

# After the Storm



Meet four animals who weathered Hurricane Katrina, and the heroes who brought them home.

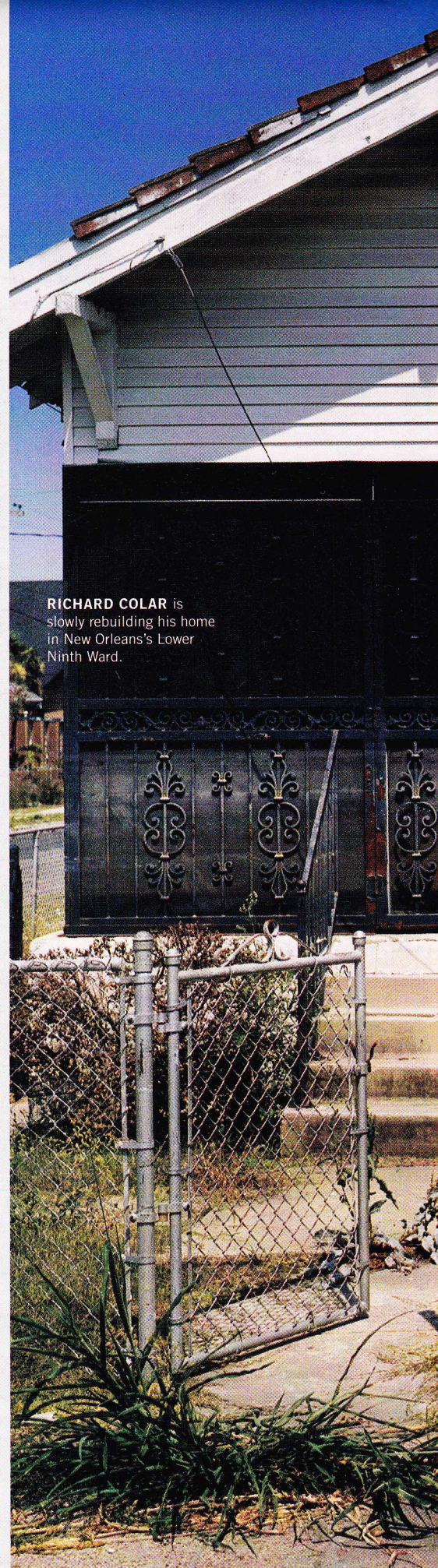
In just seven furious hours on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina demolished much of the Gulf Coast. Promptly after the disaster struck, a massive animal rescue and relief effort was launched. The HSUS and many other groups responded immediately, saving and caring for more than 10,000 lost and terrified animals.

The HSUS coordinated with thousands of animal-care professionals and volunteers to help with the crisis. The HSUS cooperatively ran two major shelters, supported Louisiana's animal rescue and relief efforts, and turned a prison facility into an overflow shelter. Thousands of animals were transported out of the afflicted areas, and The HSUS even chartered planes to airlift animals to humane societies and rescue groups around the country, freeing up enough space to continue to rescue animals from the field.

