



THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

# SPOTLIGHT on animals

IN OUR 48th YEAR

WINTER 1994

*Thanks to the hundreds of people in our community who generously responded to our Christmas appeal letter. Your donations will help further the League's twin missions of caring for homeless, injured and abused animals, and educating the public on animal welfare issues. Every penny of your contributions is used to better the lives of animals.*

*For the second straight year, the League found good homes for over 1,100 homeless animals. It is a record of which we can all be proud, but for too many unfortunate creatures, there was no home available. Every year millions of bright, healthy companion animals across the country must be humanely killed. You can help to combat this tragic pet overpopulation program, by having your pets spayed or neutered. The surgery is painless, safe, and can even prolong your pet's life. So please—ask your veterinarian today about this important procedure.*

*Abusive treatment of animals can and should be stopped. Every week, we receive calls from caring people who report instances of suspected cruelty. By responding quickly to these reports, the League can save animals' lives and take them out of dangerous situations. To report suspected abuse, call (703) 838-4775.*

*Many thanks to Ginger Noce and Carlos Mejias of the Olde Towne School for Dogs for their help in offering our annual Pet Photos with Santa. Over 350 people brought their pets in to be photographed. Also, we deeply appreciate the fine job done by photographers B. K. Nowlan and Renée Bouchard, and the many volunteers who contributed their time and services to make this event a success.*

## St. Patrick's Day is Going to The Dogs, Saturday, March 12



You don't have to be Irish to love St. Patrick's Day, and now there's one more reason to celebrate.

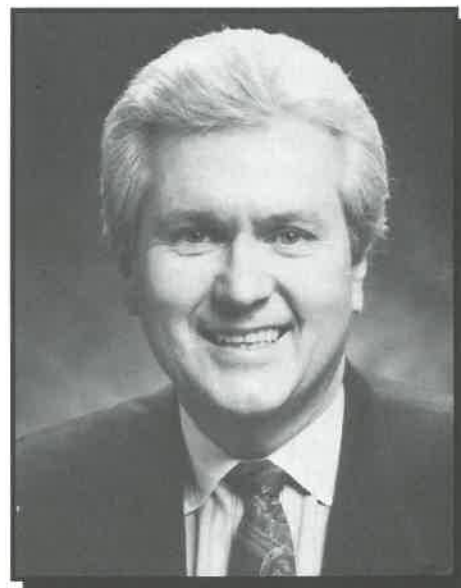
For the eighth straight year, by popular demand, the League will hold its St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show at Market Square in Old Town Alexandria just before the annual parade.

Mark March 12 on your calendar now—you won't want to miss this year's event, and neither will your dog. Every year it gets better and better, and you're bound to have a great time. The program will begin at 10:30 sharp; and as always, there is no admission charge.

Once again, popular WJLA TV-7 personality John Harter will be on hand as our special master of ceremonies, and Judge Daniel F. O'Flaherty will rate the four-legged contestants in a dozen just-for-fun categories, including Longest Nose, Most Irish-Looking Dog, Biggest Ears, Longest Tail, Curliest Tail, Most Spots, Dog/Owner Lookalike, and others. Ribbons will be awarded for first-, second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-place winners in each category.

There also will be a special event at which dogs adopted from shelters will be introduced and will receive special recognition.

A unique feature of the day's festivities will be the presentation of five beautiful, healthy Shelter dogs available for adoption. Each will be accompanied by a handler who is familiar



WJLA-TV personality John Harter will be our special master of ceremonies at the League's 8th Annual St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show on March 12.

with his personality and history.

Every dog entering the show will receive a special certificate, and a calligrapher will be on hand to inscribe your dog's name on his certificate.

Shelter volunteers will be available to distribute humane education literature and answer questions from the public on matters related to adoption procedures at the Alexandria Animal Shelter.

In addition, there will be an Ask the Vet table, where you can speak

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## Dealing with Cat Litterbox Problems

by Myra S. Miller, DVM

One of the most common complaints from cat owners is that their cat is urinating out of the litterbox. There are various reasons, both medical and behavioral, a cat may lose its litterbox training. Most cats will readily use a clean litterbox for urine and bowel movements with very little to no training. Therefore, if your cat begins to urinate out of the box it should alert you that there is a problem.

