



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 47th YEAR

WINTER 1993

The Alexandria Animal Shelter is open seven days a week, as well as Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings until 7:30. Call 838-4775 for more information.

Thanks to all our many friends who generously responded to our Christmas appeal. All proceeds go to help homeless and injured animals and to expand the humane education program in our community.

In 1992, the League was able to reunite with their owners 59% of the stray dogs and 16% of the stray cats that we received at the Shelter. The Humane Society of the United States reports that the national average for reuniting strays with their owners is 16% for dogs and 3% for cats.

Our sincere thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Ted Drews of Alexandria, who recently donated a 1989 Plymouth to the League. The car is in great condition, and it will be used primarily in our adoption and humane education programs. Thanks, Sheila and Ted!

One of the best things you can do for your dog or cat is to have it spayed/neutered. The medical benefits, including the prevention of many forms of cancer, are just some of the reasons why you should have this very important surgery performed on your pet. Talk it over with your veterinarian.

23 area veterinarians cooperate with the League in providing a low-cost spay/neuter program. Our thanks are extended to these veterinarians for their dedication to animal welfare.

The December 1992 Pet Photos with Santa was a big success, thanks to Carlos Mejias, owner and director of the Olde Towne School for Dogs. Carlos has been conducting this event for many years and each year it seems to get better. All proceeds go to the League. Thank you, Carlos.

The League offers humane education programs which are available free of charge to schools, scout troops, civic associations and special interest groups. For more information, please call Jeanine Clarke at (703) 838-5042.

Be 'Irish for a Day'! Come to the 7th Annual St. Paddy's Day Fun Dog Show

The temperature may still be below freezing, but spring is on the way. The first sign of the season is the 7th Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show, sponsored by the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria and the Ballyshanners, the local Irish-American Society. This year's show will be the biggest and best FUN dog event in the area. And all dogs are welcome—whether they're purebreds or lovable Heinz-57s, obedience school graduates or flunk-outs, no matter what their size, they're invited.

This year's show will begin at 10:15 a.m. on Saturday, March 13, at Market Square, 301 King Street in Old Town Alexandria. The Master of Ceremonies will be popular television personality John Harter of WJLA-TV Channel 7. Our Judge will be the Honorable Daniel F. O'Flaherty of the Alexandria General District Court.

First, second, third, fourth and fifth place ribbons will be awarded to winners in each of the following ten categories: biggest dog, smallest dog, dog with the most spots, dog with the longest tail, blackest dog, whitest dog, dog with the curliest tail, dog with the biggest ears, dog with the best handshake, dog and owner in the best Irish costume. In addition, every dog entered will receive from the League a certificate suitable for framing, and there will be a calligrapher to inscribe the dog's name on the certificate.

A very special event at the show will be the on-stage introduction of every dog in the audience that was adopted from any animal shelter. Each of these "Shelter Graduates" will be given a special award.

There will be five beautiful, healthy, personality-plus dogs from the Alexandria Animal Shelter who are available for adoption. Each dog will have its own hand-



JOHN HARTER
will emcee
the 7th Annual
St. Patrick's
Day FUN
Dog Show

ler familiar with the dog's personality and background, and who will answer questions for potential adoptors.

A veterinarian will be at our "Ask the Vet" table to answer questions on pet medical care. League volunteers will be on hand with low-cost spay/neuter certificates and humane education literature. There also will be plenty of coffee, hot chocolate, soft drinks and doughnuts.

Right after the Dog Show, the St. Patrick's Day Parade will begin at noon. Parade Chairman Pat Troy says that this year's parade will be the biggest ever held in Alexandria. For a full day of enjoyment, come to the Fun Dog Show and stay for the big parade!

AND COMING SOON . . .

- A Fun Cat Show!
- Pet Portraits By Michael

. . . See details inside

The 'Senior Citizen' Cat

by Nancy Suska, DVM

Age is relative. Cats, like people, experience aging in their own individual ways. So, how old is old? It's not unheard of for cats to live to be 20 or even 25 years old. Physiologically, the cat's body begins to undergo changes around seven years of age (roughly 42 human years). This is reflected as loss of organ reserve, regenerative power, and adaptability. Put simply, the older body takes longer to bounce back from insults.

Decreased mental alertness is common as the cat ages. As cats are extremely fastidious, it comes as no surprise that two other early signs of senility are loss of house training and decreased grooming. It is therefore important for owners to assist their cat by daily brushing. Monthly nail trims become necessary, since the aged nails tend to be thickened and malformed.

