



# Newsletter

## Montgomery County's Newest Animal Welfare Group

Volume 1, Issue 8

October 2006

**Animal Welfare League of  
Montgomery County**  
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### Calendar of Events

#### Upcoming Adoption Events

#### **Kentlands Petsmart Saturday Adoption Events**

- Nov 4
- Nov 11
- Nov 18
- Nov 25

#### **White Flint Petsmart Sunday Adoption Events**

- Nov TBD

#### Upcoming Fund raising events

**Cat Show at Gaithersburg  
Fairgrounds on Nov 11 & 12,  
Adoptions also.  
Wine & Whiskers on Nov 17**

ANY ARTICLE IDEAS? PLEASE E-MAIL ROGER OR JONATHAN WITH THEM. GUEST WRITERS ARE MOST WELCOME! THANK YOU LAURIE, NONA AND FRED, AND PAT GAGNE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS MONTHS NEWSLETTER.  
JONATHAN & ROGER

### *Message from the President*



#### **Laurie Graham**

The Board of Directors would like to invite all volunteers to an All Hands Meeting to be held on November 9<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. The meeting will take place at Leisure World in Silver Spring.

As you know, we have been actively working on getting a shelter space and we are so very close. We are ready to file the papers with the county to make the space ours. We got a very generous donation from a DC architectural firm. The county required architectural drawings of the space, and as I quickly discovered, this is a very expensive undertaking. Thankfully, a co-worker of mine is married to an architect. His firm, VOA Associates Incorporated, donated the work (about \$5000). We owe a big thank you to John Jessen, Chris Pilla, and Vincent Gonzaga from VOA. We would never have been able to proceed without their help. The landlord of the space, Ed Waldron, has been very generous in holding it for us while we try to get our papers filed with the county. However, since things are taking longer than anticipated, we have paid for the space for 1 month. Ed has even given me the keys!!!

Our adoption team just had one of their biggest weekends, 8 adoptions. That is just incredible. It is really wonderful to see how much of a name we are getting in our community. Of course, none of this would be possible without our foster parents. Most of them are at Petsmart every weekend showing their cats and kittens. Thank you fosters for your dedication.

Since we have had a rainy few weeks, several of our fundraising events had to be canceled or cut short.

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Mother Nature was just not on our side. However, we did have a great time at the Oktoberfest in Kentlands. We are also just finishing up a number of events at the "pumpkin patch" at St. John's in Olney. I want to thank all of the volunteers who have helped with these events. We may have gotten rained out a lot, but we did have some fun. O'Shea's cake at the yard sale in King Farm was worth any amount of bad weather.

I hope that you can all attend the All Hand's meeting.∞∞∞∞

## ***Animal Therapy***

### **Jonathan Allen**

AWL volunteers have heard about therapy cats: cats that, for one reason or another, have been singled out to share time with the suffering or the recovering, either in hospitals or assisted living homes. Those cats offer a tremendous benefit to their patients, but what most people may not understand is the history of the practice, the preparation involved and the rigorous selection process in choosing the cats that share their time and love with people who need it the most.

### **The History of Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT)**

The first documented use of animal therapy dates to 1792, when an asylum used animals as part of patient rehabilitation. The asylum used the animals to emphasize a type of 'living environment', and the patients were encouraged to learn to care for them. In 1942, an injured soldier at an Army Air Force convalescent hospital in New York requested that a dog keep him company during his recuperation, which led to other patients requesting companion dogs. Some of those patients became so attached to the dogs that they asked if they could keep them after leaving the hospital.

Despite these prototypical efforts, however, most people point to psychiatrist Boris Levison as the grandfather of modern Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and 1953 as the birth year of the practice. The phenomenon was born quite by accident, when Levison brought his dog Jingles to his office during a consultation (the circumstances of exactly why he did so are lost to the mists of time, but the suggestion is that it was not a planned part of therapy). A withdrawn and uncommunicative eight-year old boy who was the subject of this consultation spied Jingles under the desk, and drew the dog out, beginning to play with

him. Levison was able to use the boy's interest in Jingles as a breakthrough in his treatment. After this initial interaction, Jingles became an important part of Levison's treatment with other children. Levison's success initiated interest from other child psychiatrists and school counselors, and AAT was born.

