



NYSHA Behind the Scenes

Anyone reading this probably has rescued animals at home, often with sad – even tragic – or unknown histories. Many come from shelters or are simply found, in need of anything from food and shelter to extensive medical care. Frequently we hear how lucky these animals are to be rescued, but many times it seems that we are the lucky ones when they cross our paths and now enrich our lives daily. The rewards are endless.

Day after day, we all hear or see the news -- another animal is a victim of human cruelty. For NYSHA, this frequently means that we will be involved some way. We may give advice, advocate for the animal, offer a reward, help with securing financial aid to the organization saddled with a huge endeavor, send emails to members to take action, issue press releases, become part of a team effort to get to the bottom of and resolve the situation, or assist law enforcement to prosecute cruelty cases. Even though we do not have animals in our own care as a shelter, NYSHA has a huge impact on animals throughout the state every day.

We are visible in the Legislature speaking up about animal protection laws, or even assisting in writing them. In addition, we are recognized and highly respected for our workshops training law enforcement officials to effectively apply NY's anti-cruelty statutes. All this is very important, but we also derive great satisfaction in the everyday work we do behind the scenes.

In the last few months, our phones have rung about anything from starving horses to abandoned dogs to cats needing to be spayed. Unfortunately, in too many cases, local animal protection groups had been unable or unwilling to help, but our board members, staff, and volunteers did become involved. Over the years, we have built an extensive network of contacts around the state whom we can turn to for assistance.

For example, after a situation was reported to Equine Resource Rescue (ERR) in Orange County, ERR contacted NYSHA. A blind mare and her son, both in their 30's, lived in poor conditions and the owner was willing to give them up. NYSHA worked with ERR, who went to assess the horses and discuss their removal. In the meantime, we contacted Catskill Animal Sanctuary (CAS) in Ulster County. After checking their facility to make a safe space for a blind horse, CAS kindly agreed to accept them, but only after upgrading the pasture the two horses would share. NYSHA paid for boarding the horses for a month, until they could be relocated. Ashley and Pliers are now thriving and live safely and happily at the Sanctuary.

Recently, a large shelter contacted NYSHA for information on setting up an Animal Cruelty Task Force, the creation of which was going

to be a featured topic in an upcoming seminar. NYSHA was able to connect them with authorities in a county that had already successfully formed one.

When we hear of cruelty cases, we often reach out to the animal shelters who house the victims to see if we can help in any way. In some cases, we have assisted with advice about security bond posting applications and sometimes we help with a contribution toward the care of the animals, since the costs can be a huge financial strain on the organization. Examples of our reaching out include a case in which the James A. Brennan Memorial Humane Society took in 22 mastiffs, and another, in which the Susquehanna Animal Shelter took in starving dogs seized by the police. We were gratified when the president of the Montgomery County SPCA told us, "I have found the forms and guidelines on your website extremely helpful. I use the guidelines in investigations. I used them in a recent case of 48 farm animals. I also directed the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office to your website for forms and guidelines in this case."

We love doing what we do, but of course hope and wish that through legislation, law enforcement, humane education, and other means our services would not be required. Fortunately, as each of us does our own small part in rescuing animals, NYSHA will continue to serve, on a large scale, as a resource and guide for their protection.



This dog was one of 22 French Mastiffs, found abandoned – either starving or dead – in an upstate NY case. The 13 surviving dogs were transferred to James A. Brennan Memorial Humane Society and are all in good homes now.

James A. Brennan Memorial Humane Society

President's Message

It is a troubling time for people who care about animals. It seems that every week we hear of some new horror that negatively impacts animals -- legislation that lowers or removes safeguards for animal habitats, government restriction of access to USDA data and records, as discussed in our prior newsletter, and the sickening impacts of climate change on animal territories. The big picture is enough to make you want to hide your head in a bucket. How to cope with it all and stay positive is a challenge to all of us each day.

