



Randy Makes a Comeback

In mid-July Catskill Animal Sanctuary (CAS) received a disturbing email that contained photos of two emaciated animals: a frighteningly thin horse, along with an emaciated mule. They were sent by someone who surreptitiously photographed them at a boarding stable in upstate New York. The situation was desperate.

CAS sent the photos to NYSHA to see if we agreed. We did and determined that time was of the essence to help these animals. We reached out to the local authorities to request that an investigator go to the property. He said he had been there on a prior complaint when he was told a boarder had abandoned these equines at the boarding stable on the property. Though the animals were abandoned, that was no excuse for lack of care, and the investigator advised the stable owners to take corrective action, as they were obliged to care for them. In response to our call, the investigator now returned and agreed the animals had deteriorated since the prior visit.

An area veterinary clinic was called to do a hands-on evaluation. The veterinarian determined the mare needed to be euthanized as soon as possible, as she was beyond recovery, but the mule stood a chance. The owner agreed to surrender the two animals to the authorities, and NYSHA secured the services of a veterinarian for the mare to be relieved of her suffering the next day. But who would take an old emaciated mule?



Randy on arrival, with visibly prominent spine and ribs.

With fingers crossed, NYSHA reached out to Equine Rescue Resource (ERR) in Orange County, an organization that we have worked with on several cruelty cases and hoped they would help in this one. Thankfully, they

agreed to drive upstate to pick up the mule the next day.

When ERR arrived, they were introduced to the mule, named Randy. He was hesitant at first with ERR staff, but sensed they were trustworthy and walked out of the paddock and onto the trailer. As ERR left with Randy, the veterinarian arrived to end the poor mare's suffering.



Colleen Segarra of ERR with gentle Randy.

Though the mare was now at peace, Randy faced a long recuperation, as bringing an equine back from starvation is a slow process. Food intake must be monitored carefully, or the equine might die. Proper medications and supplements must be provided. NYSHA and other donors helped support Randy's road to recovery.

When Randy reached the ERR barn, underweight as he was, he still had spunk. According to ERR, mules who are the offspring of a donkey father and horse mother (in this case, apparently an Appaloosa mare) will choose whom they identify with. ERR had rescue horses in the barn, as well as

Pedro, a sweet donkey, in the stall next to Randy. Pedro was looking for a friend, but Randy identified with the horses! When the horses were let out into the cooler air after the hot day, Randy pushed his way from his stall and joined them. With that level of spirit, ERR was hopeful Randy would make it.

That hope was justified. Randy is steadily improving and when completely rehabilitated, he may become a service animal with an organization in Sullivan County that has rehabilitative programs for children and adults. Randy, though large, is gentle and likes people. Because of a problem with one leg that had not been treated properly in the past,



Pedro looking for a friend.

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President's Message

Well, COVID-19 has taken its toll on everyone. People feel at sea and things will never be right again with the world, if indeed they ever were, but at least life was tolerable for most of us. Now, no movies, no plays, no concerts, and most restaurants half open – just awful. Many of us are looking for relief inside the refrigerator – not a good idea – or losing ourselves in mindless TV shows. Some believe that additional wine is the answer. But here are some options.

Call your local animal shelter to see if they have opened up a bit in terms of COVID-19 and are allowing volunteers to resume tasks like walking dogs, while practicing safety with masks and social distancing. Shelter dogs have suffered during this pandemic along with the rest of us when their regular dog walkers were confined. Having a walk is the highlight of a shelter dog's day. And it is good for all of us to be out in the brisk fall air that can refresh the soul and body.

You can replicate NYSHA's efforts to support local food pantries by asking your friends to join you in donating pet food. All the places where we bring pet food in Ulster County are so appreciative when we arrive with our donations.

One of my friends had another idea. He purchased a kit and has spent COVID time affixing the various pieces of wood and canvas to the walls of a spare room for the benefit of his cats who now love to

play on their new wall gym, providing entertainment for both them and my friend. If you have the room, this is an option.

Here are some other ideas that benefit both people and animals. Create a backyard bird and critter refuge as you do yard cleanup in the fall. Push a bunch of leaves and brush together in a pile next to your shed or back fence; it can provide shelter for a possum. Thoroughly clean your bird feeders and start placing seed in them, so the birds get used to coming there. As it gets colder, buy a heated water bowl to put on or near your back porch for critters for whom usual water sources may become frozen. Heated bird baths are available, so your backyard birds can have a water source all winter. It is very rewarding to watch those thirsty animals drink, knowing you are helping them survive. Providing water for outside critters and birds is important year round, but especially in summer and winter.

Who knows how long this pandemic will continue, but we can put our time to good use by helping our fellow creatures. Then we can sit back with a snack and a glass of wine and watch some mindless TV and be pleased with ourselves.