Therapet, a leading non-profit AAT organization, defines modern AAT as "the utilization of animals as a therapeutic modality to facilitate healing and rehabilitation of patients with acute or chronic diseases." AAT is goal-directed and documented, with progress and activity notes. In some states, it is even reimbursable via medical insurance.

Although dogs have been the more traditional AAT animal of choice, cats have seen an increased use, and for good reason; one glimpse at the recognition or joy in the eyes of a struggling Alzheimer's sufferer lets a therapist know that the animal is helping them reach their patient.

So what has held cats back for so long? One of the reasons is the inherent trainability of dogs: dogs can be trained for many different settings, to deal with many different ailments, while cats are targeted at more specific ailments, mostly those involving advanced aging or diminished mental capacity. That does not, however, lessen the impact of their contribution. But not just any cat can be a therapy cat: a lot goes into picking out just the right cat to reach that patient.

### **Selection**

Pets and People, another non-profit AAT organization, offers the following, fairly typical, criteria for an AAT cat. A Pets and People AAT cat must:

1. Be at least one year of age. This provides the targeted care facility with the knowledge that the cat has been socialized, is friendly, and is comfortable interacting with numerous people in a crowded setting. A cat's immune system is also more stabilized at this age.
2. Be fully inoculated, which includes routine inoculations as well as feline leukemia and rabies.
3. Pass a vet's health screening assessment.

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4. Participate in a feline-specific temperament test.
5. Be specifically home-socialized to various situations including, if possible, dogs, other cats, loud noises, crowds, and frequent handling.
6. Have a human handler who is willing to complete an eight-hour training session outlining common activities

Some AAT organizations only use retired show cats, based on the rationale that cats from specific breeds have more predictable temperaments, are more interactive than others, and are used to being handled. Thankfully, this is not an across-the-board requirement. The temperament tests are usually comprehensive enough to determine if the cats are laid-back, steady, calm, and have a tolerance for the unusual. These tests will usually look for cats who think before reacting, who can tolerate unusual sights and sounds, petting that could be different or a bit rough, poking or pulling, and any number of other things that are out of the ordinary. It is also very important that therapy cats be affectionate, purr, like to snuggle on a lap or on the bed, or offer other gestures of affection.

The most common cats in AAT programs are American shorthairs, but long hair cats are seeing increased usage, with Persians seeing a special focus due to their calm nature and unconditional love. Stroking and grooming a long-haired cat's fur can sometimes bring back memories from the past, provide relief from loneliness, and provide great therapy for people with muscle conditions. Playing with cat toys can also improve the flexibility of the individual.

### ***How it Works***

Procedures can vary from organization to organization, but typically, once the organization has solicited volunteers and selected its cats, one or two trained therapists representing the organization visit the care facility to meet with an Administrator. During this meeting, the therapist(s) and the Administrator discuss and set general goals, arrange therapy times, and determine the types of group interactions that might be needed. The therapists draw up a plan, then return to meet with program staff to select clients for the therapy

group, then meets with those clients to assist in developing individual therapeutic plans with specific goals for each client.

Once the plans have been established, the therapist returns to the volunteers and their cats to choose those cats who best meet the criteria of the care facility's therapy situations. Sometimes only one cat is needed; sometimes all the cats in the program may be needed. It depends on the needs of the clients and the care facility. During this meeting, volunteers are also apprised of the type of clients with whom they will be interacting, and the general disposition of those clients toward their cats to prepare the volunteers and the animals for the sessions.

Once the groundwork is laid, volunteers and therapists visit the facility together for a specific amount of time with the therapeutic plan in mind. The idea is to take the same animals to the same clients with the same handler on the same day of the week to provide continuity of therapy. These therapy sessions continue based on the agreed-upon plans with the clients, care facility staff, and Administration.

Sessions and techniques may widely vary and are usually very highly personalized based on the client's needs and personal plan. Once the session is complete, volunteers and program staff evaluate the interactions, with each person involved contributing their observations and assessments of the sessions. The program staff then notes the clients' interaction and charts their progress on their health care record. Sessions continue until the therapy has either run its course or either client or care facility discontinues treatment.

