

## Nancy Bock: A Pet's Best Friend

by Taylor Arnold



Nancy Bock received \$25,000 for her winning concept, "The PetSafe Fire Escape for Crates," to help pets escape from their crates in case of fire or smoke emergencies.

Nancy Bock doesn't just love animals. She is on a mission to make the world a safer place for them. Recently she developed the winning concept, "The PetSafe Fire Escape for Crates," to help pets escape from their crates in case of fire or smoke emergencies, and as contest winner, she was awarded \$25,000. Today she is poised to have her invention developed and sold exclusively through Foster & Smith, the nation's leading veterinary-owned pet supplier.

Originally from upstate New York, Bock earned a degree in Computer Science and Math from SUNY Binghamton. Since 1990, this 44-year old financial analyst has called Atlanta home, and she says she can't remember a time when she didn't love animals. "Right now I have four cats and two dogs," she says. "I was always an animal lover."

The inspiration for "The PetSafe Fire Escape for Crates," came to Bock after a first hand encounter with a house fire. "We were in Kirkwood helping some friends work on their house when we heard a beeping," she says. "We noticed that the neighbor's house was on fire. It took the fire department about 15 or 20 minutes to get there, and we could hear two dogs in the back of the house. We started smashing in windows, trying to get into the back door, but they were in a crate and we couldn't get to them in time. They ended up burning alive."

I would love for someone to call me up one day and tell me that their dog is alive because of PetSafe.

The experience was so unsettling to Bock that she decided to take action. "Nobody thinks this will happen to them, but you have got to be prepared," she says. So when she heard about "My Pet Idea," an online creative contest that was in search of the next great pet product invention, she got to work. "About a month after the fire I submitted my idea and then forgot about it," she says. "A few weeks later I found out I made the top 10, then the top four."

Created by PetSafe and Drs. Foster & Smith, "My Pet Idea" invited consumers to submit ideas for new products that would enhance the pet/owner relationship and ultimately improve a pet's quality of life. After receiving more than 5,000 ideas and 200,000 votes, they selected Bock as their first place "Petpreneur" for 2007. "I went to Knoxville where the engineers had been working on my product for six weeks," Bock says. "I got to

give my input which was great because it was a very collaborative process."

The result is an attachment designed for crated dogs and cats to escape a fire, alert their owners of danger and ultimately avoid being trapped. "Firemen typically will not enter a burning house to save a pet," she says. "The heat alarm is on the crate so that when the smoke alarm goes off it will trigger the door to the crate to open. When the detector is activated, a magnet drops to lift the crate pin and open the crate door."

In addition to her invention, Bock has some important tips for helping animals escape a fire. "Keep your crate in a visible space," she says. "Keep a sign on the door that says where the animals are in case of emergency. Also, have a fire extinguisher upstairs."

She also has plenty more ideas for safety products. "I want to invent a smoke alarm that says 'Fire!' instead of beeping," she says. "Everything beeps these days... clocks, phones, microwaves... so you disregard it. But if you're sleeping, this wakes you up more than beeping would." She wants the alarm to have a visual component as well. "When the fire alarm goes off, I want to have something like

a disco ball flashing," she says. "This will get people's attention when the fire is in the back of the house."

When asked what she plans to do with the \$25,000, Bock says that this was as much a surprise to her as winning the contest. "I had no idea there was prize money!" she laughs. "I have donated some to a pet charity in my hometown, and my partner, Bonnie, is picking a charity in Louisiana for Katrina."

As for the "PetSafe Fire Escape for Crates," Bock just hopes that it will save other animals from danger. "I hope pet owners will attach this to their crates," she says. "I would love some one to call me up and say that my dog is alive because he got out."

To learn more about Foster & Smith, visit [www.drsofostersmith.com](http://www.drsofostersmith.com). For more information about PetSafe visit [www.petsafe.net](http://www.petsafe.net), and for more information on "The Fire Escape for Crates" visit [www.mypetidea.com](http://www.mypetidea.com).