Always be kind to animals,

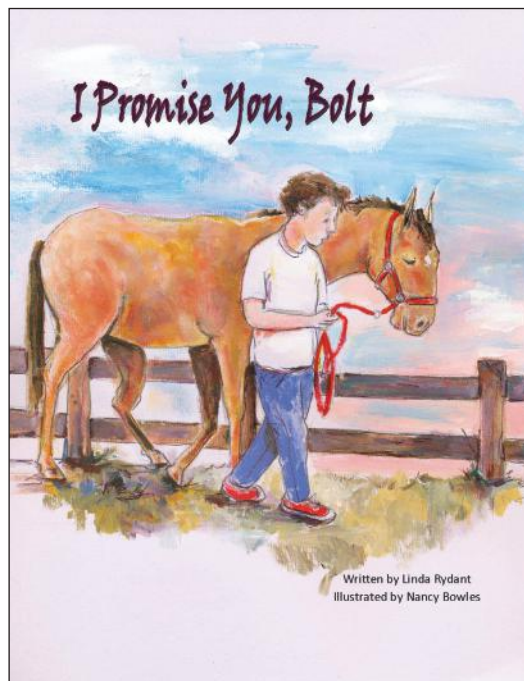
Pat Valusek, President

Book Review – *I Promise You, Bolt*

Finding children's books that teach kindness while educating about cruelty to animals can be difficult. We are happy to say we found one – and proud that its author is a long-time and valued NYSHA volunteer!

Linda Rydant explained her inspiration to write this story – “I was updating NYSHA's website with the testimonials of experts during the (first ever!) NYS Senate's Hearing on the Welfare of Racehorses in New York State. One of the presentations was from a former race track veterinarian who not only spoke of the suffering and deaths of these sentient animals, but also the love and care he provided as a child to a “retired” racehorse named Riff Raff. I knew there was a children's book in this testimony.”

I Promise You, Bolt begins by telling the story of Liam, his family, and their animal members, subtly explaining the care and responsibility



needed to take care of them. When they adopt Bolt, a horse no longer valuable at the racetrack, several pages are devoted to explaining what is required to take care of him and the commitment needed.

As young Liam grows, his connection and understanding of equines does too, and he becomes an equine veterinarian. While working at a racetrack, he learns about the abuse these horses endure, and the story gently educates the reader about why the industry is cruel and unfair to the equine athletes it claims to care so much about. He leaves the racetrack, opens up his own equine practice, and becomes an advocate for better treatment of racehorses.

Beautifully illustrated by Kingston artist Nancy Bowles, *I Promise You, Bolt* should be in every school and children's library. It is a

quick and easy read which humanizes the animals and easily holds the reader's attention. Thank you, Linda!

ASK THE VET: Keeping Indoor Cats Stimulated and Happy

Those of us who share our lives and homes with cats know that:

- 1) Cats are NOT just small dogs – they are very different animals.
- 2) Cats bond with their surrounding “territory” (which includes their humans) rather than with their “pack”; thus, most dislike car rides and travel to new venues, while dogs are thrilled not to be left behind by their humans and are eager for new adventures.
- 3) Cats are superior predators and will roam widely in pursuit of their “game.” Even when well-fed, cats will spend their outdoor hours stalking rodents, insects, and birds with devastating impacts on bird populations which already struggle for survival in the 21st century’s housing sprawls, toxic environments, and loss of open spaces.

As birds’ numbers decline dramatically, conservationists beg cat parents to keep their cats inside, while cat lovers want their companion to enjoy the outdoors; they deny that their cat has any real effect on population numbers, blaming the dwindling numbers of birds on loss of habitat, collisions with motor vehicles, toxic environments, manufacturing, etc., all of which are additional factors that drive avian population numbers down. The American Bird Conservancy (abcbirds.org) states that the over one hundred million feral and outdoor cats in the USA are responsible for the deaths of 2.4 billion birds annually. Their website contains information on bird species driven to near-extinction by cat predation, and begs us to stop creating TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return) programs that encourage more predation and loss of wildlife.



Cats playing on wall gym.

NYSHA encourages cat parents to keep their cats inside so there is no risk of their succumbing to motor vehicles or cruel humans. Following Ohio State University’s “Indoor Pet Initiative,” we can protect our cats from dangers in the



Entertaining cats with technology.

outside world and still have a happy and satisfied feline. Their website (indoorpet.osu.edu/cats) gives sound advice on litter box placement and environmental enrichment for house-bound cats: for example, whereas dogs and humans live in two dimensions (length and width,) cats live in three – adding height. Cats are eager to have areas in which they can observe their world *from above*. The perfect design is to have a kitty-climbing perch/tower by a picture window with bird feeders attracting entertainment on the wing.

If your house is suitable, a small enclosed “kitty porch” or catio could be constructed, with access from a door or window. Also, rather than feeding meals in a dish, try putting dry diet pieces in a feeding toy that the cat must pursue and swat to get his or her meal – the thrill of the chase! Have appropriately placed soft beds in various locations that your cat finds appealing, and provide agreed-upon scratching locations and materials for their marking instincts. Don’t forget to introduce new toys, once your cat indicates his/her preferences. The wild birds need our help.

