

# HUMANE REVIEW

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The Newsletter of the New York State Humane Association



## Humane Education: A Critical Need

Sixty school shootings with 57 deaths and 150 injuries; 640 mass shootings; 830,000 violent school incidences; 770,000 juvenile arrests. Per year!

This is the society we live in. And the majority of violent crime is committed by young people under the age of 30. We educate them well in the arts and sciences, and they become our doctors, teachers, construction workers. If they make it that far.

What's missing in our children's education is the teaching of empathy, respect for others, humane principles. But humane education has been around for decades, hasn't it? Isn't it old news by now?

Some states have laws requiring humane education (H.E.). In NY, Section 809 of the Education Law requires it to be taught weekly at elementary grade levels. But many of NY's teachers aren't even aware that the law exists. In other cases, it is ignored. Efforts by NYSHA and others to force NY's Education Department to comply were rebuffed. NY State simply won't follow its own law.

Empathy and morality should be taught at home some people would argue. However, many families are unwilling or unable, and many children are too busy with social media to listen. And 700,000 school children live in abusive homes where they learn the opposite. Extensive research shows that unsafe home situations are the major breeding ground for future violent individuals.

Teachers are the "other authority figures" and influence in a child's life beside their parents or guardians. Humane education taught by teachers could be a major antidote to the appalling violence statistics. To be effective, H.E. presentations should be made every week or two, either by the teachers or outside presenters.

Children's natural fascination with and love of animals makes them respond well to messages of kindness and respect for them. Studies show that kindness and respect for animals carries over into kindness and respect for humans. Morality and sympathy toward people is taught by teaching morality and sympathy toward animals.

Teachers don't even have to develop their own H.E. presentations. There are literally thousands of lesson plans available from many professional organizations. If teachers prefer, several organizations will send guest presenters to their classrooms.

So, who would be the beneficiaries of humane education taught in

schools? Children benefit. There would be less bullying, less school violence, fewer school shootings, fewer juvenile arrests, less future violent crime. Teachers benefit. Over 300,000 teachers are threatened in schools yearly and 180,000 are assaulted (9% of middle school teachers alone). Society benefits. There would be less juvenile crime and less violent crime overall, less domestic violence, fewer prison inmates, less animal cruelty, fewer mass shootings, less gun violence and murder. And there would be a dent in the hundreds of billions of dollars that violent crime costs society every year. Put simply, humane education works.



We have a choice. We can continue to suffer the incidences of crime, carry out trials for the accused, pay the huge medical and emotional costs of the victims, and incarcerate an endless stream of perpetrators, or we can take steps to reduce the staggering consequences that result. Can humane education stop all crime? Of course not. But humane education is one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of crime fighting, a tool to help reduce it, help prevent it in the first place.

More information, including the wide availability of H.E. programs and guest

speakers, is available on NYSHA's website and from the writer at [harold.hovel@aol.com](mailto:harold.hovel@aol.com).

*This article was adapted from NYSHA Board Chairperson Harold Hovel's April 2023 presentation to hundreds of teachers and school officials at a BOCES regional conference conducted via Zoom. His appearance was facilitated by NYSHA's partnership with the Hyer Ground Rescue animal welfare organization.*

### What You Can Do:

- Find out if Humane Ed is being taught in your elementary school. If not, bring the NY law to the school authorities' attention.
- Let teachers and administrators know there are resources available, many on NYSHA's website. Offer to help teachers find H. E. presenters.
- Let school guidance, social workers, and psychologists know that NYSHA's booklet, *The Connection Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence* by Dr. Hovel, can be read online at NYSHA's website or ordered.
- If there is no Humane Ed, ask to speak at a school board meeting. Have copies of the law to distribute.

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## President's Message

With all the wildfires, tornadoes, and flooding that have occurred recently, it seems at times as though the world is coming apart and we are powerless to change things. We feel overwhelmed looking at the big picture. So perhaps we can look at the smaller one – things we can do something about.

A story comes to mind told at a conference I attended: a young man who lived by the sea walked along the beach each morning and picked up starfish that had been left behind by the tide and tossed them back in the water. A man walking by saw him and said, "There are miles of beaches and thousands of starfish; you can't make a difference." The young man picked up the next starfish and tossed it into the water and said, "It made a difference to that one."

How does that relate to us? Simple actions can and do make a difference. Several NYSHA members donate pet food monthly to the various food pantries in our area. The staffers there are pleased to receive the donation, and I have met some of the recipients and they are most grateful, as their beloved animals are better fed.

We can also donate to those organizations that are assisting the animals and people who are recovering from the catastrophes that have befallen them. There are humane groups on the ground struggling to help injured and lost animals and they need support.

