



Nicky Ratliff

Great Readers, Great Leaders

We are delighted to feature book recommendations from Nicky Ratliff.

Nicky's Bio

Nicky Ratliff retired in December 2014 after 32 years of service as Executive Director of the Humane Society of Carroll County. We got a chance to talk to Nicky about her important work:

Q: What led you to your career?

I have always been interested in caring for animals. When I was a child in Monroe, GA, on my way to school I had to pass a chicken processing plant. One day a chicken was running away with a man chasing it. I dropped my books, grabbed the chicken and high-tailed it home. For "My first animal rescue," I rescued two chickens from the plant, Elvis and Isabella.

My first job caring for animals was at Preston Country Club for Pets, an exclusive boarding kennel in Columbia, MD. I called so often looking for a job that I wore down the owner Lois Preston. I learned a lot about grooming and boarding animals from her. Ms. Preston liked my work and when Montgomery County Humane Society called her looking for people to hire, she recommended me. I worked there for a few years before leaving to raise a family.

In 1978, while serving as the Treasurer of the Howard County Animal Welfare Society I saw the need for someone to look into the neglect of large animals in Howard County. At that time their Animal Control only handled dogs and cats. A few friends and I started Howard County Large Animal Rescue and I served as the Large Animal Investigator from 1978 - 80. While investigating a horse cruelty case, I called in the Department of Agriculture Investigators. Two members of their investigative team were on the Board of Directors of the Humane Society of Carroll County, which had just built a new shelter. I was interested in the work they were doing in Carroll County and in 1982 I applied and was hired as Executive Director.

Q: Looking back on your career here, what accomplishments make you the most proud and what has been most rewarding?

We handle on average 4,500 animals a year. It's heart wrenching work. We have an excellent staff and great volunteers. I am proud of the adoption rate and the return-to-owner rate we have in Carroll County. We continue to make strides in this area by using local television (the *Best Pals* program through the Community Media Center), online communication, community partnerships and our new mobile adoption unit. During my tenure, we have passed important legislation. In 1986, I worked with the County Attorney to write the county ordinance that requires people to spay and neuter adopted pets. More recently, we passed legislation to limit the number of hours per day dogs can be chained and to spell out the type of shelter they must have.

Despite the challenges, the opportunity to work with both people and animals while doing important work has been a dream job for me.

Q: Tell us about other work you have done to help animals.

I served as the president of the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, Inc. (PAWS) for 22 years. I am currently serving as the treasurer and legislative liaison. I have been instrumental in initiating, drafting and lobbying for the passage of many of Maryland's laws and numerous local laws relating to the care and treatment of animals over the past 32 years, including the prohibition of

private ownership of dangerous exotic animals. I co-wrote the State's "Dangerous Dog" law and initiated and worked to create the East Coast Animal Control Officers Academy, an 80-hour course held annually. I have assisted the Humane Society of the United States in evaluating numerous animal control programs around the country and I have served on the Board of Days End Farm Horse Rescue for 20 years.

Q: What do you hope to do in retirement?

I will continue my involvement with PAWS and with Days End Farm. I have family living throughout the U.S. and I'm looking forward to some road trips.

Nicky's Reads

The Adventures of Taxi Dog by Debra Barracca

A stray dog in New York City is adopted by a taxi driver, with whom he thereafter rides and shares adventures each day.

A Ball for Daisy by Chris Raschka

A wordless picture book showing the fun a dog has with her ball, and what happens when it is lost.

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer

George's mother is trying to teach him to bark like a dog, but he is making other sounds of other animals even though he is a dog.

Dog's Colorful Day by Emma Dodd

Dog always seems to be underfoot when something messy (and colorful) is spilt, giving readers 10 different spots on his white coat to count before the book's end and Dog's bath.

Fetch by Jorey Hurley

Illustrations and simple text follow a dog as it chases a ball at the beach.

Gaston by Kelly DiPucchio

A proper bulldog raised in a poodle family and a tough poodle raised in a bulldog family meet one day in the park.

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

When a white dog with black spots runs away from home, he gets so dirty his family doesn't recognize him as a black dog with white spots.

Norman, Speak! by Caroline Adderson

After a family adopts a dog from a local shelter, they cannot understand why he doesn't respond to commands, until a chance encounter in the dog park reveals that their new dog only understands Chinese.

The Pigeon Wants a Puppy! by Mo Willems

The pigeon really, really wants a puppy, but when a puppy arrives the pigeon changes its mind.

Trouper by Meg Kearney

Trouper, a three-legged dog, remembers his life as a stray, before he was adopted.