Other changes take place: bones become more brittle and muscles become smaller. Arthritis, due to degenerating joint components, is common. Lameness, stiffness, and pain may be evident.

Less obvious changes also occur in the major body systems. Heart disease can be overlooked, since many of the signs (decreased activity, energy and appetite) are consistent with the normal signs of aging. Other signs include labored breathing, cyanotic (blue) mucous membranes, and the animal lying on its breastbone rather than its side. Some heart diseases are caused by an overactive thyroid, kidney disease, and dental disease.

In the geriatric cat, overproduction of the thyroid hormone has adverse effects on the heart, kidneys, liver, and gastrointestinal tract. Among the signs is weight loss despite increased appetite. Diabetes Mellitus is another common disorder.

There is an increased chance of cancer as the cat ages. Any organ or system can be affected. Feline Leukemia Virus is still the leading cause. Yet another major

concern of the geriatric cat is a decreased ability to fight off infections.

Beginning at seven years of age an annual geriatric workup (including chemical and thyroid profiles, complete blood count, chest x-rays, urine and fecal analysis, as well as physical exam) is essential



Vet's Corner

to your cat's health. This facilitates screening, early detection, and diagnosis of diseases, following the course of disease, selecting and monitoring treatment, and establishing a baseline for the future.

Many signs of the diseases listed here can be detected early by the astute owner (and most cat owners are). Be alert for lethargy, anorexia, constipation, vomiting, increased thirst and urination, weight loss, bad breath, and unexplained growths.



Dr. Suska is a veterinarian at the Beacon Hill Cat Hospital in Alexandria. She is a graduate of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.



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Come to Our Cat Show!

A Household Pet Cat Show will be hosted by the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria in June 1993. This will be a FUN show for non-pedigreed cats (alias: domestic long- and shorthairs). There will be rosettes and other prizes awarded for the best cats (based on personality and general health).

A special judging will be held for "shelter graduates." There will be mini-seminars on cat health topics, vendors of cat supplies and paraphernalia, and food for the exhibitors and guests.

Please call 838-5042 and leave a message if you are interested in showing your cat, volunteering, renting a booth, advertising in the show catalogue, or simply would like to make a donation. Watch for more details as they become available.

All proceeds will benefit the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.

Things We Can Use

The Alexandria Animal Shelter is a seven-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year operation. There are many things we need to help us operate efficiently, and to provide comfort and care to homeless and injured animals. Some of the things we can use right now include:

- blankets and towels for the kennels and cages
- a facsimile (fax) machine to exchange information with other shelters quickly
- toys for both dogs and cats
- a microwave oven
- a large coffee urn for special events

If you can help us with any of these items, please drop them off at our Shelter or call us at 838-4775 to arrange a pickup. The League is a nonprofit charity and your donations are tax-deductible. Thanks!



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1992 Adoptions Set New Record

We are very pleased to report that more animals were adopted in 1992 than in any other year in the history of the Shelter. A total of 1,269 animals were adopted—a 27 percent increase over 1991 and 139 percent more than just five years ago. There has been a significant increase in adoptions in each of the last five years, and we are working hard to ensure that this trend continues. 1993 began with the highest number of adoptions—125—in any single month. This is a 213 percent increase over January 1988.

However, it is not just high adoption numbers that we are interested in. We strive to ensure that each animal is placed in a good home where it will be cared for in a responsible way for the rest of its life. Each adoption is preceded by a visit to the potential adoptor's home by a trained adoption counselor who offers suggestions on feeding, training, and animal behav-

Purebreds at the Shelter

We have all heard people who breed animals say that they do not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem because they are very careful about placing their litters only in good homes where the animals will be properly cared for, and never abandoned.

Statistics seem to indicate otherwise, however. The Humane Society of the United States reports that an average of 25 percent of the dogs received at shelters throughout the United States are purebred. At the Alexandria Shelter in 1992, 36 percent of the dogs were purebred. Poodles, cocker spaniels, and labs led the list.

Please don't contribute to the pet overpopulation problem. Have your pet spayed or neutered. Call our Shelter for information on the reduced cost spay/neuter program.

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ior. A free veterinary examination is scheduled for within 72 hours after the animal is taken home, and the mandatory neutering is arranged at a very reduced cost. After the adoption, we contact the adoptor to determine if there are any adjustment problems that we can help solve.

As a result of these efforts, by far most of our adoptions are very successful and we have one of the lowest return rates in the area.

Everyone Was a Winner At the Fall Doggie Dash

Our 2nd Annual Doggie Dash, a 1.4-mile walk/run held last November 8, was a big success, with over 250 dogs (and owners) participating. We are indebted to Dr. Pat Donohue of the Alexandria Animal Hospital who, as the Race Director, donated many hours to planning the event.

