

# Getting to the heart of the matter

volunteer  
edmonton  
**VOLUNTEER  
EDMONTON.COM**

Saving abandoned and unwanted dogs from the streets is no easy feat for Wayne and Carol Tischer. As founding members of the Human Animal Rescue Team — aptly referred to as HART — the Tischers rely on caring, generous volunteers to support their fledgling agency.

Founded in 2003, the organization began rescuing stray, abandoned and unwanted cats and dogs from rural areas around Edmonton, but soon discovered other organizations were doing the same kind of work. "Cats and dogs are very different from each other. So, eventually, we decided to put our resources towards dogs," Carol explains. Wayne adds that the rural focus came from seeing the appalling living conditions of stray dogs outside of Edmonton.

"There are hundreds of dogs living terrible lives and simply starving to death. That's what triggered it for us."

In the past five years, HART has rescued more than 500 dogs.

Once the rescued dogs are in HART's care, the Tischers seek volunteers to help house the dogs until permanent homes are found. Foster homes, says Carol, are the backbone of the organization.

"We never have enough. The only thing that we ask is that they care for the dog,



SUPPLIED PHOTO

**HEY, MICKEY, YOU'RE SO FINE:** HART founders Carol and Wayne Tischer hope to place rescued dogs like Mickey in loving homes. And you can help.

We pay all medical, food and supply costs," she says. "If we have lots of foster homes, we can eventually support more dogs."

**We're really just doin this for the dogs. It's an amazing and rewarding experience.**

Carol Tischer

While fostering a dog can be a rich and meaningful experience, it's

not always easy. Once the dog is chosen for adoption, some volunteers have a tough time letting go. "You get attached and it can be hard. But of course, foster

home volunteers are certainly welcome to adopt. It makes it easier for us since they are already involved in the organization," Wayne says.

The organization's unique adoption process ensures that rescued dogs are matched through a screening and interviewing process that looks at a person's lifestyle and personality to see which dog would be a good match for the applicant. "We try to work against impulse buying. That way you'll have a friend and family member for life," Carol remarks.

The process includes a series of meetings between the applicant and the dog

and a "cooling off" period to give the applicant time to assess the adoption.

While various fundraisers and donations help cover some of HART's operating costs and fees, volunteers help ensure the organization can continue delivering its much-needed services. Aside from foster homes, HART offers a variety of volunteer positions in areas like fundraising, special events, administration, rescuing and more. The Tischers have also been fortunate to receive support from local retailers, manufacturers and even veterinarians. Discounted dog food and reduced medical fees have helped keep HART's costs low so that Wayne and Carol can continue assisting as many dogs as they possibly can. "We're really just doing this for the dogs," Carol says simply. "It's an amazing and rewarding experience."

With the cold weather settling in, Wayne and Carol hope more people become foster home volunteers. "Without intervention, many dogs will perish in the cold, particularly the pups and the unhealthy dogs," Wayne mentions.

If you'd like to support HART, a fundraiser will be held at the Skyview PetSmart (13716-137 Ave) Saturday and Sunday. Bring in your pet for a photo with Santa. Proceeds go directly to HART.

To learn how you can become a volunteer or to adopt a dog, visit their website at [www.humaneanimalrescueteam.ca](http://www.humaneanimalrescueteam.ca) or call (780) 455-4278.

For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, Communications Coordinator, at [epham@volunteeredmonton.com](mailto:epham@volunteeredmonton.com), call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at [www.volunteeredmonton.com](http://www.volunteeredmonton.com).

## When you're in shock and don't know it

The previous Friday when Rowena left my office, she had been feeling calm and was full of plans. She said, "I felt great until Monday and then I don't know what happened. I started feeling restless and unhappy and I just can't settle down."

I asked what was going on and she said she had Roy, a carpenter, in her house finishing the upstairs renovation. "He's my brother's friend, and I've known him for a long time. He's working hard but it's messy and dusty and I'm not getting any of my own work done. Then yesterday, someone stole my wallet out of my purse while I was having lunch with my girlfriend. I remember a big commotion when someone tripped near our table."

Rowena is a freelance writer and editor who works from her home office. She came to see me a few weeks before because she was feeling depressed and unmotivated, and had been unable to

work for several weeks. We were both pleased with the progress she was making, so I understood how disappointing this setback was to her.

Rowena commented she hadn't been able to get warm all week so I gave her a cushy fleece blanket, and asked her what else she had been noticing, particularly what body sensations.

"I feel cold and restless and unfocused, and feel like going back to the chocolate and coke diet diet."

I noticed her breathing seemed shallow and her eyes looked different, and I said, "I wonder if you're in shock."

I asked her more specific questions, and she suddenly exclaimed, "I just had a thought. Five years ago, I was renting a

house. One day when I came home, I had a really spooky feeling, and sure enough, someone had broken in and trashed my

house and stolen my camera and my CDs. I never again felt safe in that house. I had two guys doing some yard work the week before, and I've always sus-

pected them, but I have no proof."

As I heard Rowena describe that break-in, her symptoms started to make sense. The current situation with Roy in her house, and the mess and confusion, and then having her wallet stolen, had triggered the shock in her system from her previous trauma.

As we worked with the incident from five years ago, Rowena pushed the blanket aside, saying she was feeling warm for the first time in days. Happily, our work with

this previous trauma made Rowena much more comfortable having Roy in her house as he finished up the renovations.

Rowena did not show all these symptoms in my office, but general signs of shock are cold and/or clammy skin, pallor, blueness around your nails, rapid pulse, irregular and/or rapid breathing, sweaty skin, dilated pupils, anxiety or confusion, and possibly lethargy.

Look for these symptoms in anyone experiencing a fresh trauma, but if you notice them on someone who has no apparent trauma right now, it would be good to investigate what's happening that might be triggering a previous trauma

Elizabeth Atherton-Reid, a chartered psychologist since 1983, has a private counselling practice in Edmonton. If you have questions or comments, email [elizabeth@atherton-reid.com](mailto:elizabeth@atherton-reid.com) or visit her website at [www.atherton-reid.com](http://www.atherton-reid.com).



**LIFE  
EXPERIENCE**

ELIZABETH ATHERTON-REID