

Volunteer profile...

meet **Deb Kardash** by Lynsey Franks

The most wounded and broken dogs inspire her, not because they've suffered or endured neglect, but SCARS volunteer Deb Kardash is moved by their recovery. "We've seen some dogs who have come in on death's door," says Kardash. "We're making a difference in that dog's life, and we're giving that dog a second chance."

There have been over 53 foster dogs that have come and gone through the devoted Kardash household within a span of three years. The interest in fostering sparked after the family of five lost their dog (Coffie), to cancer. Coffie had been adopted from the Humane Society in 2005 along with Sam, Coffie's brother. "We were hoping to get Sam a companion after she died and that's when we discovered SCARS," Kardash explains.



Deb with the entire family!

They adopted two puppies from SCARS. The puppies had been thrown out of a car near Athabasca. Looking back, she recalls a SCARS director calling regularly to see how the puppies were doing, a supervising service that she would provide for families in similar circumstances one day. Since first dealings with SCARS, Kardash has become increasingly involved over the years, and today she is fully committed to the non-profit organization.

She doesn't just dabble in the world of volunteerism; she is a full-time, core member of the society and dedicates close to 40 hours every week to moving, monitoring and mulling over the well being of these animals. On any given day she can be found at adoption events, picking up dogs from the Athabasca pound and matching foster dogs with foster homes.

"I wear a number of hats," she says. "I spend a lot of time driving around, and on the phone." Aside from her administrative duties, she also spends a lot of time at the vet. "I'm one of the foster homes that will take on dogs that have medical needs, and that means a lot of vet appointments."

To the Kardash family, caring for these animals isn't regarded as a chore—it is considered a necessary service that has value for a whole family. "My children have really benefited from my involvement with SCARS," she says. "They are growing up learning what it means to give of themselves, to be involved and to be active."

One dog in particular comes to mind, his name is Mortimer, and he was in need of constant care when the Kardash family took him in. The Border Collie cross had a broken hip upon arrival, and required multiple surgeries and endless trips to the vet. Of her three children, her 10-year-old daughter Mary became mom's bandage assistant. "They [my children] are all very involved in the rehabilitating, nurturing and caring of these animals," she says.

The SCARS mandate: to reduce the number of homeless and abused animals in Northern Alberta, is one of the other reasons she is so passionate about being involved with SCARS. "We take in just over 400 animals in a year, and there are lots more out there," she says. "It's a huge job, and it's going to take years and years to gradually change the mindset of free-guarding animals."

SCARS is a collaborative effort made possible by a large network of volunteers. It's because of core members like Kardash that SCARS is able to take in more dogs than ever before. "The core volunteer base sticks it out," she says. "And it's all worth it."