



COMPASSION IN ACTION



SUMMER
2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE SPCA SERVING ERIE COUNTY

NAVIGATING ANIMAL WELFARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The SPCA Serving Erie County, like so many national and regional businesses and organizations in the country, was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 began to increase in New York State and worldwide, the SPCA took proactive measures to ensure the safety of both the people (staff, volunteers, and guests) and animals on our premises. Poignant decisions about policies, procedures, and staffing had to be made quickly to adapt to what the situation and time called for. (One of the toughest calls we had to make was asking our volunteer force to stay home to protect themselves.) We were pleased when Governor Cuomo named animal shelters an essential service, so we could remain open for essential services with minimal on-site staff.

Although no one can argue that it was a difficult time with a lot of challenging circumstances, the SPCA is stronger now because of what we learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

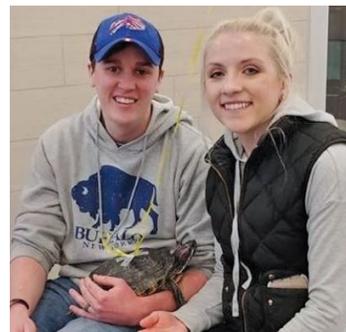


During the first several months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SPCA responded in a variety of ways.

ADMISSIONS

Starting in March, admissions were done by appointment only and were limited to sick and injured animals and abuse victims. For the safety of everyone involved, local and national transports of

animals to the SPCA were put on hold. End-of-life services were still available for the pet owners who had to make the difficult and painful decision to say goodbye to their pets.



ADOPTIONS ▲

For many safety reasons, one of the first priorities the SPCA had was to decrease the number of adoptable animals available at our shelter in West Seneca and at our offsite adoption locations. On March 17, the SPCA began doing adoptions by appointment only, limiting the number of people in the SPCA. From March 17 to 21, adoption fees were waived and using the same adoption process as we always use, 108 animals found their new homes during those five days!

From March 23 on, even though there were significantly less animals available for adoption, our community of animal lovers shared adoptable animal posts on social media and helped the SPCA adopt many of our long-term animals, including Myrtle the turtle (a staff and volunteer favorite) and 14-year-old Bailey! Shelter Manager Stephanie Pepper said, "Even though it was a painful time, these special adoptions gave us much-needed hope when we really needed it."

(continued on pages 4-5)



FIND US

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

HOURS AND LOCATIONS

300 Harlem Road,
West Seneca, NY 14224

Adoption Hours:

MON/WED/FRI	11am-6pm
TUE/THU	11am-8pm
SAT	10am - 5pm
SUN	Closed

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.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The months of March, April, and May weren't easy for anyone, which is why on behalf of the SPCA Serving Erie County's Board of Directors, I would like to give a heartfelt appreciation to every single SPCA employee who worked their tails off during precarious times. Even now, things are still changing, and our staff members need to be commended for their seemingly unending reservoir of patience! While some employees were fortunate to be able to work at home, many employees' jobs depended on being with the animals at the shelter. We know that coming to work wasn't easy, and it had to have been scary at times. The employees who worked from home had another set of challenges, and they found ways to work around sometimes tricky situations.

Something every staff member had in common was working in almost constantly changing circumstances. Every day something was changing, and everyone had to keep up, so everyone's jobs became intensely demanding and stressful. Many employees did not only their own jobs, but they also helped coworkers in other departments in jobs they had never done before.

Thank you to each SPCA staff member who struggled, but who ultimately persevered for the people and animals of Erie County. You are all special people.

JULIE DESMOND SCHECHTER
Board Chair

P.S. Every single department had to do their jobs without the strong, ubiquitous presence of our 1,700+ volunteers! For their safety, our volunteers weren't with us during the pandemic. Even though we know how much they do, we sadly understand first-hand now, how we absolutely couldn't do anything without them ... And rest assured, we never want to be without them again!



