



COMPASSION IN ACTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE SPCA SERVING ERIE COUNTY

2022 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



FROM PRESIDENT & CEO CAITLIN DALY

It is exciting to sit down and write this letter after one full year in the CEO role here at the SPCA Serving Erie County! **I am inspired to see how far we have come as an organization, thanks in large part to supporters like you.** This

past year taught us a lot of lessons about how we can best serve the people and animals in Erie County, and the shifting role we need to take to ensure these growing needs are met.

This letter comes to you after one of the most difficult summers to date, but I write to you with a profound sense of hope. While the year was full of obstacles, we learned to navigate them and see things through a new lens. **One thing is for certain: we cannot continue to do things the way we have always done them. We need to think bigger, we need to be more inclusive and meet people where they are, and we need to employ new tactics to be more effective.** We now offer temporary stays for animals whose owners are experiencing a wide variety of crises. Our primary goal is to keep families together as opposed to an emphasis on surrender. Perhaps our biggest initiative of 2023 is to form strong bonds with partner agencies throughout our community and beyond. It is with great pride that I share with you an insider's look into our new model as a community resource center.

In 2022, we saw a nearly 10% increase in cruelty investigations, a 65% increase in abandoned animals, and a 171% increase in seized animals. Reasons certainly varied, but access to affordable care and evictions were some of the biggest challenges. Armed with this information, the SPCA opened our SAFE (Sheltering Animals For Emergencies) program up to more individuals facing temporary homelessness due to hospital stays, eviction, or domestic violence. The SAFE program provides housing for pets while owners get back on their feet for a severely discounted or fully subsidized rate. We also focused on accessibility to care by holding pop-up resource clinics throughout Erie County, concentrating our efforts in East Buffalo. This year alone, we vaccinated over 100 animals and

provided over 100,000 meals to those struggling to make ends meet. It is our goal to keep families together. We believe that financial constraints should never be a reason to deny someone the love of an animal, a gift that cures so many ailments ... a gift so crucially needed in today's climate of uncertainty and unrest.

While we are putting an emphasis on keeping families together, there will always be animals who need to come to the SPCA for critical care. This past summer was brutally difficult on animal welfare organizations. At the SPCA alone, we saw a 12% increase in the number of veterinary procedures due to a higher number of critically ill and injured animals entering our doors.

The single greatest thing we can do is create strong partnerships and collaborations with other organizations throughout the community to ensure we can support the need together. In 2023, the SPCA will increase communications with animal and human organizations alike, ensuring that we form a capable and wide-reaching safety net before entering another busy season. We can only do so much good as a single organization.

"We can do great and impossible things when we work together."

This newsletter is packed with incredible feats of compassion and innovation. Please enjoy these stories and remember that thousands more happen behind the scenes every single year. We can do this amazing work together with your support. While we accomplished a lot, we have a long way to go. I truly look forward to seeing where this next year takes us. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey and truly being a city of good neighbors.

Caitlin Daly, President & CEO



FIND US

716-875-7360
YourSPCA.org
facebook.com/SPCAErieCounty
Twitter: @YourSPCA
Instagram: @eriecountyspca

HOURS AND LOCATIONS

300 Harlem Road,
West Seneca, NY 14224

Please visit YourSPCA.org
for current adoption hours.

The SPCA Serving Erie County
is proud to be a Purina Shelter
Champions Partner!



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Mission

At the SPCA Serving Erie County, our mission is to create a more humane community through: education, rescuing, protecting, and enhancing the lives of animals, and nurturing the bond between animals and people.

The SPCA Serving Erie County is not affiliated financially in any way with any other animal agency — including the Niagara County SPCA, the ASPCA, or any other humane society or animal welfare group. Our protocols, policies, and procedures are unique to this organization, a completely independent humane society that does not receive any city, county, state, or federal tax dollars. The important programs and services of the SPCA Serving Erie County are possible only due to the caring people and organizations that support us.



2022 WAS A YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS!

**BY JULIE DESMOND SCHECHTER,
BOARD CHAIRPERSON**

I couldn't be prouder of our accomplishments this year.

Our new CEO, Cait Daly, brought a fresh perspective, a deep understanding of animal welfare, an open communication style, and a genuinely warm personality. If you haven't met her yet, please reach out; you won't be sorry. Cait now has a whole year of experience under her belt, learning about the strengths and challenges of the agency and figuring out the next best ways we can serve the animals and our community. **We are excited to see what's to come in 2023.**

During 2022 the agency began to put into motion a philosophy of community-centered sheltering. The primary goal is to keep people and their pets together. You'll notice new and modified programs that will help make this goal a reality.

