



COMPASSION IN ACTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE SPCA SERVING ERIE COUNTY

2024 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



FROM PRESIDENT & CEO CAIT DALY

While 2024 was a difficult year for the animal welfare community, both nationally and here at home, we have much to be grateful for and proud of. Your support gave thousands of animals a second chance — animals like Paquito, who came to us from an overwhelmed chihuahua owner in June.

Paquito had alopecia along his entire body. His skin was red and irritated, and he needed medical

help. He was treated by our veterinary team, and while recovering, our guests would walk by his kennel and pass him by due to his appearance. Luckily Kathy B. saw his inner beauty.

Kathy took Paquito home and during his last check-up, he was almost unrecognizable! Here he is in his new home, showing what love can truly do for a homeless pet.

Paquito's story is such a positive one, however data shows that pet adoptions are down nationwide. Access to veterinary resources continues to be a difficult obstacle for pet owners. Abandonment and cruelty are on the rise. Here at the SPCA, we are putting critical programs and resources in place to combat these trends in our community.

Throughout the summer, our SPC80s adoption special helped 549 pets find their new homes in June and July alone! We carried that momentum through October, when we sent home 57 animals in one weekend! We are hopeful that 2025 will bring more adoptions!

To lessen the burden on pet owners and increase accessibility to veterinary care here in Western New York, we strengthened some programs and launched

several new initiatives. In addition to providing veterinary care to the pets in our shelter, we were able to expand our affordable Lipsey Veterinary Clinic services. We TRIPLED spay and neuter surgeries and QUADRUPLED dental procedures for owned pets in our community. We received grants to expand our pet food pantry and vaccine clinics while strengthening our community partnerships to help more pets and their people. We will continue to focus on access to care, and 2025 will bring even more happy and healthy pets through the doors of the Lipsey Veterinary Clinic.

The SPCA's Cruelty Investigations and Animal Rescue team remains inundated with abandoned animals, and cruelty cases continue to be more complex and severe. To increase our capacity, we sent two rescue agents through the police officer training academy. We are proud to announce that they graduated on December 13, which means we now have five officers on the road responding to animal cruelty complaints. In 2022, 591 animals were seized during cruelty investigations. In 2023, that number jumped to 697 animals. In 2024, we seized more than 880 animals as a result of criminal investigations and brought them here to the SPCA for treatment/care. Increasing our team from three to five officers, with an additional two rescue agents, should greatly help in keeping animals safe here in Erie County.

We will always go above and beyond to achieve our mission and help those most in need. Your support ensures that we will continue to develop innovative programs and thereby save more lives. We are honored to have you as partners in our work.

With my whole heart,

Cait Daly
President & CEO





FIND US

716-875-7360
YourSPCA.org
facebook.com/SPCAErieCounty
X: @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.

FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

BY: P. JEFFREY BIRTCH



Having served as Chairperson of the SPCA Serving Erie County during 2024, I was often reminded that our work extends far beyond the dogs and cats we're known for. Last summer brought that truth home in a particularly vivid way.

I stopped by our Wildlife Department in the summer and what I saw was truly inspiring. Our dedicated staff and volunteers were working tirelessly to rehabilitate a wide variety of species. I saw firsthand the meticulous care given to orphaned baby birds, carefully fed with formula using tiny paintbrushes. Each delicate life was treated with immense compassion and expertise.

Beyond rescuing and rehabilitating injured animals, they educate the public on coexisting with wildlife. Knowing we provide this vital service fills me with pride. The SPCA truly is a beacon of hope, not just for our beloved pets, but for all creatures great and small!

2024 was a great year for the SPCA Serving Erie County, and seeing the dedication of our staff and volunteers reinforces my belief that we are making a real difference! We're looking forward to what 2025 has in store for our organization!

With gratitude,

P. Jeffrey Birtch



SAVE THE DATE



Pawsitive Payday Annual Raffle:

January 22 through February 28



Wildlife Baby Shower:

March 11 through March 22



Kitten Baby Shower:

May 5 - May 24



Wine, Wags, & Brews:

June 11, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the SPCA



Paws in the Park:

September 27, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Knox Farm State Park



SPCA Pack Leaders: For a list of Pack Leader donors, please visit YourSPCA.org/2024packleaders.

