



[the photo book projects]

The Photo Book Projects, a photography initiative designed to raise awareness about issues affecting animal rescue and animal welfare in the U.S. and Canada today, kicked off with an initial photo session in the middle of February. Photographer Melissa McDaniel began a road trip around the two countries in mid-February to photograph rescue dogs with their families, and visit and interview staff at animal rescue groups and animal shelters, in order to compile images and information for two photo books, one on rescue dogs and one on deaf dogs, which will both be sold to benefit animal rescue groups. The tour comes to Texas in March 7, with its first stop in Austin.

Philadelphia, PA February 24, 2009 -- The Photo Book Projects, a photography initiative designed to raise awareness about current issues affecting animal rescue and animal welfare in the U.S. and Canada, kicked off with an initial photo session in Alabama in the middle of February. Photographer Melissa McDaniel began a road trip around the two countries in mid-February to photograph rescue dogs with their families, and visit and interview staff at animal rescue groups and animal shelters, in order to compile images and information for two photo books. The two photo books – one on rescue dogs and one on deaf dogs – will be published later on in the year and will be sold on her website and sold by animal rescue groups in order to raise money for animal rescue. The tour comes to Texas on March 7 with its initial stop in Austin for a pet photography day at Groovy Dog Bakery. While in Austin, McDaniel will be photographing one family with their dog for inclusion in the photo books.

McDaniel, a photographer, writer and long-time animal lover, who has lived in the Philadelphia area for the last 7 years, became an advocate for deaf dogs and animal rescue after adopting her dog Sadie, a deaf Border Collie/Labrador Retriever mix. She communicates with Sadie through the use of hand signals. “Sadie knows about 20 signs. She’s very smart, though, and chooses to look away from me when I’m signing something that she doesn’t want to “listen” to!”

In the United States alone, thousands of deaf dogs are put to sleep every year simply because they are deaf. Many people believe deaf dogs are untrainable and often grow to be aggressive towards people. “I want to show that these animals lead very normal lives with their families. They are far from untrainable. In fact, many of the deaf dogs that will be photographed for the deaf dog photo book run agility courses and working as therapy dogs. They know more commands than most hearing dogs.”

After volunteering at her local SPCA, McDaniel became aware of the large number of “great dogs” that were winding up at the shelter. “I’m amazed at the number of people who still believe that most shelter dogs aren’t worth adopting because they come with too much baggage.” While she admits there are some shelter dogs with issues that need to be worked on, she also says that the main reasons for surrendering a dog at the SPCA where she has worked have not been ones involving the dog’s behavior, but instead were external factors, such as relocation, divorce and foreclosure.

“It’s important that my photographs of the rescue dogs show them leading happy, normal lives with their new families. Rescue dogs need a new image.” While there are other photo books out on the market about dogs and even shelter dogs, McDaniel believes her books will have differentiating factors in that the dogs will be shown at home and happy with their new families, and also that rescue groups will directly sell these books in order to raise money for themselves. In addition, it is typical for the sale of many similar books only to donate a small percentage of each sale to charity, however, McDaniel hopes that a large percentage of her photo books sales will go directly to these animal rescue groups.

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Other issues McDaniel hopes to address in these books: puppy mills, breed-specific legislation, the plight of pit bulls and breeding practices that often result in the birth of deaf puppies. She goes on to say, “At the very least, my hope is that people will read these books and one, understand the importance of spaying and neutering their pets, and two, that they will make their next dog a rescue dog...maybe even a deaf one.”

During the tour, McDaniel will also be participating in pet photography days at local pet businesses along the way, such as Groovy Dog Bakery in Austin. These photo sessions will help to raise money for the initial printing of the photo books. The event in Austin lasts from 11am to 5pm on Saturday, March 7. The photos from the event will not be in the photo books, but the print sales from the event will help to front the printing costs of the photo books. McDaniel will be photographing one family from Austin with their dog for inclusion in the photo books.

The public can follow the making of the photo books, including updates on the latest photo sessions, animal rescue stories, interviews and stories from the road, on McDaniel’s blog: <http://melissashouse.typepad.com>.



About The Photo Book Projects

The Photo Book Projects is a photography and fundraising initiative designed to raise awareness about issues affecting animal rescue and animal welfare in the U.S. and Canada today, including the pet overpopulation crisis, breed-specific legislation, puppy mills and myths surrounding deaf dogs. The resulting two photo books, one on deaf dogs and one on rescue dogs, will be sold to benefit animal rescue.



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Groovy Dog Bakery

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