

PET CAUSE

THIS ENTREPRENEUR HAS BUILT A BUSINESS OUT OF HELPING AND HEALING ANIMALS. BY MELANIE SCHUTT

AS A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA middle school teacher in the 1990s, Kathleen Prasad had no idea she would one day become a leader in holistic healing. At the time, Prasad was happy with her teaching position. But when a relative experienced post-surgery complications and found relief through Reiki, a gentle hands-on technique to promote relaxation and healing, she suggested that Prasad try a session. Prasad skeptically agreed. “It was amazing,” she said, “a massage times a thousand. I thought, ‘I have to learn more about this!’”

Her dog Dakota gave her the next nudge toward a new career. Prasad learned the basics of Reiki and began practicing self-treatment. Dakota, an Australian Shepherd mix, would come lie on her feet every time she practiced and fall into deep relaxation. Prasad became intrigued by the idea that Reiki could have beneficial effects on animals.

Prasad began volunteering at animal shelters, and noticed that the animals’ ailments improved with Reiki treatments. She created an Animal Kindness curriculum for her middle school, and was amazed how engaged the students were, even those who typically “hated homework.” Prasad was driven to extend her love of teaching to Reiki.

She became certified as a Reiki instructor in 2001, teaching out of her home. The classes became increasingly animal focused. She moved beyond her home classroom to teach at The Elephant Sanctuary,

Guide Dogs for the Blind and BrightHaven Healing Arts Center for Animals.

Locally, Prasad became known as “the person to go to” for information, treatments or teaching on animal Reiki. Prasad also began receiving inquiries from people across the country and internationally. To meet demand, she created telecourses and correspondence courses. She realized she was building a network of students and practitioners, and developed a resource directory on her Web site (www.animalreikisource.com) to support it. Her next step was writing an Animal Reiki Practitioner Code of Ethics to monitor practitioner quality. Anyone listed in her directory must agree to and uphold this code.

As a teacher, Prasad doubled her student base each year. She added new revenue streams by co-authoring a book with Elizabeth Fulton entitled “Animal Reiki: Using Energy to Heal the Animals in Your Life,” and by developing an “Animal Reiki: Beyond the Basics” DVD, scheduled for a fall 2008 release. Other teachers have used Prasad’s book as a course manual, and she plans to continue creating educational resources.

Her transition from schoolteacher to animal Reiki leader was not without challenges. “One of my biggest challenges was internal,” she says, “I worried what people would think. But if you live your life worrying about people’s opinions, you’re not going to succeed.” Her daily work experiences provided plenty of career confidence to counteract setbacks—she’d simply think about the people and animals she’d helped.

Today, Prasad teaches on-site at BrightHaven, donating half the course fees back to the center. She has been invited to speak at the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association’s conference, is developing a nonprofit called Shelter Animal Reiki Association, and has students in Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia and across Europe. Prasad believes her positive connections with students, colleagues and animal organizations have been crucial to her success. “It’s all about relationships,” she says. **SBS**

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Animals inspired Kathleen Prasad to pioneer a new industry.

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