

INTERVIEW | BY LISA STAMOS

Hearing and Helping the Voiceless

LOCAL ACTIVIST SUE FOLEY IS WORKING
TO BREAK A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
MAN'S BEST FRIEND



Sue Foley and her dog Grace.

PHOTO: JIM PRISCHING



Rescue volunteers at O'Hare are (from left) Stacy Schuster, Leslie Osborne, Sue Foley, Tim Foley, Jean Gibowski, and Nancy MacIntosh who wait in baggage claim for the arrival of 10 dogs from China.

BARRINGTON RESIDENT SUE FOLEY happened upon a disturbing topic while watching a TV show, one that has changed her life, the lives of those around her, and may change the United States and other nations across the planet—if she has her way.

A discussion about the brutal dog and cat meat trade in China (DCMT) was covered in an episode of “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills”, where show star Lisa Vanderpump discussed the topic. To learn more, Foley began her research at www.stopyulinforever.org [graphic content] and learned that the practice of intentionally brutalizing dogs with violent and prolonged deaths to produce meat—dogs that are often stolen pets—began in China in 2009. It is a “new tradition” that not only involves unspeakable violence towards dogs (and the traumatizing experiences they endure along the way), but is conducted openly in public spaces under the guise of a “festival” where children are often present as witnesses. Misconceptions by the people involved in this practice include the notion that the torture will render the dog’s meat with powers that can improve a man’s virility, or in general, produce more tender meat.

For Foley—whose own dog, Grace, presents a daily reminder that dogs deserve loving and humane treatment—this has become a mission that is connecting her to people in the United States and China who are also fighting this violence, as well as conducting rescues.

We joined Sue and Tim Foley, volunteers, and a rescue team from Kentucky at O'Hare Airport's International Terminal on Sept. 15, 2017, to watch their team of rescuers receive 10 dogs that not only survived the dog meat trade, but made it around the world to Chicago on a flight from China.

At O'Hare, the dogs were welcomed, cared for, their transport cages cleaned, and they were then temporarily caged again for a six-hour drive to Lawrenceburg, KY, to receive veterinary care and find forever homes. We spoke with Foley to learn more.

QB: *Sue, this is a tough topic. It presents divergent points of view between how we view and treat dogs, versus how people involved in the dog meat trade do. What is your point of view?*

SF: The bond between people and animals is not just Western culture, it is just being human. There is a direct link between the abuse of animals and violence against people—human beings with deep mental disturbances who prey upon the powerless. I am an advocate for the humane treatment of all living things.

QB: *You had mentioned that there are some places where dog meat consumption in the United States is still legal. Are people trying to change the laws regarding this?*

SF: Sadly, the consumption of dog and cat meat is currently permitted in 44 states. H. Res. 1406 prohibits the dog and cat meat trade (DCMT) and unifies animal cruelty laws across the country. Congressman Alcee Hastings of Florida introduced this bill and fights to combat animal cruelty and the global dog meat trade. A simple phone call or letter to your Congressman or Congresswoman to co-sponsor these bills makes a huge difference.

QB: *What are you currently working on? To stop the dog meat trade, the violence involved, or both?*

SF: Our Chicago activists are currently working with global organizations including Duo Duo Project, Soi Dog, No Dogs Left Behind, and the Humane Society to shut down slaughterhouses, to place dogs and cats in safe homes, to create public awareness, to provide education amongst the young and old, to promote H. Res. 401, and put public pressure on the governments to make a change.



The dogs are located. A rescue volunteer from China (on right) flew to Chicago with the dogs.



The dog transport crates are moved from the terminal to an animal relief area outside where the dogs are released to access water, food, and have their cages cleaned before the trip to Kentucky.

Providing other options for alternate means of income is vital. The DCMT has been a well-kept secret until recently. It creates a black eye on the Chinese, so we are trying to provide awareness for the positive. By exposing the trade globally, we are hopeful for a change. There is also a huge threat to public health for citizens and visitors due to dogs affected by rabies that are sent to slaughter; consumption of diseased meat often results in death.

Luckily there are millions of Chinese activists and pet owners helping us with this fight and in support of this bill.

QB: *Are there other places aside from China where the dog meat trade is occurring?*

SF: Yes, it is occurring in South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and India.

QB: *Do you see any hope or changing views in these countries about this practice?*

SF: In April of this year, Taiwan outlawed the consumption of dog and cat meat. This is a landmark amendment to animal protection laws, and hopefully a growing trend across Asia to end the DCMT. The torture of animals has no place in modern society.

QB: *Thanks for asking us to join you and the rescuers at O'Hare. What was your observation*

about the dogs that you received?

SF: It is such a rewarding and joyful experience for all who can be a part in a rescue of this magnitude. Seeing those crates being wheeled out of the terminal and knowing what these dogs have been through just to get here, what they have already witnessed, and what their fate could have been is highly emotional.

The cages open and these beautiful beings that step out are so trusting of us. Tails wagging, kissing our faces, and just so happy to have human interaction and love. A few of the dogs were emaciated and in dire need of a bath; but a month later, in loving hands, their transformation has been incredible.

QB: *How can we help you?*

SF: Raising awareness is of the essence. Write or call your Congressional representative and express support for H. Res. 401, and H. Res. 1406. Attend a rally; get involved with an organization like Duo Duo Project, Soi Dog, or No Dogs Left Behind. Raise money to bring dogs and cats over from Asia; or adopt a dog or cat rescued from a slaughterhouse.

QB: *You wouldn't be involved in helping animals who cannot help themselves if you didn't think you could make a difference. What is your goal, and how will you get there?*

SF: Along with other activists, I will continue this fight of working towards a goal of global compassion for all animals. In this uncertain climate we are living in, there needs to be hope for humanity and for doing the right thing. Together, we can make an impact. 🐾



Volunteers offer relief and newfound freedom to the dogs. They exited their transport cages with trepidation and excitement after a long journey.



The dogs get some fresh air outside as they are prepared to ride to Kentucky with rescuers where they will receive veterinary care and find new homes.