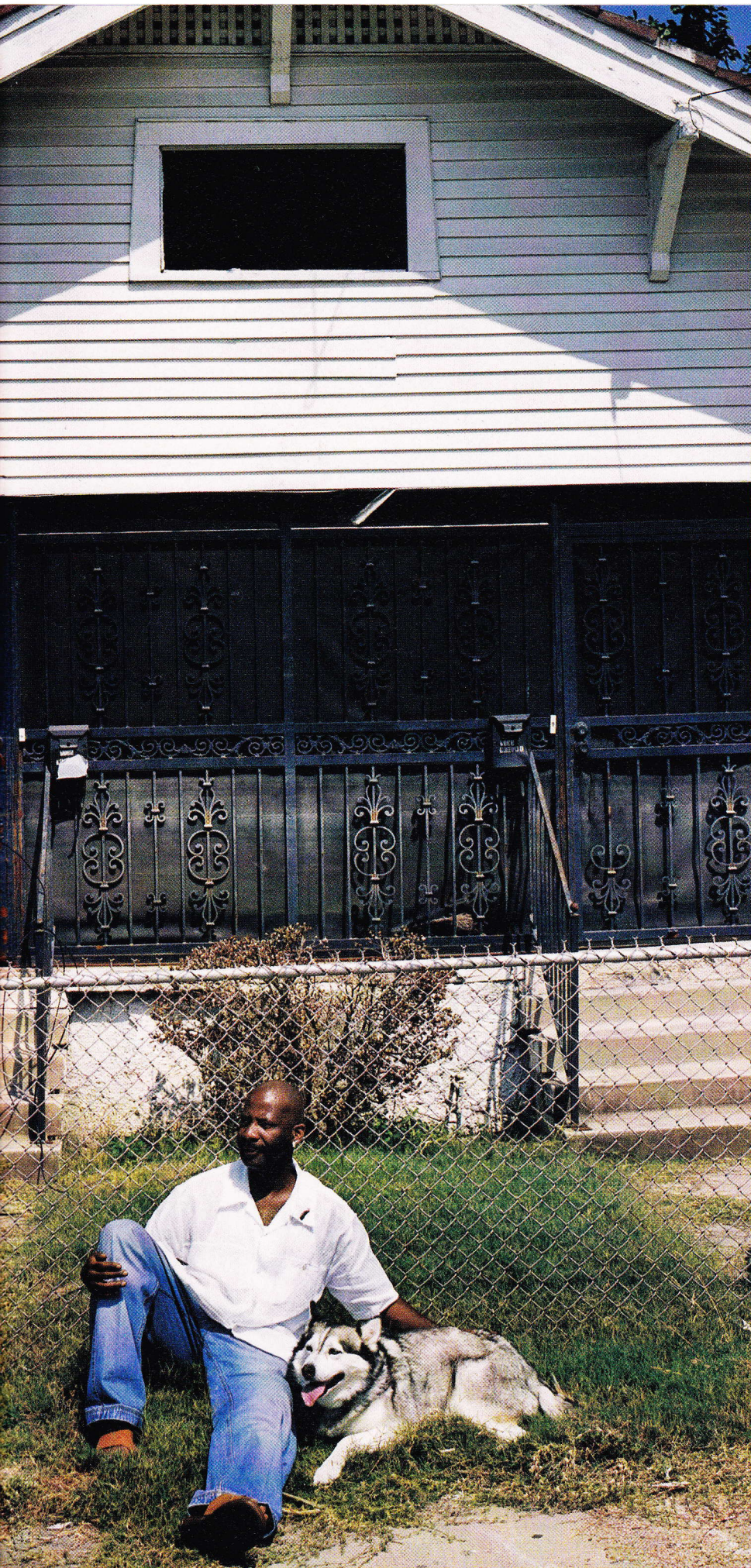
In Katrina's wake, The HSUS has spent or committed more than \$28 million to response, reimbursement, recovery, and rebuilding in direct expenses and grants to animal shelters, wildlife sanctuaries, and other animal rescue and protection agencies devastated by the storm. The HSUS will be investing even more funds and will continue to work on strategies to provide for animals everywhere when disasters strike.

A story this huge is sometimes easier to comprehend on a personal level. Here are a few of the thousands of pets The HSUS helped reunite with their families after the storm tore them apart.

BY MARJORIE INGALL



RICHARD COLAR is slowly rebuilding his home in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward.



## THE LONGEST WEEKS: Richard and Princess



Just like many others, Richard Colar, 46, had no idea how devastating the storm would be. He remained in his house, located next to one of the levees in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, as it was quickly swallowed up by 12 feet of water. He

and his beloved Siberian husky, Princess, were trapped in the attic for three days before they escaped on a makeshift raft. But after a few days on dry ground, Richard was ordered to evacuate without Princess. He left the dog with a neighbor and was put on a plane to Charlotte, North Carolina. Less than a week later, the neighbor called. The authorities had forced her to evacuate and an animal-rescue team had taken Princess.

Richard, a construction worker, tirelessly tried to find his dog. Despite being without a computer, he found ways to log on to a clearing-house for lost animals to search for Princess. After weeks of separation, he was distraught. He called The HSUS and was connected to Cory Smith, the program manager for animal-sheltering issues. "I think Cory was sent to me," he says now. "I'd lost everything. I wasn't working. I was trying to feel my way in a new place. Princess was all I had."

It took some doing, but HSUS staffers managed to locate Princess at a shelter in Ohio. Because the dog was clearly depressed and stressed, flying her home wasn't the safest option. So Cory organized a caravan of volunteers to drive Princess to North Carolina. "I couldn't find anyone to drive the last leg," she says, "So I did it myself."

Princess slept the entire way from Washington, D.C., reports Cory. The second the dog spotted Richard, she clearly knew she was home. "They were kissing each other over and over; it was so sweet," Cory recalls. "Princess was just so happy to be with him! Every time he sat down for a second she sat on him or curled up inside his arm." Richard and Princess have made their way back to New Orleans, where Richard is rebuilding his home. "That dog is my child. I know I'm blessed." >>

CECILIO ABLEES (2)

## AGAINST ALL ODDS: Marie, Buddha, and Chica



Like Richard, Marie Carr, 26, simply didn't know that Katrina would be different from all the other storms. "We'd run so many times," she says. Marie had moved to a new home in Metairie, Louisiana, the day before Katrina hit; her dogs, Buddha and Chica, were still staying with

her parents in the Lower Ninth Ward. When the call came to evacuate, her father refused to leave. "He called right after the storm and said, 'See? Everything's fine!' And then the levees broke."

