GLRO Fall 2002
A Message from Sparky

By GLRO Program Coordinator Natalie DiGiacomo

The picture shown below sits on my desk. I've been overheard talking to it at night before I go home to my own "kids." If I were with you right now, I'd be pointing at the picture saying, "Look at that face—do you see what a smart dog he is?!" You might even be annoyed. I'm sure I annoyed more than a few volunteers by fussing over Sparky at the spay/neuter clinic in Washington County, Ohio, where I met him. The clinic was part of the Appalachian Spay/Neuter Program, a project GLRO began to bring spay/neuter surgeries and veterinary care to remote, impoverished communities in southeastern Ohio.

I checked Sparky's owner in early Saturday morning. She had brought two female dogs in to be spayed. There is an informal limit of two pets per family at each clinic, but we'd had a cancellation. So when she mentioned her male dog, I made arrangements for her to bring him.

GLRO's Natalie DiGiacomo says goodbye to Sparky at an Appalachian spay/neuter clinic. Sparky's mom looks on.

HSUS Teams Save Lives in WV Floods

It was a grim reminder of 2001 for residents of some of West Virginia's rural southern counties, as heavy rains blanketed the region once again, triggering flash flooding and mudslides. Raging rivers swept down the mountain hollows, swallowing mobile homes, washing through downtown businesses, swamping cars, drowning animals and people, and leaving hundreds homeless.

The HSUS responded quickly. Within hours of being alerted to the disaster, GLRO Director Sandy Rowland oversaw the deployment of a team of technical animal rescue specialists from Florida, Texas, and Maryland. HSUS Disaster Services Director Anne Culver coordinated the myriad details of travel arrangements and last-minute instructions for the specialized responders. Led by GLRO Regional Coordinator Linda Reider, the team converged in Beckley, West Virginia, to begin operations. The Raleigh County Humane Society offered emergency housing of animal flood victims and donated more than 4,000 pounds of dog and cat food. Their involvement was crucial because of the absence of an animal shelter in hardest-hit McDowell County.

Over the next couple of days, the team members divided into three field units and each covered a separate route in the flood zone. Stopping at food distribution centers, the teams talked with local residents to learn about animal needs. The bags of dog and cat food the HSUS team brought were in some cases hand-carried by volunteers distributing daily hot meals to families unreachable by car.

Thankfully, few animals needed emergency care. However, a beagle mix had suffered serious injuries as the river swept through his yard. The elderly woman who owned the dog found him half-paralyzed and bleeding by a shed when the water receded. Since her car had been flooded, she could not drive her dog to the vet and had been trying to treat his injuries herself. The HSUS team transported Joe to the vet. Sadly, Joe's injuries were so serious that the old dog had to be humanely euthanized. With tears in her eyes, the woman thanked the HSUS team for helping to end her dog's suffering.

The same team carrying Joe also rescued a pair of puppies from almost certain death when they found them stranded between the still-high river and the main highway. After hungrily gulping down puppy food and drinking clean water, the pups, continued on page 2
Workshop Series Helps Rural, Under-Resourced Shelters

Many of the more than 800 animal shelters and humane groups in the Great Lakes region are located in rural areas and suffer from inadequate funding. These animal care providers are often unable to give their staff and volunteers quality training opportunities. Limited budgets don’t allow for long-distance travel to national animal sheltering conferences, such as HSUS’s Animal Care Expo. Yet together these groups handle hundreds of thousands of dogs, cats, and other animals. To help meet the training needs of these organizations, GLRO introduced a new series of affordable day-long workshops we call Toolkit for Healthy Shelters. Developed and presented by GLRO Regional Coordinator Linda Reider (above), the workshops are hosted by animal shelters selected for their proximity to areas most needing access to training of this type. The host organization selects from a menu of available workshops; we call toolkit for Healthy Shelters.

Two more are planned for the fall of 2002. The workshops have been held in Nashville, Indiana (host: Brown County Humane Society); Charlevoix, Michigan (hosts: Charlevoix County Humane Society and Charlevoix County Animal Control); Marquette, Michigan (host: Marquette County Humane Society); Dayton, Ohio (hosts: Montgomery County Animal Shelter, Humane Society of Greater Dayton, and the Society for the Improvement of the Conditions of Stray Animals); and Moundsville, West Virginia (host: Marshall County Animal Rescue League). More than 150 participants representing 45 animal shelters and humane groups have attended these workshops. Together these groups handle hundreds of thousands of dogs, cats, and other animals.

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nicknamed Thelma and Louise, were transported to the Raleigh County Humane Society for care and placement. Rather than emergency care though, most animals simply needed food. Back in Ohio at the GLRO office, Sandy Rowland coordinated additional donations of pet food from Raleigh County Humane Society and PetsMart in Charleston, West Virginia. The beclaw chapter of the Salvation Army transported the food to the main distribution center in Welch to meet ongoing pet needs. The office even arranged for cattle feed to be delivered to a dairy cow in the nearly decimated town of Panther, whose owner’s barn had been washed away in the flood. The HSUS team left West Virginia, with the satisfaction that they had helped animals and addressed some long-term disaster recovery needs. The many words of thanks from residents, whose lives had been so seriously affected, deeply humbled the team members and made them glad they were able to respond so quickly in this time of need.

