

# DOGS BRINGING COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF A NATIONAL DISASTER

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*Animal-Assisted Crisis Response work involves a certified animal (dog) and handler (owner). Together they bring a compassionate presence and comfort to those impacted by disaster. The present focus is on canine-assisted crisis intervention with disaster clients. Anecdotes of these interactions are described with particular attention to intervention techniques. The dog serves as an entrée to the establishment of a relationship and a venue for the affected individuals to talk. This rapport building then allows the human part of the team to normalize trauma reactions for adults, children, and first responders. Note: Disaster survivors' names were changed to maintain confidentiality.*

Disaster mental health work is not traditional counseling, and when a dog and counselor team up, the equation is another step removed from the expected. The dog becomes the vehicle for the client to connect with the handler and express his/her thoughts and feelings. Smart-Alec and Ellie-Mae are my canine Siberian Huskies who serve as co-therapists in animal-assisted disaster work. Smart-Alec is a two-year-old, 58-pound male who is very talkative. In stark contrast, Ellie-Mae is a delicate, blue-eyed three-year-old female that is usually mistaken for a puppy because she is so petite.

An illustration of the work that these teams do is a search-and-recovery operation Smart-Alec and I were on together. Our role was to support the search-and-recovery teams when they came in from searching the woods for remains and to support the people waiting at the staging center for news regarding the finding of any remains. Searchers coming in from the field would walk over to Smarty, with a smile on their face, and ask to pat him. Momentarily, they had forgotten the sad mission they were on and enjoyed the attention from my furry friend. A family member of the missing young man came over to Smarty, patted him, and told me about her dog. For a brief moment in time, she was relieved of the reality of the situation at hand. We also discussed her bringing her own dog the next day as support for her—and she did.

Working with veterans in my occupation made me aware of the impact that their animals have on them. In some cases, it was

the life-saving measure preventing them from suicide for fear of their animal not being taken care of if they died. I have always had dogs and treat them a bit too much like humans. When I had two new pups, I decided to train them to be pet-therapy dogs. After a year of doing the pet therapy, I saw a picture in the newspaper of a crisis dog that had visited a school after a shooting and immediately started the inquiring process for me and my dogs to become certified.

The Delta Society (n.d.) has several definitions for animal-assisted activities. Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is directed and/or delivered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise who incorporates the animal into the therapeutic treatment plan. Animal-Assisted Activity (AAA) provides opportunities for motivational, educational, recreational, and/or therapeutic benefits to enhance the quality of life of recipients. A major difference in AAA is that the animal is not part of the treatment plan. AAA is delivered in a variety of environments by specially trained professionals, paraprofessionals, and/or volunteers in association with animals that meet specific criteria (Howie, 2000).

Animal-Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) provides relief and comfort to those affected by crises and disasters through trained and certified human-canine response teams. Teams work alongside organizations that meet

the mental health needs of survivors, responders, and others affected by crises and disasters (HOPE, 2000). A license in social work or mental health is not a prerequisite for becoming part of an AACR team, although many handlers do have a license and this work is a natural extension of their profession.

There are differences among the various titles and responsibilities of these dogs. Some of the titles are the following: Service Animal, Therapy Dog, and Companion Animal as defined by the Standards of Practice of Animal-Assisted Activities and Therapy (Delta Society; Howie, 2000). The Delta Society has defined these titles in the following manner:

Service animals are legally defined by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act and are trained to meet the disability-related needs of their handlers who have disabilities. Federal laws protect the rights of individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animals in public places. Service animals are not considered "pets." However, therapy animals are not legally defined by federal law, but some states have laws defining them. They provide people with contact with animals but are not limited to working with people who have disabilities. They are usually the personal pets of their handlers and work with their handlers to provide services to others. Federal laws have no provisions for people to be accompanied by therapy animals in places of public accommodation that have "no pets" policies. Therapy animals usually are not service animals. A companion animal is not legally defined, but is accepted as another term for "pet" (Howie, 2000, Definition Section, ¶1).