Marie couldn't reach her father for three days. She was relieved when he finally called from the Houston Astrodome, but was frantic about her dogs. He said, "I'm so sorry, Marie. There was nothing I could do." Her father had passed up

a helicopter rescue because he wasn't allowed to take the dogs. He'd finally had to swim for his life, leaving the dogs on the porch.

"I thought they were gone," Marie says. Days later, she was watching footage of the rescue efforts on TV when she saw her parents' house. Rescuers were loading Buddha and Chica into a boat. "I didn't give up from that day on," she says. "I knew they were alive." By calling shelters and looking online, she soon found Buddha, a shar-pei. "He'd been airlifted to California and was livin' it up on the beach in Santa Cruz," Marie says. But Chica, a chow-Doberman mix, was harder to track down. Finally, Marie called The HSUS and was put in touch with Nancy Lawson.

"Nancy worked miracles," Marie recalls. Nancy, editor of *Animal Sheltering* magazine for The HSUS, found a description of a brown-and-red chow mix in the online records of a shelter in Calcasieu Parish. When Nancy called, a staffer told her they had evacuated all the animals as Hurricane Rita hit. Nancy traced Chica to another shelter in Louisiana,

and from there to Marin County, California. But more than 800 animals displaced by Katrina and Rita had been transported from Marin to shelters all over California.

Finally Nancy tracked a dog labeled "unsure of breed" to a shelter in Sacramento. The dog had a similar face but was described as unfriendly. Nancy sensed that the animal was a traumatized Chica. Wary of dashing Marie's hopes yet again, she called the shelter and left a message saying that Chica had a distinctive crick in her tail. So when Marie called Sacramento to follow up and described Chica's tail, she heard a huge cheer go up from the shelter staff. "That's my dog!" she cried. Chica was on a plane that night.

Today, Marie's parents live with Marie, her fiancé, her daughter Isabelle, 6, and the dogs. Her parents' home was destroyed; Marie lost the coffee shop she co-owned. Chica, now 11, was recently diagnosed with cancer and heart disease. "I'm just glad to be with her for however much time she has," Marie says. "I still have no idea how Nancy found her."



**MARIE CARR'S DAUGHTER,** Isabelle, can't give her beloved Buddha enough kisses.

## HOME ALONE: Curtis and Fred



Fred, a gigantic and opinionated yellow tabby, doesn't like to travel. So when Curtis Herring, Fred's owner, evacuated his Broadmoor, New Orleans, neighborhood before Katrina hit, he left plenty of food and water and asked a neighbor to look in on the cat. But the neighbor

called to report that the water was waist-high and rising fast; he was fleeing in a boat, leaving a big bowl of water and a bag of food for Fred. "I was freaking out," Curtis, 42, says. "I called pet rescues, shelters. Half the phones weren't working." Then Curtis called The HSUS's Disaster Call Center.

The HSUS's Cory Smith and the Washington Humane Society's Adam Parascandola were deployed to Louisiana the next day. Using addresses provided by the Call Center, they searched for animals left behind who had survived the flooding. Curtis's neighborhood was still under water, but after a few days Cory and Adam found a dry route through it. They made their way to Curtis's home hoping to find Fred alive. Thanks to his detailed instructions on how to enter the house and where to look, "I found Fred upstairs, under the bed, exactly where Curtis said he'd be," Cory says.

Meanwhile, in Shreveport, Curtis had been frantic for weeks, thinking of his cat and wondering what was left of his house. Finally Cory called. "She said, 'Hey, you want to hear a friendly voice?'" And there was Fred on the phone, meowing loudly. Cory laughs, "He was just so happy to see someone!" The cat was in good health, just filthy from his mud-filled home.

Curtis, who runs an interior design firm, has returned to rebuild not only his own home but also many of his neighbors' houses. "I'm so busy," he says. "I'm only the third person in this neighborhood to move back in, and I've only been here three weeks. But when I stop to think, I just can't believe I have Fred back. Cory is truly amazing; I would not have seen my cat again if it hadn't been for her." As for Fred, for months he was terrified whenever it rained. "I can only imagine what he went through," Curtis says. "If this ever happens again, you better believe I'm taking him with me."



CURTIS HERRING and Fred in their newly repaired home in New Orleans

### No Pet Left Behind

Many animals suffered terribly at the hands of Katrina and Rita because they weren't allowed to evacuate with their owners. The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, which The HSUS worked to see introduced, aims to prevent such a situation from ever happening again. The PETS Act would require state and local authorities to include plans for pets and to service animals in the event of a major disaster. The act passed by a landslide in the House this spring but is still pending in the Senate. To see if your senators support the bill, go to [www.hsus.org/legislation\\_laws](http://www.hsus.org/legislation_laws). If they don't support the PETS Act, use the contact information on the site to urge them to.