



# critter chronicles

Every animal that comes in to the Humane Society has a story. The majority of animals surrendered do not arrive at the shelter due to behavioral problems. The recent economic crisis has brought a number of pets to the Humane Society, as their owners have lost their jobs and are unable to afford housing. These are **not** animals that are unloved or unwanted.

## Sandy's Story

In 2006 Michigan became the first state in the nation to have every one of its counties covered by a ten-year plan to end homelessness. As part of the state of Michigan's plan, the government put into place a number of grant programs targeted to helping those who are "chronically homeless." These targeted grants provided the ability for chronically homeless individuals to live in subsidized housing.

The gentleman needed the help of the Humane Society. He explained that three years ago, his life changed when the State provided funding for him to have an apartment. He had been living under a highway bridge here in our own city for a number of years. The first thing he did once he was settled into his new apartment was to get a cat. He named her Sandy. She became his confidant, his reason for getting up and trying to improve his life. She became his best friend.



However, the economy's downturn affects everything in our state. We feel it on a local level. The funding for this gentleman's supportive housing was discontinued. He explained that he would soon be turned out of his apartment. His disability, which had caused him to meet the definition of chronically homeless, made it impossible for him to survive without assistance.

"You see," he told me, "I've lived under the bridge for many years. I know what it's like, and I'll be okay. But my cat, Sandy. She's never been without a home. I took her in as a tiny kitten. I can be homeless, but Sandy...she needs a home. It's not fair to her. Can you help? Can you take her in, and find her a new home?"

He found someone who drove him out to the shelter, and he carried Sandy into the building in his arms. He cried as he filled out the paperwork surrendering her, because he was saying goodbye to his best friend. Sandy is a good cat, but lives at the shelter due to the failing economy.

## Lexi's Story

The young woman stood holding the leash in the lobby, crying steadily. She had the young dog since puppyhood, but her life had necessitated a move. Many apartments don't allow pets, so as families need to move due to financial circumstances, many dogs and cats find their way to the shelter.

There was simply no other place for Lexi, the young lab mix, to go.

The surrender survey spoke of the relationship young woman had with the dog. "Lexi is a cuddle bug, and she sleeps in bed with me at night." "Lexi loves everything and is a great cuddler." "I would change nothing about her, I love her just the way she is." Lexi is a good dog, but now waits for a new home due to no fault of her own.



So many animals in Calhoun County are in need of new homes. The shelter is limited-admission only; intake is accepted when adoption has allowed for additional openings. If you have extra room in your heart and home, won't you consider adopting one of these animals who arrived at the shelter through no fault of their own?

Having difficulty making ends meet? The Humane Society offers a Low Income Food Bank for individuals who are having difficulty feeding their pets, in hopes the animals can remain in their home instead of being surrendered. The agency also offers a Low Income Spay and Neuter (LISN) Program for individuals and families at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

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Summer 2009 brings many changes to the Humane Society. Our Annual Meeting was held in June, and we have elected new individuals to leadership roles on the board of directors. I would like to thank outgoing board members Chuck McCann, Carole Morgan and Dan Ryan, for their outstanding support for the organization in years past. Without their guidance, the organization simply would not be able to provide the services to the community that it does today.

The summer kicked off with an amazing event, a Community Barnraising held by Hands On

Battle Creek. Well over 100 individuals volunteered their time and skill in recreating our dog park and walking trails. With all our construction and renovation, we are still anxious to have you come out and spend some time with the animals. I hope you'll consider volunteering or becoming a foster parent - we are always in need of assistance in carrying out our mission.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to give me a call at *Jessica Gilbert* 269.963.1796.

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## Bryan Thomas Fund for Sick and Injured Animals

Gracie, a female tiger-striped cat, arrived in a box this past spring. She was injured, and needed help. Gracie had gotten twisted up in the engine of a truck, and a gentleman from Jim Hazel's Automotive pulled her out and brought her to us in hopes there was something we could do.

Gracie's leg was badly broken, a part of her tail was torn off and she had suffered terrible burns and tears in her flesh. Still, she physically reached out her paw to staff members, imploring them to pet her and comfort her. Instead of being scared, she was so brave.

Our cat vet, Dr. Ruth Tenbroek, was at the shelter performing spay and neuter surgeries that day, and looked Gracie over. Dr. Ruth called her husband, Dr. Mark Atma, out at Pennfield Animal Hospital, to see what could be done. He said that he would look at Gracie. We packed her up and sent her off.

Dr. Atma didn't have high hopes, and was expecting to euthanize her that next morning. But then, he met our

Gracie and she once again reached out for human contact. Gracie's quiet way of imploring people to help her made everyone realize that she is a special little cat.

Since that day, Gracie has gone through three separate surgeries – one to repair her broken leg, and two to remove and stitch up her flesh wounds as her skin has died around the injuries. Pennfield Animal Hospital has been incredible, performing most of their care at no cost to us because they found something special about that small, brave cat. The rest of the funds to help Gracie come from the Bryan Thomas Memorial Fund for sick and injured animals.

