

9-year-old's Pet Pantry helps animals in need

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When Covington School student Sophia Rotger, 9, heard a news story about families having to give away their pets because they couldn't afford to feed them, she wanted to help.

"Sophia's interest and curiosity about the issue presented a great opportunity for me to teach her how to get involved and feel empowered in the face of negative news," said Sophia's mother, Rachel Rotger.

And so The Birmingham Pet Pantry was created as an annual promotion to collect pet food donations from Birmingham area pet enthusiasts.

Sophia and her mom didn't have to look far to gather other partners around the project. For distribution, Gleaners Food Bank connected them with Community Sharing, a pantry in its network that offers the option for families to shop for pet food. Sophia's favorite store for shopping for toys and food for her own pets, Premier Pet Supply, was also happy to participate as the collection point for all the donations and is even offering a discount to anyone wishing to purchase the food donations at his store.

Mike Palmer is the owner of Premier Pet Supply and when he heard of Sophia's idea, he couldn't wait to get on board.

"What I'm impressed by is the fact that a 9 year old would be forward thinking enough to come up with an idea like this food drive to enable people to keep their pets. As opposed to trying to figure out how to find homes for more and more homeless pets, Sophie came up with a plan to prevent that from becoming an issue."



Sophia Rotger holds Lucy, her terrier mix. Sophia is ensuring that other pets have enough food as her own.

Anyone wishing to donate pet food can either deliver it to or purchase it at Premier Pet Supply between now and until March 31. Premier Pet Supply is at 31215 Southfield Road, Beverly Hills.

So far they have collected over 1,800 pounds of food and the donations will be delivered to Community Sharing on April 1. For more information about Community Sharing visit www.community-sharing.org

Sophia is a third grader at Birmingham Covington School and has three pets of her own: a golden retriever named Katie; Lucy, a terrier-mix, and a guinea pig named Sandy.