



**ASPCA® DOG OF THE YEAR**

**RESCUE:** CAMBRIDGE, MA

When Jessica Kensky became a double amputee as a result of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, she needed dedicated help with some of her essential daily tasks. That support came in the form of a very special dog: Rescue.

Born in 2012, Rescue trained as a service dog in a Rhode Island prison through a program run by NEADS (National Education for Assistance Dog Services). In 2015, NEADS donated Rescue to Jessica through its Pawsitively Strong Fund, which provided service dogs to qualifying survivors of the Boston Marathon bombings.

Rescue's assistance for Jessica – a former nurse – includes opening doors, fetching specific objects, calling for help in emergencies, and many other tasks. At the same time, Rescue also provides Jessica and her husband Patrick Downes with invaluable emotional support and comfort that has helped transform their lives.

Inspired by their experiences with Rescue, Jessica and Patrick are co-writing a children's book, "Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship," featuring a girl with similar disabilities and a service dog named Rescue.

Because of his unique ability to give his owner new hope and a new life following a devastating tragedy, Rescue is the **2017 ASPCA Dog of the Year**.



**ASPCA® CAT OF THE YEAR**

**FLAME:** GREENVILLE, SC

Flame was a malnourished orange and white kitten when he strayed into the Belmont Fire Department in South Carolina in 2015. Too small to even be vaccinated, he attached himself immediately to the firefighters. They instantly returned the affection, opening their home and hearts for him and naming him Flame. Every day, Flame brings them companionship and comfort, even during the most stressful and tragic moments. "After spending time with Flame – simply holding him or playing ball – the firefighters instantly feel better," said Belmont Fire Chief Anthony Segars.

Flame – who is unfazed by the loud sirens and lives in a mini-firehouse created for him by Animal Planet – also participates in educational events with local children, and has inspired the department to encourage adoption and spay/neuter of local animals.

Because of the deep loyalty and comfort he provides local heroes, Flame is the **2017 ASPCA Cat of the Year**.



**ASPCA® CITIZEN HERO AWARD**

**JUDY OBREGON:** FORT WORTH, TX

In 2010, Judy Obregon noticed a homeless dog on the side of the road near Fort Worth, Texas. After closer observation, she was shocked to discover that this area, part of Echo Lake Park, was a dumping ground for abandoned, injured, and deceased animals. From that moment on, she vowed to help them in any way she could.

Day after day, Judy visits this financially challenged, high-crime area to rescue animals, arrange veterinary care, and assist with their adoption into safe and loving homes. After years of working on her own, she brought together local animal welfare advocates, rescuers, foster families, and volunteers to form The Abandoned Ones (TAO), an organization dedicated to local animal rescue and public education. To date, Judy has personally rescued more than 300 dogs from the Echo Lake Park area, and her efforts have inspired attention and admirers across the country.

For her tremendous personal commitment to local animals in need, Judy Obregon is the recipient of the **2017 ASPCA Citizen Hero Award**.



**ASPCA® HENRY BERGH AWARD**  
**MISSION K9 RESCUE: HOUSTON, TX**

Nearly 3,000 American dogs are risking their lives in heroic national service both at home and abroad. But while these animals are cared for during their tours of duty, that attention often drops off when they return home. Some find themselves homeless, injured, and very vulnerable.

After years of rescuing some of these former military dogs, Kristen Maurer, a private canine handler, and Louisa Kastner, a former military vet tech, teamed up with Bob Bryant, a marketing and social media expert, to form Mission K9 Rescue in 2013. The organization, which operates from a permanent facility in Houston, Texas, works to rescue, reunite, re-home, and rehabilitate retiring and retired military and working dogs.

Four years after its founding, Mission K9 Rescue has reunited more than 70 canine handler teams and rescued more than 100 dogs who valiantly served humankind. Representing the compassion and vision of ASPCA founder Henry Bergh, Mission K9 Rescue is this year's recipient of the **2017 ASPCA Henry Bergh Award**.



**ASPCA® EQUINE WELFARE AWARD**  
**ELAINE NASH, FLEET OF ANGELS: EVANS, CO**

A lifelong horse lover, Elaine Nash noticed that while many people are interested in rescuing at-risk horses, they are often hindered by prohibitive commercial transportation costs and a lack of access to horse trailers. To address those obstacles, Elaine launched Fleet of Angels, a network of thousands of trailer owners on call to help transport at-risk equines from danger to safety – sometimes as far away as Alaska. Each year, thousands of horses are assisted by their life-saving work.

In 2016, Nash was asked to create and manage a large national effort to find homes for roughly 300 of 900 starving and neglected horses seized by the state of South Dakota from a failing facility. By mid-December – even in the midst of extreme weather conditions – Fleet of Angels met that goal, and is currently working to place the rest of the seized horses, after the other 600 were turned over to them in January.

The group also recently organized and managed a comprehensive network of equine rescuers providing vital resources for owners of horses displaced by Hurricane Harvey. For utilizing inspiration, innovation, and collaboration to save the lives of hundreds of at-risk horses, Fleet of Angels is the recipient of the **2017 ASPCA Equine Welfare Award**.



**ASPCA® TOMMY P. MONAHAN KID OF THE YEAR AWARD**  
**JESSICA BROCKSOM: MILFORD, CT**

Proving that you can't be too young to make a big difference, 11-year-old animal lover Jessica Brocksom won the job of 2017 Connecticut Kid Governor<sup>SM</sup> on the strength of her inspiring animal welfare platform "Helping Animals – Those Without a Voice." Fifth graders from across the state elected Jessica to her position as part of a civics program created by the Connecticut Public Affairs Network. Since assuming the office in January 2017, Jessica has hit the ground running, promoting collection drives for local shelters, working with state officials to enforce tougher laws against animal cruelty, and educating fellow students about the horrors of animal abuse and how to prevent it.

Jessica spreads her message through press conferences, fundraising and media appearances, local library visits, videos, and through her official blog at [CT.KidGovernor.org](http://CT.KidGovernor.org). One of these fundraisers – held at her school – helped pay for the eye surgery of a local dog in need. This past spring, Jessica advocated for legislation allowing children to have therapy animals with them while testifying in court. This law was ultimately passed by the Connecticut General Assembly. During the summer, Jessica worked on "Heat Kills," a Milford, Connecticut city-wide campaign designed to spread awareness of the dangers of leaving dogs and other animals in cars during hot weather.

For the leadership role she plays helping animals across her state, as well as inspiring a new generation of animal welfare advocates, Jessica Brocksom is the **2017 ASPCA Tommy P. Monahan Kid of the Year**.

*This award is dedicated to Tommy P. Monahan, a nine-year-old Staten Island boy who perished in a 2007 house fire trying to save his pet.*