 500 pets.

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Often, the owners are worried that their pets will forget them while they're apart from each other; however, the case shows the opposite. The pet never forgets its person, according to the executive director of Ruff Haven, Kristina Pulsipher.

She adds that the reunions are why they do it and there are so many individuals who've been their clients that have become their fosters or volunteers.

Sources:

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