LEAVE A LEGACY OF COMPASSION

Let your love of animals become your legacy and help sustain the operations of the SPCA for years to come by including the SPCA in your estate plans.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



COVID-19 has made an impact in the world unlike anything we've experienced in our lifetimes. The SPCA Serving Erie County was deemed an essential business by the state, which led to a deep dive by our management

team and board of directors to find the balance between carrying out our mission and keeping our staff safe.

Thankfully, Western New Yorkers answered our calls for help and did so in a variety of ways. People adopted animals, leading to a moment where every dog was adopted and soon after, every cat at the shelter was adopted, too. As new animals who had no other option trickled in, they were also quickly adopted.

Animals who were either pregnant or too young to be adopted, a majority of which were cats and kittens and rabbits, were sent to SPCA foster homes until they were old enough and ready to be adopted. Our foster homes allowed us to have less animals in the building, which was an important step in keeping SPCA staff healthy and safe.

We are beyond thankful to our many donors who have helped in so many ways during our greatest time of need. We are honored and humbled to receive your monetary contributions, gifts from our Amazon wish list, and for your help purchasing much-needed supplies.

We have been unable to safely utilize our 1,700 dedicated volunteers during these times, which as you can imagine, is a real struggle for our staff and for the volunteers who want to help. Many have stepped up by fostering animals in their homes and volunteers have made gowns and masks for our staff. Our Paws for Love volunteers have gone virtual, doing a series of wonderful videos of their pets working from home that have been very well received.

At the shelter, we've gone to extreme ends to clean, organize, and sanitize in order to operate safely. Hand sanitizing stations have been added throughout the building. Special protocols for adoption, admission, and wildlife have been put in place to keep everyone safe.

We are also taking the time to assess what Erie County needs from our organization moving forward. With things like spay and neuter surgeries being put on hold for some time, we expect that there will be a bigger emphasis on the Lipsey Clinic's services in the summer. We also are determining the best way to adopt animals on a larger scale in the future, while still following best practices for social distancing.

In April, we celebrated 153 years serving Erie County as a leader in animal welfare. Our organization has lived through tough times before and with your help, we will survive again. On behalf of our staff, volunteers, and board of directors, thank you for making all of this possible.

Gary Willoughby II
President & CEO

A bequest is one of the easiest and most impactful ways to support the SPCA's mission. Planned giving options include:

- Wills
- Trusts
- Charitable gift annuities
- Life insurance policies
- Real estate and personal property
- Retirement benefits

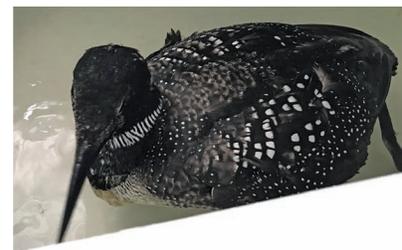
For more information, visit YourSPCA.org/donate/planned-giving, or contact Jennifer Gurz, Chief Development Officer, at 716-875-7360 ext. 219 or jenniferg@yoursPCA.org.

(continued from page 1)

In late April and early May, adoptions began to incrementally open with animals being brought in from SPCA foster homes. At the time of this writing, plans are underway to investigate future adoption policies, including maintaining the adoptions by appointment policy.

ANIMAL EMERGENCIES, ANIMAL RESCUE, AND ANIMAL CRUELTY INVESTIGATIONS

SPCA Officers were available for help every day — and help they did! They assisted with high priority emergencies, abandoned animals, wildlife emergencies, and they remained available for assistance with law enforcement agencies. They also distributed pet food and supplies to pet owners who needed it. See rescue photos and stories on the next page.



WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT ▲

The Wildlife Department, which was busy gearing up for its busy spring and summer seasons, normally runs with four staff members, up to ten college interns, and 150 volunteers. Instead, the department operated with only a handful of employees and without interns and volunteers. Staff triaged phone calls with concerned community members every day to determine if the call constituted a wildlife emergency. If it was, help was available at the SPCA.

