

Early Adopters

Middle school girls in New York City give stray dogs a second chance.



WHAT HAPPENS when puppies and preteen girls get together? Lots of hugging, some high-pitched squealing, and, it turns out, plenty of healing. Unleashed (unleashedny.org) is a program that teaches New York City middle school students how to become animal welfare advocates. Working with shelters primarily in the rural South where dogs would otherwise be euthanized because of overpopulation and limited resources, the girls recruit foster families, write Petfinder listings, and interview would-be adopters; they also gain experience in fund-raising, marketing, and public speaking. “We make the dogs’ lives better,” says Unleashed participant Meredith McDevitt, 13, “and they make ours better.” Since its start last fall, Unleashed has placed nearly 100 puppies in permanent homes.

“Middle school girls are trying to figure out who they are,” says psychologist and Unleashed founder Stacey Radin, PhD. “I wanted to create a program to help them feel powerful and make an impact. They are the voices for these puppies, and they go the distance for them.”

Having finished her three-month rotation with Unleashed,



McDevitt snuggles up to one of her charges.

Brandilee Figueroa, 15, now plans to become a veterinarian or work for the ASPCA. “One of my favorite dogs was Fancy, who was skinny and scared when we first found her,” Figueroa says. “Fancy came to visit us after she was adopted, and she was so cheerful and thick and lovely. She’s not afraid anymore, she communicates, and she loves everyone. It’s so good to see where she started and what she’s become.” —**BROOKE KOSOFSKY GLASSBERG**



Here to Sway

For stressed-out city dwellers, Eoin Finn has a relaxing remedy.

After years as a yoga teacher, Eoin Finn still hadn’t reached enlightenment—a serene state of appreciation for

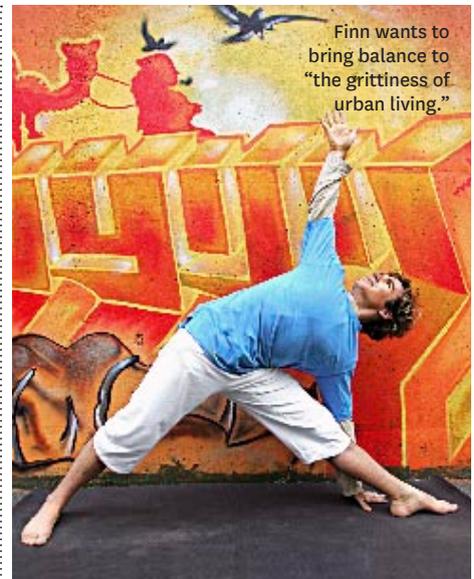
the present moment. Then, on a retreat in Costa Rica in 2006, he lay in a hammock. “I thought, *if everyone did this*

for ten minutes a day, we’d be calmer and more productive.”

He’s right: Studies show that even short periods of relaxation can lower blood pressure and improve concentration. Finn gathered some hammocks and set up a “spontaneous relaxation” zone in Vancouver (his home), inviting

hurried passersby to have a swing. “There’s some bewilderment, then they melt right in,” he says.

Now Finn hosts events across North America (see blissology.com for details). “We’re not selling anything,” he says. “We’re just helping people sit down and enjoy the simple splendors of life.” —**RACHEL MOUNT**



FINN: ALEX JOWETT/ALEXJOWETT.COM