– Holly Cheever, DVM

News Flash! Booklet about the “Link” Between Cruelty and Violence Updated

NYSHA has published a second addition of the booklet about the pervasive link between cruelty to animals and violence to humans, especially the connection with domestic violence, but with all other forms of violence as well. The second edition builds on the previous one and contains nearly 180 references. It covers juvenile crime, violence in schools and school shootings, bullying, dog fighting, child and spouse abuse, violent gangs, murder and serial killers, and



assaults on police officers. Especially useful are suggestions for breaking the seemingly endless cycle of violence, especially domestic violence. Fighting animal cruelty is a major weapon in the battle against human violence, as has been increasingly recognized by law enforcement personnel. The booklet is available to read on the NYSHA website, but also in hard copy by request from NYSHA at a cost of \$10, which includes shipping. www.nyshumane.org/order_connection/

Spotlight: Linda DeStefano, In Memoriam

Those of us working in animal protection seem like a minority sometimes, but one person can create a group and guide it into a strong and growing force.

Linda DeStefano was one of those people. Tragically, she died suddenly in an accident in June of this year, doing what she was known for – showing concern for others.

Born in Schenectady, Linda moved to Syracuse after college, where she became a well-known activist seen regularly at meetings or protests for a multitude of causes. Her letters to the editor appeared frequently in local print and social media.

Linda was the president and co-founder of People for Animal Rights of CNY, a grassroots organization working for animals and environmental protection, but she was also involved in other advocacy areas. She was a leader of the local and statewide Sierra Club, and was actively devoted to promoting peace, social justice, and voting integrity. It is no surprise that her master's degree was in social welfare, and that she was the first director of the Central New York Chapter of the Civil Liberties Union.



Members of People for Animal Rights of CNY (PAR) spoke fondly of her following her death: “Linda will be remembered as a stalwart organizer for people, animals and the environment. She was a leader and mentor for people wanting to make positive change in the world. She will be missed dearly by her friends, family and co-organizers.”

Working with Linda over the years on various issues, NYSHA considered her a good friend and trusted ally. She was optimistic that change was possible, as reflected in the names of the cats she left behind – Allegra (Happy) and Sunshine – who were so important to her that they were mentioned in her obituary along with her husband and family members. Our condolences go out to all of them.

Our words here cannot adequately describe Linda's immeasurable influence and the deep respect she earned from those she worked with. For more about her, see the tributes from other organizations and watch for a tribute on the PAR website in November. <http://www.peopleforanimalrightsofcny.org/information>

<https://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/iroquois/honoring-and-remembering-linda-destefano>

Our Voices in Albany

NYSHA concluded its analysis of NYS S.8029, a shelter standards bill proposed by Senator Monica Martinez, and provided the results to her office, along with input from the shelter directors whom NYSHA had contacted. The Senator's aide was pleased with the comprehensive report. Please keep watch on this bill and let your representatives know how important it is to you and for animals in shelters.

NYSHA Legislative Committee members also advocated for S.7719/A.9989, which passed in the Senate and was referred to the Assembly Agriculture Committee. It will require that all racehorses are microchipped and be prohibited from being transported for the purposes of slaughter within or outside New York State. We believe

that it is one of the most important pieces of legislation that has ever been introduced to prevent racehorses, both Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds, from going to slaughter. Please contact and ask the Committee chair, Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (*LupardoD@nyassembly.gov*, 518-455-5431), to bring this bill to a Committee vote, so it can go to the Assembly floor and get passed.

Please look on the NYSHA webpage, www.nyshumane.org, under the Legislation tab to see the **Chart of NYS Animal Protection Legislation** for important bills concerning animals in New York State. We will let you know when the Legislature resumes its sessions, so you can contact your legislator. Your support is critical.

Randy Makes a Comeback *Continued from page 1*

Randy cannot be ridden, but he would be a wonderful companion animal to have around individuals who could pet and fawn over him, and not feel afraid.

So despite the horrid beginnings of his journey, Randy is doing well. ERR has told us that if it does not work out with the therapeutic organization, he will stay at ERR until a good placement is found.

As for the stable where this tragedy occurred, the people were not charged. That decision was based on several factors – one of which was an agreement

with authorities to not engage in any more boarding, and to keep only the couple of horses they owned, who were in good shape. Periodic visits from authorities are ensuring the agreement is being followed.

NYSHA is glad that we were called upon to assist in this case and were able to succeed in achieving the best outcome that could have been hoped for in this tragic situation. We appreciate the backing our supporters provide us, so we can continue to aid in the relief efforts for animals in need.

HUMANE REVIEW

The Newsletter of the New York State Humane Association

Vol. XXXVI, Fall 2020. Published by the New York State Humane Association, Inc., PO Box 3068, Kingston, NY 12402

Editors: Laura-Ann Cammisa, Sondra Woodvine

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