

HOLLAND, Jennifer S. Unlikely Heroes: 37 Inspiring Stories of Courage and Heart from the Animal Kingdom. 246p. notes. photos. Workman. 2014. pap. \$13.95. ISBN 9780761174417.

Gr 5-8—In this heartwarming follow-up to *Unlikely Friendships: 47 Remarkable Stories from the Animal Kingdom* (2011) and *Unlikely Loves: 43 Heartwarming True Stories from the Animal Kingdom* (2013, both Workman), Holland whips up enthusiasm for the selfless acts of different animals. The book is divided into “Superheroes” (animals engaging in thrilling acts of bravery, such as dolphins who rescue divers from great white sharks), “Everyday Heroes” (creatures still making an impact, including a llama that comforts the elderly and disabled), and “Big-Picture Heroes” (those unknowingly contributing to a larger effort, such as housecats that, through in-vitro fertilization, are gestating and giving birth to endangered black footed kittens). The heroes here run the gamut from wild to tame: rats sniff out landmines, a hippo saves a baby gazelle from a crocodile, a horse rescues his owner from an attacking dog, and more. A charming design enhances the text. Inspirational quotes set the mood for each section, insets throughout add related facts, and eye-catching photographs add to the adorable factor. The upbeat text has a positive tone, but these stories aren’t mere fluff. They include plenty of quotes from experts, and Holland casts a critical eye over these tales, being careful not to anthropomorphize; for instance, when writing about the heroism of elephants, she also emphasizes that these large animals can be destructive. A sweet look at the animal kingdom.—*Nancy Call, Santa Cruz Public Libraries, Aptos, CA*

