



Animal Chatter

Washington Area Humane Society **SPRING 2007**

1527 Rt. 136 | Eighty Four, PA 15330 | 724-222-PETS | washingtonpashelter.org

A No Kill Shelter Giving Pets A New Leash On Life Funded By Your Contributions

★ Wish List ★

- Dry Cat & Dog Food
- Frontline Plus
- Dry Kitten Food
- Scoopable Cat Litter
- Bleach (*we use a lot*)
- Laundry Detergent
- Paper Towels
- Baby Food (*meat only*)
- Small Envelopes
- Postage Stamps
- 39 Gal. Garbage Bags
- HP15, 17, 78 cartridges

A QUICK LOOK AT

Abuse Cases

Most of the cruelty to animals complaints we file are summary offenses, filed with a Magisterial District Judge who notifies the defendant of the charges against them. If the defendant pleads guilty, the sentence can bring fines from \$50 to \$750 per animal, and up to 90 days in jail. The Humane Society does not receive any of the fine.

If the defendant pleads not guilty to the charge, a hearing is scheduled. Our Humane Society Police Officer will present evidence and witness(es) are asked to offer testimony in support of our complaint.

If there is no response to the charge, a warrant is issued, and a constable is sent to locate the defendant, which can take from weeks to years. Often the defendants leave the area, and are never found and brought to justice.

Dog Thrives Despite Stunning Cruelty

by Jamie Ivanac

To see Colby today, you would never know the horrors he suffered just three months ago. Colby is a happy, playful puppy who loves to run, loves to play in the water – and loves people, especially Kris Marra and her husband, Gordon Otten.

Late on Dec. 23, Kris was watching the local news when she saw a story that sickened her. A Bentleyville man had been arrested for abusing his dog, beating him with a baseball bat and throwing him repeatedly against a trailer.

Kris's heart went out to the puppy. "When I saw him, I told my husband, 'We have to get this dog,'" she said.

Kris and Gordon, WAHS volunteers, contacted the shelter and made arrangements to foster the puppy, who they named Colby.

Kris, a realtor from Peters Township, first became acquainted with WAHS when she called to report a dog she had seen tied out on a very short chain. "I was showing a house on a Saturday evening when I noticed the dog. I called WAHS and left a message, and they called



me back at 9 p.m. that same night. I can't even get a realtor to call me back at 9 on a Saturday!"

Since then, Kris's company, Coldwell Banker, has donated money to the shelter, and Gordon, a contractor, built the roofs over the dog runs.

When they brought him home, Colby had a 9-inch incision on his back, no top teeth and a golf-ball sized hematoma on the top of his head. He weighed just 15 pounds. A donor from Bethel Park paid Colby's initial emergency vet bills, but he's had to have two more surgeries since then.

"When we first got him, even though he was in pretty bad shape, his spirit was still good," said

Kris. They even took him with them to Gordon's sister's house for Christmas dinner. "We didn't want to leave him alone. He was wagging his tail the whole time."

Today, Colby has made himself right at home with Kris, Gordon and their 11 cats – all of which were rescued, three from WAHS. His top teeth are growing back and he's up to a healthy 45 pounds. The only indication of his abuse is a scar on his neck.

"He has really come a long way," said Kris. "He sleeps in bed with us. Even the cats love him."

"We weren't looking for a dog, but Colby called out to us," said Kris. "He's our son. We love him."

A Story About Kacie *by Jeannie Sexauer*

Kacie, an abandoned 3- year-old setter/beagle or pointer mix was found running through a neighborhood with several other dogs two years ago. Our Humane Officer was dispatched to bring the dogs in and was able to pick up two of them, a rottweiler pup and Kacie. Kacie was extremely thin, had bacterial infections of her skin and was scared to death. She was at our shelter for five days when I was asked to walk her in the Canonsburg Fourth



Kacie visiting with seniors

of July Parade. It was a very hot day and Kacie dutifully kept walking along with all the other

volunteers and dogs from the shelter. When we got to the end of the parade we went to the park to man a table along with many other vendors for the day. Kacie never took her eyes off of me and the other volunteers teased me with lines like "how can you take her back to the shelter? She loves you." After a few hours I felt the same way. There was no way she was going back to the shelter. Having two other dogs at home didn't

matter; I called my husband and said, "Get the crate ready, I'm bringing her home." Well, Kacie never needed to be crated, she was so perfect. Why she was abandoned I'll never know. She knew all of her commands, was housebroken and was a complete love.