On another note, numerous people respond to our pleas to write to their legislators to support bills that better the lives of animals. Those letters, calls, and emails make a difference and can influence

legislators and the Governor to pass those bills which result in better protection for animals.

People often reach out to us about possible cruelty situations, and we advise them as to the most effective way to communicate with their local police and SPCAs and provide those agencies with the relevant facts, so those cases can be investigated, thus making a difference in the lives of those animals.

On another front, volunteers bring their therapy dogs of all makes and models into hospitals and nursing homes. The visiting animals bring such joy and happiness to the patients there, some of whom may be suffering from a terminal illness.

A difference also can be made by not supporting businesses or activities that exploit animals. Don't acquire your companion animal from a pet shop; don't attend the racetrack where horses are whipped as part of the show and often break down on the track and are euthanized; don't attend rodeos where animals may be cruelly shocked and suffer injuries; and don't attend circuses where wild animals have been "trained" to perform in unnatural ways.

We may not be able to change the world, but we all can make a difference.

Please be kind to animals,

Patricia Valusek

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## Equine Cruelty Investigation Training

NYSHA was proud to support the "Investigating Equine Cruelty and Neglect" workshop held at Little Brook Farm in Old Chatham. The July training was conducted for law enforcement personnel and humane agency cruelty investigators. It featured speakers Susan McDonough, retired NYS Police Investigator and NYSHA committee member, and Dr. Steve Naile, equine veterinarian. NYSHA Board member Jean Daniels assisted at the registration desk.

This was the most recent of the yearly workshops that Little Brook Farm has produced in an effort to make law enforcement personnel aware of how to recognize cruelty when they receive a complaint about a neglected or mistreated horse. Lynn Cross, the farm's founder, was proud to report that the attendees were very impressed with the training, and she had received several thank you emails.



*L to R: Delhi PD Officers Tyler Croizer; Tiffany Croizer; Tioga Co. Dep. Sean Detota; Delhi NYSUP Lt. Jason Lonecke, Delaware Co. Dep. Collin Roche. Abe, a police horse retired from Rockland Co. Mounted Police, patiently assisted.*



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## Bear Necessities

Everywhere you go these days people talk about a bear sighting closer than normal. We touched on this in our summer e-newsletter, but a reminder is in order to keep everyone safe – humans, domestic animals, and the bears.

Do not put out birdfeeders until December and then still check with DEC to see if there are any bears not yet hibernating in your area. The smell of a BBQ grill may be enticing, so put the grill in a protected area after use if you can. Take in all garbage pails as soon as possible. For outside barn animals use secure electric fencing and/or flashing red lights, and do not store equine or chicken feed where a bear could be tempted! Lastly, but so important, please don't leave any of your companion animals out overnight.



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## Our Voices in Albany

As of the time we go to press, we are in a holding pattern with regard to the three animal protection bills that passed both houses of the NY Legislature. We are waiting for the Governor to sign them.

Please take a minute and contact Governor Hochul and ask her to sign the following bills into law: Stop the wildlife killing contests

(A.2917/S.4099), Stop sending horses to slaughter (A.5109/S.2163A), and Stop selling disabled horses, ponies, mules, and donkeys at auctions (A.3552A/S.1677A).

If the animals could speak, they would say, “Our lives are in your hands...please stand up for full protection for us.”

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## Tribute to Cydney Cross



The animal world lost a true friend when Cydney Cross, founder of “Out of the Pits” near Albany, passed away recently. Cydney dedicated her life to rescuing, evaluating, and training dogs – first Greyhounds for many years, then unwanted Pit Bulls – and finding them new homes. In addition to running the organization, she wanted to educate others.

She served as an adjunct professor in Animal Science at Cobleskill College, teaching therapy dog training. On a

personal note, she helped NYSHA when we found ourselves with an unwanted dog on our hands because of an eviction.

She was known beyond her animal work as a result of her other charitable endeavors – from feeding the homeless to supporting programs to educate underprivileged children. An important role model for the business community, she was chosen by Albany’s News10 as an Inspirational Woman of the Capital Region in 2017.

Cydney was a good, compassionate, and practical woman who did whatever she could to help make lives better for both animals and people. She will be missed.

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## The Vet Is In: More Than Just a Motto – Be Prepared

We all watched with unimaginable horror the recent fires in Hawaii and, of course, immediately thought of evacuating with our own pets. The idea is painfully unthinkable, but if we do everything we can ahead of time, we stand a real chance to save them. With so many disasters seemingly happening all at once, we can’t do too much to prepare.

Make sure all animals are microchipped to be more easily reunited should they get lost in an emergency. Research in advance what emergency housing or shelters accept pets. Keep a picture of you and your animals together so that you can prove your connection if other means of identification are unavailable.

