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## news

### Pet project

By Richard Carrier  
Contributing writer

Nov 12, 2008

Monica Plumb has been an animal advocate for most of her life. And for almost the same period of time she has been looking for a way to convert her advocacy to activism. She has been looking for a cause.



"I've always wanted to raise money for animals," she said of her recently launched campaign to provide life-saving Pet Rescue and Resuscitation Oxygen Masks to fire departments, starting with those in Powhatan County.

Monica Plumb (below, with cat Kitty Boo) decided to raise money for pet rescue masks (above) after seeing them used on television. She has also created a website, <http://www.petmask.com>, to help spread the word and raise money. | courtesy photos

Monica Plumb is ten years old. The fifth grader at Pocahontas Middle School recently saw a television broadcast of a dog being saved by one of the pet-specific oxygen masks and immediately knew this was her cause. A quick phone call to Phil Warner, Powhatan County Assistant Fire Chief, confirmed both a need for the equipment in Powhatan and enthusiasm for her project. "We do have the equipment at the Courthouse Station, #1" Warner said, "but we had just had a fire where we didn't (four out of the five county stations do not have the oxygen masks) and three cats died. It would be a super big favor for this 10-year-old to do this for us."



The tiny Ms. Plumb did not really need this extra motivation, but the Fire Department's endorsement of her proposal did get the creative wheels turning. She enlisted her dad, William, to help her put together a web site, <http://www.PetMask.com>, which was launched in early October. Next came the design of donation cans and the solicitation of sponsors. Dad and Mom, Wendy, had one rule; she had to do all of the talking herself, not a really big challenge for such a committed crusader.



Monica quickly enlisted the support of Progressive Auto works, Poppy's Diner, Allen's Chinese Restaurant and Deborah's Hair Design . In just three short weeks donations from the cans placed at these retail locations and posters directing people to the web site have generated cash and pledges sufficient to purchase one mask kit for each of the county's fire stations.

"It feels really good to know that animals are being helped," Plumb said. But don't think for one moment that this mini-crusader had folded her tent and retired her banner. The eminently observant and efficient Monica realized that the mask kits lacked protective storage on the fire trucks and were subject to breakage, plus there were many more volunteer fire companies in the Commonwealth not equipped with the pet masks. New goals were set to find and purchase suitable protective storage containers and to expand the purchase of pet oxygen masks for the volunteer fire departments in surrounding counties. Most larger municipalities' fire departments include the pet masks in their budgets but volunteer units seldom have funding for the units. Monica Plumb would like to change that, certainly locally, and she does not rule out extending her campaign outside of the surrounding counties and to rescue squads. And after that? "World peace?," her mother questioned.

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The diminutive Ms. Plumb is a hands-on animal lover and hopes to eventually channel her love and concern for animals into a career as a veterinarian. Sixteen year old Kitty-Boo rules the Plumb home, and makes it clear there is no room for other mammals, but Monica has also sequestered three fish and a frog there.

She loves science in school and currently spends her Saturdays attending the Math and Science Center's Slithery-Slimy Odd Pet Class.

Despite the fact that her next goal is to own a Fire Bellied Newt, this young activist is not one dimensional. She'll soon be back on the basketball court at school, still finding time to squeeze in classes in another of her passions, Hip-Hop dancing.

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### Reader Comments

by **Laura Graham** of Powhatan Nov. 14, 2008, 10:40 AM

Thank you, Monica for helping animals in this way. We are all proud of you.

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