



From top: • Amra, the original sheriff of Dogtown, with his girlfriend Rhonda. • One of the first Dogtown octagons going up. • Lucy liked to oversee the feeding process each morning. • Symphony conductor Tom Kirshbaum led the Dogtown Chorus with his poop scoop.

Best Friends Dogtown



A Brief History of Dogtown

1987: The first three octagons are completed. One hundred and fifty dogs move in. Faith Maloney, Best Friends' first director of animal care, sets up Dogtown headquarters in the tiny kitchen of Octagon Three.

1989: Crew chief, designer and mechanic from the Golden Age of Indy Jim Travers, who lives in nearby Kanab, Utah, invites his old pal, businessman Homer Harris, to help him engineer a water system that will save hauling buckets and won't ice up in winter. Homer's wife, Dolores, becomes an early member of Best Friends, sending in \$25 a month.

1991: Times are tough as Best Friends stretches its resources to admit hundreds of abused and abandoned dogs. Dogtown takes form as a true canine community. Sheriff Amra the malamute patrols the town and greets visitors. Ginger the Chesapeake, rescued from a puppy mill, manages the Dogtown economy by gathering tennis balls under the Federal Reserve Tree. And Victor the mutt, who once lived at the end of a heavy old chain, establishes Dogtown's first suburb, Victorville.

1992: One of the earliest regular volunteers is music professor Tom Kirshbaum, conductor of Arizona's Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra. After a day of poop-scooping ("best way to get to know the dogs," he says), he camps out at Dogtown with his basset, Bubbles, to be in the middle of the amazing choir of singing as the dogs greet the sunrise.

1997: Homer and Dolores offer to help build a new suburb of Dogtown for dogs who are older and need longer-term special care. They put up \$500,000, which, promptly matched by the growing number of Best Friends members, quickly leads to the creation of Dogtown Heights (a gated community).

In the years that follow, Dogtown attracts thousands of people – students, interns, veterinarians, vacationers and other visitors, and people from all over the world who are setting up their own sanctuaries or neighborhood programs to help save dogs from an untimely death at local shelters.

Today, shelters, humane societies and rescue groups look to Dogtown as a "dog university."

"The thing we do so well is create a real life for dogs," says Faith. "Dogtown is a rich world that enables every dog to reach his or her full potential – a world where they can leave behind whatever they've suffered and create a new life that makes up for everything that went before."