On April 23, the SPCA's Wildlife Department Director Barbara Haney received a call from a Buffalo citizen who was surprised to find a bird, who the caller thought was possibly a goose with a broken leg, on the caller's second-floor balcony. "I asked him to text me a picture and immediately I knew it was a Common Loon — a species of special concern in New York State. The gentleman thought the bird looked like it had a broken leg because of the loon's anatomy." Common Loons spend most of their lives in water and walk clumsily on land, because their legs are located far on the rear of their bodies.

Because this is a very special bird, SPCA Officers Maleskis and Wlodarczyk went on the rescue call. Wearing PPE, they walked through the man's apartment to the balcony and rescued the loon. They brought the loon to Dr. Karen Slote, the SPCA's wildlife veterinarian and local expert on this very delicate species. "Migrating loons don't breed in Buffalo and my guess is that he was on his way to Canada. If you see loons in area lakes, they're just stopping by for food. I don't know how in the world he got stuck on a balcony but once he was there, he probably had difficulty taking off. He was dirty and exhausted when I got him. I'm caring for him around the clock," said Dr. Slote.

HUMANE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Some of the most painful decisions had to be made regarding our humane education programming for children and adults. All humane education programs (including adult education programs and seminars, before- and after-school programs, library programs, nursery school sessions, school break camps, Saturday academies at schools, school field trips, Scout patch programs and

◀ **VETERINARY DEPARTMENT**

At first, the SPCA's Veterinary Department frenetic pace seemed to slow down. Instead of spaying and neutering animals weekday mornings, they were advised by national and state shelter veterinarians to discontinue these surgeries during the pandemic. Emergency medical and surgical cases were admitted and cared for.

Dr. Helene Chevalier, the SPCA's

Chief Veterinary Officer said, "It was imperative to find ways to serve the community and the animals while at the same time keeping our staff and our community safe with social distancing practices."

During the pandemic, the Veterinary Department worked to adapt and create new protocols, including using a telehealth-type system of remotely caring for animals. Dr. Chevalier said, "A lot of thought was put into defining what essential services we could safely provide to the animals in our community. We did our best to prepare ourselves in case we were needed to assist pets owned by COVID-19 patients. We were working constantly to be prepared for the worst, all the while hoping for the best.

"With kitten season here, we're now working diligently increasing the veterinary services at the shelter. We are very thankful to our staff, our volunteers, and our community for their support and for helping us adapt to the way we care for animals with these 'new normal' COVID-19 realities. COVID-19 wasn't easy for any of us, but I'm so proud that we all really pulled together and we never stopped helping Erie County!"



workshops, and Tale for Two sessions) were cancelled through June 30.

Very sadly, the Humane Education Department's popular summer camps were also cancelled. We hope that they will be back next year!

FUNDRAISING SPECIAL EVENTS

Throughout the year, the SPCA hosts a variety of fundraising special events that are enjoyed by

community members. Sadly, like so many other things, decisions were made to cancel the Wildlife Baby Shower (scheduled for March 21) and our popular Wine and Wags and Brews (scheduled for June 10). Currently, plans are still being made for our annual Paws in the Park walk on September 26, but, depending on circumstances, this year's Paws in the Park could become our first-ever virtual walk! (See page 8 for more details.)



SPCA Officer Maleski rescues a ring-billed gull from the Buffalo Post Office. Thank you to the postal workers who confined the bird, which enabled the rescue! The gull was transported to the Wildlife Department.



This newborn kitten was found abandoned at a Buffalo residence. A good Samaritan noticed that the kitten was left behind by mom and needed assistance. Officers Maleski and Wlodarczyk responded immediately to rescue the kitten and brought the newborn to our medical staff for immediate attention at the SPCA.

An individual spotted a free roaming juvenile chicken alongside a yard at a Buffalo residence. Officers LeShay and Heine rescued the chicken and brought the animal back to our barn staff at SPCA. The chicken had injuries to both feet, which were treated.



