

Katrina's four-legged victims need homes

Volunteers from a Chicago animal welfare group drove to Arkansas and back over the past two days, bringing five truckloads of abandoned cats and dogs from the fringe of the hurricane disaster area back for adoption. The sojourn of PAWS (Pets Are Worth Saving) Chicago is part of an enormous animal rescue taking place in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The dogs and cats coming here are from a "no kill" shelter near Little Rock, said Paula Fasseas of PAWS. None are pets reluctantly given up by fleeing hurricane victims, she said, but moving them to Chicago will open up shelter space for cats and dogs that have a hope of being reclaimed by their families.

"The animals of people who have shown remorse or said they love their pets — we are absolutely not transferring out. Those animals are loved and all those people need is time," Fasseas said. The approximately 30 cats and 50 dogs coming to Chicago include "strays and litters of puppies that had been dumped."

Organizations such as "Huskie Rescue" have already offered to take some dogs, Fasseas said. The Humane Society of the United States continues animal rescue operations, along with the Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Anti-Cruelty Society in Chicago is offering free vet care to the pets of families displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"These people have lost their homes and most, if not all, of their possessions. The family pet can provide great comfort to them during this time," said David Dinger, the society's vice president of operations. "We feel it is part of our mission to help care for these animals until they are able to go home."

A few abandoned pets will be on hand this morning when PAWS breaks ground for a \$6.5 million shelter at Clybourne and Racine.

— Leslie Baldacci, Red Streak

