

THERESA STRADER, 48
Black Forest, Colo.



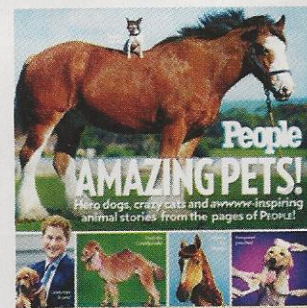
Strader (with friends) says her volunteers visit the homes of every potential adopter. "We go through a lot for these dogs, so we don't just hand them out."

SHE RESCUES PUPPY-MILL DOGS

Though a pediatric nurse by profession, Theresa Strader has always been an animal lover, and she started volunteering at shelters when she was just 10. In 2007 she heard about 561 dogs going up for auction when a large-scale breeder—a "puppy mill"—was going out of business. "I said, 'I'm set up to take care of two or three of them.'" But her heart sank when she arrived. "The first thing that hits you is the smell," Strader recalls. "Then you are overwhelmed by the emotion of seeing dogs live like that, in cages, frantic. These were dogs who never felt sunshine on them." She ended up going home with 13 of them.

After that Strader founded the nonprofit National Mill Dog Rescue, which has since housed, rehabilitated or found homes for more than 6,800 dogs, from poodles to pugs and Cavaliers to Chihuahuas. At her 160-acre facility, Strader and a team of 1,400 volunteers plus a small paid veterinary staff "take immaculate care of every single dog. We don't cherry-pick," she says. "We take everybody."

Sherrie Lidderdale, who adopted a Welsh corgi from Strader, says, "Most people who love animals know about Theresa and all of the work that she does. It's just so cool when one single individual can make such a huge difference." —SYDNEY BERGER



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