

## **My View: Personal mission to save pets makes community stronger**

**By Ann Siner – Contributing writer  
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I remember pulling a cowering kitten from underneath a parked car in downtown Colorado Springs when I was just 16. Years later, I pulled them out of cages piled high with kittens at our local pound. It's a blessing and a curse to feel so strongly about saving animals, but I've accepted it's my life passion and mission. I will do everything in my power to save the lives of homeless pets. That means anything from fostering a sick puppy to raising lifesaving funds for the nonprofits in our community.

Just a few years ago, homeless dogs and cats in the Valley were very likely to end up in a landfill. Phoenix held the dubious distinction of being the second worst in the nation for the fate of stray animals. Thanks to the efforts of a coalition of animal rescue organizations, however, we are turning this dire situation into one with many happy tails.

I'm proud to say that since the 1990s, I have helped raise millions of dollars, fostered more "fur-babies" than I can ever come close to counting, and served on the boards of the Arizona Animal Welfare League, Friends of Animal Care & Control and now the Arizona Humane Society.

But it is more than a personal mission; it is making my community stronger.

From the first day in 1991 when my sisters and I started My Sister's Closet, we had no idea our vision to reshape resale would turn into a flourishing, \$26 million business.

We have donated our unsold inventory to thrift stores of local shelters. We have given more than \$7 million in product and cash to save the lives of those who can't speak for themselves. My sister and I are honored to serve as co-chairs of the annual Compassion with Fashion fundraiser that last year raised in excess of \$1 million.

The return both personally and professionally has been immeasurable. Rarely a day goes by where a customer in one of our stores doesn't go out of their way to share that they shop with us because of our commitment to help suffering and homeless animals.

The Arizona Humane Society's vision is strong and clear: to end animal suffering, homelessness and needless euthanasia. What attracted me to the board is an innovative approach and different way of thinking about animal welfare – similar to my own approach in business. Under the guidance of Dr. Steven Hansen, the chief executive of

AHS, life-saving programs such as the Bottle Baby ICU, Second Chance Animal Trauma Hospital and resources to help keep more pets in homes are truly changing the course for animals who would normally be left behind. These programs don't just happen by magic. They take money. And they take hard work by people – both those in the organizations dedicated to the effort and by you and me.

It would be my pleasure to take you on a tour of AHS' facilities and show you that each of us really can make a difference. AHS has demonstrated the ability to raise the bar, serve as the model, and has exciting plans to accelerate that effort. Together we are transforming our community and have no plans of slowing down.

*Ann Siner is CEO and founder of My Sister's Closet, My Sister's Attic and Well Suited, and is a board member of the Arizona Humane Society.*