Kacie was so gentle and loving that I started taking her to Assisted Living Homes, Elementary Schools, Day Cares, Libraries ... any place that wanted to meet her. She has had many elderly residents hug her, pet her and give her treats. The schools are our favorite. We like to show kids how to care for their pets and to teach safety with animals. When Kacie sees her bag with treats and water come out, she knows she is going to school to see the kids. She went from a scared, abandoned dog to a favorite for our Community Outreach Program.

I will always wonder what her first few years were like and why someone left her behind, but I am sure glad she made it to our home. If you are thinking of adopting a dog, please don't overlook the older ones. They are the ones that need the good home the most and in turn are the most grateful for being adopted. I would adopt an older dog again in a heartbeat.

Those with Big Hearts Called to Help

by Theresa McCall

Anyone who has been on this planet for more than a few years has learned that life is not always kind, nor is it easy. It can cause me to withdraw from sad situations, instead of pitching in to make things better. Luckily there are people stronger than I, who roll up their sleeves and plunge headfirst into the situation. Because of an old, starved, blind, bleeding dog, I came to know better several of these very special people.

While at work, I saw a stray wandering on busy Route 19, at great risk of getting hurt or causing an accident. I lured her into my building with some cheese. It was easy to see she was a sweet, gentle dog. When I checked for identification tags, it was

apparent she was suffering from starvation and neglect. I called animal control and quickly received a call back from Kym Secreet. She said she could pick up the animal, but was not sure where the dog would end up. Most strays are never claimed. Older ones, with health issues are much less likely to be adopted. I called several people at the shelter to see if they could take the dog. Jeannie Sexauer, who runs the foster program, spent many minutes on the phone consoling and advising me. Jeannie is one of the rare people who gives unceasingly from her heart to assist neglected and abused animals. We each made several phone calls, but there seemed no solution

for the dog in my office. There were already several older dogs at the shelter in need of homes.

The old dog wandered around our store, too stiff to sit or lie down. While I was on the phone she approached my chair and lay her head next to my thigh. I started to cry. I had to leave for an appointment and needed to make a decision very soon. She was in pain and I convinced myself she was better off being put down than suffering from the ticks, blindness, missing teeth, frozen, bleeding paws, starvation and arthritis anymore. I picked her up and set her down on some blankets to rest. I called Kym Secreet and asked her to come pick the old girl up. *Continued on page 8*



Young People Learn to Help the Animals Which Helps the Humane Society

by Pat Sphar

Throughout the fall months, Girl Scout Troop 1438 of Bethel Park donated their most valuable resource – their time – by helping the Washington Area Humane Society on Wednesday and Friday evenings. The girls, in groups of four to five, supervised by a parent and volunteers, learned how to clean and set up the dog cages. They quickly learned to ignore the sights and smells of the job and to concentrate on the reward of playing with puppies in a clean cage and walking the adult dogs once the “dirty work” was done.

As the girls grew more comfortable with their jobs at the shelter, they started to notice what some of the dogs needed from them. One such dog was a young pit bull puppy rescued from a terrible situation, suffering from mange, who initially cowered in the back of her cage. The girls were told that they need not interact with this shy, terrified dog because of her skin condition, but they nevertheless donned latex gloves and sat in the cage with the dog, named Marbles, and socialized her. Little by little, Marbles became less frightened and today she

is a normal, friendly, playful dog who looked forward to her nightly walks and has subsequently been adopted.

