

inside



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CNN's Jim Acosta on how he stays grounded

By Tricia Escobedo



CNN's Jim Acosta, right, covers the 2012 New Hampshire primaries. (Edward M. Pio Roda)

Covering the news can be a stressful job that often requires long and odd working hours. News correspondents must be available almost any time of the day to report on events as they unfold.

That was the life of **CNN anchor and chief national correspondent Jim Acosta** for many years reporting on political campaigns and the White House.

Shortly after transitioning to his current role, he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

“After I left the White House in 2021, I would basically tell anybody that I knew that I wanted to get a dog,” Acosta said. “I thought, you know, I’m going to have a little bit more free time on my hands since I’m not going to be at the White House day and night. I’d love to have a dog. It’s something that I’ve always wanted to do.”



Acosta and Duke

He reached out to a friend who worked with a rescue organization, and a short time later he was connected with a beagle puppy named Duke whose mother had been found in an abandoned house.

“I just love dogs,” Acosta said. “I must have been a dog in a previous life, and so it just was a natural thing to want one as soon as I had the time available.”

Each year, CNN asks its TV hosts and correspondents to spotlight the inspiring stories of changemakers with whom they share a personal connection as part of the network's **"Champions For Change" initiative**.

Acosta didn't have to think twice when he was asked. He selected Julie Castle, the CEO of the **Best Friends animal sanctuary**, who helped connect him with Duke.

Best Friends has two pet sanctuaries, one in Utah and one in Arkansas where Duke is from. They are calm, hospitable places for the animals and encourage visitors who are interested in adopting.

The Kanab, Utah, location is "like a national park with rescue animals," Acosta said. The sprawling indoor-outdoor sanctuary houses plenty of cats and dogs but also other animals such as pigs, goats, horses, turtles and parrots.

At the facility in Bentonville, Arkansas, "there are beanbag chairs, there's a coffee bar ... they want you to come in there and spend a lot of time with the animals," Acosta said. "(It's) like an Apple store for animal rescue."

Best Friends is working with other shelters to help create the same model and reduce the rate of euthanasia for healthy, adoptable pets.

"They're essentially trying to revolutionize the pet adoption experience ... into a much more appealing experience rather than just going to the sad, depressing animal shelter (where) animals might get put to sleep," Acosta said. "What Best Friends is hoping for is that by the year 2025 — just two years from now — 90% of animals that go into shelter facilities get rescued."

When Acosta reached out to his friend who works for Best Friends to help him find a dog, it didn't take long for him to find the perfect match.

"Within a week or two she was sending me pictures of this little beagle puppy that they found in Arkansas," he said. "Apparently the mother had been left abandoned in some house that had been foreclosed on and had puppies.

“As soon as I got the picture texted to me, I was like: ‘Oh my God, this is it. I have to adopt this dog.’

“Within a few weeks I met Duke, and (we’ve) been best friends ever since.”



***VIDEO:** Acosta spotlights Best Friends Animal Society, which is on the forefront of the no-kill movement.*

After his experience, Acosta wanted to spread awareness about Best Friends and its mission.

“If we could take all the stressed-out people in this country and put them together with an animal that needs a home — think about all the good we could do,” Acosta said. “I find having a pet to be a tremendous stress reliever and a tremendous reality check on your life. You know what I mean?”

“You’re stressed out ... and then you come home, you open the door and the dog’s looking at you like ‘I’ve got to go to the bathroom!’

“It does take you back down to planet Earth and ground you a little bit. And I think it’s a tremendously healthy thing.”

■ ***CNN insider rec of the week***





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