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## THE LIVES OF OTHERS

I admit to being one of those people who can't resist greeting every animal I encounter. My husband has accepted that our evening walks are often interrupted by my need to pet every dog being walked and every cat lounging on the sidewalk.

I've also been known to bring animals home with us – dogs who are clearly lost, cats who are clearly homeless.

I don't seek out wandering dogs or hungry-looking cats, but they seem to find *me*. And at that moment when I realize I have to intervene, my first thought is always "oh no – "I'm in a rush, I don't have time, this isn't my problem," but that voice is never loud enough to make me turn away.

It would be easier to do – certainly more convenient, especially for my own two cats who have to relinquish a part of their living space for whatever refugee happens to come home with us.

But if it's not *my* problem, then whose is it? By virtue of being part of a larger community, I can't help but feel a responsibility to care for *all* its members, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.

Gandhi once said "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated"; by that definition, we have a long way to go. But there is so much we can do to make sure that no one suffers needlessly.

I keep leashes, treats, and blankets in my car and have the number for my local animal shelter stored in my cell phone; I support spay/neuter clinics; and I've pulled over many times to move a lifeless body out of the street, calling when there's a telephone number on the tag and creating a proper burial when there's not. Basically, I've come to accept that whatever plans I have on any given day may be curtailed by an unexpected critter who happens to cross my path.

These small steps reap huge rewards, namely reuniting animals with their people, providing shelter to the lost and abandoned, and just knowing that a few moments of inconvenience for *me* makes a world of difference in the lives of others.

With a perspective...