

HUMANE REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE HUMANE ASSOCIATION



Samantha Mullen – In Memoriam

The animals lost a champion this past December when Samantha Mullen succumbed to cancer. She did her best to defy and beat that enemy with every breath of her being, just as she had defied and prevailed over so many opponents before, but this was a battle she would not win. Her loss is our loss of a uniquely talented and dedicated individual. We want to take this opportunity to celebrate her life and signify her accomplishments.

A born educator, she began her career as a French Professor at SUNY New Paltz after moving to New York from her home in the Midwest. While teaching there, she began her animal advocacy by serving on the board of the local SPCA in order to improve conditions for the shelter animals.

After eleven years at SUNY, she chose to pursue her passion for animal advocacy on a full-time basis, and NYSHA had the good fortune to hire her as our Administrator in the mid-1980s. It can truly be said that she infused and renewed the organization with her spirit, dedication, and professionalism.

One of her key objectives was, and continued to be, solving the problem of pet overpopulation, and she attacked it with a vigor unmatched by many. To that end, she spearheaded a hugely successful two-day conference in New York City in September, 1987, entitled “The Overpopulation of Cats and Dogs.” Speakers included well-known national figures, such as Ingrid Newkirk and Tom Regan, various veterinarians participating in early-age spay/neuter and low-cost clinics, as well as numerous luminaries well versed on this issue. The conference proceedings were published in book form by Fordham University. Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, the topics discussed are as relevant today as they were in 1987.

With the ink barely dry on the book, Samantha launched headlong into the biggest challenge of her career – doing battle with Justin McCarthy, who ran the infamous “Animals

Farm Home” in Ulster County, NY. It was the largest animal hoarder case to date at that time, and may still be. McCarthy, emboldened by his New York City PR background that included a slew of friends in high places, had managed to pull the wool over the eyes of many, including *Readers Digest*, to hide an ugly reality. Rather than providing animals a happy home on the farm until they died, he condemned them to a living hell. The animals, at the mercy of this demon, suffered until they died, the victims of starvation, lack of veterinary care, and worse – cannibalism by other starving animals.

When the opportunity presented itself to stop him, Samantha embraced the prospect. She succeeded in gaining the cooperation of Dr. Lawrence Bartholf, an area veterinarian who was aware of the sins of McCarthy, and welcomed the chance to join forces with Samantha, the sheriff’s department, the UCSPCA, the DA’s office and the AG’s office to remove the animals and shut the place down permanently. After a year-long effort, new homes were found for the animal survivors and a plea bargain was struck in which McCarthy

pled guilty to cruelty and the corporation was dissolved by the AG’s office. Dr. Bartholf, reminiscing about Samantha said, “McCarthy thought he was smarter than her, and that was his mistake. She was much more intelligent than he was, and she won because of it.”

If there is a heaven, Samantha has been welcomed there by the hosannas of the hundreds of animals who were rescued from that death camp and the thousands of others who were spared the misfortune of ever being surrendered there. NYSHA produced a video of the case, and the end scene features Samantha waving a chain saw in the air, gesturing toward the “Animals Farm Home” sign before she plunged the blade into the wood, destroying it. Shutting down the

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Samantha Mullen

President's Message

In Memory of Samantha Mullen

As an educator, it is often equally, if not more rewarding, when a student learns a life or moral lesson than when he or she masters the subject matter. For me, teaching humane education – either overtly or embedded in the curriculum – along with Spanish, often has tangible results. Hearing my young charges react to animal cruelty, promote spaying and neutering, or advocate for stronger animal protection laws makes each day in the classroom especially fulfilling.

One doesn't need to be a formal teacher, however, to educate others and have a profound and long-lasting effect on animal protection. An example is NYSHA's beloved Board Member, Samantha Mullen, who died on December 21, 2012, with the same dignity, grace, and courage she was an example of all her life. There are no words to convey our loss, nor the loss for the animals for whom she fought tirelessly, endlessly, eloquently.

It is a great testimonial to her inspirational nature that so many people, including friends from long ago, came to say good-bye and to tell her they loved her. Her circle was huge, and the difference she made by her life will outlive her always, just like the ripples spreading from a pebble tossed in a pond that reach continually outward. The world and its inhabitants, both human and non-human, are much better because of the power of this one extraordinary person.

The unending tributes we received – either to or about Samantha – were universal in that we could all relate to her influence, integrity, and dedication, yet were striking in how individualized her relationships were with those she mentored. We at NYSHA always knew how special Samantha was, yet we were still overwhelmed by her sphere of devotees and will be sharing some of their heartfelt comments on our website.