Unfortunately for this Great Blue Heron, the two geese who attacked him chose not to observe social distancing. Fortunately, however, an Elma resident witnessed the attack and immediately called the SPCA Serving Eire County. Officers Robertson and Maleski responded to the scene and transported the bird back to the SPCA's Wildlife hospital, located in our Harlem Rd., West Seneca shelter. The heron was diagnosed with an injured right ulna and foot.



Little Libby went home to Cheektowaga with Michael!

Kim from Cheektowaga welcomed Rosie into her family!



Brooke from Lancaster adopted Webster!

Ken and Samuel from Buffalo adopted Jellybeans!



GREAT EXPECTATIONS LORRAINE'S STORY

BY BETHANY KLOC, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

If there's something we've all been forced to learn recently, it's that sometimes, things don't go the way we expected! As an SPCA foster parent who has fostered more than 180 cats and kittens over the past twelve years, I thought of myself as a seasoned pro who could handle a lot. At the beginning of March, I happily took home a year-old pregnant black cat named Lorraine.

During the next month, I eagerly (read: impatiently) awaited Lorraine's kittens. Because I was working from home, I visited her several times a day and I watched as she continued to grow. Finally, on April 10, she went into labor. That night, Lorraine had three healthy little kittens, and everyone seemed fine.

That next evening, I went into her room to check on everyone and there was a new kitten! I called the SPCA's Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr. Helene Chevalier who said it wasn't unheard of for cats to have babies on separate days. I had known that, too, but this was a first for me!

Just a few hours later, I noticed that Lorraine was having contractions and she was in pain. I called Dr. Chevalier again at 9:45 p.m. and she agreed that it was probably an emergency, so I needed to bring her in to the SPCA right away.

I met Dr. Chevalier and Staci Lucas, the SPCA's Infirmary Manager, at the SPCA. The first thing they did was take an X-ray, which showed that Lorraine had a large kitten in her which she would never have been able to birth on her own. Because of this, she was going to need an emergency cesarean section.

I stayed in the infirmary as they performed the cesarean section surgery and her spay surgery. No matter how many times I have been in the infirmary during a surgery, it never ceases to amaze me at the incredible work that's done. Dr. Chevalier and Staci saved Lorraine's life, but unfortunately, the kitten who was stuck, didn't make it. But, by saving Lorraine's life, they had also saved her other kittens.

The beginning of the next week was tough. Lorraine wasn't eating on her own, so I fed her slurry with a syringe several times a day and I was also



Lorraine and one of her kittens peak outside of the box where the kittens spent their first few weeks.

supplementing the tiniest kitten with formula. (I was so thankful that I was home and could do this!) Sadly, two kittens passed away. It's always painful when you lose a foster animal, especially when it's a baby, but it helps to remember that neonatal kittens are extremely fragile, even when they have their moms with them.

At the time I'm writing this, everyone in this little family is healthy and doing well. Lorraine is eating on her own and the kittens' eyes have all opened and they're beginning to ramble around. I love watching them interact with one another — beyond greedily pushing their siblings out of the way when they want to eat.

I know I speak for a lot of the SPCA's foster parents when I say that being a foster parent is one of the most rewarding things I do. And sometimes, being a foster parent is one of most painful things I do. But the good times easily outweigh the bad times and that is why I, along with so many others, will always be an SPCA foster parent.

If you're thinking about becoming an SPCA foster home and helping the SPCA save lives, please visit YourSPCA.org/fostercare.

HOW THREE LEGS AND A WAGGING TAIL LEAD TO EXCEPTION-AL CIRCUMSTANCES

BY GINA LATTUCA, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

When COVID-19 attacked our world, one of the many questions we at the SPCA asked ourselves was this: “How do we fulfill our mission and still serve the people and animals in our community who need us, even during this pandemic?” Surely, people would still find themselves in emergency situations with animals, and it was imperative to us that they had somewhere to turn.

Thankfully, animal shelters were added to the list of essential services in New York State in mid-March, which gave us room to determine the safest manner in which we could provide important services to Erie County.

