

Nonprofit is unchaining dogs, one at a time

By Jodi Schneider McNamee
Correspondent

It all started with a dog named Chopper, who had been unhappily chained up in his owner's backyard in Portland for six long years.

A group of volunteers led by Kelly Peterson, Senior Vice President of State Affairs for The Humane Society of the United States, noticed the chained dog.

Chopper's luck changed in a single afternoon.

Peterson and another volunteer approached Chopper's owner with an unusual offer: A group of volunteers, she told him, would come in for four hours on a Saturday and build a fence for Chopper. He agreed and the first-ever project for "Fences For Fido," founded by Peterson, was born.

Fences For Fido changes the life of dogs and families by removing chains and building fences. The nonprofit volunteer organization builds fences free of charge for families who keep their dogs on chains, tethers, and in small enclosures.

The group also provides a new insulated dog house for each dog, spay/neuter and vaccinations for the animal if needed. All free of charge.

La Donna Sullivan, volunteer director of the Central Oregon Crew, began her journey with Fences For Fido almost at its conception in Portland nearly eight years

ago.

"A friend of mine told me about the organization and said I'd really like it, knowing my passion for animals," Sullivan said. "We drove to Salem and built a fence which freed a chained dog. I fell in love with the whole idea of improving the quality of life for dogs, and never looked back."

Fences For Fido began in Portland, expanded to Salem, Southwest Washington, the coastal area and Central Oregon. Sullivan, co-chair on the board of directors, moved to Bend three years ago to kick-start the Central Oregon group for the organization.

“ Anyone can request a fence, for yourself or for anyone you see that has a chained dog. ... Everything is confidential. — La Donna Sullivan

"We saw a need for Fences For Fido in Central Oregon. Several of us would drive over here and build fences for those dogs in need of them. And in October 2013 I moved over here and we started our crew," Sullivan said.

Sullivan participates in outreach, works on the crew, and serves as the lead for the builds. She also organizes

spay/ neuter appointments for the dogs.

The organization's biggest question is how to know where all the chained dogs are.

"People are finding out about our organization," Sullivan explained. "And when someone spies a chained dog, they go to our website and put in a request for a fence. Anyone can request a fence, for yourself or for anyone you see that has a chained dog. All we need is the address. Everything is confidential. You could be a real estate agent, a police officer, or a mail carrier. Our policy is that we don't judge the families."

"Our volunteer outreach coordinators actually knock on the person's door who has a chained dog. Then we talk directly to the owners about providing a fence."

The outreach coordinators do a walkthrough for the dog's family to see where the dog lives outside. Fences For Fido sets up a post-build and a fence-build.

The volunteer outreach coordinators always return to see how the dog is doing. They check on the fence and follow up with the families.

Each month Fences For Fido meets up with Bend Spay & Neuter Project, Furry Friends Foundation, and a few of the shelters in the area.

"As a group we are trying to better the community by partnering with each other,"



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

A fence can get a dog off a tether.

Sullivan said.

Fences For Fido is now committed to putting four portable fences up per month with insulated dog houses for Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

The reservation is an area of over 1,000 square miles in north-central Oregon.

"They don't have a shelter system, so we are partnering up with Bend Spay & Neuter and two shelters to help with the overpopulation of dogs," Sullivan added.

Bend Spay & Neuter partners with Fences For Fido when they have a need for spay/neuter during a fence build in Central Oregon.

Kiki Dolson, founder of Furry Friends Foundation in Sisters, met with Sullivan at one of the monthly meetings.

"It happens too often, a dog wanders, and with fencing not affordable, owners feel they have no choice but to chain their dog," Dolson said. "That's where Fences For

Fido steps in, and that fence becomes a reality. The great thing is anyone can report a need. You see a chained or tied dog, notify Fences For Fido and it's all confidential.

"The first thing I noticed about volunteer director La Donna Sullivan was her approachable and positive personality. She is a person that follows through and gets things done. I am so pleased with our new partnership, and want to thank Fences For Fido for their recent donation of much-needed food to the Furry Friends pet-food bank.

"By aiding pets one family at a time, our combined services will leave more in the family budget for other necessities, thus improving the quality of life for both family and pet.

"I am really looking forward to hearing about the first build in the Sisters area," Dolson added.

For more information visit www.fencesforfido.org.

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Fences for Fido is an award-winning, nonprofit that **builds fences free of charge** for families who keep their dogs on chains, tethers, or in small enclosures.

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- Spay/neuter services




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