



Pizza Pups

- 1 Kimberly LaRussa was always looking for ways to help the animal shelter she worked for in Niagara Falls, New York. LaRussa worked for the Niagara County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or the Niagara SPCA. This shelter rescues animals and works to find them good homes.
- 2 The shelter was already very successful. They rescued more than 15,000 animals. But the difficulty was new animals were always arriving that needed a new home. LaRussa wanted to find new ways to let people know about each of these animals. She wanted to encourage even more people to adopt them.
- 3 LaRussa had an unusual idea. A new shelter volunteer, Mary Alloy owned a nearby pizza shop and had always supported the shelter. LaRussa started thinking about all of the people who ate pizza each week. One day LaRussa texted Alloy, “Hey, what would you think about putting pictures of the dogs on pizza boxes?” Alloy thought this sounded like a great way to help dogs get adopted.
- 4 LaRussa printed photos of shelter dogs that were **available** for adoption. Each picture had a message, such as: “Please adopt me! My name is Pickles, and I’m 2. I live at Niagara SPCA. I’d like to live with you.” Alloy taped a photo on each of the shop’s pizza boxes.
- 5 Customers loved seeing these pizza box messages! There were cute photos of dogs with names like Cinnamon, Venus, and Joey. Cinnamon was a cuddly two-month-old puppy with floppy ears. “Many people want to order a pizza just to get the shelter dog photo,” LaRussa said. After only one day, someone adopted a six-month-old puppy named Larry. Soon more dogs found new homes. In addition, business at the pizza shop had doubled over the weekend.

DIRECTIONS

As you read, underline details about the problems and star details about the solutions. Then, complete the activity on page 3.

available: ready or easy to get



- 6 One large dog named Hooch wasn't used to being around children or other animals. He needed an adults-only home, which was hard to find. After seeing his photo, one young couple went to the shelter to meet Hooch. They took him home to see how he would adjust. Soon, the couple told the SPCA that they would adopt Hooch. They sent photos of him sitting on their couch, looking happy. Everyone at the shelter jumped up and down with joy.
- 7 After a while, the Niagara SPCA also started putting photos of shelter cats on the pizza boxes. Cat lovers were thrilled. By May, Alloy had put over 5,000 photos on her pizza boxes, and over 25 dogs and cats had been adopted.
- 8 Before long, LaRussa and Alloy came up with another idea to help both the shelter and the pizza shop. Anyone who adopted one of the "pizza pups" would also receive a \$50 **gift certificate** to buy more pizza. For people thinking about adopting, the gift certificate seemed like an added bonus. Between the photos and the gift certificates, the pizza shop and the shelter were both busier than ever.
- 9 One family had been thinking about adopting a shelter dog since January. Their nine-year-old daughter had fallen in love with a three-year-old dog named Solstice. When they saw Solstice's photo on a pizza box in March, "We rushed to adopt her before anyone else could," the girl's mother said.
- 10 TV stations and newspapers reported about the many **creative** ideas that the Niagara SPCA was trying. The news spread, and soon more shelters and pizza shops in other states hoped to do something similar. Several of them got in touch with the Niagara SPCA to ask for tips.
- 11 Meanwhile, LaRussa and Alloy continue to act as creative problem solvers, finding fun ways to help the shelter. They were surprised by how well their ideas have worked. "It's just unbelievable," Alloy admits. The women say they won't stop until all of the animals are adopted.

gift certificate: a printed statement that can be used as money

creative: original, unique



Understanding Problems and Solutions

Write details about a problem and solution from the text. Then, describe the problem and solution in your own words.

Problem	
Some details from the text that show the problem are...	In my own words, the problem is...

Solution	
Some details from the text that show the solution are...	In my own words, the solution is...



Where Are the Classroom Pets?

- 1 When the coronavirus pandemic closed schools in the spring of 2020, students and teachers tackled the challenge of learning from their homes. But while students and teachers figured out how to distance learn, what happened to all the class pets? Where did they go?
- 2 The problem of taking care of class pets was handled in different ways. Some teachers—like Michigan elementary school teacher Scott Kefgan—took class pets home. However, this solution created a new problem for Mr. Kefgan. His class had many pets, including a lobster and about thirty fish. With all of these animals in his home, his house felt very crowded! “The geckos are in the middle of my kitchen floor,” he said. “My dining room table has the gerbil, and the frogs and the turtles are in this **gigantic** tank.” Since Mr. Kefgan had no choice, he slowly got used to his new roommates.
- 3 Some principals also helped out with class pets. In Missouri, Assistant Principal Kevin Edson brought home two rabbits named Bun Bun and Bruce. These fluffy visitors thrilled Mr. Edson’s three daughters. His daughters played games with the rabbits and even used leashes to take them on walks. However, Mr. Edson’s wife wasn’t happy at all. “It did not take me very long to **recognize** that I do not enjoy having two bunnies in my house. Bunnies are very smelly,” she said. Like Mr. Kefgan, Ms. Edson simply had to adjust to these unexpected visitors.
- 4 Scott Doty is a high school science teacher in Michigan. His classroom had 30 aquariums with about 300 fish. This was too many fish for him to take home. Doty solved his problem by going to school every week to take care of these class pets.

DIRECTIONS

As you read, underline details about problems and star details about solutions. Then, complete the activity on page 6.

gigantic: very big

recognize: to admit as true



- 5 Other teachers took a different approach. They sent class pets home with students. Five-year-old Emma Daly and her nine-year-old sister, Cleo, live in Brooklyn, New York. The sisters took care of a class pet named Frisky the Frog. They loved watching Frisky swim around in his tank. One night the Daly family heard a strange “tik tok tik tok” sound. Everyone was puzzled. Finally, they realized that the noise was coming from Frisky!
- 6 As schools began online learning, another problem came up. Many students missed their class pets. To fix this, one teacher gave her students daily **updates** about their class turtle, named Rio. The teacher included photos and videos of Rio in her reports.
- 7 Wisconsin teacher Maggie Lottes had just gotten two new class pets—two rats named Cookie and Muggo—when the pandemic closed school. Once school went online, Ms. Lottes wanted to find ways to help her students continue to connect with Cookie and Muggo during lessons. Although her students were at home, she knew they could still learn from their class pets. “We had ‘Reading with Rats’ sessions and a weekly ‘Rat Chat’ session on Fridays,” she explained. Students could talk with their teacher and also watch Cookie and Muggo during these online chats.
- 8 “Even though the school year ended much differently than expected,” Ms. Lottes said, “I am thankful that our class pets still brought joy to our virtual classroom.” Teachers across the country agree. The pandemic changed so many things about school, but teachers and students worked hard to take care of their class pets—and find fun new ways for students to enjoy them.

updates: actions or messages to share new information



Understanding How Ideas Relate

Describe the problems and solutions from **Where Are the Classroom Pets?** in the box below. Remember that some problems may have more than one solution. Then, draw a line connecting which problems are related to which solutions.

Problems	Solutions