The Lipsey Veterinary Clinic is now up and running, providing low-cost basic veterinary services to owned dogs and cats. Again, an important component to keeping pets and families together. The clinic is currently working with existing clients but watch for increased availability in the months ahead!

Thank you to the incredible staff and diligent board for the continued focus on the important task of living up to the SPCA's mission every day while at the same time striving to be innovative and open to new directions as well.

Julie D. Schechter

Julie Desmond Schechter
Board Chairperson

ARE YOU FELINE DOGGONE LUCKY?

**Take a chance in our Annual Raffle
presented by Hodgson Russ, LLP.**

First prize: \$2,500

Second prize: \$1,000

Third prize: \$500

1 ticket: \$10 | 3 tickets: \$25

Purchase your tickets on YourSPCA.org or call
Caitlin at 716-875-7360 ext. 230.

Raffle sales will take place from January 23 to
February 28. Winners will be announced on a
live Facebook video on February 28.



INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION THROUGH HUMANE EDUCATION

BY KATHERINE GILLETTE-COCKERILL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HUMANE EDUCATION

Our Humane Education team spends most of our time in the community. We visit schools to promote empathy and kindness for animals through our Encouraging Kind Kids (EKK) program, turn students into superheroes called “PAW Protectors” in after-school programs, and visit food banks to hand out pet food and supplies. After the May 14 shooting, requests for our presence in the community took off. We participated in more than 50 events between mid-May and November. In the summer, we ran our most successful summer camps ever.

Participation in community programs introduced us to a variety of community partners who have been instrumental in helping us identify and address community needs. The VolunTEEN program launched in November to address the growing need for youth programming.

There is a need for meaningful career opportunities and qualified animal welfare professionals, especially in the veterinary sciences. Our goal is to increase opportunities for youth involvement and remove barriers for BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) youth to work in the animal field. In doing so, we worked with Nevaeh, who had participated in one of our after-school programs several years ago and is now interested in becoming a Veterinary Technician.

Our Humane Education team is well on its way to inspiring the next generation of animal advocates!



Nevaeh, a former after-school program participant, tests her skills as a future vet tech.



HUMANE EDUCATION

Presented **575** programs in 2022 with **9,565** participants

- **37** scout programs
- **105** family programs
- **208** school programs
- **225** community programs



LIPSEY VETERINARY CLINIC

Services provided to owned pets

Spays: Neuters:

59 **56**

Other surgeries:

30

LIPSEY VETERINARY CLINIC

BY MICHELLE SOBASZEK, LVT, LIPSEY VETERINARY CLINIC PRACTICE MANAGER

In October 2022, the Lipsey Veterinary Clinic re-opened and began welcoming back existing clients and patients. Soon, we hope to have the availability to open appointments to new clients and patients.

We are especially proud to be a community-centered clinic. The Lipsey Veterinary Clinic offers high-value, low-cost, basic veterinary services for both dogs and cats, including diagnostics and preventatives.

One of our favorite cases from 2022 was Nikita, a 10-year-old Doberman Pinscher with a heart condition. She came in with a bleeding mass above her eye that was affecting her quality of life.

Nikita's owners were facing the heartbreaking decision of euthanasia. The anesthetic risks were thoroughly discussed with them, and they agreed to proceed with surgery to remove the mass. Nikita's surgery went very well, and she was able to go home! They reported that she was loving life again and acting like a puppy.

With our clinic, Nikita is enjoying extra quality time with her loving owners. We have seen many cases like Nikita's and are so happy to be a part of so many happy endings!



THE BEHAVIOR DEPARTMENT TAKES US BACK TO THE FUTURE

BY MINDY USSREY, DIRECTOR OF ADOPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

No, we don't need a DeLorean, and we aren't traveling back to 1955.

Since my arrival in March 2022 as the new Director of

Adoptions and Behavior, we have spent time evaluating where we were, where we are, and where we want to be.

In June, we made a shift in how we evaluate the animals who enter the shelter. The Behavior staff no longer conducts formal behavior evaluations. We have evolved into looking at an animal's overall behavior from the moment it walks into the shelter. How does the animal interact with the admissions or vet staff? How does the animal walk on the leash or get crated? How does the animal interact with other animals? Does the animal enjoy enrichment and how does it interact with it? Does the animal have a history that might affect their behavior?

