



Betty Kaiser

Betty Kaiser's Chatterbox

At U.S.-Mexico border: The needy, the helpers and the guards

Another nurse from Bellingham, Wash., joined them.

Upon arrival at the clinic on Jan. 13, they were put to work immediately. Buses arrive daily from the ICE detention facility with several hundred refugees who have been released to enter the country.

Now, they are greeted by the volunteers with smiles and given help in connecting with their U.S. sponsors, a hot meal, warm showers and bathrooms, beds, clothing, shoes, medical help, phone services and safety courses.

Chris says, "Most of them are headed east. They stay for a day or two before continuing on their journey. People who felt especially sick came right away to the clinic for medical help. There was usually a surge of children and adults needing our help in the afternoon and into the evening. We would go to bed and the next morning there was a line again.

We took care of everything from minor colds to bruises, scrapes, headaches, stomach aches, athletes' foot and occasionally more serious illnesses. People with life threatening problems are sent to the local hospital ER.

"They have so much hope," she says. "Even the ones with ankle monitors who would likely be sent back to the dangerous situations they are trying to escape. I have met and worked with similar families here in Oregon. They are hardworking, kind, hopeful. They have strong family values, are attentive to their children. So happy to be here.

"Now, having worked in Texas, I have a new respect for their struggles."

The volunteers occasionally had opportunities to take a break around lunch time to learn firsthand about the border situation.

"One day we visited La

Posada, a place where Catholic nuns provide longer term housing and support for refugees that don't have an immediate place to go.

Another time we visited a 19th century chapel that will be torn down if the wall is built. Then, the next group would arrive, and the work would start again until the early evening."

Chris' stories about the common humanity of the people she encountered are heart-warming. There were the needy, the helpers and the guards. The needy, of course, were the most obvious. There was a 12-year-old boy, separated (and later united) with his father on a truck where people were killed crossing the border. Another boy had an infected leg from the wreck.

A woman who was 6-1/2 months pregnant fell in the Rio Grande River and was tossed about by the current. She was worried about her baby.

Chris got out her stethoscope and they both laughed out loud as they heard the baby's heartbeat. There were tears of happiness.

People from all walks of life come to help. There are clothes to be sorted, floors to be mopped, meals to be prepared and cleaning of all kinds to be done. A group of Mennonite men and women come regularly and prepare the soup of the day.

A local church group comes often as does a church from Iowa. A Facebook group helps people in the McAllen area to donate pizza dinners to the Respite Center.

One day, Chris observed some official looking men with clipboards watching the children play. She was suspicious. Turns out they were sketching plans to build a playground.

Kindness abounds.

And then there was an hour-long discussion with a border

guard. The government was shut down, but this man was working without a paycheck for his family.

Chris began their conversation by thanking him.

The guard's response was, "If I was not working, people would die. I could not live with myself if that happened."

So, what can we do? These were legal immigrants. Not illegals. They had a destination. Still, they were needy. Getting from their country to ours is not easy even when they've done the paperwork.

Of course, the easiest way to help is by direct donations to organizations like the Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande.

Advocating for just treatment of the immigrants is another way to help. Sometimes government needs a little nudge to tell them that what they're doing is kinda crazy.

Here's an example from Chris:

"When people cross the border and turn themselves into the border patrol, they are sent to ICE detention. Their shoelaces are removed and taken away. Everyone needs a new pair of shoelaces when they arrive at the Center.

"One of the volunteers tried to get the shoelaces back from ICE, but so far, 'NO' is the answer. There may be a logical reason for this, but to have them replaced days later by donations and volunteers seems pretty inefficient."

Betty says, "That's government for you."

Many thanks to Chris for sharing her story and to all who care for these newcomers with open minds, hearts and expertise.

God bless them all and the USA!

Contact Betty Kaiser's Chatterbox at 942-1317 or email bchatty@bettykaiser.com

Pet tips 'n' Tales

By Mary Ellen
"Angel Scribe"



Cat 'Kneads' to save lives

The following two stories illustrate pets' life-saving abilities:

Shanon had my full attention when she asked if I knew how her shelter-rescue cat, Lucy, saved her life.

"Seven years ago, my electric lawn mower's large battery was rechargeable," said Shanon. "I put the monster on my vinyl bedroom floor and plugged it into the electrical outlet."

Shanon said she then purr-omptly forgot about it, went out, came home late and went straight to bed. She had recently begun sharing her room with her then eight-year-old rescue-tabby kitty, Lucy, and closed the door at night.

