

HUMANE REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE HUMANE ASSOCIATION



“Model Animal” Program Brings Rewards to Teachers and Students Alike

The “Model Animal” program, conceived of by **ArtforAnimals**, has proved a huge success in one school district in Columbia County, embraced by teachers and students alike. In the spring of 2009, the program was presented as a way to introduce the concept of compassion toward animals through art. The program succeeded in not only generating compassion and understanding toward animals, but also in bringing together diverse groups of students who otherwise might not have been friendly with each other.

NYSHA President and middle-school teacher Laura-Ann Cammisa took the lead in bringing the “Model Animal” program to the art department at Taconic Hills Central Schools. Ms. Cammisa’s goal was to have live animals in art class once every quarter to serve as models. To establish the program, Ms. Cammisa first enlisted the support of the art teacher and then presented the idea to the principal. After gaining his approval, she engaged the cooperation of area residents and their well-socialized companion animals, adopted from shelters and rescue groups. Once chosen, the animal models needed to have a health clearance by the school administration to ensure they were disease free and up-to-date on shots.



On the first “Model Animal” day, the subject was a Pit Bull named Grace, brought in by a local Pit Bull rescuer. Sadly, Grace’s ears had been cut off, as dog fighters cruelly do, to prevent another dog from grabbing them during a fight. The lack of ears prompted one sympathetic student to declare she was going to paint the dog with the ears it lacked, a sweet and compassionate observation and gesture.

The following year, on one of the “Model Animal” days, the students participated in a field trip to Equine Advocates, a horse rescue organization in Columbia County, where students met rescued equines. After learning the histories of the various horses and donkeys, the students drew their personal impressions of them.



This past year, Bellina, Ms. Cammisa’s big tortoise-shell cat became the first feline to appear in art class and Art Club. She was a big hit. The students stretched their skills and imaginations; some drew realistic representations while others were impressionistic.

Though launched in the accelerated art class, the “Model Animal” program was extended to include art classes of other grade levels, as well as the after school Art Club, so every interested student could enjoy the thrill and challenge of working with an animal model. The individuals who brought the animals were glad to stay after school to encourage the budding artists.

According to Ms. Cammisa, the benefits of the “Model Animal” program were felt far beyond art class. She said, “The benefits were boundless. Animals brought kids together. Kids who did not get along would be united by an animal. On the days the animals were brought to school, a calming and socializing atmosphere was noticeable throughout the school.”

As far as academic relevance, Ms. Cammisa said that she used Bellina the cat in her Spanish class as a launching point for a Spanish lesson. After explaining that Bellina previously had been a homeless stray, she asked students to describe the characteristics and appearance of the cat now. This exercise provided the children with an opportunity to express

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President's Message

At my veterinarian's office recently, I listened as a mother explained to her young child why they were there. Their cat needed to be spayed, and in simple terms she explained how every companion animal, like every child, needed a loving home, and this was one way to insure that they would not be contributing to pet overpopulation. She patiently answered her child's questions, and the connection between the three of them was sweet. Puffy Fluffy herself was rescued, trying to stay warm in a friend's barn.

It's never too early to start teaching children compassion and responsibility toward animals. This woman was setting such a good example for her daughter – adopting a homeless cat, and making sure she had proper medical care, including neutering. Petting my cats and hearing their stories of being rescued, the little girl would probably remember this day in a positive way and, hopefully, she will become a mini-educator herself.

It's also never too early to start teaching kindness, whether to animals or people, and how connected both aspects are. Unfortunately, we lose great opportunities every day in our schools, where humane education is an unfunded and overlooked mandate.

In New York, state law requires that elementary school children be given humane instruction every week, but how and how much is extremely vague. There is no requirement at the secondary level, although legislation has been supported by NYSHA to change that. However, most teachers are unaware of this law, have too many other priorities, or do not have any idea of how to apply it. Overwhelmed administrators certainly do not promote humane education, either, although we spend enormous and necessary time on character education and anti-bullying initiatives. The relevance just doesn't seem to be obvious and important.

What is especially disturbing is that it is so easy to find ways to incorporate lessons about responsible animal care into the daily curriculum. "Model Animal" is just one example. Websites of many animal protection agencies offer all kinds of ideas, projects, and plans that fit into any subject matter, but most teachers are unaware of them. Our NYSHA website has several suggestions and links.

