

The man behind Big Sky Ranch Sanctuary

by MariLyse Dumas



On a wet and cold day in early December, when the dampness penetrated even the warmest of clothes and chilled you to the bone, a friend and I ventured out to meet Andy Parent, the founder of Big Sky Ranch Sanctuary, and tour the facility.

He was waiting for us and when I first saw him I said to myself, *“he looks like a real, normal person, the man who started all this in 2002”*

To break the ice and get to know the person we were interviewing, I started asking questions. How did all of this get started? He told me he purchased the hobby farm in 2001-2002. Why? He **“had”** to buy the farm; that was it. He simply had a feeling this was going to be a very good thing in his life.

It was not very long after that the animals started coming. It was as if people knew he had a place for animals that were rejected. He never put an ad anywhere; never made any publicity. People just kept coming with animals that had been mistreated, that were slated for the slaughter house or been abandoned, etc. So he started adding shelters and buildings to protect the animals from the elements and he built paddocks and fences to separate the animals. Then the people came offering help, high school students asked to complete their required mandatory volunteer hours by working on the farm and first time offenders ordered to perform community work all became an amazing resource pool for assistance with the animals and the sanctuary.



As we toured the farm, Andy patiently introduced us to every animal and explained how and why each animal was there. It was effortless to imagine him doing this over and over again to allow people to see and feel the work he is doing. However, beyond amazing, was the fact that the animals were calm or rather peaceful --- yes peaceful is the perfect word to describe them. In my years of volunteering, I have seen many animals in shelters and they were always stressed. These animals here were very different and it was an absolute joy to be in their presence. And, if that is not enough, we learned that the animals cohabitate in harmony. That is not to say the dogs don't run after the cats but the atmosphere is one of “friendship”.

By the time we completed the tour I was frozen, but I had one more question for Andy; *"If you had one wish, what would it be?"* Andy looked a little bewildered; I clarified, *"If you could have your dream become a reality, what would it be?"* In a sincere and assured voice he replied that he would like to be a voice for the animals -- not just at the farm but on a much larger scale -- at the government levels, the national level and perhaps even the international level. He would like people to respect animals. *"With respect, all (creatures and humans) can live in harmony."* With that, I thanked Andy and we left.



Post scriptum: A few days ago, I sent Andy the story of Jasmine, an amazing greyhound that adopts and nurtures rescue animals at a shelter including rabbits, deer and other creatures. This is a quote taken from his reply

"Very nice story! As I said, animals already know what some people still need to learn. How to care for each other no matter who you are; God is our teacher; we just need to listen and then you will see the beauty that has been given to us on this planet we call mother earth."

Canadian Canine Good Citizen™ Preparation Course



Forever Friends Dog Training School (Ottawa, ON) now has a Canadian Canine Good Citizen™ Preparation Course. The course provides training and practice to assist owners and their dogs for a Canadian Canine Good Citizen Test. For information regarding the course cost and space availability, please e-mail Forever Friends Dog Training School at contact@foreverfriendsdogtraining.net or call 613.727.4335.

The next Canadian Canine Good Citizen Test is scheduled for Sunday, February 7, 2010 at Forever Friends Dog Training School at 17 Grenfell Crescent, Unit 6, Ottawa, ON.

First Spay Neuter Clinic for Merida and Neighboring Communities in the Yucatan

by MariLyse Dumas

Many Canadian pet owners automatically get their pets spayed or neutered at the appropriate age and a spay/neuter clinic may not sound like a big deal but, in the Yucatan, this is extraordinary news.

One thousand spay and neutering surgeries are planned in January 2010. Forty (40) vets, plus vet nurses and volunteers are coming in from the USA, Slovakia, Romania and other parts of Mexico.

Planned Pethood Mexico, Merida City Hall, Yucatan's State Health, "Evolucion" and AFAD are each providing support, whether it be in the form of surgical services, logistics, surgical implements, medicine and/or lodging for the volunteers. As well, Burger King and other local businesses will be supplying food and drinks to the different volunteer crews.



What a wonderful start to a new year; a substantial demonstration of compassion and care for animals. This is the beginning of a tangible change in culture and philosophy towards animals. It's unavoidable and wonderful.

Bravo to all involved.

I have written, so far, two articles in the RDOC newsletter about the situation of animals in the Yucatan and the terrific work accomplished by AFAD. I cannot wait until the next edition to tell you more. Meanwhile here are some links to some of the organizations involved.

www.plannedpethoodmexico.com

<http://www.afad.org.mx/>



A Feather in Canada's Cap *by MariLyse Dumas*

On November 6, 2009, Canada became the first North American country to express support for a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare. The Canadian Parliament passed a private members' motion that calls on the government to support (in principle) the development of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW).

The UDAW is an agreement among people and nations to recognize that animals are sentient, to respect their welfare needs and bring an end to animal cruelty – for good.

