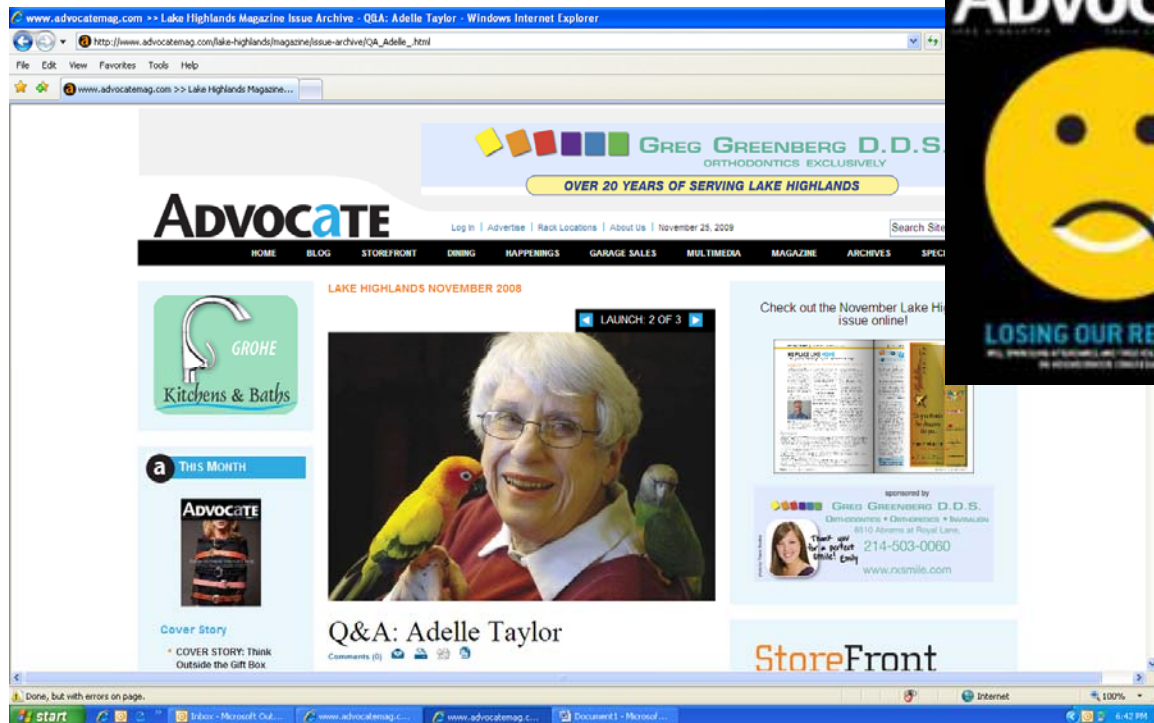


## November 2008 Issue of Lake Highlands Advocate



A little over a year ago, one of 77-year-old ADELLE TAYLOR's most philanthropic friends told her about Dallas' many senior citizens who cannot afford to take care of their animals. An animal lover, Taylor created the nonprofit Seniors' Pets Assistance Network (SPAN), helping older neighbors get proper care for their best pals. Taylor tells us about Rudy, for instance, a kitty that was able to undergo a biopsy, which her 83-year-old owner could never have afforded without help from SPAN. If all goes as planned, Rudy is just the first of the furry friends to find help.

### What inspired you to start SPAN?

Sometime near the end of 2006 a friend called me — this friend who's been a wonderful volunteer all over the city. She loved working with Senior Source. Often clients she worked with through Senior Source are on a fixed income, and many of them have pets that have been with them for years — the pets themselves are often senior citizens. But as costs of veterinary care and food go up, my friend was finding that volunteers were actually helping to pay some of these costs the pet owners couldn't afford. One day she called me and said, "Adelle, you're an animal lover and I need your help." So I said, "Sure."

### So it was that easy?

(Laughter). I thought it would be easy to get some help — I'd just go around and ask my animal-loving friends to give us money. Well, it didn't work. It became apparent pretty quickly that in order to raise money, we'd need to become a legitimate charity. So I handpicked the board — they are all young professionals with full-time careers. I am the only senior on the board. And they have worked their hearts out. Just filling out the paperwork is a lot of hard work. We have to train volunteers, build the website ... we are in fundraising mode right now.

**What exactly are you and the volunteers working toward?**

The mission here is to — let me read it to you — serve the needs of Dallas-area seniors who require assistance in caring for their companion animals. We can't do everything at one time. Vet care will be our first priority, initially. We are just getting started so we don't want to scatter ourselves.

**Why is it so important to keep pets and their owners together?**

We knew pets were good for us, but there is a tremendous amount of research out there now showing that pets help people — reducing blood pressure, stress and in a lot of other ways. One of the major things to attack seniors is loneliness. For some seniors, their pet is their only real family member and having the pet means having a companion. Owners of pets have responsibilities to carry out every day, and they often feel safer in the home with the pet. I like to think of SPAN as not just a pet and people helper, but also a prescription for better health.

**What kind of pet do you have?**

I have five parrots and a fuzzy black Pomeranian, 6 years old. I've had birds for 25 years. I've had Tango, a rescued bird, for 16 years. He belonged to a family that had a baby — Tango is loud and kept waking up the child so they had to give up the bird. A lot of people buy birds because they are pretty, but they don't realize they are complicated to care for. My husband helps me out — when I beg! Seriously, we go to volunteer at Presbyterian Village in Oak Cliff. One of our birds, Toby, is training to be a therapy bird.

**How can we help you?**

We need you to tell everyone you know about us. Send people to our website, [seniorpets.org](http://seniorpets.org), and learn all about us. And ask us for help if you need it. You can also reach SPAN at 972.655.8906. —*Christina Hughes Babb*