Medical problems that might cause a cat to lose its litter habits include bladder inflammation and bladder stones. All of these problems may cause discomfort and increased urgency to urinate. Therefore, your cat may not make it to the box in time to deposit the urine, or may associate the discomfort with the litter box and avoid using it. Kidney failure and problems with walking could also cause your cat to urinate in an unusual location. A visit to your veterinarian for a thorough physical exam, urinalysis, and possibly blood tests or x-rays will help uncover any of these problems.

If your cat gets a clean bill of health but is still not urinating in the box, it is probably a behavioral problem. Cats often form a particular preference for a substrate to urinate on. To modify your cat's behavior you must make the litter box more appealing than the locations the cat is currently using.

To make the litterbox more appealing:

- keep it extremely clean;
- try using an unscented scoopable or clay litter;
- if the box is covered, remove the cover;
- try adding an additional box (this may be helpful especially if there are multiple cats in the home) or place the box in the room your cat has chosen to urinate in.

To make the inappropriate area



### Vet's Corner

less appealing, first clean it well with an enzymatic cleaner available through your veterinarian or a pet store to remove all the smell of urine. Alternatively, white vinegar and water can be used to clean the area. After cleaning the area try to cover it with something offensive to your cat such as tin foil, plastic, or a bar of deodorant soap. Another tactic is to put your cat's food in the area where he was urinating. Cats are fastidious and do not like to eat and urinate in the same location.

If all else fails, you may need to confine your cat to a small room with the litterbox to help "relearn" his litterbox habits. Once the cat has mastered using the box while confined to the room, gradually allow access to the rest of the home.

*Dr. Miller practices at the Elpaw Veterinary Clinic in Alexandria.*



### Pet Portraits by Michael Returns May 13-15

If you've been waiting for the right time to get a professional portrait of your four-legged family members, take note: popular pet photographer Michael Joseph will be back in our area to immortalize your pets on film.

Mr. Joseph, whose studio is headquartered in North Carolina, is known nationwide for his animal portraits. He will be in Alexandria May 13-15 to conduct sittings. The entire \$10 sitting fee is donated to the League; of course, there will be an additional charge for any photos you may decide to purchase. Sittings can be arranged for pets alone or for pets and family members together.

Every year, the appointment books fill up quickly, so to avoid disappointment, you are urged to call right away to set up a time that is convenient for you. You may call toll-free, (800) 822-1379.

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



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# Animal Control Professionals: The Shelter's Unsung Heroes

by Cynthia Miles

Remember the days when the words "Animal Control" brought to mind a dogcatcher with a net? Animal Control has come of age, and if it weren't for these compassionate and hardworking individuals our lives would be very different.

Animal Control professionals enforce laws that protect animals from the abuse, cruelty and neglect they too often suffer, and those animals would not be able to look forward to a better life in a loving home.

The Animal Control Officers in Alexandria are among the best. They're good at their jobs because they love both animals and people.

An Animal Control Officer (ACO) is a law enforcement professional in the State of Virginia. Each officer attends the Animal Control Academy and other professional courses. He or she can write tickets, issue a summons on the spot, and enforce game control laws.

"There are good strong laws in Virginia," says Roger Townsend, who has been an ACO in Alexandria since 1989. In August 1993 a law was passed that identifies the responsibilities of animal owners and requires that every shelter animal be spayed/neutered within a reasonable period of time after it is adopted.

Roger and his coworkers, Chris Caswell and Kathy Borden, work six days a week. Their schedules overlap, and there is usually one officer at the Shelter to respond to calls, questions or complaints.



**Alexandria Animal Control Officers (from left) Kathy Borden, Roger Townsend, and Chris Caswell play a key role in ensuring the safety of both animals and people in our community.**

"Every day is different," says Roger. "We usually answer 325 to 350 calls per month." Not all of such calls relate to domestic animals. In fact, of the 4,949 calls for service Roger and his colleagues received in 1993 alone, 1,407 of them dealt with wildlife in distress.

In addition to responding to Alexandria residents' animal-related problems, ACOs also inspect pet stores and security dog training facilities when the business owners request a permit.