It is ultimately an inter-governmental agreement. It will be a non-binding set of basic principles acknowledging the importance of the sentience of animals and the corresponding responsibilities that all of us have to uphold these principles. For more details see <http://www.udaw.org/>.

It was in 2003, at the Manila Conference on Animal Welfare that a foundation text for a UDAW was agreed upon.

In 2005, the UDAW Inter-Governmental Steering Committee was formed. Representatives of the governments of Kenya, Costa Rica, Philippines, Czech Republic & India agreed to champion the initiative.

As of 2007, WSPA Canada <http://www.wspa.ca/default.aspx> has been working to convince the Canadian Government to support their campaign to achieve a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW). More than 75,000 Canadians signed petitions and sent in excess of 20,000 letters to MPs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in support of this campaign. Member societies of WSPA also supported the campaign. http://www.wspa.ca/members/canadian_network/default.aspx.

The UDAW will have an impact on people and political entities such as the UN, governments, veterinarian associations and most importantly on animals and their welfare. This is just the beginning as more than 1,900,000 people all around the world have shown their support by signing their names. If you wish to add your name to the petition, go to <http://www.animalsmatter.org/>.



We wish to extend our sincere and deepest sympathy to Karen and Robert Paynter in the loss of their dearest companion and assistance dog, Cogan, to George and Sue Sylvestre in the loss of their best friend Harley, to Kelli and Albert Astri in the loss of their beautiful boy Max, to Arnold Portugese in the loss of his beloved Sheba and to Heather Laundry and Frank Gildehhaar in the loss of their cherished Lucy, all of Ottawa, Ontario.

Holiday Hazards are Plentiful

While Poinsettias are not likely to cause anything more than a tummy upset, there are holiday plants that are toxic and sometimes fatal if ingested. Some of the more common holiday flora that can create problems include Christmas Roses, Mistletoe, Holly, and Lilies.

Festive foods that are plentiful and toxic in most homes during the holidays include chocolate. The toxic compounds in chocolate are Theobromine and Caffeine. Symptoms of chocolate poisoning include vomiting and diarrhea, seizures, increased heart rate and respiration, tremors, and hyperactivity.

Some types of chocolate are not as harmful as others and the severity of the reaction from ingested chocolate depends largely on the size of the pet and the type of chocolate eaten. White chocolate is the least harmful and dark chocolate and cocoa are the most toxic.

The Interactive Chocolate Chart on the National Geographic website has excellent information regarding chocolate poisoning, see <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/10/pets/chocolate-chart-interactive> (control key + click to follow link). You may wish to bookmark this site in case of a chocolate emergency.

Another treat that is harmful to dogs is Xylitol, an ingredient often found in candies and gum, particularly sugar-free brands. Symptoms of Xylitol poisoning include vomiting, weakness, ataxia, depression, seizures, coma, and death.

Other poisonous foods include alcohol, cherry or peach pits, onions, coffee, garlic, grapes, raisins, raw yeast and macadamia nuts.

Non-Food Hazards

Remember dogs, especially puppies, will eat almost anything that is within reach. Holiday lights and extension cords can cause severe electrical burns and/or electrocution. The chemicals inside lights can also cause serious chemical burns and noxious reactions.



Christmas ornaments can cause lacerations if broken and tinsel and ribbons can become lodged in intestines if swallowed causing life-threatening blockages. Keep potpourris out of reach as well as some may contain traces of strychnine.

Prevention is the best way to ensure you and your pet have a safe and happy holiday. Be sure to keep noxious plants out of reach and keep toxic foods in sealed containers. Most of all, ensure that your pet is supervised when around Christmas lights.

If your pet does ingest food or items that can cause harm, call your vet immediately. A good resource for additional information is the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals website at www.aspca.org (control key + click to follow link) or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control at 888.426.4435.



Introducing RDOC's Bite Prevention Mascot

Here at last is RDOC's very own mascot for its Bite Prevention Program. We are currently working on a name for this adorable canine but he will play an important role in teaching children about dogs and bite prevention.

RDOC's mascot will make a first appearance at the launching of RDOC's Bite Prevention Program at the Magic and Illusion Show scheduled for April 3, 2010 at Ben Franklin Place in Nepean, ON. Watch for more information soon.

Responsible Dog Owners of Canada (RDOC)

Responsible Dog Owners of Canada is a registered non profit organization that promotes responsible dog ownership through education and support, cultivates respect for the rights and privileges of members of the dog-owning and non dog-owning communities, fosters recognition of the contribution that canines make through companionship, service/assistance and therapy and aspires to assemble a strong network of responsible dog owners to ensure the restoration and preservation of a dog-friendly society.

Responsibility • Respect • Recognition

Contact Information

Phone: 613.228.7764, e-mail: info@responsibledogowners.ca

160 Oakridge Blvd., Ottawa, ON K2G 2V2

www.responsibledogowners.ca