Yet one committed teacher can make all the difference. In my school, with just a few staff members, it was easy to set up an animal appreciation club and do some work in the classroom. But this is not enough, and I am hoping to use a conference day in the future to share ideas and resources with colleagues.

As a member of the community, you have several options. Go to school board meetings and ask what is being done to follow the laws regarding humane education, and express concern that they be enforced. Find a teacher you feel com-

NYSHA's Calendar

2012 Investigating Animal Cruelty workshops - Please check our website - nyshumane.org - for locations and dates of NYSHA's spring workshops.

Humane Lobby Day - April 18 in Albany at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. NYSHA's website has link for information and making a reservation.

Animal Advocacy Day - June 13 in Albany at The Well of the Legislative Office Building. NYSHA's website has a link to more information for this inspiring day.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month - April

Be Kind to Animals Week - 1st week of May

Adopt-a-Shelter-Cat Month - June

Please visit us on our new Facebook Page - New York State Humane Association. We hope you "like" it.

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fortable with, and see if he/she needs your help setting up a program. Inquire with local shelters and rescue groups about their availability for humane ed presentations. Of course, follow our legislation news to encourage lawmakers to make reasonable, enforceable mandates so that we can start teaching compassion at an early age and continue doing it throughout a student's academic career.

Something that outrages all students is animal cruelty. Through humane education, we can teach children that often at the heart of abuse is overpopulation. Teachers, shelters workers, and other presenters have a wonderful chance to engage kids in something that they feel very strongly about and enable them to make a difference. We owe them – and the animals – that.

As always, for the animals,

Laura-Ann Cammisa

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LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The current session: January – June 2012 We will continue to focus on legislation designed to strengthen our cruelty statutes, including a bill that will make it a crime to possess dog fighting paraphernalia, thus further strengthen New York's animal fighting statutes.

A key goal of NYSHA is to see a law passed that would drastically limit the numbers of animals bred. Breeders (including puppy millers) who are adding to an already burgeoning pet overpopulation get virtually a "free pass" in New York. For example, for a fee of only \$100, those who qualify as pet dealers can breed an unlimited number of dogs and selling each for often over \$1,000. Private, "back yard" breeders who do not qualify as pet dealers have no restrictions at all on the puppies they're responsible for.

Overpopulation of dogs and cats is a leading cause, not only of the need for euthanasia of unadopted animals in shelters, but often even more tragically, of the massive cruelty to animals that occurs daily. Breeders who are responsible for the births of more animals than they can sell often dispose of them using horrible methods. Just one example of this is the case of a puppy miller in Yates Co. who authorities discovered had gassed unsold puppies by placing them in a crude, home-made gas chamber into which he introduced poisonous fumes produced by the gas engine of a farm vehicle.

Bill A2368 would limit the number of fertile animals a pet dealer may harbor to 50, but NYSHA believes that number

is far too generous. Fifty fertile animals could easily produce hundreds of puppies or kittens a year.

NYSHA will continue to lobby for A1835, which would move the cruelty statutes from the Ag and Mkts Law to Penal Law, resulting in more thorough training for police in cruelty laws. We will also continue to oppose bills we find potentially harmful to both animals and shelters, despite their intent, such as A7312-C, dubbed "CAARA" (Companion Animal Access & Rescue Act).

Important reminder re: law affecting animal shelters In 2010, NYS legislation was passed that limited the method of euthanasia used in animal shelters to injectable sodium pentobarbital. This effectively banned the use of gas chambers.

Even though injectable sodium pentobarbital is widely considered the most humane way shelters have access to when ending the lives of animals, it must be properly administered by trained and certified euthanasia technicians. When it is not practical to inject an animal intravenously, a possible alternate route is directly into the heart – but only after an animal has been rendered unconscious, and therefore pain free, via an appropriate pre-euthanasia drug.

We remind our readers – particularly animal control and shelter personnel – of this new Ag & Mkts law, Article 26, Section 374, because it's come to our attention that at least one shelter may have performed intracardiac injection on unanesthetized animals, which is specifically against the law.

Saratoga and Steuben Counties Host NYSHA's 2011 Workshops

The Bryan J. Baker Training Center in Ballston Spa was the site of NYSHA's "Investigating Animal Cruelty" workshop on May 21. It was co-sponsored by the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office with an array of attendees that included Sheriff's investigators and sergeants, NYS Troopers, police officers from adjoining counties, probation and parole officers, dog control officers, and representatives from humane organizations. And we were pleased to have First ADA Karen Heggen from the



NYSHA's Deputy Andrea Stene, with some attendees at the Saratoga County workshop.