To keep abreast of developments in humane control methods, our offic-

ers also attend in-service training programs offered by the Alexandria Police Department.

Alexandria residents are very concerned about their neighborhoods and how animals are treated. "People will not hesitate to call if they walk by a house and see something wrong," said Roger.

To remove an animal from a potentially dangerous environment, the officer will warn the owner and return 24 hours later to ensure that the situation has been corrected. If the officer feels that the situation will not improve, he or she will write a summons and remove the animal to the Alexandria Animal Shelter.

There is a great deal of stress associated with Animal Control work, such as when an officer confronts evidence of cruelty or the death of animals allowed to roam. But there are also rewards, especially when they see a pet returned to its owner, or a neglectful owner educated toward more humane treatment of his pet, or an abandoned animal adopted from the Shelter into a good home.

Alexandria has 24-hour emergency animal control service. All calls from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. are dispatched through the Police Department. If an Animal Control Officer is not on duty, there is an emergency service technician available.

So here's to the Alexandria Animal Control Officers, the unsung heroes of our community. They deserve a medal for doing a job that is sometimes difficult, often rewarding, and very necessary.

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The Shelter has created a new school presentation for grade-school children to familiarize them with the role of Animal Control Officers. This program is designed to dispel the myth of "dog catcher" and serve as a link to the community. An officer will go to the class, answer questions about his/her job and about wildlife in the urban area, and educate children on the proper response when they witness incidences of cruelty or neglect.

For information on how you can arrange this presentation for your school or classroom, call Jeanine Clark, Humane Educator, at (703) 838-5042.

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# So You Want to Adopt a Pet

by Cynthia Miles

So you want to adopt a pet—you feel that the time is right. Perhaps your children are finally old enough to help properly care for an animal. You've moved into a house with a fenced yard. Or you have retired and have more time to spend with a pet. Whatever the reason, you are ready to embark on the journey of pet adoption.

The road to finding the right pet for you can be a lot less stressful for you if you begin your search at the Alexandria Animal Shelter. We want the best for both the animals in our care and the people who adopt them, and have in place procedures to maximize the chances of a successful adoption.

When you arrive at the Shelter you will be encouraged to read a brochure that discusses our adoption procedures before you proceed to the dog pens or the cat cages to meet the animals who need homes. Once you select a pet you would like to become part of your family, your first step is to fill out an adoption application.

The purpose of the application is to give us information about your history of pet ownership and help ensure that you and the animal are right for each other. For example, if you have your heart set on a Great Dane and you live in an apartment that allows pets, we may recommend a smaller breed of dog that can exist happily in less spacious living quarters.

Do you already have a pet? If you are already a dog owner, we ask you to bring in your dog to meet his/her new companion. If you have

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Happy endings like this one don't just happen; they require commitment to responsible pet ownership and to making the adoption work. (Photo by Myra McGovern)

## Euthanasia Workshop Held in Alexandria

Tragically, each year over 15 million animals nationwide must be humanely euthanized because there are not enough homes for them. Shelter workers understandably experience feelings of pain, anger, and depression at having to see bright, healthy animals permanently deprived of a good life and a loving home.

Shelter workers and volunteers around the area met recently for a workshop presented in Alexandria by Bill Hurt Smith on December 8-9. The seminar, entitled "Euthanasia: The Human Factor," gave participants a chance to discuss with their colleagues the feelings associated with euthanasia. Over 50 people attended the workshop.

Our special thanks go to Brian Watson, owner of Armand's Pizzeria, who generously provided pizza and salads for the participants during the program.



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## Worth Remembering:

*“ Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace. ”*

—Albert Schweitzer

## AWLA Facts And Figures



The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is entering its 48th year of service to the community and the animals who share our lives.

Did you know:

- 1,136 animals were adopted from the Shelter in 1993, including
  - 665 cats
  - 450 dogs
  - 21 other domestic animals

These numbers represent a 107 percent increase over 1988.

- 40 percent of the animals handled by the Shelter in 1993 were purebreds.
- 282 lost animals were returned to their owners.
- 1,292 low-cost spay/neuter certificates were sold.
- 4,949 service calls were answered by Alexandria Animal Control Officers.
- An estimated 5,750 children and adults benefited from our Humane Education presentations.