Qualification as an AACR team involves a sequential process. First, the dog must be a year old to sit for the Canine Good Citizenship test. Many dog training centers administer this exam. The next step is for the dog to pass the Therapy Dog certification. The two major certifying organizations are the Delta Society and Therapy Dog International (2006). The team must engage in pet therapy visits for a minimum of six months prior to applying for the AACR course. Ellie-Mae has made over 125 visits to our local nursing home and Smart-Alec over 100. Smart-Alec and Ellie-Mae were certified through an AACR organization

based in Oregon. The AACR process involved a four-day course for the team. Additionally, the volunteer should be a volunteer with local emergency response disaster services such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army or county emergency management agency. The FEMA course IS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command Systems) and a basic Critical Incidence Stress Management (CISM) course are required. The organization has a code of ethics that was adapted from the Ethical Standards of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Treatment. Some other AACR organizations are HOPE animal-assisted crisis response, Northeast Crisis Response Coalition, NCRC (n.d.) and NOAH's Canine Crisis Response Team.

The owner must assess if there is a goodness of fit between his/her dog and the demands of the work. This work is stressful for the dog and the handler alike. Loud noises, changing environments, long hours, disrupted schedules, and sometimes unhealthy conditions are the norm. It is the handler's responsibility to protect the dog. In terms of the conditions for deployment, there must also be a goodness of fit for the handler.

I have been to Katrina, the California fires, the Atlanta tornado, the Parkersburg tornado, the Iowa floods, and Northern Illinois University where the shootings of many students took place on Valentine's Day 2008. Some deployments were with the Red Cross as a mental health worker and some with the AACR group with my dogs. On some of my Red Cross deployments, I was the guide for AACR teams and directly experienced the impact of additional dogs with clients. In disaster work one might ask, "Why bring a dog?" Disaster work is different from traditional counseling, so the traditional stays back in your home office. What is first and foremost is a compassionate presence. On site I introduce myself as Louise, not Dr. Graham. There is no need for them to know that I am a doctor. If they ask about my role, I tell them that I am in mental health. The survivors need to have someone to hear their story, to acknowledge their pain and the extent of their loss, and to display empathy. Silent listening, a hand on their back, or a hug is often what conveys the caring.

In this instance, the mental health worker needs to “just be” at times rather than “do.” Josh Billings (n.d.) said, “A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself” (Quotations Section, ¶70).

Ellie-Mae serves as the welcoming receptionist, inviting the client in for her undivided attention. Smart-Alec looks rather like a polar bear and proclaims his arrival with many guttural sounds as he jogs up to people, tail wagging. When people see Ellie-Mae or Smart-Alec, they quickly feel comfortable to approach and ask to pat my canine welcoming committee, which elicits smiles on their faces. The dog does the initial contact just by its presence and that establishes the relationship. Some of the first questions from clients are “what is the dog’s name?” and “why are you here?” The dogs are great ice breakers. Clients observe my caring and attentive interactions with the dogs and deduce that I must be trustworthy if the dogs trust me. They observe the positive relationships we share. Unsolicited, clients usually begin speaking about their own dogs. Thus, the kernel of rapport begins to grow.

### **College Campus Shooting**

Ellie-Mae and I went to Northern Illinois University (NIU) after the shooting deaths of five students. Many students ran up to Ellie and asked to pat her and then immediately began speaking about their own dogs back home. A sense of calm reminiscence came over their faces as they spoke about their dogs. There are many studies that speak to the calming effect of stroking a dog (Friedmann, Thomas, & Eddy, 2000). Ellie-Mae allowed them to regress to a place that was safe, secure, and comfortable. A number of them spoke of the intrusive nature of the media and how the newscasters had thrust the microphones in their faces and demanded that they recount the shootings. One young lady said that students learned to walk in the opposite direction as quickly as possible when they saw the media presence. If contact with them were unavoidable, they dropped their heads, averted their gazes, and rushed by. She said that it was so nice to just pat the dogs and

not think or talk about what had happened for a minute.

They expressed their feelings and thoughts as they stroked and hugged little Ellie-Mae. They had some of their needs fulfilled by nurturing and being nurtured by her. This was a momentary escape from the horrible tragedy and uncontrollable environment in which they had found themselves. Speaking about their dogs back home or from their childhood led them to speak of home, parents, and siblings. Most recounted how they returned home the very evening of the shootings. They spoke about their parents taking care of them and how their parents were frightened for their safety. This allowed them to transition into disclosing their own fears and the feeling of being unable to control their campus environment. Ellie-Mae was especially welcomed at NIU because the mascot for NIU is a Siberian Husky. I told the students that when Ellie-Mae heard of the tragedy at their school, she wanted to come, knowing that their mascot was a Siberian.