Last week Samantha's Legislation Committee met, and again we were guided by her spirit, her thoughts, and her wisdom. By her hands-on activities, because of her legislative successes, and through the people she educated, millions of animals – born and not yet born – enjoy or will have lives free of suffering.

Samantha's work is her legacy, and she will be missed in direct proportion to all she accomplished for animals, which was and will continue to be an immeasurable contribution for their protection. We know our mission! Spread the good word in her honor and fight her good fights in her memory!

Knowing Samantha was one of the greatest privileges of my life, and it says so much about her that so many people feel the same.

As always, for the animals,

Laura-Ann Cammisa

Matching Grants

Have you checked to see if your workplace matches employee's donations to qualified organizations? If not sure, please ask your employer. You may be able to double your donation to NYSHA.

NYSHA's Calendar

Investigating Animal Cruelty workshops -- The first workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, April 30, to be held in Yonkers with the Yonkers Police Department. Please check our website -- nyshumane.org -- for further information as it becomes available on this workshop and the rest of our 2013 schedule. We plan to conduct four this year, providing extra opportunities to those who will benefit from attending.

Humane Lobby Day -- Wednesday, April 17. Co-sponsored with The HSUS at "The Well" of the Legislative Office Building. NYSHA's website will have a link to more information.

Please visit us on our Facebook Page -- New York State Humane Association. There is also a link from our website.

We hope you will "like" us.

nyshumane.org



Samantha with her beloved Dudley, who had been rescued during an investigation and closure of an Ulster County puppy mill.

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NYSHA Workshops Grow in Popularity

NYSHA added a fourth workshop to the 2012 roster to accommodate a request from Suffolk County. Because of an increase in the number of cruelty and animal fighting cases, the Suffolk County Police Department asked for a workshop as soon as possible. The county authorities took our workshop very seriously and sent about 50 of its officers. Those attendees, combined with additional police from other county localities, made for a capacity crowd at the Suffolk County Police Academy. It was an excellent workshop with Suffolk County ADA Stacy Skorupa complementing the NYSHA speakers with an excellent presentation and handouts.

The Suffolk County request came after one of its police officers reported how impressed he was with the training he had received at a NYSHA workshop co-sponsored by the Broome County Sheriff's Office. Held in Binghamton in July, there was a full house, with representatives of various area police agencies in attendance. Also represented was the District Attorney's Office in the person of ADA Josh Shapiro, an effective and compelling speaker.

The reputation of NYSHA's workshops was further enhanced this year when we made our debut at the New York State Police Academy in Albany. NYSHA was delighted and honored to conduct this workshop, co-sponsored by the New York State Police. Such a large number of attendees signed up that the workshop had to be moved to the auditorium. In addition to State

Police, there were officers from various Capital area police agencies in attendance. ADA Christina Calabrese from the Albany County District Attorney's Office did an excellent job instructing the attendees on how that county wants its cruelty cases addressed.



Dr. Holly Cheever, NYSHA presenter, with NYS Troopers at workshop held at the NYS Police Academy.

It was at the Albany workshop that we acquired our newest speaker, State Police BCI Investigator George Bird. He came as an attendee, but had brought along an assortment of cock fighting implements he had retained from a cruelty case. He asked to display them in the foyer, and when we requested that he briefly tell the attendees how he went about his investigation, he

agreed, and another NYSHA star was born.

We are delighted to have had such a successful year and are currently planning our 2013 workshops, most of which will be at the request of police agencies. And though we teach the cruelty laws as they appear in Article 26 of the Agriculture and Markets law, we would much rather those laws be in the Penal Law where officers would become familiar with them during their initial police training.



Attendees at Syracuse workshop.

You can help by reading the legislation section of this newsletter and urging your state legislators to support the bill that enables the animal cruelty laws to be moved back into the Penal Law where they belong. It is the most important thing you can do to enhance the protection of the animals of this state.

Legislative Committee Update

The Legislative Committee is still coping with the huge void left by our Chair, Samantha Mullen. Her tireless efforts on behalf of animals have truly left an indelible mark on everyone who had the great fortune of knowing and working with her. The tremendous admiration and respect for Samantha throughout our field was also shared by many members of the NYS Legislature with whom she worked very closely on various bills impacting the care, treatment, and welfare of animals throughout New York State.

Among her expansive accomplishments, she was most recently instrumental in helping to pass a law which makes possession of animal fighting paraphernalia a crime. She also worked tirelessly to promote crucial legislation that would transfer the anti-cruelty statutes back into the Penal Law.