Our sincere thanks, also, to the members of the Breakfast Club, a local women's running group that assisted Dr. Donohue with the registration and timing of the race.

We also are grateful to our race sponsors who helped make the race a financial success: The Alexandria Animal Hospital, Elpaw Veterinary Clinic, Ft. Hunt Animal Hospital, Dr. Richard Hawe, Kingsview Animal Hospital, and the Virginia-Maryland Veterinary Emergency Service.

Raffle prizes at the event were donated by the Chart House Restaurant and the Union Street Public House.

We sincerely thank all these people, as well as the dozens of volunteers who helped make the 2nd Annual Doggie Dash an overwhelming success.

WANTED . . . Volunteer illustrator and office help for National Pet Memorial project. Illustrator to do small line drawings of pets and their people. **Call Ron, (703) 780-3000.**



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Annual Dinner Note

For many years, the League has held its Annual Dinner at the banquet hall in the Gadsby's Tavern building in Old Town. The dinner has always provided good food, an interesting speaker, and the camaraderie of people who share a common interest in animals—all this at a very reasonable cost.

By every measure over the past decades, our Annual Dinners have been very successful and attendance has steadily risen. And that is our problem!

Those of you who attended either our 1991 or 1992 dinner observed that we were filled to capacity, and in 1992 we had to turn away many people who wanted to make reservations.

We aren't eager to move from the traditional site of our Annual Dinner, but to accommodate all our members and friends who want to attend, it appears that we will have to look for another location. We haven't picked the new site yet, but we will strive to ensure a convenient Alexandria location, adequate parking, and good food at a reasonable price. Look for more details in our next *SPOTLIGHT*.

Humane Education Benefits Everyone

The objective of any humane educator is to foster in children and adults a lifelong appreciation and concern for the well-being of animals and the environment we share.

Humane education programs are a large part of the League's community outreach services. Our programs at the Shelter and in the community are free of charge to schools, scout troops, civic associations and special interest groups.

The League's programs focus on the role of the Shelter; pet care and owner responsibilities; animal cruelty and neglect; wildlife concerns; pet overpopulation; and the many environmental problems that affect people and animals alike.

If you are interested in having a program presented to your class or group, please call Jeanine Clarke at (703) 838-5042.

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Jack Steele, *President*
Joyce McDowell, *Editor*

Book Your Pet Portraits By Michael Joseph

For the fourth consecutive year, the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria has selected Michael Joseph, the nationally renowned pet photographer, for the annual spring Pet Portraits session. Mr. Joseph is recognized as one of the country's outstanding photographers. His interest in animals and his affection for dogs and cats are evident in his work as a specialist in pet photography.

He has photographed over 50,000 pets across the country, and is widely regarded as the foremost pet photographer in the nation. Every year there are more people who want him to capture their pets on film.

The entire \$10 sitting fee will be donated to the League. At each sitting, Michael will take six to eight pictures of you and your pet or your pet alone. He and his wife, Deborah, use techniques developed over many years to coax the perfect pose from your pet.

About five days after your sitting, you will have a chance to view your proofs; at that time you may order finished pictures



in a variety of sizes and styles.

Appointments are necessary. To schedule yours, call Mr. Joseph's studio at (800) 822-1379. This year, he will be in Alexandria on May 7, 8, 9 and 10 *only*. So please, arrange your sitting now to avoid disappointment.

Be a Considerate Pet Owner: Pick Up After Your Dog

It's still a big problem! And it exists throughout Alexandria: It's dog owners who do not pick up after their dogs.

It is a violation of the City Code to allow a dog to defecate on private property, and while a dog may defecate in designated dog exercise areas, the owners must pick up after the animals. By far, most dog owners strongly support this law and willingly clean up after their pets. But a very small minority of people somehow believe that allowing dog feces to remain on the ground is not offensive to others, and do not realize that it could be a source of disease to other dogs.

Please be a responsible pet owner and carry a pooper-scooper or a small plastic bag with you when you walk your dog. Everyone will thank you.

A Living Legacy for Animals

Since its inception in 1946, the League has benefited from the generosity of individuals who have made bequests to further our programs and mission of caring for homeless and injured animals. If you would like to include a bequest to the League in your will, you may include the following language: "I give \$_____ to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Inc., having its principal offices at 910 S. Payne St., Alexandria, VA 22314, for its general purposes."

For more information, please call (703) 838-4775.

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