VETERINARY SERVICES

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF VETERINARY CARE: THE SPCA'S GACIOCH TEACHING HOSPITAL AND INFIRMARY PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

BY RICHELLE COONS, VETERINARY SERVICES MANAGER



VETERINARY DEPARTMENT

Services provided to shelter pets

Spays:

1,284

Neuters:

1,269

Yelp for Help patients

650

When it comes to veterinary medicine, one thing is certain: there are not enough professionals in the field, especially in shelter medicine. Recognizing this challenge, we have developed several programs over the past year to help address the shortage of shelter medicine and veterinary staff in our community.

The SPCA is now partnering with Trocaire College's Veterinary Sciences Department to provide animals for their Veterinary Technician program. Students at Trocaire College will have the opportunity to practice their clinical skills on animals from the SPCA, which will help us provide the necessary medical care for these animals and give Trocaire students invaluable hands-on experience. This collaboration is mutually beneficial. Trocaire students gain hands-on experience working with SPCA animals, while the SPCA's veterinary staff benefits from a lightened workload.

In addition to our partnership with Trocaire College, we are incredibly grateful for the generosity of donors like Nancy and Bill Gacioch, who have committed to supporting the Gacioch Teaching Hospital and Infirmary. This donation will allow the SPCA to offer more opportunities for students pursuing their Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine (DVM). In 2024, we hosted both pre-veterinary students working toward their undergraduate degrees and DVM students in graduate school, including those from Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, Syracuse University, Cornell University, SUNY Cobleskill, Iowa State University, Daemen University, and North Carolina State University. None of this would be possible without the support of Nancy and Bill Gacioch, and we can't thank them enough for their generous contribution.

Through these programs, we are proud to help educate the next generation of veterinary professionals. We look forward to the positive impact these efforts will have on our community in Western New York!

BEHAVIOR DEPARTMENT

BEHAVIOR PROGRAMS AT THE SPCA

BY LEIGH ANN ABBEY, COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES AND BEHAVIOR MANAGER

Staff are now certified in Animal Shelter Behavior Management, which allows us to assist dogs and cats with their behavioral concerns and create a less stressful shelter environment.

Three dogs graduated from the Pups at the Pen program in 2024! This program partners the SPCA with the Erie County Sheriff's Department and Sit n' Stay Pet Services to offer a unique opportunity for shelter dogs and incarcerated individuals. These individuals work with the dogs to improve their



Egypt, a Pups at the Pen graduate



BEHAVIOR DEPARTMENT

The SPCA conducts a behavior evaluation for every cat and dog admitted!

behavior and adoptability through basic obedience, crate training, and socialization. This allows dogs who struggle in the shelter environment to thrive in a more comfortable setting.

EDUCATIONAL FARM

EMBRACING NEW BEGINNINGS: FRESH STARTS AND GROWING DREAMS ON THE FARM

BY HEATHER SILVERTHORN, EDUCATIONAL FARM MANAGER

2024 was the “year of new” for the Educational Farm at the SPCA. In June, our long-time Farm Director, Shiela Foss, retired after 38 years at the SPCA. Sheila’s dedication to the animals on the Educational Farm will never be forgotten, and she left big shoes to fill. In June, I joined the farm as the new manager, eager to continue growing the department that Sheila had started.





EDUCATIONAL
FARM

Adoptions:
99

At the beginning of the year, a surprise hoarding case led to two Boer/Nubian mixed goats coming to stay with us on the educational farm. Bonnie, a sweet, social, brown kid (baby goat) with white spots (one heart-shaped spot above her hip), and Clara, a playful, social, white kid with a black head, were initially up for adoption. Our 31-year-old mini-horse, Xylord, connected well with Bonnie, and a decision was made that she would become a resident of the farm. Xylord lost a long-time goat pal, Newman, in the autumn of 2022, and it seemed he may have chosen his new pasture mate in Bonnie. As rescues do, we think about our animals’ well-being and long-term outlook. While Bonnie was a great buddy to Xylord in the pasture, her young goat energy was often too much for her more mature stall mate. After some thought about the vast age difference between this unlikely pair, another decision was made to keep Clara as a resident as well. Since then, this trio can be seen palling around the SPCA’s pastures, and Xylord gets a good night’s sleep while Bonnie and Clara party the night away!