Concurrently, a group of kids from the NHS Human Services Therapeutic Family Care Program in McMurray chose WAHS as their project for the year. Supervised by parents and staff from the facility in McMurray, these young people continue to come to the shelter every Tuesday and walk all the dogs in the main kennel, a BIG job!!! In addition, they often visit the Falconi building and walk those dogs, as well as clean the cages. It is a wonderful experience to see the interaction between the kids and the dogs – all loaded with energy – they run and play together. Just like the scouts, these young people of varying ages have discovered which dog likes what games and how to interact with

older and younger dogs alike. Both groups have learned how dogs and cats come to be in the shelter, and when patience is needed with an animal that has been mistreated by its previous owners.

The Humane Society is deeply indebted to these young people for their time and commitment in working with these animals. We hope that it has been as good an



experience for the kids as it has been for the animals they have helped. A big THANK YOU to Bethel Park Scout Troop 1438 and the Family Care Kids (pictured above) of McMurray.

Got Computer Stuff?

Our last newsletter communicated the need for a computer professional who could take the lead in modernizing our computer software. We could not have been more fortunate. Kellie Leach, Director of Information Technologies at Snaveley Forest Products has jumped in with both feet to research appropriate software and evaluate our unique requirements. While she continues to work on the software aspect of our needs, she has put together a list of hardware components we will also need including PCs or laptops in working order no more than 4 or 5 years old with minimally a Pentium III, 1 GHz processor, Windows XP (any version) and a CD drive. In addition we are seeking flat panel monitors 17" or 19" in good working order.

Help is There When Mourning the Loss of a Pet by Dana Dekman

I was not prepared for the sudden loss of my cat Pepe. For twelve years he gave me unconditional love. After a bad day, I could just pick him up and all of my problems seemed to melt away. He gave me so much joy that I could not imagine life without him.



The night that he passed, I thought I was having a heart attack. My neighbor called the paramedics. My heart was physically fine but the hurt was unbearable. The first night without him was long and sleepless. My tears were unstoppable.

The next day, I found support in my family. My children did not have a bond with Pepe like my husband and I. The kids had been with him just a few short years. My husband Matt was acting strong but I know he was hurting. Matt was Pepe's chosen favorite. I always wondered why it was not me. Maybe my kisses annoyed him or my hugs were too frequent. I can't imagine it was that.

The next few days, my crying started to subside. I was able to focus on my other cat Scruffy. We got Scruffy two years after Pepe. We realized Pepe needed company for when we were not home. I have been told that two cats are easier than one and after a few days of hissing the two became best buddies. Together

they devised evil ways to get us up at five in the morning. They would play, eat and sleep together – they were brothers. After Pepe died, Scruffy was definitely wondering where Pepe was. He kept going over to the floor where Pepe had passed on. He would smell it and then lay down in the same spot. It would break my heart. We all had to give Scruffy extra attention knowing that he was suffering too.

During that first week, I found myself desperate to ease the hurt. After much research I found the website petloss.com. Here you can chat with others who are going through the same grief. You can participate in a Monday night candle ceremony to honor and remember our pets. There are also several good books on pet loss. One that I liked is *When your pet dies – A guide to mourning, remembering, and healing*. I remember a quote that made me realize why my grief was so strong, "How much it hurts in death is a

product of how much love and attachment there was in life." I know a lot of my friends had no idea how I was feeling but this book helped me to explain my emotions.

As the saying goes "time heals all wounds." According to my dad, a new kitten was the answer. He brought a kitten home from work just a week after Pepe died. He claims the kitten was going to be a barn cat if no one wanted him. I thought that I was betraying the memory of

Pepe but soon realized that the new kitten was making Scruffy happy. The kitten, named Skippy was making the whole family smile again. He could never replace Pepe for Pepe was irreplaceable. He was simply helping to fill a void in my heart.

Saying goodbye to a pet is a sad part of life. You have to remember the joy that he/she brought you. Don't be afraid to love another pet. There are too many out there who need you.