## So You Want to Adopt

from page 4

a cat, we do not require that you bring it to the Shelter. Also, if you already have pets, we will need to ensure that their veterinary records are up to date before releasing the Shelter animal to minimize the risk of health problems.

Okay, your application looks good. It's time to schedule a home visit. But don't worry—it's not like a visit from your in-laws! We don't care what kind of furniture you have. Its purpose is to assist the family in understanding the responsibilities of pet ownership.

At the Shelter, our main concern is for the pet. Is your fence adequate to contain the animal—or is it of mesh wire, two feet high? Is your backyard a concrete slab that tends to flood in the springtime? Will you agree to have the animal spayed or neutered within the specified time period following adoption as required under Virginia law?

The serious questions we ask concern the animal's quality of life. How long each day will the dog be left alone? Do you allow your cat to roam? Will you tie or chain the dog all day? Where will you keep the animal—in the whole house, the basement, or in a crate?

Another important reason for all the questions is to see that you receive all the help and support you need to ensure a successful transition from the Shelter into its your home. Returning an animal to the Shelter causes both you and the pet undue stress, something we try hard to avoid.

All animals adopted from the Shel-

ter receive their first veterinary examination free. This initial exam may take place at any time within the first three days after you pick up the pet. While it does not include testing for feline leukemia, rabies, or heartworm, you should take advantage of this opportunity to discuss your pet's health needs with the vet.

The Shelter's procedures are designed to ensure the well-being of the animals for which the League is responsible. And those who decide to choose a Shelter animal over those from pet stores or other sources know they are saving that animal's life and giving it an opportunity to be taken into a loving home.

Even animals who have come from abusive environments will respond well to love and attention, and there are few things so rewarding as giving such a pet a new lease on life!



Gwen Jennier works her special magic on a Shelter resident.

## Shelter Transformations Work Wonders for Dogs

Imagine being brought to an animal shelter full of strange noises, animals and smells. You're unsure of what is happening, you're scared, nervous, and, to add insult to injury, everyone is standing around you trying to figure out exactly what you are!

All too often, companion animals are brought to us in miserable condition, dirty and matted almost beyond recognition. We wonder: Does she have a chance? She is a sweet dog, but will people want her? The staff know that the best way to improve her chances is to call Gwen Jennier.

Gwen has been a godsend at our Shelter. For the past two years, she has worked her magic on sad, matted, scared dogs to transform them into clean, groomed, and more confident canines. Thus, an animal that might have been overlooked often finds itself the darling of the kennel.

Gwen generously donates her time and talents, often responding to our calls for help many times within 24 hours, because she understands that the better the dog looks, the faster he can be placed in a new home. The League greatly appreciates all of her hard work and energy to provide wonderful transformations that help our Shelter animals win a new lease on life!

### A Shelter Wish List

The Alexandria Animal Shelter often needs things that you cannot use. If you'd like to help with any of the following items, please bring them to the Shelter at 910 S. Payne Street:

- electric wall-mounted can opener
- Science Diet feline and canine food
- Nylabones
- blankets with tight weave
- heating pads (for orphaned wildlife)
- Puppy Lac/Kitty Lac
- microscope
- professional dog dryer
- plastic cat toys

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## A Perfect Match

by Woodrow Richards

Hi! My name is Woodrow, but please call me Woody—all my friends do. I'm now living happily with my family in Alexandria. A year ago, however, my future was uncertain and none too bright. I'd like to tell you how my "happy ending" came about, thanks to the efforts of the great folks at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.

In what I believe was an accidental separation from my original family, I found myself dazed and wandering the streets of Alexandria. Street life was a totally new experience for me and I was terrified of all the traffic, noise and hostile people. I was a homeless animal frequently referred to as a stray. I had no identification, and as the hours passed I realized that I would probably never see my original family again.

I was really hungry, feeling depressed, and acting more and more on instinct. I didn't even remember my name. In short, I had no past, and no future. Luckily, I was picked up by a kind Animal Control Officer from the Animal Shelter. I had no idea how fortunate I was.

