Passion, love of animals fueled Chris Cape's heart and soul

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Constantly rescuing needy dogs and puppies—and felines—often burns out the most dedicated rescuer.

Trust me, I know. I have been at this nonstop since 2010, and it only gets more difficult to see animals suffer. It never gets easier. And it's all human caused. Humans don't see the "butterfly effect" of the choices they make on behalf of their animals.

To put it in perspective, it's like the faucet that never shuts off; it's always gushing out dogs and cats in desperate need of help—in need of rescue.

It's dedicated folks like Christine Cape, 54, the former president of Blackhat Humane Society, who answer those calls for help. When dogs were rescued by her, it's like they hit the lottery with a nice home and warm bed being the prize.

Cape's light shined bright in the rescue world, and she often raced off into the far reaches of rural areas to pick up a dog in dire circumstances.

Getting those rescued dogs placed into permanent, loving homes was Cape's ultimate goal. Traveling at great length from Gallup to Durango, Colo., or Flagstaff, Ariz., to conduct what we

call in the rescue community a doggy "meet and greet" was part of her weekly routine.

However, on April 23, this avid rescuer's life ended abruptly in a head-on collision in Colorado, about six miles north of the New Mexico border on Colorado Highway 140. Her foster dog Bingo survived the wreck, and was recently adopted from the La Plata Humane Society in Durango.

The fateful trip also afforded Cape the opportunity to visit with her daughter Alysha. But, the mom to seven dogs had to get home to Gallup where her dogs, bulls, and other assortment of animals awaited her return.

Now those animals wait for rescue, after being safe and comfortable in Cape's loving care for years.

Cape and I go back some years.

When she resided in Sanders, Ariz., she was a special education teacher at Sanders Valley High School.

We would team up to catch puppies and momma dogs. We strategized on how to catch other strays roaming the Family Dollar or Mustang gas station areas.

We did our best to save those we could. Along this journey, we fought and argued as her heart was bigger than her house, and she took on way too many dogs. But we always came full circle—back to strategizing, talking about how we could best help animals in peril.

For some years, Cape frantically tried to rescue animals from a rural shelter. These animals faced euthanasia on the same day of their arrival. Rescuers had to scramble to get to the shelter before the end of the day to save these animals.

Cape was mostly successful, but agonized over the ones she had to leave behind. Cape's dedication grabbed the attention of a bigger rescue group and created a pipeline for those dogs and cats at high risk of euthanasia in our rural areas.

I can truly say a vibrant woman, a light in the rescue world, has been snuffed out prematurely.

And the problems in our rural areas continue.

It's mostly the seeming resistance to spay and neuter, as numerous folks in our area can't grasp the monumental overpopulation that shelters and rescues here grapple with daily.

Folks don't realize that one litter is too many, and giving away puppies and kittens only exacerbates the problem. It's a selfish act. Not spaying or neutering *your* dog/cat contributes to the vast overpopulation and eventually the offspring and/or unwanted momma dog becomes someone else's problem.

Cape fought hard to rescue animals. She gave her life for it. And was an ardent proponent of spay/neuter, vaccination, and proper dog and cat care. One day out of your dog or cat's life and your life, to get your pet fixed will drastically cut down on the overpopulation problem.

Let's put this in perspective, if you think it's okay to let your dog or cat have even just one litter, per the ASPCA:

"Dogs can breed twice a year with litters of 6 to 10 puppies. In just seven years, one unspayed female cat and her offspring can produce 420,000 kittens; one unspayed female dog and her offspring can produce 97,000 puppies."

Rest in peace Chris Cape. You will be missed. Those of us who got a chance to know you a little will miss your laugh, and your passion and zest for life.

Your legacy will live on in each person who answers the call to help animals in need.

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