Saying Goodbye to Jet

It wasn't in the stars for Jet. His fierce appearance and scars spoke of an abusive life as a fighting dog. With his cropped ears and pussycat feet, he



was a stunner – catching the eyes and stealing the hearts of staff, volunteers and many visitors to the shelter. Relentless in her desire to find out why he kept losing weight, volunteer Cathy Cunningham shuttled him to and from her own vet numerous times to find out if it was

as serious a condition as it turned out to be. Tests led to a diagnosis of liver disease and an ultrasound proved it to be beyond repair. "Jet was most likely exposed to, and contracted hepatitis in what the vet says was 'a very hard life' despite the fact that he is only around two years old ... [he had] end stage cirrhosis of the liver and massive liver failure." "

A plea was made for donations intended for expensive procedures had the ultrasound not been definitive. Weak, with no appetite, and fluid surrounding his organs, Jet was mercifully euthanized, finally surrounded by people who adored him.

Building Bridges at WAHS

Girl Scout Cadette Troop 4090 of Ringgold toured the Washington Area Humane Society in 2006. Since the girls all had a love for animals, they decided to earn their Silver Award by helping the Humane Society. In recent years, WAHS has experienced serious drainage problems creating a muddy mess in the area where they walked the dogs. Troop 4090 decided to build a foot bridge so that walkers could avoid the "swampy" area safely.

The Silver Award is the highest a Cadette Girl

Scout can earn. To earn this award, each scout had to learn about all aspects of animal care and their habitats; earn three different Interest Projects related to animals, and; learn business skills and display leadership skills.

Congratulations to Katrina Dubbs, Teresa Halinka, Lauren Meyer, Emily Scalise, and Sarah Simmons, now all in 10th grade at Ringgold High School for achieving this prestigious award.

With help from volunteer Cathy Cunningham, a team of brawny men



sacrificed some weekend time to haul the bridge to the shelter and put it in place. Handrails from the Cat Castle have been

added to complete the job.

Building bridges and of course, teamwork, made this project another winner for WAHS.

Improving Our Score

We have updated our adoption follow-up form that tracks the progress of new adoptees after a month in a new home. In addition to inquiring how well the animal is adapting (housebreaking, companionability with other animals and children, etc.) we also ask how the overall adoption experience went. And we are happy to report that on a 1-10 scale our average rating after hundreds of follow-ups is 9.8! A perfect 10 is our ultimate goal and we will continue to strive for that.

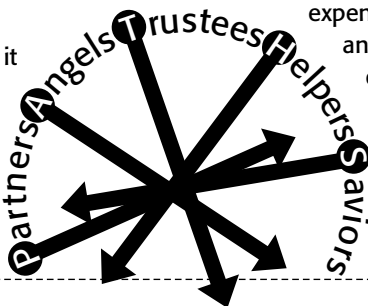
P.A.T.H.S. – The Easiest Way to Help Our Budget

The P.A.T.H.S. program was developed as a way to maintain funding throughout the year.

We ask dedicated animal lovers to take it upon themselves to assure that the basic needs of the shelter (utilities, cleaning products, insurance, medicine, etc.) are able to be funded monthly, especially during slow periods when donation funds are scarce.

This kind of steady monthly income for routine expenses allows us to make necessary changes and badly needed repairs with money from our other fundraisers.

You can help just by putting your monthly pledge check of as little as \$5.00 in the pre-paid envelope we provide to you every month, and mailing it back to us.



I, _____, would like to pledge to send \$_____ per month to the Washington Area Humane Society's **P.A.T.H.S.** Program. My first envelope will be mailed to me the last week of the month in which I enroll. I will mail it back as soon as possible. If at any time, I would like to stop my tax deductible donation, I will contact the Washington Area Humane Society at 724-229-0404.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____ Date _____

_____ Yes, I will put a stamp on my return "Pledge" envelope to save the mailing cost.

Yes! Litter Box Problems Can Be Resolved. by Jennifer D'Abarno

As the owner of many cats and dogs over the last 30 years, I thought I was pretty experienced at managing various pet problems. Our cat Meeko, however has been the biggest challenge. Meeko was adopted from WAHS at about six months of age for my daughter. He adjusted well to his new home and was already litter trained.