The only way I have found to cope is to focus on the actions that I can control. I can contact elected officials and let them know NYSHA's and my opinion on critical issues. I can vote to elect public servants who share my viewpoint and that of other individuals sympathetic to the plight of animals. Given the contacts that NYSHA has throughout the state, I can reach out and offer our assistance with security bond postings and referrals to agencies who call for guidance.

I can also do things that are more hands-on and warm the soul. I can volunteer at local animal sanctuaries and equine rescues and simply offer human kindness to the animals there by petting them and sometimes grooming them, many of whom have not had much positive attention in their lives. I can simply walk shelter dogs who dearly appreciate being taken out of their cages for a romp around the grounds.

All organizations, including ours, appreciate volunteers to assist with events, such as helping at fund raisers or participating in protests at race tracks; that is something I do. Some humane agencies have pet food banks to help people who are experiencing economic hardships. I am sure they would welcome help picking up pet food donated by local supermarkets and bringing it to their facilities.

The point is, when the big picture is looking dark and scary, it is good to focus on the smaller picture to find some joy and satisfaction -- helping animals is one place to look. I recall a story that was given at a seminar that stayed with me and seems especially relevant. There was a man who lived by the beach and each morning he would walk along the shore and pick up starfish left behind by the tide, each starfish fighting for life. He would toss each one back into the ocean. One morning, another man saw him and said, "Why bother doing that, it doesn't make a difference, they will wash up again." As the first man tossed another one into the sea, he replied, "It makes a difference to this one." We must find that same desire to make a difference in a way that matters to us.

Always be kind to animals,

Patricia Valusek

NYSHA Supports Little Brook Farm Workshop

Little Brook Farm hosted its yearly equine cruelty investigation workshop on June 15 in Old Chatham. Sue McDonough, retired State Police Investigator, and respected NYSHA committee member, provided the police officers and others in attendance with an explanation of the NYS animal cruelty laws and investigative procedures. Dr. Steve Naile, a dedicated Ravena veterinarian, demonstrated hands-on what to look for when eyeing a horse for possible neglect. Sunny, a calm and gentle older horse, played the role of "patient" as Dr. Naile pointed out key areas to examine.

Following the formal instruction, the attendees joined Lynn Cross, the rescue's founder, in a large paddock where they were allowed to mingle and get comfortable with these sweet animals who were fortunate enough to make it to safety, care, and love at one of the oldest equine rescue facilities in the northeast.



Summer Brennan gives some basic advice on handling equines during an investigation.

NYSHA's Calendar

September – **National Disaster Preparedness Month** – Make a plan for your animals in case of an emergency. See nyshumane.org for links to prepare for one.

September 23 & 24 – **Hudson Valley VegFest** – For information on this great event, go to hvvegfest.org.

October – **Adopt-a-Dog Month** – We recommend shelter dogs!

October 2 – **World Day for Farmed Animals** – Dedicated to creating awareness of the needless suffering and death of sentient animals raised and killed for food. Find events in your area to participate in.

October 11 – **Pet Obesity Awareness Day Survey** – Please see this newsletter's *The Vet Is In* article, and if you want to participate in the survey, go to Petobesityprevention.org website for instructions.

November 5 - 11 – **National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week** – You can show your appreciation by volunteering, making a monetary or supplies donation, adopting a shelter animal, "liking" your local shelter's Facebook page, and most of all by being a responsible pet guardian.

Please visit us on our Facebook Page - New York State Humane Association (NYSHA). There is also a link from our website. We hope you will "like" us.

nyshumane.org

The Vet Is In

Our human population has become increasingly obese, and with that physical change, we have saddled ourselves with multiple health issues that are the inevitable consequence. Physical damage (osteoarthritis, fatty infiltration of the liver) and hormonal changes (diabetes mellitus) shorten our longevity and increase the costs of keeping ourselves going. Similarly, we are wreaking the same damage on our companion animals with the same consequences: despite gentle instruction given at the time of the first kitten and puppy visit, and then firmer warnings with successive annual appointments, 54% of dogs and 59% of cats are overweight or obese in this country, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention.