We rely heavily on enrichment, socialization, and overall welfare. We have developed new programs that help us with those things, like our Doggie Entourage program, and we brought back our Pups in the Pen program and our cat enrichment program, the Advocats. We are growing our Behavior Foster volunteer team to help move the animals who are a little more challenging into a home setting and out of the shelter in hopes that it decreases their stress. We have brought back many long-time dog volunteers and have the strongest group of volunteers I have ever known. We have created relationships among several other humane societies and shelters across Western New York for collaboration when we need assistance.

I am proud of my devoted and hardworking Behavior and Adoptions teams at the SPCA. We have come a long way this year and the future looks bright. Great Scott!

HELPING OUR FUR FRIENDS THROUGH INVESTIGATIONS AND RESCUE

BY LEEANN WEBB, SUPERVISOR OF ANIMAL CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS AND ANIMAL RESCUE

The SPCA received a complaint in May 2022 of animal cruelty, alleging an individual placed a rubber band on the end of a cat's tail. After responding, SPCA Officers interviewed the individual who admitted to attempting to dock the tail of the cat. Tail docking is considered a surgical procedure that can only be performed by a licensed veterinarian. This procedure is painful and is deemed to be medically unnecessary for cosmetic reasons. The cat was seized and transported to the SPCA for immediate medical attention. Continued medical intervention was provided by SPCA veterinary staff to include a partial tail amputation to remove the dead tissue at the end of the tail.

The owner of the cat was charged with one misdemeanor offense in violation of section 353 of the Agriculture and Markets Law of NYS and accepted a plea deal in November 2022 through the District Attorney's Office. **The cat has found a loving home, where he enjoys playtime with his brother.**

The SPCA Animal Cruelty Investigations Department launched a life-enhancing program in the summer of 2022 to provide adequate water and shelter to dogs in our community whose families face barriers obtaining a proper doghouse. NYS Agriculture and Markets Law requires owners to provide adequate shelter to dogs, allowing them to escape the elements at their discretion. "Operation PAWS" (Providing Adequate Water and Shelter) has successfully united ten community members with a proper dog shelter, buckets, Kongs, and peanut butter. **We hope in the next year to successfully provide additional assistance to many more families who need help keeping their pet in a safe environment.**



INVESTIGATIONS/ RESCUE

Cruelty investigations: **1,504**

Abandoned animals admitted: **245**

Seized animals admitted: **587**



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: CINDY SILAGYI

BY KELLY DESCHAMPS, DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES

When asked what volunteers do at the SPCA, I always simply say – EVERYTHING! In March 2022, long-time volunteer Cindy Silagy took “everything” and ran with it in the best way possible. Cindy

saw a need at a time when staff needed a solution, and the solution was her.

Cindy began volunteering with us in 2016. While Cindy thought that the move from the SPCA’s old location in Tonawanda to West Seneca would be the biggest event in her volunteer career with us, the pandemic had other plans. When COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and Cindy returned to volunteering, she saw that new volunteers needed more mentoring and training.

In March 2022, Cindy accepted a unique volunteer role now known as the Canine Volunteer Coordinator. Cindy started by updating the volunteer roles and creating best practices for procedures in working with the dogs. She has grown to assist with recruiting and onboarding

our canine volunteers, scheduling the volunteers, improving and increasing communication with volunteers in this area, and being a mentor to new and existing volunteers. In addition to all of this, Cindy has developed and teaches training classes for our canine volunteers. She recently developed an adoption matching class for our canine volunteers in which she uses the elements of dog behavior, customer service, and empathy to guide fellow volunteers on how to best match adoptable dogs to new families. **You can now find her three days a week at the SPCA, smiling, laughing, and cheerfully mentoring fellow volunteers, caring for adoptable dogs, and matching new canine family members to adopters.**



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers:
1,039

Total logged hours:
43,718

WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

BY BARBARA HANEY, DIRECTOR OF THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Like all animal welfare, the Wildlife Department has had many highs and lows this past year as we navigate a more and more complex world. The Wildlife Department’s hospital was challenged by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in 2022, which required that we practice safe biosecurity for all our birds to protect our hospital from a breakout. After two years of navigating COVID-19, this added stress was particularly challenging, but the staff and community stepped up, and we partnered with Messinger Woods Wildlife Care and Education Center to quarantine birds appropriately.