"Well, at 2 a.m., Lucy began kneading my shoulder in a very annoying manner," said Shanon. "I kept pushing her away, but she wouldn't leave me alone until I was fully



Lucy (right), saved the lives of her family including her twin-brother, Desi (left.)

awake. I then noticed an acrid burning smell coming from outside. I got up and closed the windows to stop any further smoke from entering my home. I climbed back into bed and fell right asleep."

Once again, Lucy started kneading Shanon again, only this time it was with more urgency.

"She was dig, dig, digging into my shoulder. I roused myself to shoo her away and that's when I realized the acrid smell was stronger, overwhelming and inside," Shanon said. "Then it hit me! The battery plugged in on the floor!"

Shanon jumped out of bed, opened the bedroom window and went to the battery, which was red hot. She pulled the plug and fetched her oven-mitts but didn't know what to do with a smolderingly-dangerous battery that was melting the floor.

"I retrieved a cookie sheet, lifted the battery on to it, carried it outside and slid the smoking thing off onto the cement driveway," Shanon recalled.

She returned to her smoke-filled home, turned on bathroom and oven fans and opened all her windows and doors to clear the smell. She then went over to Lucy Lu, picked her up and gave her what Shanon described as "the biggest hugs ever!"

"Lucy quite possibly saved all our lives including my mother, our two Yorkies and her brother, Desi," said Shanon. "My smoke detector didn't come on, but Lucy's nose did."

Another time, Shanon's neighbor had a mouse in her house, so she carried Desi and Lucy over to her neighbor's to go to work.

"They loved the adventure," said Shanon. "It was a win-win situation for everyone but the mouse. The cats are now purr-fessional rodent-ridders. When I go on holidays they will be comfortable staying with their 'Auntie.' We both wish we had thought of this before!"

Tips 'n' Tales reader Ellen, who is in her late 70s, said, "If it were it not for my dog, Mimi, there are days that I simply couldn't face getting up in the morning! She's a life saver who constantly lifts me out of loneliness and depression. One day, as I was walking her (or rather, she was walking me) she stopped to 'water the grass' when a man paused to talk to her.

"Mimi has this odd growling-bark-talk, so the confused man took a step back. I explained, 'Look at her tail, it is happily wagging. She isn't barking, she is talking to you!' He bent back down to pet her and said that he believed that 'Each busy day, one must stop and smell the roses. Today, Mimi is my rose.'"

Ellen said it felt good interacting with a paws-itive stranger; and by the smile on his face, she said it looked like Mimi had also lifted his spirit. "Having a dog brightens my world," said Ellen.

TIPS:

"Thank you, Mary Ellen, for my first Tips 'n' Tales article 'Shanon's Shadow,' written about my black cat," said Shanon. "It is a real keepsake. His story has been enjoyed by everyone I shared it with. Thank you for forwarding me all his fun fan mail and paws-itive responses from your readers to his article. I plan to read Shadow his fan mail when he comes home from his outside rounds today."

Share your fun, amazing or crazing pet tips and tales at angelscribe@msn.com or Follow Pet Tips 'n' Tales on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PetTipsandTales. Adopt loving pets online at www.PetFinder.com. For spay or neutering, call the Humane Society at 541-942-2789.

Opal Center to present Pulitzer Prize-winning play

The Opal Center for Arts and Education, Cottage Grove's Black Box Theater, will present "night, Mother," the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Marsha Norman. Nominated for four Tony awards and winner of the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, "night, Mother" is a powerful

play about contemporary life and what gives it — or fails to give it — meaning.

Director and actor Nikki Pagniano announced there will be a two-week run of the rarely produced drama, which takes on the very serious topic of suicide. True to life, the story

is filled with humor and human compassion, while also making a disturbing statement about responsibility and courage.

Featuring actors Eliza Roaring Springs and Elizabeth Peterson, "night, Mother" is a story about a mother and daughter, and about taking control of one's life. The play opens on just another Saturday night in the home of Thelma and her grown daughter, Jessie, who makes a startling announcement which propels the two women into a

life-changing conversation of uncompromising honesty.

The Opal Center, 513 E. Main St., is based in the historic Lawson Building in downtown Cottage Grove.

The play will be performed March 1, 2, 8 and 9 at 8 p.m., with matinees on March 3 and 10 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$12 and are available online at opalcenter.org or next door to the theater at the Crafty Mercantile, 517 E. Main St. in Cottage Grove.

6-day weather forecast

FRIDAY 46° 28° Cloudy	SATURDAY 49° 26° Sunny
SUNDAY 47° 27° Sunny	MONDAY 46° 37° Sunny
TUESDAY 47° 35° Rain	WEDNESDAY 45° 36° Rain

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