

Humane Society: not just an animal shelter

By Mike Billington
Managing-Editor

For many people the immediate image that comes to mind when someone mentions the words "humane society" is an animal shelter-period.

The Potsdam Humane Society, however, while it does maintain an animal shelter is also involved in the entire animal world. Not only do they care for strays and provide people with a place to bring unwanted pets, they also have embarked on a low cost neuter and spay program to cease the creation of unwanted animals and have launched into a massive education program which will, they, hope, create better living conditions in this area for animals.

Formed more than 20 years ago, the Potsdam Humane Society operates from a shelter which was constructed in 1970 on the Madrid Road. That shelter is still being paid for entirely out of monies received by the society from private donations and village and town allotments. Private donations remain its lifeblood.

The goals of the society are to protect and to care for animals as humanely as possible in addition to conducting a neuter and spay program to decrease the ever rising population of strays and unwanted pets which often end up being abused.

The problem which the shelter currently faces boils down to a pair of simple statements: there are too many animals and not enough money.

To combat half of the problem the society's low cost neuter and spay program has been developed to encourage area residents to help prevent the birth of unwanted animals.

The fight is far from over, however, according to society spokeswoman Judy Araj and Pat Crist.

During an interview they noted that many people oppose spaying or neutering because they believe that it will make their pet fat and lazy.

"This is absolutely false," Crist said, "because an animal gets fat for the same reasons a person does: overeating and not enough exercise. Frequently the animal isn't lazy, but the owner is."

Another myth which has blocked the society's efforts to limit animal population growth is the one which holds that to neuter a male dog or cat is to spoil his fun.

"That's simply ridiculous," Araj noted.

"And so is the school of thought which says that every female animal is entitled to have at least one litter. That's an application of human values to an animal and that, again, is ridiculous," she added.

Some parents are simply afraid to tell their children about the "miracle of birth" the woman added, and so they bring pets into the home for children to "observe" during mating.

"There is plenty of birth information available for a parent who might feel squeamish about discussing the facts of life with children," Crist noted, "without bringing more animals into the world. Besides animals, like humans, usually mate in secluded areas without benefit of an audience."

Many families entrust the care of a pet to a child in an attempt to teach responsibility.

This frequently leads to an abused animal since the child usually tires of taking care of the pet on a regular basis fairly quickly and the parents normally follow suit some short time later. What results, then, is a loose animal who, if not spayed or neutered, helps to create more and more animals.

Other barriers to the society's goal is the feeling that the family deserves to have "just one litter" of its pet's offspring.

"That's still a lot of animals being produced and each of those animals will reproduce 'just one litter...' before you know it we will be overrun with animals. As it is now we have an estimated 95

One of the basic problems which the humane society sees as important in the fulfillment of its goal is the attitude which Americans have that animals are possessions.

"This is absolutely the wrong idea," Araj noted, "if you want a status symbol buy a Cadillac not a purebred dog which you will have a hard time caring for and won't have spayed or neutered."

She added that "people have established the artificial 'purebred' guidelines which currently fetch high prices for animals and cause the population of these and other animals to burgeon into nearly unmanageable limits."

"It's been hard trying to educate people who treat animals as their 'as if they were property only not a living breathing creature. The saying 'it's only an animal' is about the most inhumane

thing I think that anyone has ever said," she noted.

For these people, she noted, the idea of spaying or neutering a dog or a cat is "out of the question because, after all, it's only an animal."

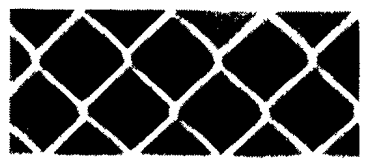
The society's education program has taken the form of a weekly newspaper column as well as "talking with people we come in contact with." The society, which will give information about its neuter-spay program to anyone who calls Crist at 265-8288, recommends that female cats and dogs be spayed at five to

six months, male dogs at six months, and male cats at six to eight months. The society has a standing invitation to anyone to visit its shelter between the hours of 9-10:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 6-8 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

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TWO KITTENS on a cage at the Humane Society's animal shelter on Madrid Road illustrate the plight of many unwanted litters of dogs and cats. (Mike Billington Photo).



"TAKE ME home with you" is a cry this young pup would probably not have to make if more animals were neutered or spayed according to Humane Society sources. (Mike Billington Photo).

TURKEY SUPPER
The annual turkey supper, with all the trimmings, featuring homemade rolls, apple and pumpkin pies, sponsored by the United Methodist Women of the Buckton United Methodist Church, will be served at the Brasher Falls United Methodist Church in the church parlors, on Thursday, September 16, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Take out dinners will be available beginning at 4:30 p.m. Please bring containers. The price will be: adults, \$3.25; children, 5 to 12 years, \$1.75 and children under 5, free. There will also be a bazaar featuring home made fudge, aprons, and a fish pond.

ACCEPTS POSITION

Ronald Barlow, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Barlow Sr. of Potsdam, has accepted a position as manager of computer systems with E.S.B., Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio.

Barlow attended Potsdam High School and the University of Pennsylvania.

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POTATOES
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THE POTSDAM HUMAN SOCIETY operates this animal shelter on the Madrid Road in the Town of Potsdam (Mike Billington Photo).

Gems to be shown here

The St. Lawrence County Rock and Mineral Club will present their twelfth annual show at the Pine Street Arena in Potsdam on Saturday September 18 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This show will provide an opportunity for people to see what can be done with rocks. On display will be rocks and minerals from St. Lawrence County as well as from around the world.

This show will provide a place for dealers to show their handcrafted items and will offer an opportunity to purchase some unique Christmas gifts.

It will also be an educational show for people of all ages. There will be a display of fluorescent minerals, where some minerals in a darkened room will change to all kinds of colors under ultraviolet light.

Another exhibit will feature some of the stories and myths about some of the gemstones.

There will be demonstrations of

various lapidary techniques, information about collecting sites in the area, and about various shops in the area where supplies may be purchased.

YARD SALE BY PRO-LIFE GROUPS

Potsdam's Pro-Life Groups will hold a yard sale at St. Mary's School on Saturday, September 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Donations for this sale will be welcome—items may be left at Marge Bradshaw's, 7 Garden St., or brought to the school the evening of September 17. In case of unpleasant weather, the sale will be held inside the school.

MEMBERSHIP COFFEES

Canton-Potsdam League of Women Voters will hold membership coffees on Wednesday, September 8 at 8 p.m. at the home of Ann Forsyth, 30 Chestnut Street and on Thursday, September 9 at 10 a.m. at the home of Florence Shulman, 32 Hillcrest Drive. All interested people are invited.