Over the years, Meeko began to urinate on occasion in places other than his litter box, which was located in our finished basement. Initially this was a rare event that increased in frequency to the point where our whole house began to wreak of urine. The vet checked Meeko at various times and nothing seemed to be wrong. We changed the litter more often but found him using the box less and less. We also changed the brand of litter several times. A friend suggested we might have too much litter in the pan, so we began to fill it more shallowly to no avail. Nothing worked and as we resigned ourselves to the problem, I became a slave to regular neutralizing, deodorizing, and shampooing the carpet. Because his favorite spot to urinate was located right in front of the entry from the garage, there was no possibility of moving the litter box there.

Since he was somewhat shy we got a cover for the box to give Meeko privacy. No luck with this attempt either.

When Meeko was five years old, we got a dog and then adopted



another dog a year later. The pets got along fine, but Meeko's problem persisted. Now the dogs started rummaging through the litter box for his leavings, which were fewer and fewer. By this time the basement smelled so bad we ripped out the carpeting and installed tile. The urinating in the basement stopped, but he began to urinate in other locations throughout the house and I continued regularly cleaning the rugs like I had always done.

I thought the dogs were making the cat nervous, so I moved the litter box to the dining room where he had been choosing to relieve himself to give

him more privacy and change his routine. He simply continued to urinate and now defecate beside the box!

One day I mentioned my problem cat to a friend who loaned me a

pamphlet called "The Fastidious Feline" written by Patricia McConnell that she had found very useful. In this pamphlet was a very concise review of various litter box problems and possible solutions from the cat's point of view based on behavioral research, many of which I had already tried. One point that was made in the pamphlet was that cats, like humans, sometimes don't want to walk "all the way downstairs" to go to the bathroom. Another was that some cats' paws are irritated by gravelly litter or messed by their own excrement. On this advice, I bought two additional pans for

each of my other floors, and a sandy, clumping litter. Although I had tried every major brand, I always bought the gravel type. I filled the boxes with a few inches of the new litter and placed them in the original location in the basement, the dining room (after freshly neutralizing the area), and the third in my daughter's bedroom. Immediately the cat began to use all three litter boxes and never went anywhere else again! Now I have to clean all three boxes twice a day to keep up with the amount that he puts out. I can't believe all of that used to be on my carpet!

I think what made Meeko different from my previous cats was that he was de-clawed, and the rough litter was uncomfortable for his sensitive paws. It was amazing that something so simple could fix a problem that had been going on for nine years!

Fixing this problem has greatly improved our enjoyment of Meeko. I learned that with pets there is always a solution if you keep your eyes and ears open and look at things from their perspective in addition to the human one.

Author Patricia McConnell has published many helpful books and pamphlets on training.

Adopt a Dog, Get 10 Free!

*Or you can get ten dogs
for one cat!*

Jody Kreush, proprietor of Aloha New York has been inspired to encourage shelter adoptions and she is making a delicious offer to those who do. For each WAHS adoption, Jodie will give the new adopter ten Free gourmet hot dogs prepared in her unique mobile kitchen



located at 140 Miller's Run Road. All shelter animals that have been in their new home for more than 14 days qualify for this tasty incentive. Adoption papers are required to redeem for offer. For more information, call Jody at 412-221-5632

Where's an Eagle Scout When you Need One?

We have benefitted more than once from projects tackled by Eagle Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and youth groups. And there are times when we can't think of a project to give them when they are nice enough to offer.

At this time there are a couple of projects that need to be completed and although they are big jobs, they are well within the range of capabilities that determined Eagle Scouts have shown.

With kitten season right around the corner, the small red concrete block building known as the whelping building will be packed to the rafters with homeless cats. This building has become the first stop for incoming

cats, but it is not heated or air conditioned. Even worse, it is not insulated. The 14'x26' building has painted block walls and an 8' ceiling inside. The need for insulation to keep the cats warm through unpredictable spring weather is clear.