### ***Conclusion***

AAT has been around for quite some time, but cats are relative newcomers to AAT. The possibilities of their contributions are only beginning to become clear, but they seem to have great potential to help Alzheimer's and elderly patients in particular. While cats are not highly trainable or flexible enough to fit into the manifold situations that dogs can, they do offer the pluses of being laid-back, calm, and loving, which can coax the most reticent or "lost" patient out of their shell and bring them back to a semblance of their former selves. The love and acceptance of cats is not lost on pet owners, and it is also not lost on the ill or suffering, either. Therapy cats share

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these traits with those who need it most.

### **References**

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### **Volunteer Profile: Pat Gagne**

#### **Jonathan Allen**

Pat Gagne was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, and was working there as a part-time soda jerk at a drug store when a handsome “older man” sauntered in and ordered a chocolate frappe. She soon learned that that meant “milkshake” in New Hampshire language, and that the “older man” was the love of her life. Two years later, she married him, and when his government job brought him to Maryland a year and a half after that, she had a simple choice: come along or get divorced. That was 37 years ago, and as she was still pretty attached to the guy, she moved to Maryland. After 39+ years of marriage and 2 sons, they’re still here.

Pat didn’t get around to college until their youngest son started junior high school, at which point she started going to the University of Maryland, taking paralegal studies. Unfortunately, after only two semesters, a diagnosis of Hodgkins Disease changed everything. She went back to secretarial work after her treatments, until her sister caught her between jobs and demanded that she write her a romance novel. Pat has always been a voracious reader and had written stories for her own amusement, but in 1990 she decided it was time to give writing a serious try. This October, she submitted her 24th contracted book to her editor at Harlequin Intrigue. Writing romantic suspense proved to be an extremely rewarding career change for her. The dress code can’t be beat, the hours are flexible, and her idea of a traffic jam is three cats in the hall blocking the door to her office.

As for pets, they are currently owned by three indoor door cats; a feral colony of three neutered cats who live on their back deck; a herd of deer that includes two does and their twins; a fox; two raccoons; at least one chipmunk; three groundhogs; assorted squirrels and half the bird population in Montgomery County, all of whom they feed twice daily.

### **Pat and Her Max**



Pat is a member of the Montgomery County Police Department’s Citizen’s Academy; has taught ceramics and swimming; coached youth bowling leagues and T-ball; and tried her hand at watercolors and line dancing. She also enjoys animal photography and has spent an inordinate amount of time studying books on gardening, scary for someone who has been known to kill cactus. Meanwhile, she’s supposed to be working on book 25, and if she could just stop crashing computer systems, she’d get right back on that (For more information on what she writes, check out her web site at [www.danisinclair.com](http://www.danisinclair.com)).

She attended her first AWLMC meeting out of curiosity with no intention of getting involved. The enthusiasm expressed by those in attendance persuaded her otherwise. There are growing pains with any new venture, but she believes that we have the potential to make something special with this organization.

\*note: Pat was one of the runners-up as voted on by listserv members for featured volunteer. The other runner-up will be featured in the next newsletter. ∞∞∞∞

## **Special Reminder from Nona Silver regarding Upcoming Events**

**A Wine & Whiskers event will be held on Friday night November 17th from 4-8 pm. AWLMC is co-sponsoring a Wine & Cheese event at the Olney Beer & Fine Wine store in Olney located at 18208 Village Center Drive (next to Shoppers Market). They are having several wineries participate that evening and we hope that you all come and perhaps get your holiday wine and cheese. We are also having a silent auction. Come - shop - have fun!**

**Cat Show - AWL is participating in the Cat Fanciers Fall event at the Montgomery County Fair Grounds on Saturday November 11 and Sunday November 12th. It was great fun last year - we had a silent auction, sold beds, cakes, cookies, cat treats and many more items. This year we will also have our cats for adoption. Please call Nona to volunteer for either day, morning or afternoon shifts. The shifts are from 9 am to 1 pm and from 1pm to 5 pm. We need four people for each shift.**

### **Pumpkin Patch at St John's Church**

#### **Nona Silver**

We were invited by the youth group at St Johns in Olney to participate over a 6 day period (over two weekends) with their pumpkin sale. Mary Culp and Nathalie Curry planned the events, with crafts for the children and a bean bag toss game.