There were small and large makeshift memorials all over campus for the five students who were shot and killed. All the memorials had stuffed animals with Siberian Huskies prominent. In front of Cole Hall, where the shootings occurred, there were six white wooden silhouettes of Siberian Huskies. They had placed five of the Siberians running in one direction and the sixth, representing the shooter, running in the opposite direction. That sixth Siberian was continually knocked over face down in the snow, only to be picked up later and repositioned by another student. Because Ellie-Mae is a Siberian, she triggered discussion about this practice among the students while they were patting her. Some felt sorrow for the shooter. Others felt anger and wanted no memorial for him. This naturally led to the discussion of Cole Hall being torn down. Again, students were conflicted in their feelings. Some students believed that it should be torn down and a memorial built in its place while others thought this was “giving in” and that they should return to class in Cole Hall. Their emotions ran the gamut as I sat quietly and let them stroke, pat, and hug Ellie-Mae. Her calm presence elicited their innermost

expressions and feelings. It was truly wonderful to work with my good co-therapist.

The faculty in the History Department and at the Latino Center requested that the dogs come for a visit. The teams went into the classrooms at the beginning of class and the dogs went around and visited with the students. The faculty and other people at the Latino Center told us that the visit had made a "huge" difference in the students' demeanors. Faculty commented that it brought a climate of normalcy back into the classroom. Surprisingly, the History faculty requested that we come up to their offices. They all came out of their offices and patted the dogs and then spoke about their own dogs at home. Perhaps we all need to regress in the face of adversity. The moments of regression allowed faculty to verbalize their own uneasiness and stress at having had to come back into the classroom to help their students deal with anxiety, fear, and their "forever changed" university. It was obvious that they had the same feelings and thoughts as their students but had the additional pressure of having to be the supportive, stabilizing, and guiding forces in their students' lives.

The University Counseling Center was the initiator of our visit to campus. We always had one or two dogs on duty in the waiting room of the Counseling Center. Students came in for their session and were surprised to see the dogs. They quickly began asking questions about the dogs, smiled, and seemed more at ease. We were quick to point out that no matter where we were on campus, we were at NIU because the Counseling Center had invited us and arranged for our stay. We knew that the Counseling Center would be dealing with this long after we had returned home. The head of the Counseling Center told us that students often commented that they did not want the counselors in their classes, preferring the dogs instead. The Counseling Center hoped to make therapy dogs a part of their ongoing program and believed that the success of the crisis dogs would be a helpful impetus to seeing this through to fruition.

No matter where we went on campus, we were welcomed with open arms. The staff in the cafeteria greeted us (rather, the dogs) each

time we went for meals. They took pictures of the dogs and hugged and patted them just as everyone else had done. Before I arrived at NIU, I had thought of the dogs in relation to the students and had not anticipated the rest of the university community to be as receptive. How wrong I was! Everyone in the college community welcomed the dogs' love and affection and seemed to get in touch with their feeling side through their encounters with them.

The dogs slept in the dorms with us, rode on the university buses, went to the cafeteria with the students, attended a basketball game, and attended the memorial service for the five fallen students. For a brief moment in time, the dogs became part of the NIU community and were open and inviting to all. Ben Williams (n.d.) said, "There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face" (Quotations Section, ¶1).

### **Fire**

Crisis dog teams work in all types of disasters—fires, tornados, floods, and manmade disasters such as 9-11. The crisis dogs are able to provide a valuable service to parents who come to service centers or dining facilities at disaster sites. Clients come to the service center and meet with Red Cross caseworkers and fill out paperwork to see if they are eligible for aid. This process usually takes about an hour. FEMA is often at the same center so that clients can apply for federal aid at the same time as they see Red Cross staff. Paperwork proving residence and personal identification is required. In many instances people have lost paperwork in the disaster, are sleep deprived, and have not eaten properly. Their routines are completely disrupted and they are overwhelmed with the magnitude of their situation. Anger, confusion, numbness, and sadness are normal reactions to the devastation.