With very few exceptions, during the SPCA’s COVID-19 response phase, part of the policy that began mid-March was that our organization was only able to admit animals who were injured or ill.

So when 2-year-old Roadie’s family brought him to our West Seneca shelter on the evening of March 25, just a little more than one week after this policy was put into effect, there was no question of our admitting him to the SPCA. Poor Roadie, sitting in the back seat on the lap of his “sister,” couldn’t stand; he had just been hit by a vehicle and his hind right femur was shattered. The family members were completely distraught, crying over the fact that they couldn’t obtain veterinary care beyond care from an animal clinic at a cost of merely stabilizing Roadie that was prohibitive for them.

Roadie was sadly surrendered to the SPCA. Because X-rays showed us that his leg was beyond repair, it was amputated, which allowed our Veterinary Department staff to save Roadie and help him resume life in the most normal manner possible for him. Within just a couple days, Roadie was already standing, eating normally, and equally important to us, his tail was wagging furiously! All great signs in our book.

Throughout the process, family members contacted the SPCA to check on Roadie’s progress. They knew they had surrendered the dog to the SPCA. They knew that Roadie was no longer theirs. They knew that the SPCA is serious about honoring its commitment to donors when their dollars, donated for life-saving measures of animals with no alternatives, are being used. They just wanted to know how Roadie was doing. Roadie was an

emotional support dog for their daughter, we learned. While they knew they could no longer own Roadie because of the surrender agreement, the family just wanted to know he was OK. It would help ease their minds during this tragic experience that just happened to occur during a worldwide pandemic.

Roadie and the story of his family, as all the animals we admit, truly affected the hearts and minds of our staff members. But this was different. We can’t really pinpoint why. An emotional support animal. A pandemic. Life had become hard enough without the accident that rendered Roadie homeless. And now in front of us, wobbling on three legs, here stood this wagging tail, separated from the family who loved him.

We knew what had to happen, and in that moment, we knew the people who donate to help save the lives of animals like Roadie would agree. It’s something we wish we could do for all the animals surrendered to the SPCA because veterinary care could not be afforded. On most days, we cannot allow it due to the reason the dollars were donated in the first place. But on that day, we could.

Roadie was adopted by his family on April 13. It was something we all needed ... not just Roadie’s family and “sister,” but the staff at the SPCA, who needed a positive, happy something to cling to during some dark days. Roadie’s family is slowly replacing the funds used for his surgery and extended care, and while we cannot often provide this alternative to the community, we were thrilled to be able to make this exception happen at a time during which it was so needed.





YOUR DOG'S FAVORITE DAY OF THE YEAR!

PAWS in the PARK

SEPTEMBER 26, 2020
Beaver Island State Park

Like you, everyone at the SPCA is hoping that we'll be able to enjoy a great 2-mile scenic walk together ... But there is a chance that in order to keep everyone safe, Paws in the Park may have to be turned into a virtual walk. But rest assured, we'll still make it an event that both you and your dog will love!

Read more about Paws in the Park and register at YourSPCA.org today!

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, the SPCA was like everyone else — caught in disbelief and a little uncertain. But the one thing we knew we could be sure of was the support of our loyal Shelter Guardians. This dedicated group of donors gives us peace of mind because their monthly, steady donations are the resources we depend on to give compassionate care to thousands of animals each year.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A SHELTER GUARDIAN? THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS:

- ▶ Provides a safe, secure way to donate every month.
- ▶ Choose the monthly amount that best suits you.
- ▶ You can cancel or change your donation at any time.
- ▶ Provides the domestic and wild animals at the SPCA with the care they need.
- ▶ 10% off every purchase at the SPCA's Petique.
- ▶ 10% off on every PawsWay purchase.
- ▶ Receive fewer mailings while still being informed about special shelter news and updates.

Enroll online at donate.yourspca.org/shelterguardian or call Colleen at 716-875-7360 ext. 227.

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