As a veterinarian, I find this trend distressing and reprehensible. Clients who permit their large or giant-breed dog to become so overweight that he/she tears the stifle joint's "CCL" (cranial cruciate ligament) have created a condition with extreme pain, requiring surgery costing \$2,000 - \$5,000, plus months for proper rehabilitation. They have imposed a long period of suffering on their dog that was preventable -- and expensive. The cat guardians who leave dry food available "24/7" are very likely to find themselves dealing with a future obese diabetic, requiring extensive blood-testing and daily insulin injections -- no fun for the giver or the receiver.

Obesity changes an animal's life, even before the dire health consequences develop. Cats, who are fastidious about their fur-care, can no longer groom themselves and develop clumped fur (which tugs at their skin) and seborrhea (i.e. flaky skin, either dry or oily). As members of a species that has evolved to be lithe climbers, able to leap from branch to branch, they become instead couch potatoes who have difficulty with stairs. Dogs (also an athletic species) have similarly become so heavy



that their joints break down and they too face a lifetime of unnecessary pain in which even the simple act of defecation becomes a struggle. Obesity impairs locomotion, respiratory health, and liver function, and creates diabetes, hypertension, heat stress, and anesthetic risks—to name just a few of the ills that develop due to excess weight.

What I find baffling is that humans do not see their companions' obesity as it develops, and are not sensitive to their pets' discomfort. I find that I have to show owners a picture of what is normal (such as is shown in the Nestle Purina Body Condition System chart) and where their animal falls in this continuum. I discuss adjusting their pet's diet to a healthier source, formulation, and daily intake. If I am able to persuade the owner, I may be gratified to see the companions get thinner with future visits and regain their health and athletic abilities. Unfortunately, more often my entreaties are countered by the pleading eyes of their pet at the next meal time, and the human just can't say no.

Obesity is not "cute." It is not funny. As responsible guardians of our animal companions, keeping them trim should be one of our first missions. Please evaluate the ingredients and calorie content of their treats as well as their primary food source, as this is often the cause of the extra weight gain when owners are doing well with their choice of the main meal. Please remember that pet food companies tend to recommend more cups of food per day than is advisable. We veterinarians can only advise...and hope that our clients care enough about their pets' health to take our advice.

Holly Cheever, DVM, Voorheesville, NY

State Legislation Update

NYSHA's Legislation Committee worked hard this year on bills that would help to improve conditions for animals in New York. We are disappointed that once again the State Legislature failed to act on many important issues; however, they did pass two noteworthy bills we supported.

The first piece of legislation, which Governor Cuomo has signed into law, will further crack down on animal fighting by defining it as a designated offense that qualifies for electronic eavesdropping or video surveillance. This critical measure will enhance law enforcement efforts to identify these heinous operations and bring perpetrators to justice.

The other bill, known as the *Elephant Protection Act*, will ban the use of elephants in any type of entertainment act in New York State. With this bill, the state continues its efforts to protect one of the world's most majestic creatures. In 2014, Governor Cuomo signed a law to prevent the trade of illegal ivory articles and products. As this newsletter goes to press, we await the *Elephant Protection Act* being sent to the Governor for his signature.

Despite these two important victories, some very important proposals were not acted upon. NYSHA continued advocating for banning the transport and slaughter of equines for human consumption, and for a bill that would create a dedicated fund to support retired race horses. NYSHA also fought to end abusive and cruel practices impacting companion animals by supporting a ban on the declawing of cats, as well as a measure that would have mandated that veterinarians report suspected abuse to authorities. Equine and companion animal protection will again be top priorities when our elected officials return to Albany in January.

Please help NYSHA be a strong voice for animals by ensuring that all our representatives make animal protection a priority. Educate yourself, know the issues, follow legislative activities, attend advocacy days, make phone calls, write letters, and keep fighting! We see growing support from our state legislators; however, much more work needs to be done.