One young man, who had lost everything in his apartment during a fire, was not able to produce the required verification paperwork. He became very angry and started yelling at the caseworker: "I have no [expletive] gas money!" Fear and anxiety were clearly written on the face of the caseworker. Smart-

Alec and I approached the young man and just waited for him to acknowledge us. He complained loudly about the system. I winked at the caseworker and asked if the young man and I could take a break outside for a couple of minutes. We went outside and he patted Smart-Alec and complained about the system as Smart-Alec listened attentively. He reported that his license had his prior address on it and he had not changed it to his current residence. His girlfriend had left because the apartment was ruined, he had not been able to get in touch with her for three days, and his cell phone did not work. He used my telephone to attempt to reach his girlfriend, to no avail. My acknowledgment of his feelings of separation from his girlfriend and his sense of dislocation eventually defused his anger and he was able to return to the caseworker and complete his paperwork.

### **Tornado**

Jessica was a client who came into the service center to meet with a FEMA representative after a tornado. While she hugged and patted Smart-Alec, Jessica shared that her Labrador Retriever, Dakota, had died in the tornado. She told me that her mother had chastised her for feeling bad about losing her dog when other people had lost everything they owned and some their lives or loved ones. I told her that Smart-Alec was part of my family and that losing her dog must have felt to her like losing a family member. She explained that she had had Dakota for ten years and that he was like her first child. She then opened up about her experience during the tornado. Stroking Smart-Alec the whole time she told her story, she told me that she had made it through the storm by driving into a corn field, pushing her daughter into a ditch, and lying on top of her to protect her. Jessica went on to speak about other life circumstances and losses she had endured and how she had dealt with them in the past. She questioned her "bad luck" in life. After I made a reflection statement, I took the opportunity to reframe her adversities into her resiliency and strength as a mother and as a person. She left feeling relieved and her parting words

were, "Sometimes, you just have to be reminded of your strengths."

The crisis team was also helpful to parents while they filled out paperwork. Children were understandably "out of sorts," their lives disrupted due to the disaster, before coming to the center. Then, they were expected to sit quietly for an hour while their parents sought assistance with necessary forms. It was extremely demanding for them. Smart-Alec and I approached parents with children and requested the children's presence at a nearby table. The children were happy not to have to sit still and to be able to enjoy the dogs. As they patted and hugged Smart-Alec, many of the children mentioned that they had a dog. This segue allowed me to ask if their dogs were now afraid when it rained or during thunder and lightning storms. I used this as an opportunity to normalize these fears, noting that the rain must make their dogs think of the tornado. I also had crayons and paper and told them that they could draw a picture for Smart-Alec of anything they liked. Without any directions the children drew tornados. We then talked about how they protected their dogs in the storm and how that was similar to how their parents had protected them. I made sure to have them lead the discussion in case this was not accurate. When I had a group of children, they initially talked about their dogs or relatives' dogs but then spontaneously spoke of the disaster. They took turns telling their personal details of the storm. I observed group therapy working as intended, with my co-therapist Smart-Alec.

One three-year-old volunteered, "Park got ouchie but the bank is OK." Translation: the park, where she went to play, had sustained much damage and the equipment was broken but the local bank was not damaged. As she held Smart-Alec, a seven-year-old proclaimed, "Makes me cry about the semi." She was referring to a semi tractor-trailer that was on the side of the road, upside down and crushed. It made me wonder if one of her parents or a relative drove a semi and what his/her reaction had been to the truck when he/she saw it. A ten-year-old told me that her dog had been lost in the tornado and that when the crane took down the one standing wall that was left

of her home, her dog rolled out alive. She was able to talk about her fears while holding Smart-Alec.

When the parents finished their paperwork and returned to retrieve their children, the children were relaxed and happy instead of being cranky from sitting still and quiet for an hour. This afforded me the opportunity to ask how their children were coping. One indispensable role for me was to normalize the regressive reactions of young children. Mothers were upset when their young children displayed regressive behaviors such as soiling, thumb sucking, clinging, or being exceptionally cranky. I informed the parents that behavior is the primary mode of communication for young children and this is their way of saying that they want to go back in time before the disaster when everything was safe. Parents were relieved to learn that this was normal and with time their children would likely return to their previous level of functioning.

