The 1985 National Humane Education Teacher of the Year Finalists

by Bill DeRosa

In addition to introducing Children & Animals readers to Kathryn Anderson, NAAHE is pleased to honor the three teachers who were named finalists in this year's Humane Education Teacher of the Year selection. Our finalists have done an outstanding job of incorporating humane education activities into the daily curricula. We hope that you will be able to make use of some of their innovative ideas and activities in developing lessons for your own classroom.

Dr. Joyce Bloom

The name of finalist Dr. Joyce Bloom is synonymous with humane education in New York City. Joyce teaches health and physical education to kindergarten through fifth-grade students at Community School 86 in the Bronx. She conducts numerous humane education activities that often extend beyond the classroom to parents and other adults in the citywide community.

The nature of Joyce's activities suggests a dual role for humane education: to create positive attitudes and behavior toward animals and at the same time to help children learn in other curriculum areas. In one of her more extensive projects, Joyce has designed and conducted a humane education unit in movement for physical education classes. The unit includes instruction in responsible pet ownership and an introductory lesson on the concept of animal rights.

One activity in the unit requires students to act out their interpretation of what it would be like to be a dog or a cat. Students then discuss the issues of pet overpopulation and responsible pet ownership.

Some of Joyce's greatest accomplishments in humane education lie in the areas of media publicity, staff development, and parental involvement. She has produced two public television shows on humane education for her school district, the New York City educational television channel, and a cable channel. Approximately 1,000 people in the metropolitan New York area viewed the programs, which will be rerun regularly. Joyce has also provided staff development programs and resource materials to teachers and staff in her school and throughout the city. For example, she frequently presents workshops on humane education such as one titled Saturday Science, designed for New York City science teachers. Joyce has also designed and coordinated several humane education presentations, which have been given by guest speakers, for the Community School 86 Parents Association.

In addition to her work in the classroom and with teachers throughout the city, Joyce serves as an officer of the Advisory Council for the New York City Humane Education Committee.

Julaine Demge

Finalist Julaine Demge is known throughout her school as the animal expert. Whenever students or staff members have animal-related questions or find injured animals, they turn to Julaine for advice. As a kindergarten teacher at Garrison Elementary School in Oceanside, California, Julaine is committed to promoting principles of respect and compassion for animals in all her classes. As Julaine explains, "I want to change the uncaring attitude many people have toward animals."

To transform this commitment into action, Julaine incorporates humane education into her classes on a weekly basis. In Julaine's classes, children learn that their actions can affect animals. "I don't think we give children enough credit for being able to understand the connections between human behavior and animal suffering," she explains.

Julaine's emphasis on humane education not only helps her increase positive attitudes and behavior toward animals but also helps to motivate students to extend in other areas of the curriculum. Once a year, during Be Kind to Animals Week, Julaine conducts a series of schoolwide activities that include poster contests, essay contests, play writing and performing, films, speakers, and a pet parade. In an essay contest held this year, students were asked to write on the topic, "If I were President Reagan, I would..." Julaine notes that "students respond very positively to activities like writing or arts and crafts when the theme centers around animals."

In addition to the activities she conducts personally, Julaine utilizes community resources and specialists to present programs to her students. In the past, these have included personnel from the Humane Society, Kenya's wildlife reserves and area schools in Kenya's wildlife reserves and are currently awaiting replies. Anita notes that "this activity has heightened the interest of my class in Africa's beautiful wild animals."

To help teach students about the needs, habitats, and adaptations of wild and domestic animals, Anita often invites representatives from the Marin Humane Society and the Marin Wildlife Center into her classroom to conduct activities. In addition, at the end of each year, Anita's students construct paper maché animal models and place them according to their appropriate habitats in a display of land, water, and sky. Students then have an opportunity to share their displays with parents during the school's annual open house in late spring.

In addition to her work with students, Anita has made strong efforts to promote humane education among her fellow teachers. She encourages other teachers and administrators to provide funds for classroom animal welfare organizations and frequently circulates animal-related petitions among her colleagues.