We will keep you posted via email and Facebook notifications regarding activity on important animal related issues.

Spotlight

Julie Tanner -- Animal Advocate

Julie Tanner, who lives in Niskayuna with her son Thom and her treasured cats, has dedicated her adult life to helping animals, and she has indeed made a positive impact.

One of her achievements was the creation of “Julie’s List” in which she compiles news stories of animal cruelty in the state and emails them to subscribers. She urges followers to contact the judges or DA’s office dealing with the charges to advocate for serious punishment for the crime.

NYSHA regularly peruses the cases and often reaches out to the organizations dealing with the crimes to offer support by providing rewards to find the perpetrators, rendering assistance with security bond posting applications, or emailing reference documents to police.

To promote participation of animal activists in the legislative system, Julie has been actively involved with Animal Advocacy Day (AAD) since its inception seven years ago through her efforts with NYS Senator Jim Tedisco, along with advocates Steve Caporizzo, Donna Farnsworth and Valerie Lang Waldin. AAD provides animal protection groups and individuals the opportunity to meet with state legislators and advocate for humane legislation. Julie also works with Senator Tedisco’s staff to maintain the AAD Facebook page.

A legislative accomplishment which she is most proud of is the role she played in the passage of the “Buster Bill” which makes acts of heinous animal cruelty a felony. The law was named in memory of Buster, a cat who was doused with gasoline and set on fire in Schenectady. Julie worked tirelessly along with many animal advocates to collect hundreds of names on numerous petitions supporting the bill and presented them to the legislature. In Julie’s words, “Animals feel pain just as people do, so they deserve the same protection.”

Julie does not restrict herself to quiet advocacy; she can also engage in fearless hands-on involvement. For example, she confronted an animal

abuser who used a cord to strangle a cat to death on the street right in front of her and her son, and who then placed a cord around the neck of another cat. She yelled at him to stop as he ran to his apartment with the cats. Julie called police but since they were unsure of the appropriate laws, she rushed to the nearby office of then Assemblyman Jim Tedisco, obtained a copy of the animal cruelty laws, and brought them to the police. They went to the man’s apartment where the cat was found with the cord around its neck, thankfully still alive, and arrested the abuser. Julie and Thom subsequently testified at his trial.



Julie with her beloved feline family.

As a result of her effective advocacy, Julie has received awards from NYSHA, the Mohawk and Hudson Humane Society, and Whiskers, and letters of recognition from Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal, Senator Jim Tedisco, and Senator Phil Boyle.

In addition to her animal work, for many years Julie worked as a teaching assistant for special education children in the Schenectady school system. When students told her about domestic violence that often included animals, she conveyed that information to the proper authorities, since she knew both the animal and family members were in jeopardy. Julie used every opportunity to raise awareness among

teachers and administrators about the connection between animal abuse and human violence.

Though she has wrestled with serious health issues over the past few years and was forced to retire from work, Julie has not allowed her health to curtail her determination to do all she can to combat animal cruelty. She said she would network at any time with anyone who wants to help stop it. “It’s all about team work,” she frequently says, “working together as a team to accomplish our goals. With increased public awareness, education, and tougher laws, the goal of preventing animal cruelty and neglect can be accomplished.”

Julie is a fearless fighter for animals, and we look forward to spending many more years working with her as an extended member of the NYSHA team.

The Book Corner

NYSHA is proud and excited to announce the publication of Dr. Harry Hovel’s newest book, *Helping Animals Means Helping People*. Harry has been on our Board of Directors for over 20 years and active in the animal protection movement almost all his life, developing a special interest and becoming an expert about the relationship of animal abuse to human violence. His latest work is a study of the circle of life and the connections between animals, people, and the environment, detailing how our actions hurt or benefit each. Watch this space for a review in our next newsletter, and check our website for more details.

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