Another big project that requires coordination, teamwork and money is the painting of the dog kennels. Bleached and hosed down every day, the walls take a beating and the bleed-through rainbow colors of many former paintings is all too visible.

If you can help with either of these major shelter improvements, please call the shelter at 724-222-7387.

Honor a Loved One With a Memorial Brick

Memorialize or honor your loved one, be it a special person or pet in your life. Honor outstanding work performed by a youth group, company or employee. Purchase a brick inscribed with your personal message which will be placed in our growing memorial walkway at the Humane Society. A dedicated space directly to the right of the front door has been thoughtfully "planted" with these warm remembrances of friends and loved ones.



Contributions for these bricks help the shelter continue to operate and serve the animals who have been neglected, abandoned and abused. Choose from two sizes of bricks: Single 4"x8" brick for \$25.00 or an 8"x8" brick for \$50.00

Call the shelter or download a form from our website and return it with your check made out to WAHS. For more information, call Barb at 724-229-0404.



Modern Art Pet Portraits

Volunteer and professional graphic designer, Faye Klein produces one-of-a-kind, custom, contemporary posters featuring your favorite group of two or three pets.

Provide three quality photos (photographic prints or high resolution digital files) and Faye will create a colorful and memorable framed poster of your loved ones. Each poster is 12"x36" set in a black metal frame. Orientation can be vertical or horizontal. Framed posters are \$150.00 of which 20% is donated to WAHS. You can also order from the existing image library of colorful dogs and cats in any combination for \$75.00 by visiting www.washingtonpashelter.org/posters.htm

All finished posters will be available for pick up at the shelter. For more information, call Faye Klein at 724-969-0184 or email fayeklein@gmail.com

Put Pet Poster Request in the subject line.

(Continued from page 2)

When Kym came for her, I cried some more, worried about how she would spend her last two days on this planet, the time limit for holding animals. Would she be warm? Would she be alone?

Then I received a call from Kym Seccret who had made a concerted effort to find this dog a home. It turned out that Angel Ridge had accepted her into their loving family and the dog was not only alive, but doing very well. Now



"Callie" (above) could spend the rest of her days in comfort.

I am continually amazed by the compassion that people like Jeannie, Kym and the staff at Angel Ridge consistently demonstrate. I am thankful they exist, and certain that many animals are thankful as well.

Visit Us at These Events

May 12, 2007
Snail Speed Car Club
1st Annual Car Show
benefits WAHS.

For more information:
snailspeedcarclub.com

June 16: Pet Adoption and Care Fair, Bethel Park

June 30: Peters Township Community Day

July 20-21: Community Day - Burgettstown

Suggestion?

We want to know what you have to say about the newsletter, the website and the shelter in general. What news is important for you to hear about? What improvements would you like to see in the coming years? Are there any fundraising ideas that you can share that will improve the flow of money to the shelter?

Our mailing list has been in disrepair for a long time and we try to remove duplicate records from our database. But there are limitations to the current system. If you receive more than one newsletter, please contact Barb at 724-229-0404.

Thank you for your help.



Washington Area Humane Society
P.O. Box 66
Eighty Four, PA 15330

The Boomerang Dogs—Sadly Returned



Lenny is so sweet and gentle, he is a perfect choice for even small children. Although housebroken, Lenny was returned after a few weeks in a home for "marking." The family had recently lost their old dog and were not ready to deal with an issue so soon. Lenny likes many other dogs and there are solutions for his marking behavior if it did reoccur.



Buddy is not one of those dogs who could share his life with a cat. He loves people, young and old, and he was adopted briefly but returned because of a child who had allergies. Buddy has spent most of his 5 years outside, yet he is housebroken! Despite his less than optimal life, Buddy is an enthusiastic, friendly dog who would be great in a family with kids.



Hero had been adopted for more than a year, but his barking would not be welcome in the new townhome where his owner was moving. Alone all day, Hero was bored and needed exercise. His older owner was unable to give him the exercise that this strapping rottie-shepherd mix needs. Hero is a loving, housebroken boy who needs a new home.