Though we know Samantha left behind shoes too large for

anyone to fill, we are now carrying on her legacy by continuing her vital work through the legislative process. As the New York State Legislative session has just begun, we have started to identify key pieces of legislation and areas of concentration for lobbying efforts. This will include continuing Samantha's fight to pass A775A Rosenthal/S1776 Fuschillo which would move the animal cruelty laws from Agriculture and Markets Law into the Penal Law. This important piece of legislation would help to improve accessibility and understanding of animal crime statutes for police officers, and subsequently promote enforcement and prosecution of these crimes under the law.

Please help in our efforts by contacting your State Assembly Member and Senator and urge them to pass this important bill. We thank you for your ongoing support of this critical work and look forward to a very productive year ahead on behalf of the animals.

Animals Farm Home lead to a spate of other hoarder cases that Samantha expertly assisted with across upstate New York – places that should have been closed down long before.

Despite the time spent on hoarder cases, Samantha also actively lobbied the New York State legislature for improved animal legislation. Though she was diplomatic and professional, it was clear that this diminutive power house was a force to be reckoned with. A pretty and petite woman, she could pack a verbal punch when necessary. A proponent of mandatory spay/neuter of dogs and cats, her efforts lead to the passage of a key bill that required the sterilization of all dogs and cats adopted from NY State animal shelters. It was added to Article 26 of the Agriculture and Markets laws as Section 377. This piece of legislation alone has doubtlessly saved hundreds of thousands of unwanted animals from being born, often into a life of suffering.

Her dedication to shelter animals was matched by her devotion to shelter staff for whom she had the greatest respect and appreciation. To support them in their demanding work, she produced “Shelter Standards” workshops in various parts of the state. The workshops included segments on the latest sanitation techniques, information on the most humane methods of euthanasia for the technicians performing that sad but necessary task, and counseling sessions on “shelter burnout” for those faced with the daily challenges of running an animal shelter. Employees who attended these workshops felt they had finally found a place where they were understood and appreciated.

News of Samantha’s stellar work spread, and in 1994, The HSUS hired her as Director, Animal Care and Sheltering. She embraced this opportunity to effect positive change for animals with a national focus. The job meant relocating to Maryland, and later NJ, but she knew she would some day return. At The HSUS she established various programs to bring innovations to the shelter community and participated in the production of the yearly Expo, held in various cities across the country.

The year 2003 took her on a detour from her normal duties when she became involved with a major dog fighting case. The NYS Police, along with police agencies in several states, were investigating a large dog fighting network. The kingpin was located in Orange County, NY. The police called in The HSUS and the New York State Humane Association for assistance. Samantha headed the animal team that entered the

Orange County property with police, helping to remove the animals for placement at various shelters. She worked with the DA’s office to ensure animal reports and evidence was collected. The dog fighter was subsequently found guilty, was sentenced to prison, and forced to pay restitution to the agencies that cared for the animals.



Samantha, at hoarder investigation, with rescued cat.

A tragedy of another sort followed – Katrina hit the Gulf. Samantha and other staff were dispatched to coordinate rescue efforts in Louisiana. Hundreds of animals had been displaced by the flooding and rescued by various groups and brought to a central location. Despite the sultry weather, animals had to be cared for and makeshift housing had to be built. Records had to be created to begin the process of finding animal owners. Mission accomplished, Samantha returned exhausted, but satisfied that she had made a difference.

After 13 years, Samantha retired from The HSUS and returned to NY, but she never retired from working for the animals. She joined the Board of NYSHA as Legislative Chair and resumed her lobbying on behalf of animals. Sue McDonough, who often lobbied with her said, “Samantha always went out of her way to explain each piece of legislation she supported, especially with new aides, so

that they understood the context and why it was important. She was a very professional, outstanding lobbyist.”

In sum, though Samantha left the university, she never stopped teaching. Even as a patient at Albany Medical Center and at St. Peter’s Community Hospice, she never missed an opportunity to educate staff, family members, friends, and visitors. Two subjects were on her syllabus: the need to spay/neuter companion animals and the extraordinary importance of full-service shelters, those compassionate shelters that never turn animals away, because the staffers there know what tragedies might befall them.

It was her wish that her advocacy for animals continue through all of us who were her students in some capacity over the years, that we continue being a voice for the voiceless. We believe the essence of her life can be expressed in one of her favorite quotes, one from Gloria Steinem, “I think the most important thing in life is to have a sense of purpose, to find and do the work you care about. Really living well, I suppose, is when you feel that to some extent, you’ve had an effect on the world and that you’ve helped relieve the suffering around you.” By this standard, Samantha really lived well.