

Animal society has a howlingly good first year in its new home

By James Callaghan Jr.
STAFF REPORTER

With one howling – or meowing – year of success in its new premises behind it, the New Milford Animal Welfare Society (NMAWS) is going strong.

Thanks to a bequest from the late Ruth Young, the society moved into its own building at the beginning of July last year, with expanded quarters for the homeless dogs and cats it accepts.

Two full-time workers, Renee Gardner and Sandy Schroeder, are helped by 20 volunteers in taking care of the abandoned animals.

"Animals need human contact," said Ms. Gardner, alluding to the amount of care the society is able to provide because of the number of people who contribute their time.

The volunteers come in and perform assorted tasks, such as walking the dogs, bathing them and just giving all of the animals a little attention.

"I am glad that we have an animal welfare society and that they keep the building in excellent condition and that there are good conscientious people down there," said Norman Sarles, a New Milford

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resident who volunteers time "as often as possible" to go down and walk the dogs.

Before the existing building was built, the stray dogs and cats were boarded by local veterinarians.

The year-old facility can house 40 cats and 20 dogs, but a few more cats are there now.

As of a week ago, 42 cats and only 14 dogs were being cared for at the shelter, whose services are limited by the number of cages and the budget it has for food and supplies.

The shelter's purpose is to take in strays, but in recent months it has accepted more and more pets that have been left outside for the society to care for.

"We live in a disposable society, and animals are the ones at the bottom of the barrel," especially in today's economic climate, said Ann Plude, the society's vice president,

concerning the dumping of pets.

Ms. Gardner also attributes the increase in pet dumpings to the straitened economy.

When this dumping occurs cats can be taken in right away, but state law requires dogs to be placed in the regional facility on Erickson Road in New Milford for a seven-day waiting period.

Afterward, the society buys the dogs back at \$5 each to keep them from being euthanized and then tries to find a suitable home for them, as well as the cats they have taken in.

Last year the society placed 105 dogs and 220 cats.

"We like to find the right pet for the right people," said Ms. Gardner.

The NMAWS is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., for the adoption of pets.

The shelter can be reached at 354-1350.



Staff photograph by JAMES CALLAGHAN JR.

New Milford Animal Welfare Society volunteers Jessica Bierbower, left, and Beth Hallecks cuddle kittens waiting to be adopted.