

TO THE RESCUE

JENNY FROH
CATCHES PETS
AT THEIR BEST

BY ROBERT KIENER



It's been a busy morning for photographer **Jenny Froh, CPP**. Hired to photograph the graduates of a Lewisville, Texas, training center, she's been carefully posing and photographing students for over an hour. Froh, a master at getting her subjects' attention, will do whatever it takes to get them to look into her lens, like blowing whistles or squeezing one of the squeaky toys she's brought to the session.





Although Froh's pet photography was initially volunteer work, as soon as she began posting pet portraits on her website, she started getting commissions for pets as well as pets with their owners.



Whistles? Squeaky toys? Exactly. Froh has been hired by the DFW Dog Quest Training Center to photograph the latest four-legged alumni of its "Hollywood Dog 101" class. As she explains, "I'll use whatever it takes to get a dog's attention, and squeaky toys are great for getting them to look straight at me."

Also in her bag of tricks are squirrel and duck calls, a long-limbed feather duster, and bells on a stick. "They all work wonders with dogs," says Froh. She then adds with a sly grin, "Cats are crazy about feathers."

AHA MOMENT

Froh, 44, a working mother of three children who's based in Flower Mound, Texas, has carved out a nice niche as a pet photographer and received recognition for her award-winning photos. Her work has been featured in regional and national publications. She earned recognition as a PPA Diamond Photographer of the Year in 2014 for getting four out of four International Photographic Competition images into the Loan Collection, the only pet photographer to do so last year.

"Jenny is a very technically talented photographer with a great eye, but she also has an uncanny and rare ability to connect with the dogs and cats she photographs," says

noted pet photographer Barbara Breitsameter, M.PhotoG., CPP. "Watching her at work is fascinating; it's as if she's on the same wavelength as the pets she photographs."

Froh started photographing children and families in 2008 and, as she explains, "fell into" pet photography after Bacchus, her 13-year-old bull mastiff, died in 2010. "After we lost Bacchus we looked through our photo albums for pictures of her but were saddened to discover that we didn't have any good ones. I started taking pictures of our other dog, Sadie, so at least we'd have pictures of her forever," says Froh.

After she photographed a dog that she and her family were fostering, a bull mastiff named Titan, Froh had an *Aha* moment that would change her professional life. "I offered to take some pictures of Titan that the dog rescue could use on their website to help get him adopted," says Froh.

The pictures of Titan "brought out his lovable side," says Froh. He was adopted in less than a week after his pictures ran online. "We were all amazed," she says. "I suddenly realized what I did could make a difference." She's never looked back.

Froh continued to volunteer her services to more humane societies, including Hearts





Speak, an international nonprofit organization that pairs up photographers, artists, and other creative types with animal welfare groups. “Some people believe shelter dogs are not well-behaved or not trainable,” says Froh. “That’s rarely the case, and I want my pictures to show them in their best light, as bright, adorable dogs that would make a welcome addition to any family. I never want to make a dog look pitiful; feeling sorry for a dog is not a good reason to adopt.”

Case in point: Froh recently photographed Blossom, a feisty, three-legged Jack Russell terrier mix that was surrendered to the Flower Mound Humane Society. “A healthy dog can be a challenge to adopt,” says Froh. “Blossom needed someone special.”

Froh’s picture of Blossom, wearing a colorful purple bow and with a mischievous expression on her face, proved irresistible. “I also posed her on a tree stump to show that she’s not handicapped and can bal-

ance like every other dog,” explains Froh. Blossom was adopted days after her picture appeared on the humane society’s site.

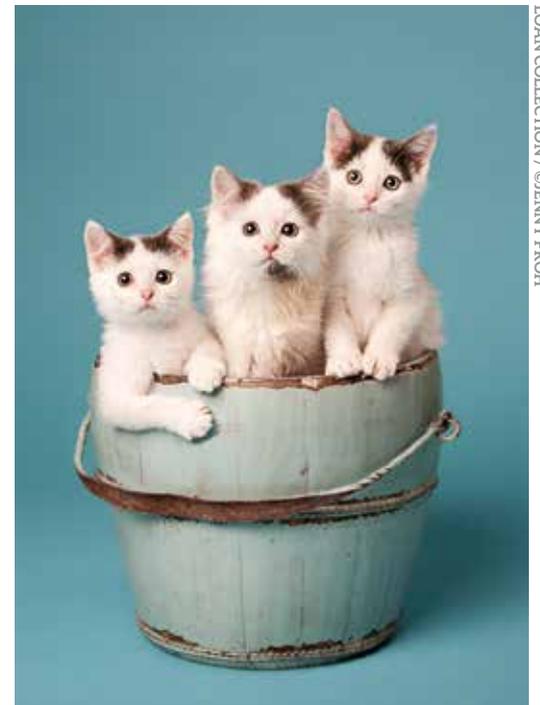
Although Froh’s pet photography was initially volunteer work, as soon as she began posting pet portraits on her website, she started getting commissions for pets as well as pets with their owners. “There are a lot of people who don’t have children or have grown up kids and want to have professional portraits of their pets,” explains Froh. “I got a lot of exposure from my volunteer work, and this has helped me build my portfolio and gain new commissioned clients.”