FOSTER CARE

THE LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT OF FOSTERING ANIMALS


BY JILL ANTES, ADOPTIONS &
FOSTER CARE MANAGER

Fostering animals is essential to our SPCA’s mission. By opening your home, you provide a lifeline, offering a safe haven where animals can heal and thrive. Foster care allows them to recover from trauma and illness in a loving environment, improving their well-being and preparing them for their new homes.

Gizmo’s story exemplifies the power of fostering. Found as a stray in critical condition, he needed urgent, life-saving surgery. Despite a poor prognosis, he was placed in foster care, received exceptional support, and underwent successful surgery. After a challenging recovery, Gizmo thrived, and his foster parent adopted him!

Gizmo’s journey demonstrates the difference we can make when we unite to help those in need. If you’ve ever considered fostering, take the leap! Fostering transforms lives for animals and the people who open their homes!





FOSTER CARE

Total animals
served by foster
in 2024:
2,155

Current Foster
Homes:
442

New Fosters
Homes
55

Adopted
through
Foster Homes:
678

ADOPTIONS DEPARTMENT

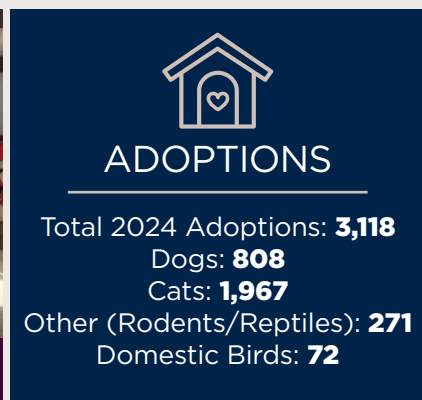
A YEAR OF HEALING, HOPE, AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

BY JILL ANTES, ADOPTIONS & FOSTER CARE MANAGER

2024 was a year of incredible adoptions, thanks to community support! Northtown Subaru sponsored two adoption events, helping many animals find new homes. Our Vets & Pets program, sponsored by Moog, offered free adoption to military veterans.



Dobby (left) with his new brother.



We also welcomed pets displaced by hurricanes in the southern states. Many families, forced to surrender their beloved animals due to the devastation, found comfort knowing their pets would have a second chance.

One heartwarming story is Dobby's, a pup transported from a hurricane-stricken area with the help of the BISSELL Pet Foundation. Adopted by Yasmine and her family, Dobby quickly settled in, bonding with their other dog and children. He's now a cherished family member! Yasmine kindly shared, "It feels like Dobby has been part of our family forever."

Dobby's story, and many others like it, show that adoption — even amidst hardship — leads to hope and happiness!



HUMANE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

INSPIRING FUTURE ANIMAL WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

BY CHRISTINE DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The Humane Education team expanded youth programs in 2024, forging partnerships with Buffalo Public Schools like Research Laboratory High School and the Career and Technical Education programs at McKinley and Riverside High Schools. This collaboration offered students hands-on learning and career exploration, with opportunities for summer employment at the SPCA. Some Riverside students even volunteered in our Wildlife Department after passing the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitator's Exam!

We also offered career-intensive workshops to middle and high schools, featuring two levels of hands-on learning. In Vet Science 101, students learned veterinary terminology and preventive care through games. Vet Science 102 provided a chance to observe surgery, practice injections, and learn CPR. Workshops also covered animal behavior, exotic animal care, wildlife rehabilitation, and animal rescue.

Finally, Vet for a Day, sponsored by Drs. Hodges and Ferguson from Nat Geo Wild's program "Critter Fixers Country Vets," engaged 75 youth in a day of learning. This program promoted diversity in veterinary science, offering lectures, mentoring from black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) professionals, and hands-on experiences like suturing and exploring wildlife medicine.

