



Cindy Ratliffe tries a new animal oxygen mask on her dog, BJ, at the Burleson Fire Department Station 1. The masks were donated by Dog Scouts of America Troop 119.

CHRISTOPHER AMOS/Burleson Star

Dog Scouts donate air masks to BFD

By SALLY ELLERTSON
Burleson Star Editor

Dogs caught in house fires have an even better chance of survival thanks to the Dog Scouts of America.

Troop 119, based in Fort Worth, donated animal oxygen masks to the Burleson Fire Department.

"One of our top individual fundraisers, Connie Romano, for Dog Scouts of America lives just outside the Burleson city limits," Cindy Ratliffe with DSA, said. "Her dog, a Westie named Stuart, is the chair dog of the event."

The nonprofit group has donated oxygen masks to fire departments in Fort Worth, Arlington, Dallas, and Mansfield. The masks are designed to allow firefighters to provide respiratory aid to animals rescued from fires. The kits come with three masks—small, medium, and large.

"The difference between this mask and a human mask is that the human air mask is more flat to fit over your face. With that,

firefighters can wave it in front of the animal's face or try to hold it up to their mouth," Ratliffe said. "The animal masks are cone-shaped, like a plastic cup from the ballpark, so it fits over their muzzle. There is a ring of rubber that seals it to the dog's muzzle so all of the oxygen goes directly into the dog."

Cindy and her golden retriever, BJ, and Connie and Stuart presented the two mask kits to the Burleson Fire Department.

"We have the masks on the first truck out of each station," Burleson Fire Chief Gary Wisdom said. "I am guessing that we probably do about two animal rescues like this each year."

Dog Scouts of America works to promote responsible pet ownership and raises funds for Operation Kindness and other animal welfare causes. Troop 119 covers the North Texas area, which includes from Burleson up to Plano and McKinney and "everything in between," Ratliffe said.

For more information about Dog Scouts of America, log on to www.dogscouts.com.