



Cathy Kangas and Arthur Benjamin (first and second from right) join Sheila Schaffer (far left) and others in welcoming Liberty, Freedom, and Charlie Bear to the U.S.

HOME FREE

Pair helps reunite soldiers with Afghan strays

Stationed in Afghanistan last year, Army National Guard specialist Sheila Schaffer grappled with the stress of escaping enemy gunfire and exploding mortar shells, exacerbated by the depressing sight of dogs scrounging for scraps outside the compound perimeter. Some had missing ears and tails, signs of the popular regional blood sport of dogfighting.

Some dogs would crawl through the base's razor wire to seek refuge under Schaffer's guard tower. When one gave birth to seven puppies under the medic's hut, Schaffer found respite caring for the canine family. She could have lost her paycheck: Military regulations forbid soldiers

from befriending strays in combat regions. Orders had been issued to shoot the dogs, and locals employed on the base often bullied them.

Soon Schaffer was put in touch with a group reuniting soldiers and Afghan strays. Within a week, Delta and her pups were headed west to Kabul.

Delta was eventually sent to Schaffer's parents in the U.S., but because of the expense of transport—about \$4,000 per dog—most of her puppies remained in Kabul. Then in November, HSUS supporters Cathy Kangas and Arthur Benjamin helped bring the dogs home as part of a large-scale reunion. With donated airfare

from American Airlines, 14 dogs and one cat traveled from Kabul to the U.S.

"When we rolled the cages out and opened the doors, those dogs flew at their adopted owner and just kissed and licked them," remembers Kangas. "... I saw big, burly, 6-foot-8 Marines fall to the floor and sob and just hug that dog like it was the love of their life."

Schaffer and her battle buddy Penny Herold were there to greet three of Delta's puppies. Charlie Bear now lives with Schaffer in Iowa—her parents couldn't part with Delta. Herold adopted Liberty, and another soldier is caring for Freedom, now known as Meena. In early March, the rest followed.

— *Ruthanne Johnson*

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Arthur Benjamin and Cathy Kangas

▶ **DOGGED COMPASSION:** Philanthropist and HSUS National Council member Arthur Benjamin founded American Dog Rescue after witnessing on TV the flood of pets left behind after Hurricane Katrina, and now he is never without foster dogs. "I do better with a dog by my side than on my own," he says. Benjamin is also helping prison programs train service dogs for veterans with disabilities. He and Kangas were major financial supporters of The HSUS's To the Rescue benefit last year in New York, which raised money for the Animal Rescue Team.

▶ **ON A MISSION:** Between traveling the world and promoting her luxury skin care line, Cathy Kangas can usually be found helping animals. A member of The HSUS's National Council—an advisory body to the board and executive staff—and Equine Leadership Council, Kangas has traveled to Canada's ice floes with an HSUS crew to document the mass seal hunt. While on a trip to St. Martin, she approached the tourism minister about the island's stray dogs. "In an hour's meeting, I got 100,000 euros out of him, and we built a shelter and have a mini ambulance and we have been able to do spaying and neutering."