

Keeping people and their pets together

By Kathleen Wallace

Photo by Kathleen Wallace

When Black Forest residents Cynthia and David Bullock lost their beloved dog, Harley, to cancer, they did more than grieve. They started Harley's Hope Foundation with the goal of helping people and their pets stay together.

"Harley was a rescue dog we fostered and adopted and was in our life for eight years," said Cynthia Bullock, the foundation's executive director.

"When she was diagnosed with cancer, it really blind-sided us because she had always been a very healthy, active dog," she said.

In an effort to save her life, the Bullocks regularly drove Harley to Denver for cancer treatments.

"The logistics of getting her to Denver for treatment made us realize there are very few services available to people going through crises with their animals, and very few, if any services, to encourage people to stay with their animals," Bullock said.

The Bullocks decided to start Harley's Hope Foundation, a state-licensed 501(c)(3) non-profit, to fill the gap.

"A fair number of people give up their pets but don't want to. They don't know where to turn for assistance or don't know about resources that already exist in the community," Bullock said.

"They just need a little more assistance, a little more information to be able to keep their pet."

Harley's Hope Foundation provides

assistance by letting people know what resources are already available to help with a variety of situations.

"It could be someone who needs a specialist and doesn't know where to turn," Bullock said. "It could be someone having training issues. Resource-sharing is part of what we do."

In one instance, Bullock said she knows of a trainer who took in a pit bull that had been involved in fighting and was aggressive toward the trainer's cat.

The trainer was able to solve the aggression problem and now uses the dog when working with other dogs that don't get along with cats.

"As soon as we accept the fact that animals aren't hairy versions of us; that there's a reason for their behavior; it's phenomenal what the right kind of therapy can do," she said.

Harley's Hope Foundation also helps pet owners with veterinary emergencies.

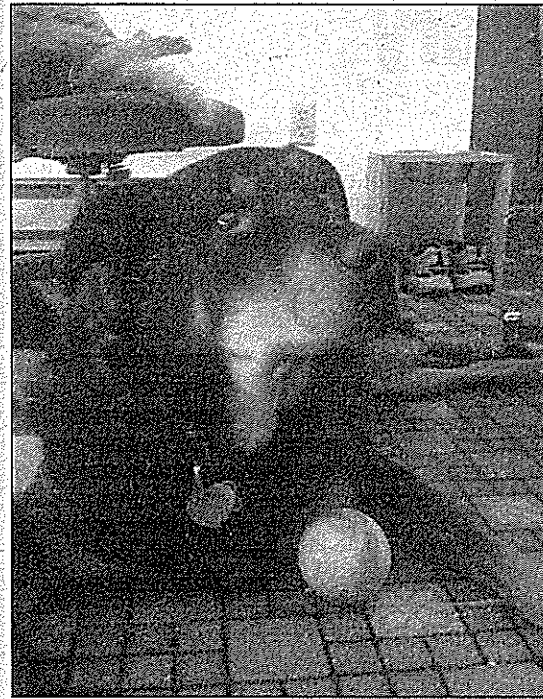
Over the Christmas holidays, the foundation helped with four emergencies.

One of them was Mica, a cat in need of an emergency operation. Mica's owner was a full-time student who couldn't afford the operation.

She called Harley's Hope Foundation, which helped provide the necessary funds to save Mica's life.

As a new nonprofit, the foundation doesn't have the funds to help with every unaffordable medical emergency.

"We've applied for grants and hope



Harley inspired Black Forest residents Cynthia and David Bullock to start Harley's Hope Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps people keep their pets.

they come through, but we're hoping the community will also see the value in what we're doing," Bullock said.

"There are no other nonprofits in southern Colorado doing this. We hope to find funding through a combination of grants and individual and corporate support."

Education is the foundation's third mission.

Bullock is working on a free educational series to be presented at the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region every Saturday morning in April and the first Saturday in May.

The foundation's network of veterinarians and trainers will cover topics pet owners should know, such as what constitutes a veterinary emergency, how to prevent the most common emergencies and knowing when to rush a pet to the vet, she said.

"We'll look at alternative treatments, like acupuncture and chiropractic care for older animals and chronic conditions like arthritis, and we'll talk about the human-animal bond and canine behaviors and hopefully feline behaviors as well," Bullock said.

"The whole series is designed to provide the community with the tools and education they need to become better pet guardians and to ensure their pets are in their homes for many years to come.

"We believe that Harley's 'hope' would be for all animals to experience a safe home with a loving family for their entire lives, through good times and bad, just like she did."

For more information, visit www.Harleys-HopeFoundation.org or call 719-362-6335.