We are asking the community to help us in a variety of ways. We have shifted from picking up injured and sick wildlife to asking the public to help us by bringing the animals to us. **In 2019 we sent our SPCA rescue agents out for 863 wildlife pick-ups and in 2022 we sent them off for only 256.** There are a variety of reasons for this shift, not least of which is the fact that cruelty calls have increased at an alarming rate and SPCA Officers are being pulled into many complex situations. How were we able to shift our resources? With the help of a kind, loving community in the form of a new group of Wildlife Transport Volunteers, and the community becoming partners in the care of our local wildlife. **If you see an injured or sick wild animal, please call us at 716-875-7360 ext. 247 for advice.**



WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Animal intake:
3,540

Number of species:

Phone calls:
8,425

159



FOSTER CARE DEPARTMENT SUCCESS

BY HILARY LEMPERLE, ADMINISTRATION AND INTAKE COORDINATOR

Have you ever wondered what an animal has thought or felt when surrendered to an animal shelter? I'm sure some are scared about being in a new environment and what the future holds for them.

Floyd was one of these animals who was surrendered to an animal shelter after living a short time with a family. There were multiple dogs in the home, and Floyd was more work than the family had anticipated. Floyd is a working dog, so when he was bored, he would chew on items he shouldn't and would cause problems with the other dogs in the house. He needed more than this family could provide for him.

Floyd entered the shelter and was terrified. He would come out of his kennel, but he didn't want to interact with anyone. Staff tried working with him, but he couldn't bring himself to let his guard down and trust. He became difficult to work with because he was becoming unpredictable, and because of this behavior, volunteers were understandably hesitant to interact with Floyd.

An outside trainer was brought into the shelter to help Floyd. She worked with him and found he was very treat-motivated. He wanted to make the right choices, but he was not being challenged enough to keep his interest. Floyd was learning tricks and how to behave, but he still had a difficult time trusting the people in our shelter.

Shelter staff knew Floyd was not coping well with shelter life and he needed more enrichment and interaction. An appropriate foster home was sought, and we were hoping for someone who would work with Floyd and keep him engaged. Soon a special woman was found. She had owned cattle dogs and knew they needed a job. She worked with Floyd and took him to agility and training classes. She loved Floyd and, in the end, this became a "foster win," because she kept Floyd.

Today, Floyd is a happy and healthy dog. He has a sibling and works to please his mom. Recently she took him to a barn hunt, and he won first place. He loves his life!

What better thing to do for an animal who has been displaced than to show them the love they need until they can find their new home? Fostering saves lives.



FOSTER CARE

Total number of animals who spent time in foster care:
2,363

Foster homes:
1,759

NEW foster homes:
150



EDUCATIONAL FARM SAYS GOODBYE TO OUR SWEET FRIEND

BY GINA LATTUCA, SPCA CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER AND SHEILA FOSS, SPCA EDUCATIONAL FARM MANAGER

We said heartfelt goodbyes on September 29 to a sweet, gentle friend loved by SPCA staff members, volunteers, and thousands throughout the community.

Newman, a 10-year-old Nubian goat, was brought to us by one of our animal cruelty investigation officers after being rescued from a neglectful owner/caretaker in January 2014. Newman, almost two at the time, was suffering from a permanent condition most likely acquired at a very young age, Caprine Arthritis and Encephalitis (CAE). He was receiving no care for the condition.

Newman's CAE started to progress at an increased rate last year. By late summer, SPCA Farm employees

noticed Newman slowing down significantly. He was having more difficulty getting up and down and walking more slowly. They also noticed he didn't want to stay out in the pasture as long as he usually did in the past.

When large animal veterinarian Dr. Jean Feldman observed Newman's continuing decline, she knew some tough choices had to be made. After discussing the situation with Dr. Feldman, the farm employees made the heartbreaking choice to say goodbye to Newman.

We know many of you in the community share our sorrow in bidding farewell to this amazing soul who has brightened so many lives just by his presence.



ADMISSIONS

Dogs: **2,099**

Cats: **4,282**

Other animals: **718**

Farm animals: **117**

ADMISSIONS STEPS IN TO HELP COMMUNITY CATS

BY HILARY LEMPERLE, ADMINISTRATION AND INTAKE COORDINATOR

Each year thousands of healthy community cats are brought to the SPCA in hopes of finding a home off the street. A community cat is a cat who is living outside and does not have an owner. A community cat may be social and allow handling; however, they may also be feral and run away if approached. Not all community cats are adoptable because of their disposition, but many have caretakers. There will never be enough space in a shelter to accept all of them.

The SPCA wants to help as many animals as possible and helping community cats who can be adopted and placed in a home is one way the public is being asked to assist with the community cat population. If you find a healthy community cat who has been in the area for a while, you can bring this cat to the SPCA, where he or she will be scanned for a microchip, vaccinated, given a flea treatment and hopefully a clean bill of health. You are then asked to take the cat back and given a list of “homework” to help find the owner.

