



*What if we trained shelter dogs like movie dogs?  
Could learning dog tricks save their lives?*

# Spider's Story

VISION STATEMENT  
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Inside of every shelter dog is an undiscovered movie star. To find those diamonds in the rough, my crew and I make videos with shelter dogs, which help them get the best kind of stardom: loving homes.

For our Fourth of July film, the shelter—Pet Orphans—brought out a dozen dogs. We began our training process and improvised our film.

One dog was especially rough—an Australian Cattle Dog who looked and sounded like he'd walked straight out of the *Mad Max* movies. They had given this dog the perfect name: Spider. You had to be careful how you touched him.

Spider had a history. Twice before, he'd been adopted, but given up on and sent to the pound. It would have been three strikes you're out, but fortunately the shelter had pulled him off of death row.

In the Fourth of July film, Spider could barely sit for five seconds while most of the other dogs could sit, pose, and were taught to perform a few tricks.

Almost all of those dogs were adopted right away. But a month later, no one had come for Spider.

According to the ASPCA, this year, three million dogs will enter shelters. But unfortunately, one in every five won't make it out and we know that they won't end up on a nice country farm.

The biggest reason shelter dogs don't get adopted is lack of training.

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I kept thinking about Spider. I'd volunteer to walk him, and directed his energy by introducing him to the agility course. Whenever I taught Spider a new skill, I'd see a spark. He began to open up. Instead of avoiding eye contact, he looked at me. He learned a few hand signals. He smiled.

So, I decided that I was up for a challenge. I brought Spider home. Forever.

Today, Spider knows more than 50 tricks. One of Spider's favorites is perching his front paws up on top of an exercise ball and rolling it around the studio.

He even invented his own trick: From the big ball, he'll hop across onto the handlebar of his toy shopping cart and trolley it across the studio.

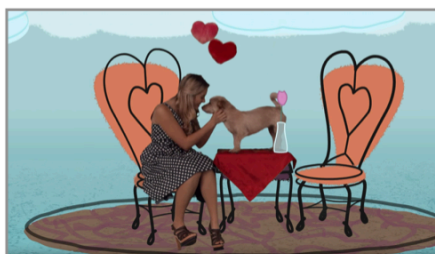
Our veterinarian says that he is now a completely different dog. When I first adopted Spider, she needed three vet techs to help her examine him. Now we perform tricks in the waiting room.

Trick training transformed Spider's life, made him sociable, built our bond. Trick training unleashed his personality, brought out Spider's inner "movie star."

Dog tricks can do that for other shelter dogs, too. By enriching their lives through trick training, we will help more shelter dogs find their forever homes. And maybe, just maybe, we could save them all.



Public Service Announcement videos for Pet Orphans feature trained shelter dogs.



Darby Anne Walker (NBC's *The Voice* contestant) volunteers to star in a stylized Valentine's Day video.

