

How Your Pet's Endless Love Can Teach You Something New

According to our newest Game Changer, Sylvia Melendez, Rosie opened a part of her heart that she didn't know existed. After taking in and caring for the abandoned 6-month-old pup, Sylvia discovered what she was destined to do - to teach others how to learn from the animals in their lives.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Sylvia Melendez was nominated for a Healthy Pets Game Changer Award by Marie G.
- She discovered her love for fostering animals when an abandoned Great Dane named Rosie landed on her doorstep
- For the last five years, Sylvia has been fostering pets in her home and working with rescue groups that focus on different kinds of pets and different breeds
- Fostering Rosie opened Sylvia's heart to working with animals — not only dogs but cats and other pets as well
- She was also inspired to open her own business, a pet boarding and daycare service called Wagging Tails & Loving Paws that she runs out of her home in Virginia

Sylvia Melendez, nominated for a Healthy Pets Game Changer Award by Marie G., discovered her love for fostering animals when an abandoned Great Dane landed on her doorstep. The dog, who came to be named Rosie, was just 6 months old.

"We definitely put in a lot of time, effort and love, and found her a forever home when she was almost a year old. That work definitely opened our hearts a lot, and I think she found us instead of us finding her," Sylvia said.

Fostering Rosie opened Sylvia's heart to working with animals — not only dogs but cats and other pets as well. She was also inspired to open her own business, a pet boarding and daycare service called Wagging Tails & Loving Paws that she runs out of her home in Virginia.

Discovering Foster and Rescue of Animals in Need

After Rosie, Sylvia says, "many, many other people have called us to get information about us fostering or how they can get information about ... fostering, rescuing or how to adopt other pets." For the last five years, Sylvia has been working with rescue groups that focus on different kinds of pets and different breeds. Then she passes along that information to those looking for fosters or rescues — and always keeps an open door.

"I always refer them to a specific place or person that can help them," Sylvia says. "I don't close my heart or arms to a foster. I'm always open to any that come to my home. I always say, and always will say, that Rosie opened a very part of my heart that I didn't know existed.

I didn't know anything about rescue until she came into our life. And we're always in communication with the family that has her right now, and she always will be part of us and part of our lives." She continues:

"When Rosie came to us, she was very underweight ... We took her back to the vet, we spayed her. She was very fearful of humans. She was very fearful of men. So we had a few families that came to see her hoping that they could adopt her.

And I was very careful with people, of course, being a Great Dane, and everybody wanted her. And I was like, 'You have to be careful and she's not going to hurt anybody. I just want a good home for her and I'm going to wait whatever time I need to ensure that she's going to a good home.'

It was very important for me. And I remember the family that has her now, the first time we met and the lady came with her husband ... Rosie ran to her husband, and that was a sign for me because she was very fearful of men.

So when she ran to this guy, I was like, 'OK, she's ready.' And he calls her his valentine ... we get pictures of them together and she's being treated as a queen. And that's exactly what I wanted for her. I would not have it any other way."

Learning From the Animals in Your Life

Sylvia is passionate about not only homeless rescues but also helping people in her community by pet sitting and pet daycare. Every animal, she believes, teaches us something new:

"I haven't closed my heart entirely for rescues. Most of my clients have rescue pets that I care for, and each one of them teaches me something different. No pets are alike. Each one of them has something to give me and to give my clients. I feel like there are so many of them out there looking for love, looking to change our lives.

We feel sometimes that we are changing them, their life, but they're changing ours as well ... it's like loyalty, it's like endless love. We can have many things in life, but the love of a pet, it's unmeasurable. Definitely."

Sylvia also wants the world to know that we can each make a difference by volunteering to help the animals around us:

"I would like for each person to think about volunteering. It doesn't have to be in your home. In my case, I had the opportunity to bring pets into my home and to give my time. But if you have time to volunteer to a rescue, or just to bring ... diapers for dogs or blankets, or just to go for an hour or two, volunteer your time to a rescue or foster for a weekend ... they will be grateful ...

We change their life one day at a time, one minute at time. They need us. We have a voice. They don't. So we definitely are their voice. We have to be the voice for the voiceless. And I'm a pet advocate. We have to be an advocate for the pets.

They expect for us to love them, to give them the best we can. And I think we owe them as much as they give us love and they don't expect anything in return, we can do better. We definitely can do something for them."

If you'd like to learn more about Sylvia and Wagging Tails & Loving Paws, you can find her via social media at **[facebook.com/WaggingTailsLovinPaws](https://www.facebook.com/WaggingTailsLovinPaws)**.¹

Sources and References

¹ [Facebook, Wagging Tails & Loving Paws](#)