These opportunities inspire future animal welfare professionals, ensuring skilled care for companion animals in our community.



CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS AND ANIMAL RESCUE DEPARTMENT

BY CHIEF LINDSEY WOOD

Big news at the SPCA! Please join us in welcoming our newest Special Agents, Nicole Abrams and Meghan Giles! After serving as rescue agents, they recently graduated from the NYS Peace Officer Academy.

We also want to express our sincere gratitude to Special Agent William Heine, who retired after 19 years of dedicated service. Thank you for saving countless animals, Bill! Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!

In August, our SPCA officers were met with a devastating sight: Quincy, a skeletal Bull Terrier ravaged by neglect, lay motionless on a doorstep, barely clinging to life. Six tiny kittens huddled beside him, equally vulnerable. This was no ordinary call; these animals needed immediate rescue. Our compassionate officers rushed Quincy to our shelter, where our veterinary team worked tirelessly to save him. They provided around-the-clock care, soothing his painful sores and slowly nursing him back to health. The kittens, thankfully less affected, also received the care they needed before finding foster homes.

Today, Quincy is thriving in a loving home in Springville, a testament to the swift action and unwavering dedication of SPCA officers.



Special Agents Nicole Abrams and Meghan Giles



INVESTIGATIONS/ RESCUE

SPCA officers responded to **1,269** animal cruelty investigations. These investigations led to the seizure of:
880 animals seized due to cruelty
132 animals abandoned due to eviction



Davy, the therapy dog, is a heartwarming tribute to fallen Officer David Tolsma.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

55,168

calls to the shelter's main number in the busiest season, May-September 2024

5,624

animals intake

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

BY LEIGH ANN ABBEY, COMMUNITY SUPPORT
SERVICES AND BEHAVIOR MANAGER



- The Behavior Team and Community Support Services Department collaborated with the Cheektowaga Police Department in selecting their therapy dog, Davy, a heartfelt tribute to Officer David Tolsma, who tragically lost his life in the line of duty in 1977. Davy arrived at the SPCA in April and now plays a vital role in the Cheektowaga Police Department's officer wellness program, helping to alleviate stress and enhance the well-being of their team!
- Auggie, a handsome orange cat, was brought to the SPCA as a stray this November. The finder saw him intermittently over the course of a few months and was leaving food out for him. Although he wasn't wearing a collar, we found a microchip and contacted the owner. The owner came in to claim Auggie, who had been missing for seven months! The Community Support Services team was happy to assist with reuniting this family thanks to Auggie's microchip!

OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

PAWS ON THE GROUND

BY TYLER ROBERTSON, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES PROGRAM MANAGER

The SPCA's ACCESS Team is concluding Phase I of the PetSmart Charities Incubator Grant, focused on Buffalo zip code 14208. The overall purpose of this project is to understand the challenges that community members experience related to veterinary care and other pet support services. In 2024, we established eleven new partnerships, served 2,002 new pets, and reached 1,849 new families. A focus group was conducted, and surveys were completed to understand community needs. We are currently analyzing the survey results in collaboration with the Institute of Human-Animal Connection. The information gathered in this program evaluation project will be used to develop or improve the veterinary/pet services that the SPCA Serving Erie County provides in the 14208 neighborhood. The SPCA plans to apply for Phase II of the grant from PetSmart Charities. Our aim is to implement the community's feedback over the next three years.

In addition, the Pets for Life Program, initiated by the Humane Society of the United States, launched at the SPCA in October. This program is driven by social justice and the belief that the bond between humans and pets transcends socioeconomic, racial, and geographic boundaries. It aims to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits, joy, and comfort of this bond. The SPCA will concentrate our efforts in the 14211 and 14215 neighborhoods. To date, we have spayed/neutered thirteen pets and provided wellness appointments for four pets.



OUTREACH

The Pet Pantry:

Pet meals

(cat and dog) given: **297,864**

16,357 Pounds of litter

6,079 Other items given (toys, treats, collars, leashes, etc.)