Saratoga County DA's Office share her expertise with the attendees on how to make the best case possible.

NYSHA's fall workshop, held at the Steuben County Public

Safety Building September 17, was a repeat performance, resulting from a request by the Sheriff to have us return. He said there had been various staff changes since our last workshop,

and the new officers needed training. We were pleased to have ADA Mike McCartney from the Steuben County DA's Office join us to repeat his excellent presentation on obtaining and executing search warrants. And to team teach, he brought along with him a relatively new ADA, Terry Northrup, a young woman who is dedicated to prosecuting animal crimes.



NYSHA's Dr. Harry Hovel with two attendees at the Steuben County workshop.

NYSHA speakers, reviewing the evaluations from both workshops, found them filled with phrases such as, "Very informative. Well done!" and "Passionate, honest speakers who speak their minds." Such comments buoy our spirits and let us know that the work we are doing is a valuable tool in training others in the task of fighting animal cruelty. Be sure to look at NYSHA's website to see the dates and locations of the 2012 workshops.

NYSHA Speaker Appears at Capital District Bird Club Meeting

NYSHA Board Member and chairperson of the Animal Cruelty Committee, Sue McDonough, along with NYS Trooper Christine Baldwin, discussed “How to Recognize and Report Animal Cruelty” at a symposium sponsored by the Capital District Bird Club. The event took place on October 15 at the Colonie Library near Albany.

Barbara Preisman, president of the bird club, felt it would be a topic of interest to the members of the club and their guests, all of whom are interested in the welfare and humane treatment of birds kept as pets. Some 30 people attended the event.

Subsequent to the presentation, Ms. Preisman wrote to Sue saying, “Thank you so very much for your passionate and knowledgeable presentation at our seminar regarding animal abuse. You are truly a friend to animals everywhere, and I thank you on behalf of them, our club and myself for what you do. It is a difficult and heartbreaking job, and your dedication over the years is nothing less than inspiring. The good you have done is immeasurable. Thank you also for bringing Trooper Baldwin and having her share some of her experiences with us. She too exudes the caring and commitment that you embody.”



NYSHA's Sue McDonough with NYS Trooper Christine Baldwin.

The purpose of the club is to promote the proper and humane care, appreciation and understanding of pet birds and to assist in the rescue, adoption and re-homing of pet birds. In the past couple of years, adoption and rescue issues have increased tenfold.

If you are interested in learning more about adopting a rescued pet bird, contact the Capital District Bird Club President, Barbara Preisman, at bpreisman@nycap.rr.com.

“Model Animal” ... Continued from page 1

compassion in a creative way, as well as expand their Spanish vocabulary. Ms. Cammisa said that when Spanish class ended, all her students lined up to say goodbye to Bellina, petted her gently and kissed her head.

Knowing that the students were interested in the cat model in school that day, the Math teacher used the opportunity to explain the concept of the geometric increase in class that day, an all too familiar phenomena that results from the mating of two un-altered cats.

Though **ArtforAnimals**, the organization that created the concept, has unfortunately disbanded, the “Model Animal” program that was ignited at Taconic Hills by Ms. Cammisa, the principal, and the art department is flourishing and continues to engage children in compassion and love for animals.

Moreover, the benefits of the program need not be limited

to Spanish and Math; they can extend to all classes in both an academic and social way. Discussing animals in class provides teachers with an opportunity that allows students to talk about their own animals which gives teachers an insight into the home life of students they might not otherwise have.

What you can do: Share this idea with your local schools and animal shelter directors, and rescue groups, so that it can be replicated in as many schools as possible throughout the state. The program is not expensive. The tools involved, the pencils, papers, and paints, would have been used in class regardless. But, by bringing animal models into the equation, the experience is much richer for the students, and the compassion and goodwill that is generated throughout the school is priceless.

For further information about the program, you may contact Laura-Ann Cammisa at 845-336-4514 or via our website, nyshumane.org.

Your Will Can Be Your Way...

Your will can be your way to continue helping animals after your lifetime. We are grateful that many of you have given NYSHA generous donations. If you also wish to remember NYSHA in your will, please ask your attorney to specify our official name and address as follows: New York State Humane Association, Inc., PO Box 3068, Kingston, NY 12402 • Federal ID Number 22-2238112