One mom was very concerned about these behaviors in her three-year-old who had resumed bed wetting. She also volunteered that her six-year-old was "fine as long as he has a plan—he just did what we said." I asked her if he were usually organized and liked structure. She affirmed this and acknowledged, when asked, that he seemed even more concerned with routine and structure now. This interaction, which all started with a dog pat, resulted in my being able to inform her that this was his manner of handling anxiety and these behaviors reduced anxiety for him. I suggested that she give him some extra attention and allow him time to talk about the disaster or to draw and then have him tell her about the drawings.

The dog can be a vehicle for projection. I told some children that the previous night Smart-Alec or Ellie-Mae had a dream. Then, I asked them what they thought the dogs had dreamed. Invariably, the child responded with content related to the disaster. I then asked them what they thought Smart-Alec, if he could talk, would tell us that would help him feel better. Various things were mentioned, such as retrieval of lost toys, a wish to have the local store back (the Quick Stop that was demolished), and "his Mommy" or "his

Daddy." Sometimes, I said that Smart-Alec had been scared that morning and I wondered what scared him. This led to conversations about how we often become frightened when it rains or thunders.

Many adults were also unaware of normal reactions to a disaster. Adults patted the dog and commented on the fact that their dog or cat was now frightened when it rained. The frightened dog or cat discussions provided a perfect segue into how humans and animals often act similarly in the face of trauma. I educated them regarding the normal reactions we all have to a disaster. I found that normalizing thoughts and feelings was one of the most helpful services we provided. A visible relaxation and a draining of tension from their faces appeared when they realized that they were not "losing it." They would invariably thank me for sharing this information.

Normalizing thoughts and feelings allowed me to tell them that they would return to their prior level of functioning relatively soon, unless they had experienced previous trauma or significant losses, which would require a longer period of time for healing. This allowed them an opportunity to volunteer more information if they had had such a prior experience. One man, while patting, stroking, and looking at Ellie-Mae, responded to my statement with a sob and proceeded to share that his wife had divorced him two months prior and his aunt and uncle had lost their home. We talked about his going through this experience alone and the pain he felt when he saw families working together in the rubble of the disaster. Past traumas and losses resurface with new trauma. This shared knowledge affirmed that they were not deteriorating.

When clients disclosed significant traumas or losses, I took that opportunity to encourage them to call a mental health professional (their therapist if they had one). The role definitions are different in the two positions. When I function in a Red Cross role, I give clients a referral to a local community mental health organization. When I am with the AACR team, my role is to have the Red Cross mental health person do the referral. When with the Red Cross, our licenses have reciprocity in the disaster state. With the AACR a license is not

a requirement, nor is there reciprocity if one holds a license. The basic communication skills of reflection, paraphrasing, clarifying, summarizing, and silence are all employed in the AACR work.

### **First Responders**

The dogs are not only for the clients impacted by the disaster but for the first responders as well. FEMA personnel, police, National Guard members, firefighters, and others are some of the first responders who come to help when communities are affected. These helpers are impacted by direct exposure to the disaster site and are subjected to vicarious traumatization by helping the survivors. For some it is being involved in the recovery of the deceased. Often, these first responders go out of their way to approach the dogs. They squat down and give them a hug and pat. More often than not, when this would happen, I would be silent as they were allowed to enjoy the moment of peace and distraction from the pain and suffering all around them. One National Guard man buried his face in the fur of the dog's neck and held her for what seemed like an interminable amount of time. He then gave her a quick pat on the head. She responded with a kiss for him. He turned to me and said "thank you" as he returned to the devastation all around him.

The National Guard, police, and security people are thrust into roles of enforcing the regulations and often must present an austere presence to the public. I have yet to find a crisis dog that could not break through that presentation as they wag and kiss their way into responders' hearts. The dogs orchestrate a momentary reprieve from the grave situation. Unconditional, positive regard and silent acceptance are powerful tools that the dogs seem to possess intuitively. An anonymous writer once said that the reason a dog has so many friends is that he "wags his tail instead of his tongue."

### **Red Cross**

Red Cross volunteers fill many different positions in disasters, from feeding and sheltering to driving trucks and providing mental health services. The expectation is for

a three-week commitment and at least 12-hour days, with disrupted sleeping and eating schedules the norm. They are in constant contact in a helping mode with the clients affected by the disaster. When the animal crisis teams come to a disaster service center or a feeding facility, they contact the mental health supervisor for collaboration and directions.

