

Pets Are People Too, Y'know!

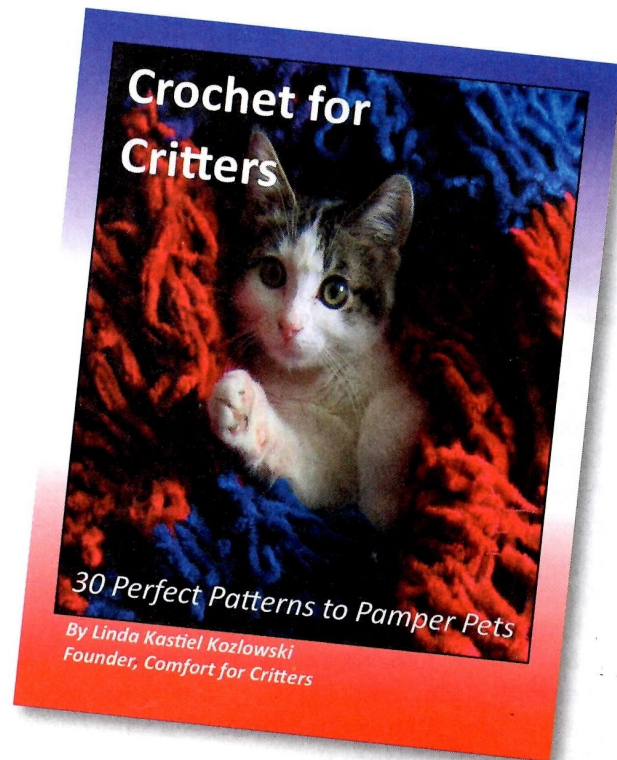
By Randy Cavaliere

It's an understatement to say that 2020 was an interesting year. When I wrote this, at the end of that year, the world was still in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic and our lives were upended from what we formerly knew. We waited anxiously for vaccines to be approved and administered so we could go back to that which we dearly missed.

I've found that in every situation, there is something for which to be thankful. In my life, there was the birth of a grandchild, the marriage of a daughter, and a potentially serious medical event that ended on a healthy note. My work kept me in a good routine.

What in your life gave you relief from the frightening reality of the virus? As a loyal reader, I would think there were at least two things: your hook and your yarn. Many folks were grateful that craft stores remained open, deemed as essential businesses, giving us the means to create and alleviate stress. Making something for someone other than ourselves is always a feel-good activity.

We of the crafty ilk are, in general, a very charitable group. When there's a need, our hooks start flying. Our good work is not limited to people; animals are



often in need as well. Thousands of crocheters and knitters answered the call worldwide to help animals affected by the 2019 Australian wildfires. Not surprisingly, adoption rates from animals shelters, especially for dogs, zoomed upward in the face of the pandemic. An article in USA Today from September 2020 cited a 73% rise in adoptions. But another article in the publication from April 2020 states that, "...shelters are never, ever completely clear of animals." (*USA Today, April 2020*) So throughout the pandemic and in normal times, animal shelters constantly require donations and supplies.

Just as in your home, animals need good food and a comfortable environment. Items that are easy to make and always needed in shelters are blankets, used as beds. One nonprofit organization that provides comfort is aptly named "Comfort for Critters" (CFC). According to their website, <https://comfortforcritters.org>, this is a volunteer program that donates free, handmade blankets to more than 300 shelters in every U.S. state. Founded and owned by Linda Kastiel Kozlowski, CFC has, as of December 2020, donated more than 108,000 blankets since its inception in 2007! Over 15,000 blankets were donated in 2020! 1,000–2,000 blankets are shipped monthly from its Glen Ellyn, Ill. base to shelters nationwide. WOW!

CFC not only supports sheltered dogs and cats, but also donates to shelters that support less common pets such as fennec foxes, ferrets, fancy rats, mice and rabbits.

CFC relies solely on volunteer efforts and donations of money, supplies, yarn and fleece fabric. The website offers step-by-step directions and free patterns for crochet and fleece blankets. An e-book of crochet patterns and handmade blankets for your pets is available for purchase; don't overlook the wearables for pet parents and animal lovers.

You can easily get started on a blanket. Look for the free Super-Easy Crochet Patterns that require a K/10½/6.5mm hook and 4-ply yarn to create a blanket measuring 20–22 inches long. A PDF page of patterns is available for downloading.

Once that blanket is complete, there are 2 ways to donate your work: directly to CFC or to a local shelter in your area. Click on "Volunteer Resources" for the address to which you can drop off or mail your donation. (You can drop yarn and fleece at the collection site if you live in the area.) Include your name and email address so a thank-you note can be sent to you.

Not sure where to send locally? Scroll down the same resource page to section #2 for information on shipping. Be sure to complete the "Drop Off Memo" on the website so your donation will be included in the CFC monthly and annual donation counts. Click on "Animal Shelters We Support." Find one in your state or wherever you want to donate. You'll see helpful information such as the contact person, type of blanket requested and the animals sheltered.

There is so much to read on the website that doing so is enjoyable on its own!

Here are some of the benefits of making blankets for shelter animals:

1. You contribute to meeting an ongoing need.
2. It's a great way to use up scrap yarn and make room for new yarn!
3. It's a wonderful group activity, even in times when social distancing is still a "must."
4. You'll have the heartwarming knowledge of knowing you made a shelter animal's life more comfortable.



5. The comfort doesn't end when the animal is adopted; your blanket goes home with someone's new pet.

Charles Dickens wrote in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." I hope your hook and yarn have given you some relief during the time of the pandemic. 