“I love both types of work, but the volunteer work is free from pressure and I can be a bit more creative,” says Froh. She finds photographing pets much easier than children. “I know some people will say the opposite, but with dogs there are no moms complaining how their child’s hair looks or whether or not their smile looks forced or fake.”

Today 70 percent of Froh’s work is volunteer, the rest commissioned. Thanks to an understanding husband, Steve, and three boys, Gunnar, Tate, and Ronnie, she has converted the family’s dining room into a photography studio that’s jam-packed with lights, cameras, a seamless backdrop, and more. “Thankfully, they love animals as much as I do,” says Froh. The family has multiple dogs and often fosters additional pets.

Froh confesses that she used to spend “way too much time” editing her work in Photoshop and Lightroom and now does only minimal editing. “It just got too time consuming, and it never felt or looked right,” she says. She explains that entering photo competitions has been an excellent learning tool. “You can’t help but learn what you’re doing right and wrong from critiques,” says Froh. “I’ve grown by leaps and bounds by submitting my work and listening to the judges’ comments. That’s been invaluable.”

While Jenny Froh is thrilled that she’s been able to make a difference by helping dogs and cats get adopted, she does admit to what she calls a “foster failure.” Her name is Portia, a Great Dane mix. The Froh family began fostering Portia and her sister Paisley when they were puppies. Both came down with the often-deadly canine infection parvovirus, and the Frohs spent two months nursing them back to health. Each day they injected them with



LOAN COLLECTION / © JENNY FROH

antibiotics and fed them around the clock. The puppies barely hung on to life.

Happily, both dogs survived, and they were sent to a Colorado shelter to be adopted. But the Froh family missed Portia. "It had been heartbreaking to let her go. We'd fallen in love with her while bringing her back to life," remembers Froh. When the family

learned that Portia had still not been adopted several months later, Steve drove halfway to Kansas to retrieve her.

Three years later, Portia, Froh's "foster failure," is a healthy member of the family and a frequent subject of Jenny Froh's camera. When editors of *The Bark* magazine ran Jenny's portrait of Portia and her three

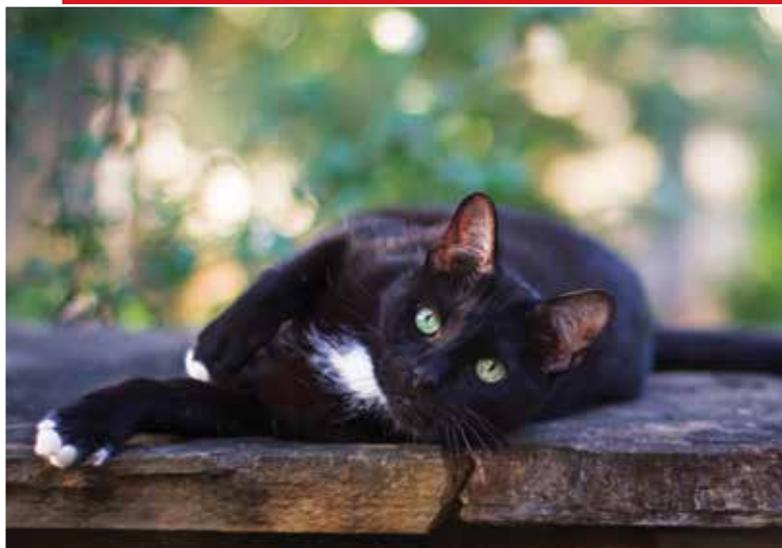
siblings on the cover, they spoke for many of Jenny Froh's admirers when they called her shot, "lens-shatteringly adorable." Some failure. •

jennyfroh.com

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▶▶▶ SHELTER PET TIPS FROM JENNY FROH

TURN OFF YOUR FLASH. Get in front of a window or go outside for some natural light. Flash can give animals the appearance of green, glowing eyes, which is not how you want to portray a pet that needs to be adopted.



GET DOWN ON THEIR LEVEL, AND FOCUS ON THE EYES. Nobody wants to see the top of a kitty or puppy's head, and it's often difficult to get them to look up. A low angle also helps you to look less intimidating to the pet.

PUT THEM IN SOMETHING. If you have a puppy or a kitten that won't stay still, put them in something. Most likely they will climb out, but you have a chance of catching the photo right before they do.

ASK FOR A HELPING HAND. An assistant can hold a small pet in their hands while you take their picture. And larger pets can be hugged. Often an animal looks more friendly and social if a person is cuddling them anyway.

TREATS AND SQUEAKERS GET ATTENTION. Most animals in shelters don't know their names or don't have one, so calling for their attention rarely works. Treats and noisy toys get them

to look at you and perk up their ears. Sometimes you can even catch an adorable head tilt.

USE SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD. You don't always get to choose your background when you're working with shelter animals. By using shallow depth of field, all the focus will be on the pet. Try an aperture of 2.8 or wider. Do your best to find a simple background or get in nice and close so the animal fills the frame.

BE PATIENT AND MAKE A LOT OF CAPTURES. Puppies and kittens especially move quickly, and it's not always easy to time the shot so they're looking into the camera or doing something cute. Be prepared to press that shutter button at any time.

LET THEM RUN. If all else fails, and their energy is too high to contain, let them run free and catch them in action. Set a high shutter speed to freeze the motion.

