

# suburban life

**SUPER-  
WOMEN**  
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A photograph of three women standing in a grassy field with trees in the background. The woman on the left is wearing a white vest over a black long-sleeved shirt and purple pants, holding a large tan and white bulldog. The woman in the middle is wearing a black t-shirt and black pants, holding a small black and white dog and a small tan pug. The woman on the right is wearing a green dress and a white cardigan, holding a small black and white dog. All three women are smiling.

**East Bradford Veterinary  
Hospital, All 4 Paws Rescue,  
and Senior Dog Haven &  
Hospice** collaborate to give  
at-risk, unwanted, or forgotten  
animals a second chance  
at happiness.

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# A New Leash on Life



Dr. Meghan McGrath of East Bradford Veterinary Hospital

East Bradford Veterinary Hospital, All 4 Paws Rescue, and Senior Dog Haven & Hospice collaborate to give at-risk, unwanted, or forgotten animals a second chance at happiness.

by **Bill Donahue**  
photos by **Nina Lea Photography**

**A**NIMALS HAVE A TREMENDOUS CAPACITY TO LOVE, EVEN AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO HORRORS MOST PEOPLE COULD NOT IMAGINE. Members of the local rescue community have seen enough trauma and tragedy to test the resolve of even the strongest individual, but they continue their tireless work to give those animals a second chance at a healthy, happy life.

Meghan McGrath, V.M.D.—call her “Dr. Meg”—is the owner and medical director of East Bradford Veterinary Hospital, based in West Chester. She opened East Bradford Veterinary Hospital in a Craftsman-style house in West Chester with the goal of being “a hometown doctor that offers 2022 medicine.” Rescue has been central to her practice since it opened its doors in 2019.

“People who do rescue deserve a huge amount of admiration,” Dr. Meg says. “Most people couldn’t handle one of the horror stories these people see and hear on a daily basis, and they just



Kristen Geddes of All 4 Paws Rescue



Gail Gallagher of Senior Dog Haven & Hospice

keep going. They always put the animals first—constant compassion. The need is so great, with so many animals out there in chronic need of rescuing and fixing, and they never stop.”

Dr. Meg has forged close partnerships with several locally based rescue organizations, including All 4 Paws Rescue and Senior Dog Haven & Hospice Inc. She makes herself and other members of the practice “very available” to these nonprofits, and goes to great lengths to make the cost of treatment accessible and affordable.

“For both organizations, if they have a dog with nowhere to go, we’ll say, ‘Bring them over,’” she says. “I’m comfortable with difficult spays and extreme dental cases, but some of the dogs require more extensive surgeries. We have a boarded surgeon come in at a significant discount for the rescue organizations. If there’s something we’re not able to do in house, we will outsource it to one of our partners.”

### TURNING THE TIDE

Most people who feel inspired to help animals spark their interest at a young age. Kristen Geddes was just a girl—no more than five or six years old—when her family took in Patches, a guinea pig that another family no longer wanted. To her, the thought of an animal being without a loving home was “heart-breaking.”

Once Geddes entered the work force, she spent 10 years as a corporate event planner with expertise in advertising and marketing, but her interest in helping animals never faded. She started volunteering at a local shelter, and the experience compelled her to found her own nonprofit enterprise, All 4 Paws Rescue, in 2009. Based in Malvern, the foster-based organization offers rescue, rehabilitation, and sanctuary for animals in need. All 4 Paws has taken in animals of almost every sort—horses, pigs, parrots, chickens, tortoises, sheep, etc.—yet dogs are its primary focus.

“We started off with a few dogs a month, which became a few dogs a week, and now we’re taking 150 to 200 dogs a month,” Geddes says. “Since we started, we have rescued 14,144 animals—more than 14,000 lives that would have been lost. People don’t have a concept of how many animals need help. We get hundreds of requests a day.”

While All 4 Paws used to acquire most of its dogs from high-kill shelters, Geddes has been working hard to develop relation-

ships within the puppy-mill community. Now, the owners of many commercial breeding kennels call her when they have an animal they think has outlived its usefulness. “These are dogs we can’t say no to,” she adds. “If we don’t take them, I know what will happen to them.”

Most people would be surprised at the kinds of dogs organizations like hers take in, including purebreds, hypoallergenic breeds, and other animals considered “in demand.” For anyone interested in adopting or fostering a certain breed, Geddes offers this advice: “If you’re patient, we’ll find it.”

Geddes’s relationship with East Bradford Veterinary Hospital has been vital to the rescue’s survival.

“Dr. Meg is all about the animals, and that’s exactly how we are,” she says, adding that Dr. Meg has adopted several dogs through All 4 Paws. “Veterinary care for our animals is extensive and expensive, and I trust her with the care of our animals. It has been an amazing partnership.”

Much like Geddes, Gail Gallagher came into the rescue community as a volunteer with a soft spot for senior and special-needs dogs. As co-chair of Senior Dog Haven & Hospice, she plays a significant role in helping older dogs that have been abandoned when they have the greatest need for comfort, companionship, and care. Many of these dogs are surrendered by their owners, either because of illness, advanced age, or financial burden.

Senior Dog Haven & Hospice relies heavily on an extensive network of volunteers and fosters. Now celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the Delaware-based nonprofit has saved more than 1,000 senior dogs through its adoption program and cared for approximately 300 dogs through its hospice program. In addition, a financial assistance program for people of limited financial means has helped keep a “couple hundred” animals in their homes and out of shelters.

“We take cancer patients, dogs with undiagnosed diabetes, all kinds of problems,” says Gallagher, who has a full-time job as a critical care nurse. “All of our dogs need extensive medical care, and most have to go through two or three surgeries before they are deemed well. We spay or neuter close to 80 percent of our intakes. Sometimes they have a respiratory illness or need to put on weight or require extensive dental care to be healthy enough to be adoptable.”

Senior Dog Haven & Hospice has used East Bradford Veterinary Hospital as its primary

vetting partner for the past four years. The relationship began with an emergent call.

“We had a large shepherd that had lived on a chain all its life, and it needed extensive vetting,” Gallagher recalls. “Another partner of ours was closed, so we called East Bradford, who didn’t really know us at the time. We said, ‘We have a dog that needs to be urgently seen,’ and [Dr. Meg] said, ‘OK, bring him over.’ She’s done amazing work for us ever since, and it’s been a great collaboration.”

Rescue requires great personal sacrifice, even on its best days, but all three of these women go above and beyond to give at-risk or forgotten animals a second chance. Dr. Meg admits that the work can take an emotional toll, but she says the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of animals that cannot help themselves makes her “feel alive.”

“For me, rescue is the heart of what we do here,” she adds. “I personally have gone out to puppy mills and seen animals in cases of hard neglect and hoarding situations. These are innocent beings, and they have nothing but love for humans. It’s so strange to watch an animal come from a situation where a human has hurt or abused it and after a very short time open up and trust us again. We’re turning the tide of what someone did wrong.” ■

“Rescue is the heart of what we do.”

**Rescue organizations** such as All 4 Paws Rescue and Senior Dog Haven & Hospice need help now more than ever.

Donating to these organizations—time, money, talent, etc.—can make all the difference in the lives of animals that otherwise would not have a chance.

“If you have something to give, give it to these organizations,” says Dr. Meghan McGrath of East Bradford Veterinary Hospital. “The expenses they endure, the sacrifices they make—it’s intense. Every dime helps. If you give \$10 or \$20, you will have literally saved several lives.”

Visit [www.all4pawsrescue.com](http://www.all4pawsrescue.com) and [seniordoghaven.org](http://seniordoghaven.org) for more information.



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