



How a rescued puppy
inspired a

feature film on animal homelessness

by Judy Crozier

One evening, I was rushing to class at the University of Southern California when I saw a small puppy standing alone on the corner. I anxiously scanned the crowds at the crosswalk but no one appeared to be missing their pet. The frightened puppy looked up at each person as they walked by, begging with hopeful eyes for one of them to take him home.

Hitting my hazard lights, I jumped out of my truck and called, "Does this puppy belong to anyone?" Everyone ignored me and walked on. I stepped closer to the puppy, checked him for a collar, and scooped him up. He trembled anxiously as we returned to my truck. I reassured him and offered him my sandwich, which he gobbled up in two bites. I learned that if I dropped him at the shelter, he had a 98% chance of being killed. So the little American Staffordshire terrier/pit bull mix, who I named Puff Monster, came home with me.

That was the beginning of what would be an eye-opening journey into the world

of animal rescue in Los Angeles. From that moment, I couldn't stop seeing stray animals in the streets. "Somebody should do something," I kept saying. Then I realized that "somebody" could be me. I was completing my Masters degree in screenwriting, so why not write a film about animal homelessness? I did some research and found there had never been a fictional feature film about someone who rescues animals. I also learned there has never been a film set in a shelter, and no main character has even been an animal control officer or shelter worker.

Around the same time, a friend told me of an ABC news story about a girl named

Sherri who founded a group called Sparky and the Gang. They rescued animals from the streets of Los Angeles, rehabbed them, and adopted them out at local pet supply stores. When I saw Sherri's segment I was inspired to start writing, and loosely based my main character on her, a girl who virtually picks up every stray she comes across. Knowing the clock was ticking on thousands of homeless animals, I began shooting without a completed script or budget and with only \$20 in my pocket.

The filming process suffered some setbacks, from having to stop production to rescue stray or sick animals, to a terrible personal tragedy: one day, while I was out filming, an electrical fire claimed my home and the lives of Puff Monster and four other rescue animals. Despite my devastating grief, I carried on – it was because of Puff Monster that I began this journey, and it is because of all homeless animals that I didn't give up. We filmed in Wyoming, Los Angeles and Long Beach at the old animal shelter before it