

Wags to Riches

Best Nonprofit Organization

BY BRIDGET TURRELL
PHOTOS BY LEANN JONES



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Wags has no paid employees - just devoted volunteers. Top row from left: Kim Wertenberger, Stacy Mayne, Ron Krebs, Jaunda Krebs and Kristi Tabert. Bottom row from left: Donna Prime and Linda Evans. • Wags to Riches Founding Member Kim Wertenberger, left, and Board Treasurer Stacy Mayne hold two adorable puppies which are now with foster families, waiting for adoption. • Assessment Coordinator Linda Evans holds Freya, the mother of the puppies.



FREYA IS A CORGI-CHIHUAHUA MIX WHO JUST GAVE BIRTH TO A LITTER OF PUPPIES, and she's keeping a close watch on the volunteers holding her tiny pups. They're just days away from going home with foster families, and haven't even opened their eyes yet.

They don't know how lucky they are to have landed at "Wags to Riches" in Yakima. The animal rescue agency was just voted "Best Nonprofit Organization" in the Valley by the readers of the Yakima Herald-Republic. That's impressive for an organization that's only been around 10 years. Board Treasurer Stacy Mayne says when she heard about this honor, she felt "appreciative and delighted, like we're making a difference — and people are taking notice."

Wags to Riches has 50 to 70 volunteers at any given time, and none of them get paid. "We've repurposed our lives for these animals," says founding member Juanda Krebs. "I had a really good career in my life and I think I have a responsibility to give back to the community."

She and the other volunteers

foster cats and dogs while they're waiting for adoption, and work with veterinarians throughout the Valley to get medical care for animals that need it. But that's not all, Stacy says. "We're all about rescuing animals, but we're also about communicating with the community, getting out and doing programs."

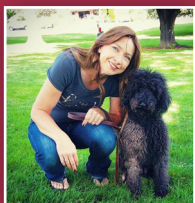
They have a scholarship program for veterinarians and vet techs at YVC and WSU. They have a "Hot Dogs" program, which raises money for special thermometers police officers use to test vehicle temperatures — and rescue animals which may be in distress in a hot car.

Juanda is proudest of the Senior Program — which helps aging people keep the pets that are so important for companionship and protection. "If you ever talk to a senior we've helped — they cry and it makes you cry and it's just the most special thing you can do for somebody," she says.

If you'd like to help, go to wagstorichesanimalrescue.com, to learn how you can adopt a pet, volunteer or foster. You can donate on GoFundMe or PayPal.

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