I was cleaned up, checked out, inoculated, and given a safe, comfortable kennel at the Shelter on Payne Street. Everyone there was so friendly and sympathetic. I received food and was taken care of, and I didn't have to worry about traffic. The staff decided to call me Billy, and I liked my new name. My human friends at Payne Street, many of them Shelter volunteers, frequently stopped by to visit me, and since I weighed about 60 pounds they tried to provide me with the exercise I needed. When I looked around I saw all types of dogs, and I knew that cats were in the building, too. Each one had a story. Many had never known what it was like to have a safe, loving home. Then I came to realize that this was a temporary situation, and I *had* to be adopted soon in order to survive!

I didn't know how much longer they would keep me and knew that larger black dogs like me are more difficult to place. I started to worry again.



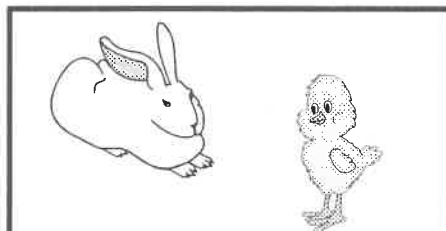
The author, Woodrow Richards, basks in the sun at his adoptive family's home in Alexandria.

Then Christa and Ron appeared, and they were looking for a dog just like me—a Labrador-German shepherd mix. While Christa started the application forms, Ron took me for a run. I had found my new family, and my friends at the Shelter agreed it was "a match."

The League wanted to ensure that I was going to a good home with enough space for me, so they sent a representative to my candidate family's home for an on-site visit and to explain the adoption procedures. The process was expedited for me and I was picked up the

very next afternoon. I received the mandatory 72-hour veterinary checkup and was neutered in accordance with the adoption requirements. The operation was simple and painless, and I feel great!

I've been happy ever since, living in Alexandria and running along the oceanfront at Virginia Beach on weekends. Now, maybe I can persuade Christa and Ron to adopt a playmate for me. There are still a lot of dogs (and cats) who need a good home—and a happy ending to *their* story!



### Please remember . . .

Those bunnies and chicks are cute, but they require long-term care. So please think twice before buying them for your children at Easter time.

Every year a number of rabbits and chicks are turned in to the Shelter soon after Easter. And, as with all pets, there are too few adoptive homes for them. So a better idea is to stick with baskets and eggs!

*Is there room in your heart and in your life for a pet? If so, please stop by the Alexandria Animal Shelter soon. There are many bright, beautiful, healthy animals who need good homes. The Shelter is open seven days a week. Call (703) 838-4775 for more information.*

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# Dog Show

from page 1



You never know who's going to show up at the St. Paddy's Day Fun Dog Show. Here, comedian Mark Russell, sporting Irish tie, poses with a Shelter dog.

with a local veterinarian about pet health concerns and an Ask the Trainer booth, where you can get advice on behavioral problems.

Coffee, hot cocoa, and donuts will be available throughout the event.

This year, for the first time, you can also purchase a special memento of the St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show, a photo memory mug (see box).

Immediately following the Show, all participants—dogs and owners—

## Take Home a St. Pat's Memory Mug

This year you can take home a permanent memento of the St. Patrick's Day Fun Dog Show.

Creative Concepts, a local business, will be at the Dog Show to offer Memory Mugs, custom-made using pictures you treasure.

All you need to do is bring your favorite photo to the Dog Show and it will be imprinted, while you wait, on a white coffee mug with the League's Fun Dog Show date and logo on the back.

These commemorative mugs sell for \$15, and a portion of the proceeds will go to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria to help homeless and injured animals. So why not get several? The cups are long-lasting, dishwasher-safe ceramic, and you are sure to treasure it for years to come.

If you're unable to come to the



Dog Show, you can still get a Memory Mug. Just stop by the Shelter, or phone (703) 838-4775 for an order form. Mugs ordered through the Shelter will be available for you to pick up there within 7 to 10 days, and your picture will be returned undamaged.

are invited to lead the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Parade Chairman Pat Troy promises that this year's march will be the best ever. The Grand Marshall will be author/playwright Larry L. King.

In the event of inclement weather, you may call our Special Event Hotline, (703) 519-7230, for up-to-the-minute information on whether the event will go on as planned or be rescheduled to a later date.



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