We sold dog bandanas, cat and dog hats, cookies, breads and many more items. I want to thank Mary and Nathalie for their wonderful ideas and also thanks to Linda Buel, Janet Culp, Sandi Dunham, Yale & Ann Tankus and Fred Silver for helping out on the weekends.

We were hampered a bit by bad weather (both hard rains and heavy winds) but still managed to take in \$224.

Thanks again to all who helped ... Nona Silver ∞∞∞

**Editors Note: And thank you Nona for your hard work and dedication!**

## **Kentlands Oktoberfest, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

### **Jonathan Allen**

The most commonly cited date for the first "Oktoberfest" is October 12, 1810, the date that Crown Prince (later King) Ludwig I Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen were married. To commemorate their marriage, the Crown Prince and Princess scheduled a horse race and attendant festivities on the 17<sup>th</sup>, but the date of the 12<sup>th</sup> is still commonly recognized as the birth of the custom. The date of the first American Oktoberfest is highly disputed, but the tradition has taken hold in many communities comprised of predominantly German immigrants (and even spreading to communities just looking for a reason to celebrate). Kentlands held its own version of the event, the 15<sup>th</sup> of its kind, on the warm, sunny morning and afternoon of October 8<sup>th</sup>. AWLMC was also scheduled to participate in the Germantown Oktoberfest the day before but bad weather made it impractical to do so. The dedicated volunteers of the AWLMC were on hand and ready when the revelers began to arrive, ready to fundraise, offer goodies for cats and dogs (almost all of which were gone by day's end), and, most importantly, raise awareness of the organization and our goals.

### **AWLMC Volunteers at Work**



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The AWLMC appearance at the Oktoberfest was a major success from many viewpoints! Not only did the five volunteers who helped out (Laurie Graham, Debby Shore, Amy Jaslow, Kacey Nolle, and Janne Cummings) manage to bring in \$415 to help out the organization, they also obviously made quite a good impression representing the organization. They recruited a new volunteer, got an offer to help out needy animals from a new veterinarian, and even got a few minutes with Congressman Chris Van Hollen, who offered to aid us in getting the shelter we need to help the animals of Montgomery County and stop the needless killing of homeless pets. Thanks to the volunteers for their positive attitude and tireless efforts to make our presence at this year's Kentlands Oktoberfest such a resounding success! ∞∞∞

### **Backyard Adventures**

#### **Roger Gagne**

Our neighborhood has become a magnet for all sorts of wildlife including a feral colony of cats. Our good hearted neighbors two doors down provide food and shelter for the cats that have become something of a neighborhood project.

Our former next door neighbors were getting ready to move when the woman saw a cat carrying a tiny kitten underneath her backyard deck. She literally tore up the wood planks to discover six kittens whose eyes weren't even open yet. While attempting to trap the mother, it took off with one of the kittens. An exhaustive search failed to locate the kitten, but the mother was trapped when she returned for a second one. The Humane Society arrived the next day to pick up the remaining cats and the missing one was given up for dead. However, three days later the neighbor on the other side of them heard it crying piteously under their deck which had been searched several times prior without success. They called us and together we took it to the Emergency Vet in Rockville where it was hydrated and then reunited with the Mom and its siblings at the Humane Society where we were informed if a foster couldn't be found, the entire family would be euthanized because they were out of space.

Pat got the SPCA group to take the family by agreeing

to act as foster to the great displeasure of our own cats. Dante, Emerson, Frost, Gatsby, Minnaloushe and Ms. Muffett were all eventually adopted to wonderful homes. Emerson now resides in Japan having been adopted by a young Japanese couple who were attending American University at the time. Mamma cat was spayed and subsequently released in our neighbor's back yard where she reunited with the now neutered father and cat from her first litter. I'm happy to report that she and her mate are healthy and still thriving back there.