4,491 Pounds of "other"

pet food given (horse, goat, pig, chicken, rabbit, guinea pig, etc).

Low-cost vaccination clinics:

1,318 Dogs and cats vaccinated

546 Microchipped



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers:

1,285

Logged Hours:

(Roughly 32 full-time positions!)

66,095

Paws for Love hours:

7,386

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

BY JULIE SCHULTZ, CHIEF PEOPLE AND CULTURE OFFICER

Our Paws for Love volunteers spread joy and comfort throughout the community! With 259 dedicated volunteers, these furry and feathered ambassadors visit nursing homes, libraries, schools, and even the Buffalo Niagara International Airport, bringing smiles to thousands of faces!

Between January and May 2024 alone, they comforted over 4,500 travelers at the airport and interacted with over 16,000 people at community events! We're so proud of the impact our Paws for Love teams have in spreading kindness and connection in our community!



Our hearts are heavy with the news of the passing of Jake, the beloved "Airport Dog," and loyal companion to Al Monaco and his wife. For years, this wonderful pair brought countless smiles to travelers at the airport, offering comfort and a warm welcome. You may even remember them from their heartwarming interview on WGRZ this past November. We are eternally grateful for their dedication and the joy they shared with so many. Jake's memory will live on in the hearts of those he touched.

WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

GREAT HORNED OWL'S BATH MAKES A SPLASH!

BY BARBARA HANEY,
DIRECTOR OF WILDLIFE SERVICES

It was just a normal day in the Wildlife Hospital when I asked if Jillian from our Communications Department wanted to photograph a Great Horned Owl about to get a bath. Little did I know that those images would travel around the world and back! So many people around the world were able to see what we do on a regular basis in the Wildlife Department. The social media post went viral, and millions of people saw our staff carefully cleaning the majestic owl.

The owl came to us covered in sewage sludge and in desperate need of a bath. Bathing an owl is no easy feat, as the bird must first be sedated to stay calm. Although this story was enjoyed by many, it's just one of the hundreds of stories that are routine in the Wildlife Department, a testament to our ongoing commitment and dedication. In 2024, hundreds of orphaned songbirds, cottontails, waterfowl, and squirrels were raised to be successful wild animals in nature. There were birds of prey that received orthopedic surgery from our team of wildlife



WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Animal intake:

3,534

Number of species
admitted:

157



veterinarians. Many turtles were put back together after unfortunate run-ins with vehicles. The list goes on...

Beyond medical care, it is the spirit of compassion and community that makes our hospital truly special. Every day, we witness the extraordinary resilience of wildlife, and with the support of volunteers, staff, and especially donors, we are able to give them the second chances they deserve.

Our work together is a testament to the power of caring hearts. Thank you for making last year so extraordinary. We look forward to continuing our shared journey of healing wildlife in 2025!



Lucky was found in a barn colony of cats with a ruptured eye. We were able to remove it and now he's living his best life as a pirate cat!



LIPSEY VETERINARY CLINIC

Appointments seen
(not including surgeries):

6,436

Spay/Neuter Surgeries:

1,949

Dentals:

188

Other
Surgeries:

249

LIPSEY VETERINARY CLINIC PROVIDING AFFORDABLE PET CARE

BY MICHELLE GOULD-SOBASZEK, LVT

The Lipsey Veterinary Clinic focuses on providing affordable pet care, allowing pets to stay with their owners rather than entering a shelter.

Working in a clinic where we get to help so many animals is exceptionally rewarding. In some cases, we are an owner's last hope to get their beloved pet the help he/she needs. To see the bonds that owners and their pets have is heartwarming, to say the least. We've cried happy tears alongside an owner, and we've also been there for owners and their pets when it's time to say goodbye. I am very proud of the work we do and the passion that drives it.

The staff of the Lipsey Veterinary Clinic is a dedicated group of animal lovers and animal advocates. We work closely with the Veterinary Services and Outreach Departments to help those animals most in need.

We look forward to continuing to focus on helping the people and their pets in our community in 2025!