I was with the Red Cross in Parkersburg, Iowa, after the tornado, in the capacity of a licensed mental health person and not with my dog as an AACR member. As the Red Cross liaison, I went around with the AACR teams and with another AACR group, NOAH. I connected the dog team with workers who appeared to be stressed and needed a break. It gave them a much needed reprieve when they sat for a few minutes, patted the dogs, and talked about their own dogs and about the deployment.

A motto in the Red Cross is flexibility. What happens is not unlike New England weather—if you don't like it, wait a minute. Personal relationships, working and sleeping in close contact with new people, and taking directions from supervisors are all stressful circumstances. So for many volunteers the opportunity to vent into the attentive ear of a dog and the physiologically relaxing act of stroking a dog were helpful. I was able to do a quick educational intervention about control and predictability in stressful situations. One woman told me that her deployment had been wonderful, but she had been much stressed when dealing with her roommate with whom she also had a work assignment. The volunteer felt obligated to act as a caregiver for her medically ill roommate but was subject to her constant rendition of her illness symptoms throughout the entire deployment. This woman was left drained and exhausted from the ordeal. These disclosures were precipitated by the AACR team making the first contact with the volunteer, and then I was able to continue to support her.

### **AACR and Red Cross**

The handlers often came up to the mental health staff and pointed out a particular person whom they had found to be upset and in need of mental health services. The crisis dog teams

mingled with the clients and visited. I connected the teams with clients who I thought would profit from the experience of having a few minutes with an attentive, loving, furry listener. I brought the team over to Harry and Sally, a married couple. Harry told me that he was fine, that they were fortunate they were alive. He joked and said, "I had nothing 50 years ago when we got married and we had just had our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and now 50 years later we have nothing." I sensed that he was not as "fine" as he professed. I introduced the dog team to the couple. Again, Harry proclaimed that everything was fine. He started patting Blue, the crisis dog, as his wife spoke to someone else. I interjected that his losses were just as real and important to him as anyone else's. After he stroked the dog, receiving dog kisses and undivided attention, he talked for an hour about the devastation and how people had helped him. When I saw him the next day, he came right over to me and thanked me for listening and for the company of man's best friend.

#### Crisis Dogs and Care

Just as clinicians in the caring fields must take care not to burn out from compassion fatigue and to practice self care, the dogs need to have stress-relieving activities also. It is the handler's responsibility to know the dog's stress signals. For instance, Smarty is apt to get even more vocal, while Ellie-Mae will lick her lips when stressed. If Ellie-Mae becomes too stressed, she stops eating and drinking and gets diarrhea. The dogs do not work for long continuous hours. When on an assignment, they work for about five hours and then are given a break, but it depends on the particular dog. What a break consists of depends on the dog's temperament. Siberian Huskies are high energy dogs and love their walks and runs. I will get up early and take them for a three-mile run or walk. They also need some quiet nap time when on an operation. When Ellie-Mae and Smart-Alec are not working, which is the vast majority of their time, they love their daily morning walks or jogs and if possible an afternoon walk. Saturdays often consist of what I call "camp" days. This is just for fun; some dogs do this as training for agility

competitions. Ellie-Mae absolutely loves to do the jumps, run through the tunnels, and run over the dog walk. Smart-Alec, on the other hand, enjoys it but is just happy to be out meeting the other dogs and people and getting snacks. The socialization with many different dogs is good for them to ensure that they are friendly when meeting new dogs.

#### Summary

This work is rewarding and has made me aware of what is important in life. One time, returning from a disaster, I was waiting for the bus at the airport and a lady was complaining because the bus was late. She said, "Isn't this terrible?" I just thought to myself, "No, terrible is losing your home or a loved one in a disaster."

Some common themes emerged from this disaster work. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas said, "No person is too old or ugly or poor or disabled to win the love of a pet—they love us uncritically and without reserve" (qtd. in Pichot & Coulter, 2007, p. 9). No matter if it were a child or adult, many were moved to speak about their own dogs at home when they were with the crisis dogs. This reminiscence served to relax people enough to share their thoughts and feelings surrounding their experience of the disaster. This occurred while patting and hugging the dogs. As Will Rogers (n.d.) said, "If there are no dogs in heaven, then when I die I want to go where they went" (Quotations Section about Dogs, ¶3).

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Ellie-Mae. Photograph by Louise Graham.



Smart-Alec. Photograph by Louise Graham.

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