

Hartford Courant

# CONNECTICUT

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"We're delighted. The Newman's Own Foundation has been a champion of our work for years."

**Our Companions CEO Susan Linker**



**FOR THE PRODUCTION** of a Christmas card, Lucy, a pit bull/Labrador mix, is photographed by Krystal Makowski, a canine cottage and facilities manager at Our Companions Animal Sanctuary in Ashford. Newman's Own Foundation has offered to donate \$100,000 to Our Companion's Capital Campaign if the group can raise about \$250,000 for their operational fund by Dec. 31.

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# TO THE RESCUE

Newman's Own Offers Challenge To Help Sanctuary Expand

By **STEVEN GOODE**  
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Since 2004, when Our Companions announced plans to build a domestic animal sanctuary in Ashford, the group has shown that it's up to a challenge.

The sanctuary became a reality in 2011 with its first animal "cottage" — a living space for the animals.

That was quickly followed by a second phase in which Our Companions raised \$650,000 for the construction of two more cottages for dogs and cats.

Then in 2013, the organization opened a 6,000-square-foot animal rescue facility in Manchester where Our Companions trains volunteers and offers classes aimed at helping pets and their owners stay together.

The group's latest challenge, issued by the Newman's Own Foundation, will help Our Companions achieve its next goal of adding four more cottages, at a cost of about \$1 million, in Ashford.

Newman's Own has pledged to donate \$100,000 toward the project



**KRYSTAL MAKOSKI**, a canine cottage and facilities manager with Our Companions, plays with Jasper, a St. Bernard available for adoption.

if Our Companions can raise the last \$250,000 toward its \$800,000 operating budget by Dec. 31.

"We're delighted," Our Companions CEO Susan Linker said. "The Newman's Own Foundation has

been a champion of our work for years."

Newman's Own has provided more than \$210,000 in grants to Our

**PETS, B3**

## Pets

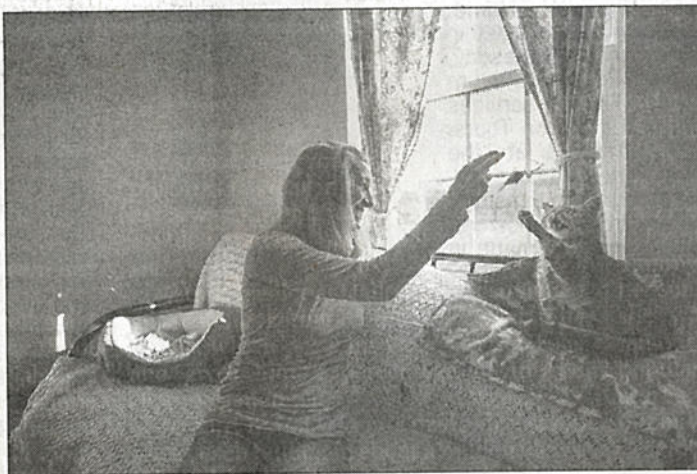
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Companions since 2005, mostly in the form of program support — the direct care of rescued animals.

Linker, who founded the organization and ran it out of her Bloomfield home for several years, said she is optimistic that Our Companions will be up to the challenge again.

"We're a little over \$600,000 now, and we have a month to go, but I feel confident because of the way our funders have responded so far," she said.

Jan Schaefer, communications director for Newman's Own, said the foundation has been supportive of Our Companions because it serves a vulnerable population that can't



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**CHRISTINE PENNEY**, a caretaker at Our Companions, plays with Mason, a rescue cat born without hind legs. "He has a disability and doesn't know it. He's very happy and gets around very well," Penney said.

advocate for itself.

"We find that by doing this [offering a challenge], it encour-

ages others to get involved," she said.

The animal sanctuary cur-

rently has two single level dog cottages that house four to six dogs each and one two-level cat cottage that is home to about 20 cats.

Linker said the sanctuary is not a high-volume rescue or shelter.

"We offer individual care with a goal of rehabilitation and adoption," Linker said. Animals who don't find new homes are able to live out their lives at the sanctuary.

This year the organization has found homes for 127 pets, including 32 from the sanctuary, she said.

Linker said they hope to break ground on the next phase in the spring or summer.

Donations may be made online at ourcompanions.org or mailed to Our Companions, 34 Sanrico Drive, Manchester CT, 06042.