

## TRENDSSETTERS

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# PICTURE PERFECT

*Susan Schmitz creates her dream job—which also happens to save lives*

BY GABBY RICHMAN

**S**usan Schmitz, owner of Photo Fusion Studio and A Dog's Life Photography, works full-time at a mortgage company, owns a photography studio, and still manages to be a hero.

The Scottsdale resident recently won a coveted Creative Grant in the International Shutterstock Stories Creative Grant Program, where she received \$5,000 to expand her work with rescue animals. The competition was fierce—Shutterstock received video entries from 39 counties, and Schmitz was one of only seven winners (and one of only two from North America).

Before receiving the grant she spent one day a week donating free photography sessions for rescue animals up for adoption, but since winning, Schmitz has expanded her rescue photo program to three days a week. The photographs are used by rescue agencies to promote adoption through website advertising, social media and fundraising efforts.

Schmitz says she always had a love for animals while growing up, but really took an interest when she began volunteering her time photographing at an animal rescue shelter.

"Merging the two, animals and the photography together, was just kind of creating my own dream job," Schmitz explains. A Dog's Life Photography also specializes in commercial and personal pet portraits.



### *Etc.*

**What is the most unique animal that you have photographed?** Probably a pot-bellied pig. The owner was so afraid that she would not sit still long enough for one photo but the trainer I work with had her clicker-trained to pose for the camera in less than an hour. **What would you tell others looking to get involved with philanthropy?** Whether you are an artist, accountant, sales rep or software engineer, charity organizations can use your help. I encourage everyone to volunteer their own unique skills and talents to help out non-profit groups that are close to their own hearts.