Keep up-to-date veterinary records in a waterproof sealed plastic bag and in a cat carrier ready to use immediately. Keep dog records the same way with your personal emergency items to take. If your dog can be crated, that is a better option and records should be kept in the crate.

Have all veterinary medicine ready to go in a sealed container as well, with instructions. Bring a few days’ supply of food, kitty litter, and bags to clean up after your dog.

Make sure that all tags have full identification on them. If your cat does not wear a collar inside, have it attached to the carrier ready to go when you need it.

Your veterinarian may be closed in an emergency situation so keep duplicate health records – not in your phone, which can get lost or ruined – but with a trusted person in case your originals are separated from your pet. But do attach your vet’s name and number to any collar, crate, or leash as appropriate.

Also, with your animal’s info, add an emergency contact outside the impacted area in case your animal gets separated from you and rescuers can’t reach you.



Depending on where you live, check with your equine practitioners or farm vets to decide what the best course of action would be to take care of barn animals. Acclimate your horses to having a towel or covering over their eyes if they need to be moved since they are not likely to be easily led when they’re frightened or facing a strange situation. Have coverings for this handy in your tack room.

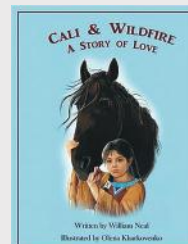
Listen for emergency warnings and if advised, evacuate ahead of a disaster. In NY, a law allows household pets to be carried on public transportation during an emergency.

Do all that you can to project a soothing demeanor so that your panic does not worsen your companion’s. Pets cannot plan for themselves and are depending on us to be responsible for them. Given their loyalty to us, we owe them all the protection we can.

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## The Book Corner: “Cali and Wildfire – A Story of Love” by Bill Neal

“Cali & Wildfire – A Story of Love” is a brilliant addition to the children’s-lit genre. Set against the backdrop of the cruel horseracing industry, it is the tale of a very young girl who saves an unwanted racehorse. Bill Neal has masterfully weaved a story that both affirms children’s innate feelings of kindness and compassion, and, more importantly, shows them how those feelings can be applied – how they, even at a young age, can help make the world a better place. Concentrating on empathy, dedication, and perseverance when helping animals, this is a must read book for young children, and should be added to any collection teaching humane education. *Patrick Battuello, Horseracing Wrongs, President; former NYSHA Board member (Guest reviewer)*



## Spotlight – Suzyn Barron



How do you describe someone who is the President of the Board that manages the Warwick Valley Humane Society, does animal control work, brings home kittens to foster, participates in or leads cruelty investigation cases, writes a pet column for the local newspaper, supervises a paid and volunteer staff, develops community outreach programs, and is a disaster relief responder? After serving as Treasurer upon joining the

Board in 1990, she became President in 2000 and has since established a low-cost spay/neuter program, improved existing facilities, and in 2023 opened a new state-of-the-art animal shelter. And these are only a few of the areas and projects in the wide scope of her duties.

Too many words come to mind – dedicated, dynamic, compassionate, forward thinking, creative, tireless, smart, focused are a few – but they describe one well-respected and impressive woman, Suzyn Barron.

Starting with her picture as a two-year-old in the New York Daily News kissing her beloved boxer Mambo, Suzyn’s career path was



varied until she found her true calling when she followed her heart and started working with animals.

Over time, her shelter began handling animals other than domestic pets and now includes a program to help wildlife in need. But along with increased services, the public perception and expectations for shelters has changed, and in Suzyn’s own words “unfortunately personal responsibility has diminished as people try to avoid the word surrender or relinquish and think they are just rehoming an animal.”

Anyone who has worked or known a person engaged in animal welfare is aware of how frustrating non-commitment to four-legged family members is. Add to that staffing shortages, financial issues, and the endless but individual animals who break your heart and it’s clear that anyone doing this for any length of time with such a long list of personal and professional accomplishments is remarkable!

Just coping on a daily basis can be a challenge, but to have implemented so many successful programs, including working with domestic violence shelters and other daily improvements, is deserving of special recognition, yet to her it’s just what you do.

And still with all she has going on right now, Suzyn is planning continual upgrades in her new shelter and a wildlife rehabilitation and education center in the future. Considering her past achievements, there’s no doubt she will get all this done!

We recently had a long conversation with Suzyn but unfortunately space does not permit us to truly honor her the way we would like to. Please see the full interview on our website, linking from this article.



*Suzyn with Chico, rescued from a remote road, tied to a tree with a sign “animal police please call.” He was adopted and became a certified service dog for a veteran with PTSD.*

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