



## PETS & THEIR PEOPLE

### Pet Guardians

#### Giving pets a second chance

For Amy Shever, guarding the welfare of pets has been a priority for almost 20 years, ever since she volunteered at a small animal shelter in Pleasanton. "I was trying to save every extra animal," says the Northern Florida native. "What was really frustrating was when people would show up and say, 'My parent died, here's his pet,'" Shever recalls. "These were animals who had been living with these people for years and had always been comforted and loved."

But it wasn't until years later that Shever was inspired to pursue her true calling. "When 9/11 happened, I was reading all these stories of owners who had passed away and over 800 animals who had been orphaned. The average age of a pet owner was only 39 years old, and I thought, after that, I better do something."

And do something she did. Shever worked with Best Friends Animal Society, a 250,000-member strong, Utah-based animal sanctuary, to launch PetGuardian, which creates comprehensive pet trust plans to ensure the continued care of pets. Within two months, Shever received 1,000 phone calls, and realized that what really needed to be done was to revolutionize animal welfare. "Everyone had focused on spay and neutering as the only way to control the pet population," she says. "It's a successful program, but this is such a preventable issue if we can educate pet owners, vets, and animal rescue groups to think responsibly. This is not just something we want older senior citizens to think about." Last year, 750,000 pets were euthanized in California alone, at a taxpayer cost of \$50 million.

Realizing she had the potential to save thousands of animals, in May of 2004, Shever started 2nd Chance 4 Pets, a non-



PHOTO: SHERRY TESLER

Amy Shever and Dan Vold, her husband of eight years. Shever asked him to marry her after just four days, and Spencer was the ring bearer at their wedding!

profit dedicated to creating awareness and educating people to think about the lifetime care of their pets, from finding caregivers for their pets to having instructions written out in case of emergency. "We have a tremendous potential to save lots of animals. We're like this little tiny non-profit, all-volunteer group basically trying to change the world," says Shever.

With 90 volunteers and 5,000 clients from all over the country, it's a wonder Shever and her husband, Dan Vold (a

physical therapist who also volunteers his accounting skills), can find the time to guard their own two dogs, 12-year-old Spencer and 5-year-old Barney, two lovable Labs. Practicing what they preach, Shever and her husband rescued Barney, who is blind and deaf, after he spent five years penned up. "Last Thanksgiving, Barney was going to be euthanized by his previous owners if someone didn't pick him up that day," says Shever. "In two hours, this dog was ours." ■