With the help of the community, the SPCA hopes to continue to help the community cat population and find homes for those who can be placed with families. Without the help of the community, it would be impossible to help as many community cats. The teamwork between the public and the SPCA has been a lifesaver for many animals.

ADOPTING WITH EASE

BY MINDY USSREY, DIRECTOR OF ADOPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

As we began 2022, and were still trying to come out of pandemic mode, potential adopters were required to make appointments to come into the shelter to look at and meet animals. As spring arrived, it was time to do away with the adoption appointments so we could have a “normal” summer. Well, it was even better than expected! The adoptions staff, a lot of them very new to the organization and hired during the pandemic, knocked it out of the park. Not only did the transition go smoothly for the staff, but the Behavior Department and the volunteers needed to adjust back to the “old ways” and they did so with enthusiasm.

Over the course of the summer and fall, we had several successful adoption events. The entire summer of 2022, all the way through September, was dedicated as “The Summer of Love” with half off adoptions for adult dogs and cats, and waived fees for our Shadow Cats. We had our annual adoption events with Subaru and our beloved Vets and Pets promotions also.

As we move into 2023, the adoptions staff is dedicated to making the adoption experience a more personal one. Staff are committed to the best customer service, and we will be utilizing adoption rooms and the Petique to add that personal touch.



ADOPTIONS

Total adoptions:

3,901

Dogs: 954; Cats: 2,329;

Farm animals: 86;

Other animals: 532



SPCA PACK LEADERS

For a list of Pack Leader donors, please visit YourSPCA.org/2022packleaders.



THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTREACH

BY AMY JAWORSKI, OUTREACH COORDINATOR

There are three facets of outreach services we focused on during 2022:

Pet Food Pantry

Our Pet Food Pantry is growing by leaps and bounds. In 2022, we were able to provide over 100,000 meals to the pets living in our community. In addition to pet food, we provided approximately 1.5 TONS of litter, and 2,000 other pet items, including beds, collars, toys, and treats. As the need in our community continues to grow, we are creating new partnerships to increase the amount of food and other items we're able to offer.



SAFE Program

Our SAFE (Sheltering Animals For Emergencies) program provides temporary foster care for pets whose owners are experiencing a significant crisis. These types

of life-altering circumstances can range from a house fire, to hospitalization, rehabilitation, eviction, or fleeing domestic violence. Without access to this program, these owners would likely have to face the impossible decision to permanently relinquish ownership of their pets in hopes they find a new home. Thanks to this program and the amazing foster families who opened their hearts and homes, we assisted 50 families in 2022. While tears are still undoubtedly shed in our lobby, these reunions bring about tears of joy.

Vaccine and Microchip Clinics

This fall brought about the first vaccine and microchip clinics that have been offered since COVID-19. Our clinics not only provide access to potentially lifesaving vaccinations but offer owners the opportunity to have their pets permanently identified with a free microchip. Over 500 pounds of food, and hundreds of collars, leashes, harnesses, treats, toys, and other items were distributed to attendees. The two clinics held this fall helped 234 dogs. Vaccines were generously donated by Petco Love.



VETERINARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

BY RICHELLE COONS, VETERINARY SERVICES ADMINISTRATOR

In 2022 the Veterinary Services Department underwent many changes. Perhaps the biggest change was the shelter-wide initiative to move towards a more community-centered approach to the work we do. This has resulted in a major change regarding the animals who we are bringing in to treat at the shelter. We are making changes so when individuals bring healthy animals that they have found to the shelter, we are sending the animals back with their finder as a foster care animal until the time comes for them to have surgery (often spay/neuter). The hope is that with these changes, we will have fewer animals in the shelter, and more in homes with people caring for them. As a result of this approach, we cared for more injured and sick animals.

To help keep our community's pets healthy, the Veterinary Services team worked with the Outreach team to host free vaccine clinics to the community. Members of the Veterinary Services staff vaccinated, microchipped, trimmed nails, and helped with collar/harness fitting for dogs at these clinics.

The Veterinary Services team can't wait to see what this next year brings, and we're excited to continue moving toward a more community-centered approach.



VETERINARY DEPARTMENT

Services provided to shelter pets

Spays: **1,512** Neuters: **1,571**

2,917 Yelp for Help patients (**915** surgeries and **2,002** other diagnoses/symptoms)



OUTREACH

The Pet Pantry distributed over **16,200** pounds of dry pet food, more than **9,250** cans of wet pet food, **3,300** pounds of litter, and **2,000** other pet supplies.