### **Kittens at Play**



We had hopes this would be the end of the situation, but over two years ago a very gaunt white and brown cat with a raccoon ringtail arrived attempting to join the others. But it quickly

### **Buddy**



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became apparent that this guy wasn't feral. Pat began feeding him and surprised him one Sunday by scooping him up and taking him to be neutered and tested. We took him in intending to get him adopted, but none of the rescue groups were accepting cats at that point and it didn't take me long to become attached to the dismay of Pat's male cat. They are enemies to this day, but Buddy as he is now called seems quite content to call our house home.

However last year five more cats showed up to join the colony and two appeared pregnant. Before they could be trapped, they each had litters. One mother was still a kitten herself and only one of her babies survived, while four survived in the second litter. A day of trapping was planned. Pat spoke with our new neighbor from Beleruse and asked permission to trap in her yard as well since the animals tended to go back and forth between our house and the one on the other side of them. She quickly agreed which was a good thing since she wasn't home when one of the kittens we still hadn't caught became lodged between her hot tub and the house. All attempts to free the frightened animal failed. In desperation, our neighbor called 911. The dispatcher informed him that the fire department doesn't normally respond to calls of this sort, but agreed to send someone out if anyone was available.

Our poor neighbor and daughter arrived home after dark to find a huge fire truck in front of her house, four burly firefighters on her back deck and her neighbors all holding flashlights. Thinking the house was on fire she called her husband who was in Belarus at the time. Fortunately, they were very understanding and with the help of her liquid dish soap, the firemen were able to extricate the badly frightened kitten later named Marilyn Monroe. Three cheers for the Montgomery County Fire Department for help above and beyond the call of duty!!!

This time our neighbors agreed to play host to the kittens they named Red Skeleton, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Junior. Our son's girlfriend adopted Red Skeleton, now called Clyde, and AWLMC found homes for the rest.

The adults were all trapped, spayed/neutered and released back outside where our neighbors continued to feed and shelter them. However this spring three of them took to spending most of their time in our yard. We started feeding them a supplemental meal – or so we thought. Apparently Baby Gray, Honey and Sugar decided quarters up the street had become too crowded. They spent more and more time on our deck and we learned they seldom go back to the large colony anymore.

While still wary, they will rub against us when we put food out and I decided with winter on the way we'd have to devise some sort of shelter for them, so I took on the project of building a 'cat house' for the deck.

### The "Cat House"



I built the cat house using some ¾ inch plywood and ¼ inch Plexiglas that I had left over from another project. The main enclosure has a floor area of 28 inches with an angled height from 12 to 28 inches. The main roof can be lifted to access the inside for cleaning with two small windows for light and to so we can see inside to be sure there are no unwelcome guests - like the pair of raccoons who were drawn to the deck one night by some unattended cat food.

To the right of the main enclosure is an L-shaped entrance that acts as a wind break and provides a sheltered area for food bowls in inclement weather. (Normally we feed the cats away from the house so as not to encourage nocturnal visitors.) The second opening is on the left side and is sheltered by the house itself.

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As we were building it, Pat and I wondered if the cats would even use the house. We needn't have worried. An hour after it was put on the porch all three went inside to check it out and as rain began hitting the deck they settled in for the night. And so did we, satisfied that they seem to like their new digs. BTW, the cat in the picture sleeping on the chair is Baby Gray. ∞∞∞

### **Wild Birds Unlimited – A Sharing Partner**

#### **Roger Gagne**

Keith and Beth Hamilton pictured below are the owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Germantown. Pat and I have been dealing with them for several years. They are nature and animal lovers who, without prodding or conditions, offered to help promote AWLMC. A sign and a box for donations is prominently displayed by their cash register. They are located at 18311 Leaman Farm Road (The shopping center near Klopper Road which houses Rustic Oven and Giant). Stop by and say hello when you're in the area.

#### **Wild Birds Unlimited in Germantown**



**Thank You Keith and Beth for your support!**

**Reminder – All Hands Meeting  
Thursday November 9 at 7:00 pm  
Leisure World in Silver Spring**

**Please don't forget to donate to  
AWLMC:**

<http://awlmc.org/SecDonate/Donate.aspx>

Or, please send a check to:

P.O. Box 7041

Gaithersburg, MD 20898

