

extraordinary WOMEN

presented by

THOMAS J HENRY

Extraordinary Women Award Winners

KAREN COLE, FOUNDER OF LIZZY'S ANIMAL HOSPICE

&

MISSY MCCULLOUGH, DIRECTOR OF MAJOR GIFTS FOR EMANCIPET

The founder of Lizzy's Animal Hospice, Karen Cole, who works to provide care for the most vulnerable companion animals, and Missy McCullough, who founded Animal Trustees of Austin and now runs the donor program at Emancipet, have each been named an Extraordinary Woman by the Austin Statesman and Thomas J. Henry Extraordinary Women program.

KAREN COLE

"Lizzy's Animal Hospice is an elder care hospice for animals – dogs are what we've ended up concentrating on – dogs who are typically 10 years and older," Cole said. "We will take a younger dog if they have a terminal illness or congestive heart failure or something like that." Cole said she wants more people to know about Lizzy's, which started almost a decade ago.

"Our mission exactly is to take the older dogs, the dogs that a lot of rescues don't want and dogs that may end up going to the shelter – we also take dogs from shelters – and we get them healthy if we can, and then we find them wonderful homes," Cole said.

After working in animal rescue for many years, Cole came to recognize the situation faced by older dogs who are without homes. Not every rescue operation can find homes for them, and Cole decided it was a niche that she wanted to fill. Cole founded Lizzy's in 2012 with a chow/golden retriever mix named Lizzy, who was found chained to a tree in southwest Austin. Lizzy was 13; and at first, it seemed like she might only live a few weeks.

"But we found out from the vet that it wasn't a situation that she wasn't going to make it," Cole said.

"You can learn a lot from your vet – and we have a very good one – and we got Lizzy healthy, and she lived two years."

Cole decided she wanted to help more dogs get out of bad situations. Lizzy's is now a non-profit, privately funded rescue organization.

"I literally decided I'm going to start from (the) ground floor and applied for my nonprofit status and started getting our name out there," Cole said. Dogs who come to Lizzy's get examined by a vet, and a plan is developed from

there. While some may need more serious medical care, there are others who just need grooming, kindness and time to feel secure.

"And then after that, you have a healthy little dog with a lot of life left and so let's find them a good place to be," said Cole, who fosters many of the dogs herself. Most are between 10 and 20 years old, and she is always looking for other people who want to foster or provide forever homes.

Older dogs make excellent companions, Cole said.

"They are usually house trained, and they're just wonderful company, so I advocate everywhere I go for senior dogs," she said.

The relationship can be equally rewarding for dog and owner.

"People sometimes say, 'I don't want a dog for 10 years or 12 years' because they don't know where they'll be 10 or 12 years, so for them, a dog for three to five years is good," Cole said. "That's where I think I've kind of made an im-



pact; I've created a resource for people. Shelters often don't have a lot of senior dogs. There they don't adopt out well, so they don't have many of them, so I've created the resource for the people who do want the older dogs.

They come to me now, so I kind of think I've helped a lot of people, too, along with helping dogs."

Cole's interest in dogs developed when she and her former husband got their first dog 20 years ago. Lizzy's is always looking for volunteers to help with fundraising, social media, as well as meet-and-greets, which take place around Austin every month, allowing interested parties to get introduced to potential companions.

Cole said she is thrilled to be named an



Extraordinary Woman, especially because the nomination came from someone who adopted a dog from Lizzy's and also volunteers for the organization. "It means that other people understand my goals and understand my passion and appreciate the same thing," Cole said. "And I know the dogs appreciate it." People considering adoption need to make sure they have the time to care for a dog, and Lizzy's adoption application addresses specific concerns like what you'll do with the dog if you're traveling or moving, whether you live in a house or condo, and other factors central to ensuring the dog and caregiver are a good match.

Cole allows a one-week trial period to make sure the fit is good for everybody and does a follow-up visit to check that everything is working out.

"I don't think anybody should have to rush into it," Cole said. "This is a big commitment, but they add so much to your lives – older and younger dogs – they add a whole new dimension."

MISSY MCCULLOUGH

"I call Emancipet my dream come true because their goal is affordable vet care for everybody in this country by 2028," said McCullough, who's also one of the founders of Animal Trustees of Austin. The two organizations merged in 2015. "That's our bold goal, which means we've got a lot of work to do, but we're ready."

Last year, Emancipet provided veterinary services to 211,000 animals. McCullough has loved animals since childhood. She got her degree in fine arts and then special education and worked with children in a residential treatment center for 18 years, and then began volunteer work with animals. "I loved my work with the kids; they were just amazing, very, very rewarding," McCullough said. "But this is why I'm here – I really truly feel like this is why I'm on this Earth."

Through shared experiences, while working with animals, McCullough and 10 other women decided to start Animal Trustees of Austin in 1992.

"It was the first nonprofit, low-cost vet clinic in Austin, and the purpose we

opened for was to do spay/neuter at an affordable cost or free," McCullough said.

The group included a publisher and an attorney. With help from professionals in the vet care field, they found a building for the clinic.

"We always just figured out what the animals needed and did it," McCullough said. "And that group of people, they helped start it; they helped run it; they were the board of directors. And the decisions were always made about what's best for the animals."

As the years went on, the clinic began offering shots and heartworm treatment at a low cost and became so busy, the merger with Emancipet made perfect sense.

Emancipet, which shares in the mission to make preventative veterinary care affordable, currently has clinics in Central Texas, Houston and Philadelphia. In addition to spay/neuter procedures, Emancipet offers vaccines, microchips, and checkups. They can help with referrals for complicated surgical procedures.

"And we have three mobile clinics that travel all over Central Texas and do free shots and free spay/neuter for people that can't afford it, and it's just grown into this magnificent organization," McCullough said. McCullough credits Emancipet CEO Amy Mills with helping the organization thrive.

"It's been a partnership that the two of us have done now, and she is a magnificent woman and the reason that I'm still doing this work and that other people are still getting this help – and even more cities are going to get it because of her."

As Emancipet's director of Major Gifts, McCullough is grateful to animal advocates who generously donate, including Dana Dean, who submitted McCullough's nomination. They have known each other since McCullough's early work with Animal Trustees of Austin.

"The people that love animals, they just want to help in any way that they can, and that's how we keep going," McCullough said.

McCullough said she is thrilled and

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