

Marti Colwell:

A Champion for the Smallest Among Us

By Jessica Dee Rohm

There are people who build successful careers—and then there are those who quietly build legacies. Marti Colwell has done both, with a life shaped as much by movement and reinvention as by purpose and heart.

An Air Force “brat” from the start, Marti’s childhood was anything but rooted in one place. She grew up moving across continents and cultures—living in New York, Newfoundland (where she attended elementary school), Delaware, Florida, Taiwan, Oklahoma, and Minnesota. Each new location brought a fresh perspective, an adaptability, and a deep understanding of people—qualities that would later define both her professional success and her humanitarian work.

In a fitting twist of geography and destiny, Marti returned at age 17 to Coral Gables—her birthplace—to attend the University of Miami. She went on to pursue graduate studies at Phillips University and UCLA, laying the academic foundation for a career that would span decades in



Marti with Missy, Quincy, and Lindsey in her backyard.

the high-tech industry.

As a marketing executive with more than 25 years of experience, Marti built a reputation for helping companies find their voice. She worked across startups and multinational organizations, shaping messaging, positioning brands, and driving

growth. Known for her strategic clarity and intuitive grasp of the “voice of the customer,” she enabled businesses to connect more authentically with the people they served.

Yet even as she thrived in the corporate world, another calling was quietly taking shape.

As the founder of Bichon FurKids, Marti transformed compassion into action on an extraordinary scale. What began as a mission to help a beloved breed has grown into a powerful, life-saving organization that has rescued more than 4,000 dogs—Bichons, Havanese, poodles, maltipoos, and mixes—giving each one not just shelter, but a second chance at life.

“Every dog deserves not just a home—but a loving, forever home,” Marti said.

At the heart of Bichon FurKids is a simple but profound belief: that our animal companions deserve to be cherished, protected, and loved. Marti and her dedicated team of volunteers live this philosophy every day. They step in when dogs can no longer



Quincy at the Bash



Caption needed



Kenzie sitting pretty in the grass



Caption needed

remain with their families—whether due to illness, hardship, or circumstance—and ensure these vulnerable animals are placed in safe, nurturing foster homes before finding their forever families.

“Rescue isn’t just about saving lives—it’s about restoring trust, confidence, and dignity.”

The work is demanding. It requires patience, resilience, and an unshakable commitment to creatures who cannot speak for themselves. Yet Marti approaches it with the same discipline and insight that defined her corporate career—bringing structure, strategy, and an abundance of empathy to every rescue.

Her personal journey reflects that same resilience and openness. After the loss of her husband a few years ago, Marti found an unexpected new chapter through the game of bridge. At Oasis, she met fellow player Ruprecht von Buttler, who had also lost his spouse. What began as a shared understanding grew into companionship, and today the happy couple lives in Poway, surrounded by a lively household of four rescue dogs—Marti’s beloved trio, Kimmie, Quincy, and Kenzie, along with Ruprecht’s

dog, Toby. Together, they form a devoted pack, bound as much by affection as by second chances.

Marti’s life has also been shaped by family and a global perspective. Her two adult children live overseas—her daughter divides her time between Portugal and Holland, while her son calls Japan home. She is a proud grandmother to two granddaughters—one currently at UC Berkeley, the other embarking on college tours as this story is written.

Her connection to place has evolved over time. Her father’s final Air Force assignment brought her parents to Oahu, where they lived for 17 years and where Marti spent many cherished vacations and summers. In 1979, a corporate relocation brought her to Southern California—a place she has called home ever since.

Those who know Marti often remark on her rare duality: a results-driven executive paired with a deeply compassionate advocate. It is precisely this combination that has allowed Bichon FurKids not only to succeed, but to flourish—as both a rescue organization and a community united by purpose. ♣



Marti and Ruprecht

How to Help

Bichon FurKids is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit organization, and its lifesaving work depends entirely on the generosity of donors and supporters. Contributions go directly toward medical care, rehabilitation, transportation, and placement of rescued dogs into loving homes.

Donations of any size make a meaningful difference. For those seeking a more hands-on role, fostering, volunteering, or simply helping spread the word are invaluable ways to support the mission.

As Marti often says:

“It takes a village to give these dogs the lives they deserve. Fosters are always needed to help save lives, and donations enable us to provide the care these deserving pups require.”

To get involved:

Foster: <https://bichonfurkids.org/volunteer-foster-2/>

Donate: <https://bichonfurkids.org/donate/>

In a world that often celebrates grand gestures, Marti Colwell’s life reminds us of something quieter—but no less powerful: that changing thousands of lives can begin with caring deeply about just one.