



Humane Society rescues people, too

Recovering addict, ex-con coordinates client services

by [Sadie Jo Smokey](#) - Mar. 14, 2009 08:00 AM
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Wendy Huffman of northeast Phoenix is an [animal lover](#) .

She's also an ex-con.

For 16 years, she was addicted to heroin and has been in and out of prison since 1995. But seven months ago, after she was released from prison, Huffman reached out to Arizona Women's Education & Employment Inc. She took advantage of the job-readiness assistance and programs designed to help women like her gain the self-esteem to find a job.

"What I got from them was how to answer that question, 'Have you ever been convicted of a felony?' " said Huffman, 45.

Huffman said she's blessed. Not long after her release, she found a job at the Arizona [Humane Society](#) in Sunnyslope because she was looking for a dog to adopt. With newly gained confidence and the computer skills she picked up in prison, Huffman clicked on the Humane Society's employment link. She

aced the interview and got a job in client services. She was recently promoted to client-services coordinator.

"I lost my dog while I was in prison," said Huffman. "He was 15 years old. He died two days before I got out. . . . It's a hard job. It's people who are requesting euthanasia for their pets, or who have to move and give up their pets. It's very emotional. I cried every day for two weeks. Then I developed some coping skills for dealing with people who are grieving."

She credits her fiance; her church, Phoenix First Assembly; AWEE; and the [Arizona Humane Society](#) for giving her the support she needs to live a clean and healthful lifestyle. She said while not everyone at the humane society has a criminal background, she knows she's not the only one it gave a chance. Huffman said AWEE has been instrumental in her success.

"AWEE takes the place of the support system that would be your family," Huffman said. "I still stay in touch with them. There's a faith-mentoring program I'd like to be involved in."

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