

# Mike Kerr and Animal Outreaches – *Making a difference*

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY HILETTE HATTING



**W**e often hear people say that angels walk among us, which is a difficult concept to comprehend as they're not present in a physical form. However, if that is how you feel about it then you obviously have not met Mike Kerr.

Mike has a soft demeanour and seems like an average kind of guy upon first meeting him. Yet inside this remarkable person burns a fire. He has the unstoppable urge to help everyone and everything.

There is a well-known saying about charity beginning at home and Mike is living proof of how true this is. He has a cottage on his property

that he has wanted to renovate for quite a while, but some of his animals moved in there. He doesn't have the heart to put his tenants out in the yard, so now they are living a cosy life in their own little cottage.

## **A ROAD PAVED WITH LOVE**

Mike Kerr established Animal Outreaches in 2009, prior to which he spent a full 12 years assisting other non-profit organisations. One would imagine that he'd be well known, yet not everyone knows about all the wonderful things





that this man has done for all things breathing. With his humble, down-to-earth disposition he doesn't like personal publicity.

The focus of Animal Outreaches is the sterilisation of animals, outreaches for rescues, education and assisting certain impoverished communities. This NPO is run solely by a group of dedicated, loyal and caring volunteers who give tirelessly to those in need.

The outreaches take place twice a week, in which volunteers go into the townships and dip, deworm, inoculate and treat animals for minor ailments. Any animal that requires TLC or veterinary attention is transported back to Port Elizabeth, where they are rehabilitated and possibly re-homed if necessary.

Animal Outreaches currently services 30 townships in the Port Elizabeth, Kirkwood and Addo regions. For the period March 2013 to February 2014, they treated 7,445 animals in the townships, informal settlements and squatter camps, and during the same period they sterilised 266 township animals. At least 20 animals from townships are sterilised monthly through this organisation.

## GIVING BACK

Animal Outreaches' love and care goes much further than just the animals. Although the four-legged furies are the main objective, they also hand out donated clothing, shoes, bedding, blankets, cushions, towels and kitchenware – to name but a few items – to poor communities in townships and squatter camps.

Education and sterilisation are two very important words and this

organisation strives to bring this point across where it matters most. While they are on outreaches, the team also spends time educating pet owners and non-pet owners about the importance of looking after one's pet and about sterilisation. They teach the children how to take proper care of their pets from a very young age. For them it is vital to educate the next generation with regards to responsible pet ownership since the children from the townships are exposed to terrible things on a daily basis. Animal Outreaches, together with the Animal Anti-Cruelty League, organises groups of children to go to the shelter so that they can receive more education and also interact with a variety of animals.

## FINDING FOREVER HOMES

The organisation has quite a variety of rescue animals on its property, including 80 dogs, 87 cats, chickens, pigs, horses and even a donkey. Every rescue dog has a remarkable story. Two that especially stand out are Suzie and Baba.

Mike was on an outreach in Klipplaat when a man who owned two Collies asked if Mike and his team could take Baba, a black and white Cross Border Collie. Her mother had no milk and she was a mere two days old. Mike took her and she stayed with him for three years on his private property where he nursed and raised her. Today, Baba is still in the shelter, patiently waiting for her forever



home. She holds a very special place in Mike's heart.

Suzie was found in Patterson township on an outreach. The team was walking from shack to shack when they heard strange sounds emanating from beneath a piece of tin. They proceeded to find four puppies in a hole in the ground under the tin. The owner couldn't afford to look after the dogs and asked Mike to take the mother and her four puppies. Today, Suzie is the only one left waiting for her forever home since her brothers and sisters have, happily, subsequently found homes.

## TOUCHING LIVES

Mike and his team go into dangerous situations and help those in need, whether it's a chicken or a donkey, a dog or a cat – they care and they teach other people how to care too.

Mike's daughter, Jen Borriero, has this to say about her father: "My Dad is not only my hero but a hero to many. Years back, before this all began, I would never have imagined that he would spend his "downtime" trundling around rural villages and dangerous squatter camps caring for animals in need – he says this is his stress relief!"

Animal Outreaches' motto is "Touching Lives Constantly", and this is exactly what they do!

## WHAT YOU CAN DO...

Should you wish to assist Animal Outreaches, please contact Mike Kerr on 082 654 9124 or e-mail him at [kerrs@telkomsa.net](mailto:kerrs@telkomsa.net)

Banking Details – Standard Bank of SA Limited, Cheque Account Number 080177182, Port Elizabeth Branch – Code 050017. 