

Film documents pet rescue efforts

It begins with the view from a boat speeding on brown water above the submerged streets of New Orleans. Images on the screen include dogs on rooftops, scenes from an attic refuge.

"Katrina Tails" is a documentary that follows animal rescue efforts after Hurricane Katrina, and tracks several searches for beloved pets by residents from New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish and Waveland, Miss.

Producer and director **Denise Richard Donnelly** has followed gorillas through the jungle while making movies, and yet the "Katrina Tails" shoot involved what she called "the most arduous circumstances" she's ever experienced while filming. As noted in the movie, 50,000 to 100,000 pets were lost in three states — an animal crisis without precedent.

This feature-length film documents not just the facts, but the emotions involved. This is a must-see for animal lovers, even those who have avoided other Katrina-related productions.

Memorable moments include the determined rescuer who swam across the street, went underwater to enter a house, grabbed two dogs floating on cushions up to the ceiling, took a breath and swam back out.

Another memorable moment: the "Sophie's Choice" agony of firemen deciding which of hundreds of dogs to help. The outrage at the cruel and pointless shooting by authorities of horses that were fed and watered daily. The selflessness of a man in an attic with water up to his face who put his two dogs above him out of the water. A St. Bernard native, whose local accent somehow required subtitles for a national audience, swearing he would drown before leaving his dog behind again.

Long after the flood has receded, the problem of finding, identifying, and getting back the pets remained. Hardly any of the pets saved were micro-chipped, and identification often was lost.

This recent showing of "Katrina Tails" was at the Deutsches Haus, an appropriate venue. Located on South Galvez Street in the middle of the city, the Haus



ANIMAL ADVISER

Ann Nungesser

is a Katrina survivor that was severely damaged. Its members have completed the renovation and repair of the first floor, and are working on the second floor. Having survived the storm, it's now in

another fight for survival since the planned medical complex for the area threatens possible destruction.

A historic statue of Berlin's bear mascot greets visitors when they enter the Haus. There is also a living de facto mascot, Max, who often accompanies his owner, **James Treadway**, to the Haus. Despite his large size, Max is still a puppy. Max is especially good with children and will pull a wagon in this year's Oktoberfest parade. Treadway and Max have been living in a FEMA trailer, so understandably the first command Max learned was "back up," since there is no room for him to turn around.

Gary Michael Smith and **Brenda Floyd** introduced "Katrina Tails" at the Haus showing on behalf of Donnelly, who lives in California. Smith is involved in the New Orleans film industry.

Smith and Floyd said they have had positive reactions from the film's audiences. The Haus viewers were no exception. The audience included both Haus President **Keith Oldendorf**, Vice President **Tommy Mertz**, veterinarian **Andrea Lorroque** and board member **Hans Heinemann**.

Heinemann is a Gretna resident with a distinctive German accent and a soft heart for animals. He's had up to five dogs at a time, always adopted when they couldn't be cared for by their original owners. Currently he lives with Happy, a poodle mix that once ruled the fourth floor of the former Little Sisters of the Poor nursing home in Algiers.

Heinemann's reaction to the film, the situation requiring people to leave pets behind, and the new law mandating that animals be part of evacuation plans, was simply, "We should not need a law to be humane." Who could disagree?

COMMUNITY NEWS



Deutsches Haus Vice President Tommy Mertz, veterinarian Andrea Lorroque and Haus President Keith Oldendorf stand in front of the historic Haus the night of 'Katrina Tails,' a film about the rescue and search for Katrina pets. Located on South Galvez Street, the Haus was severely damaged by Katrina.



Gary Michael Smith and Brenda Floyd introduced the film, which captures both the tragic facts and the emotions of the human/animal bond, on behalf of California filmmaker Denise Richard Donnelly. The couple have two cats including Emory, who was named for the MREs she ate while following the military post-Katrina.



James Treadway shows off Max, his Great Dane or German mastiff, who is the de facto mascot of the Deutsches Haus. Max is not yet a year old, and lives in a FEMA trailer. He'll pull a wagon in this year's Oktoberfest parade.

To purchase or for more information on "Katrina Tails," visit www.katrinatails.com. For more information on the Deutsches Haus, visit www.deutscheshaus.org.