

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

DARE Organization

APRIL 2013 WINNER - 1,805 VOTES

More than 10 years and 1,000 rescued dachshunds later, DARE's passion for saving those left behind is stronger than ever.

They are the dogs from puppy mills that have never walked in grass. They are the dogs that were abused, malnourished or infected. They are the gifts from Christmas that were too much work by Easter. DARE (Dachshund Adoption Rescue and Education) takes them in, loves them and finds them homes.

DARE, nominated by longtime member Judy Delbene, has won the \$1,000 prize for SunState Credit Union's April charity contest. Delbene, who won \$300 for her nomination, also donated the money back to DARE.



The organization began in 2001 but became an official nonprofit in 2004. It is completely volunteer-based and works out of the homes of foster parents, of which there are now around 30.

DARE saves dachshunds that may otherwise not have had a chance, such as seniors or those facing life-threatening medical issues.

"We don't just pull the young, pretty dogs," Delbene said. Because of this, the veterinary costs add up.

Each dog, once fully vetted, will live with a DARE member, who fosters until a suitable owner can adopt. The organization has a rigorous adoption process, complete with references and home visits. DARE doesn't want its dogs ending up in another shelter just months down the line.

"We see what happens when there's irresponsible pet ownership because we clean up the mess," said Alicia Duval, DARE's vice president.

To help prevent this, a cornerstone of DARE's mission is education. The organization shares breed expertise

with potential or current owners, such as dachshunds' common back problems or notorious stubbornness. They teach about the importance of spaying and neutering and generally about the commitment of owning a dog.

They also share why their beloved wiener dogs make such wonderful pets.

Overall, the driving force behind DARE is a love for the breed. At the organization's big annual event, Dox-A-Palooza, hundreds of dachshund lovers come out from all around the state to celebrate their hotdog-shaped companions with "wiener races" and costume contests.

Many of the dachshunds who come out are former DARE rescues and receive a special colored bandana to wear.

"You can look out and see this sea of colors and the hundreds of dogs we've helped over the years," Duval said.

For Delbene, the best part of being a foster parent is matching individual dachshunds with the perfect family. After two weeks in her home, Delbene said a scared dog that was hiding under the table will begin to show its personality.

"It's exciting to be able to do that for another living being — giving them a new life." ■

Learn more at <https://www.facebook.com/DAREtoRescue>

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