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in when she came to pick up the girls. Sparky would stay the night with us and be neutered on Sunday. It wasn’t that Sparky was bony or liked me particularly well. I think he just recognized that I was trying to help him, so he put up with me. Sparky wasn’t used to being indoors, and he certainly wasn’t used to being in a Kennel. Attempts to give him food and water in the cage met with disaster, but out of the cage he was a different dog. He let me teach him a few tricks, and for a few minutes during a break and away from the busy clinic, he rested on my lap. It’s easy to lose focus of individual animals when you spend so much time working on larger issues such as pet overpopulation or how to gain support for animal protection in struggling economies. But Sparky reminded me why people in my profession put up with the frustration, sadness, and slow progress. This dog touched me—he is alone in the fight. And he isn’t alone.

As of this printing, GLRO has presented five Toolkit workshops. Two more are planned for the fall of 2002. The workshops have been held in Nashville, Indiana (host: Brown County Humane Society); Charlevoix, Michigan (hosts: Charlevoix County Humane Society and Charlevoix County Animal Control); Marquette, Michigan (host: Marquette County Humane Society); Dayton, Ohio (hosts: Montgomery County Animal Shelter, Humane Society of Greater Dayton, and the Society for the Improvement of the Conditions of Stray Animals); and Moundsville, West Virginia (host: Marshall County Animal Rescue League). More than 150 participants representing 45 animal shelters and humane groups have attended these workshops. Together these groups handle hundreds of thousands of dogs, cats, and other animals.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Please send me information about:

- Making a memorial donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or enemy. Providing for my pet in my will and in case of emergency.
- Planning my estate and will to help animals

Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS.

Give The HSUS a gift of stock.

Promoting the protection of all animals

Help Keep Kids Safe

Every year, dogs bite more than 4 million people in the United States. Most of those victims are children under the age of 13. The HSUS’s new BARK (Be Aware, Responsible, and Kind) Dog Bite Prevention Program hopes to change that. Developed by the HSUS’s youth-education division, the BARK program is designed to help keep kids safe around dogs, reduce the number of dog-bite-related injuries in the community, and positively enhance the bond between people and dogs. It is the only program of its kind that’s proven effective in teaching elementary students how to behave safely around dogs.

Perfect for use by teachers, humane educators, and parents, the BARK program consists of “Dogs, Cats, and Kids,” a 25-minute video, and a fun, easy-to-use 32-page activity book of lessons and reproducible worksheets designed to teach kids how to avoid being bitten. The complete BARK Dog Bite Prevention Program costs just $23.95. (The video and activity book can also be purchased separately for $19.95 and $5.95, respectively.) Order online at www.nahee.org or send a check or money order to NAHEE, P.O. Box 362, East Haddam, CT 06432-0362.
Ohio, Now Is the Time

Ohio residents please take note. Now is the time to take action to move Ohio from its ranking of having the weakest anti-cruelty law in the nation, a distinction made by the Ohio Legislative Services Commission, the agency charged with writing Ohio’s laws. Additionally, The HSUS calls it the worst state in the nation for dogs and cats.

Ohio’s current anti-cruelty law was drafted more than 125 years ago. It has had no significant changes since its enactment. The law is so weak that it permits an animal to suffer from heat and cold. A dog tied in the heat but provided only a 55-gallon metal drum is considered acceptable under the current law.

Scientific evidence continues to show a clear link between cruelty to animals and violence to humans. Numerous serial killers, including Ohio’s Jeffrey Dahmer, first abused animals before turning to human victims.

Some law enforcement officers and prosecutors complain that prosecution of a misdemeanor animal cruelty case is not time or cost effective in light of the small punishment an offender is likely to receive. Thirty-seven states now have felony penalty provisions for animal cruelty. Our surrounding states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Indiana all have felony provisions.

Sen. David Goodman is sponsor of SB 221, an anticruelty bill that has passed in the Senate and is now in the House of Representatives. Efforts over the past several years to change Ohio’s cruelty laws have been met with inaction in the House. Only if you call, write, or speak with your own Ohio state representative will this bill stand a chance to make its way through the House. Ask your representative to vote for SB 221 as passed by the Senate. Tell him or her that you don’t want to live in the state with the weakest protection laws for its cats and dogs.

On a happier note, I am pleased to report that Indiana passed two important laws during the past year. The first strengthens its felony dogfighting and cockfighting law. The second strengthens its felony animal cruelty law by making the most egregious acts a felony on the first offense.

We just learned that legislation is planned for introduction in the Michigan House of Representatives this fall that would give the Department of Agriculture more regulatory authority over pet shops.

Check our Web site at www.hsus.org/glro for more details, and please let your legislator know that you support stronger oversight of stores that sell animals.

If you are interested in joining our legislative action alert team, please fill in the coupon here. We will call upon you from time to time to contact your legislators and help get bills passed that will benefit animals.

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