Bryan Thomas was born and raised in Battle Creek, Michigan. He was a kennel technician at the shelter. He had an incredible love for animals, and was dedicated to their comfort and care. Bryan lost his life in a roadside explosion on September 4, 2008 in Baghdad, Iraq. A fund was created in his honor. Animals that need extra help to survive and thrive

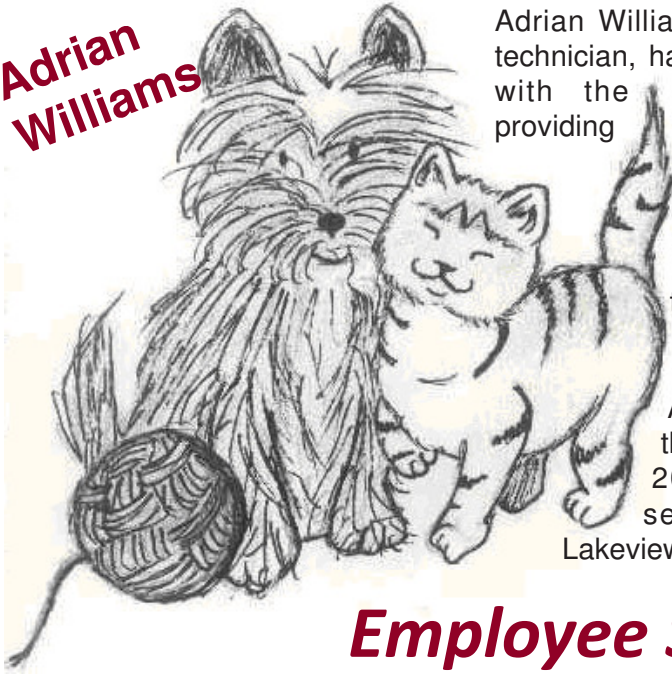
when they enter the shelter receive care through donations made in Bryan's honor.

Bryan's mother, Pam Sikora, recently made an incredible donation to the fund in Bryan's honor, but she needs your help in ensuring the fund grows to support those animals who truly need it. Please donate to the Humane Society and designate the Bryan Thomas Fund to help.



Bryan was a photographer and took many photos of animals in the shelter.

**Adrian Williams**



Adrian Williams, HSSCM kennel technician, has shared her talents with the agency through providing a variety of animal themed artwork. Her murals grace the walls of the lobby, and she is the featured host of the agency's show on AccessVision.

Adrian has been with the agency since June 2007. She will be a senior next year at Lakeview High School.

## ***Employee Spotlight***

## **Did You Know?**

The Humane Society of South Central Michigan is running a Low Income Spay and Neuter (LISN) Program, targeted at individuals and families at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Local veterinarians donate their time and skill to spay and neuter pets, stopping the cycle of pet overpopulation. To schedule an appointment to fill out paperwork, call 269.963.1796.

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## **Capital Campaign Project Update**

The Humane Society has been busy working toward the goal of completing all capital campaign projects from the past fund drive. These improvements to the facility will help the Humane Society better meet its mission through providing enhanced educational space, better quarantine space for sick dogs and cats, and improving the surgery suite for both shelter pets and animals in the Low Income Spay and Neuter (LISN) Program.

### **Kennel Reconstruction**

Kennel reconstruction on the adoptable dog side started with the tear-down of the old kennels on Saturday, May 9, 2009. The fencing on the old kennels was in rough shape, and the dirt-floored kennels continually recontaminated the dogs with whip-worms as the soil was unable to be thoroughly sanitized.

The new kennel area was leveled and set in concrete with appropriate drainage, and new fencing and kennel gates were created to ensure that the dogs remain safe and secure while they are outside.

The new kennels are able to be properly sanitized, reducing the occurrence of parasite transmission and contamination.

Funding for the reconstruction was provided through the Miller Foundation, in memory of Robert Miller, Jr and through a grant provided by Eaton Corporation. The next step in the reconstruction is the creation of shade barriers, and funding is needed to complete that project. Interested individuals should contact the Humane Society for sponsorship information.

### **Building Reconstruction**

The building renovation project is now underway, with the bid award process just around the corner.

Phase I of the project involves the creation of an education space, funded in part through a grant from the Binda Foundation. This space will be able to provide the ability for the agency to offer puppy kindergarten and dog obedience training, meeting

space and public education on animal welfare and behavior.

Phase II of the project involves the creation of a new quarantine center for sick shelter animals. This new space will segregate these animals from the rest of the resident population and allow them to recover while preventing the spread of disease to other animals.

Phase III of the project centers around the agency's surgery suite, expanding the area to include a separate prep/recovery room, distinct from surgery. This expansion will allow for better care of the animals while they are undergoing surgery, as well as provide for the ability to perform a greater number of surgeries in one day.

The staff and board of directors of the Humane Society are very excited about the changes, and encourage you to stop out regularly to see our progress! The agency will hold an open house in the fall to show progress to date. For more information, or if you would like to contribute, contact the agency.

# The Man Behind the Camera

Certainly, you've noticed the amazing photographs of shelter animals and volunteers in the Humane Society's newsletters, brochures, in the Shopper, in publications and online at [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com). These images

speaking more of the animals' personalities than their simple

visual characteristics.

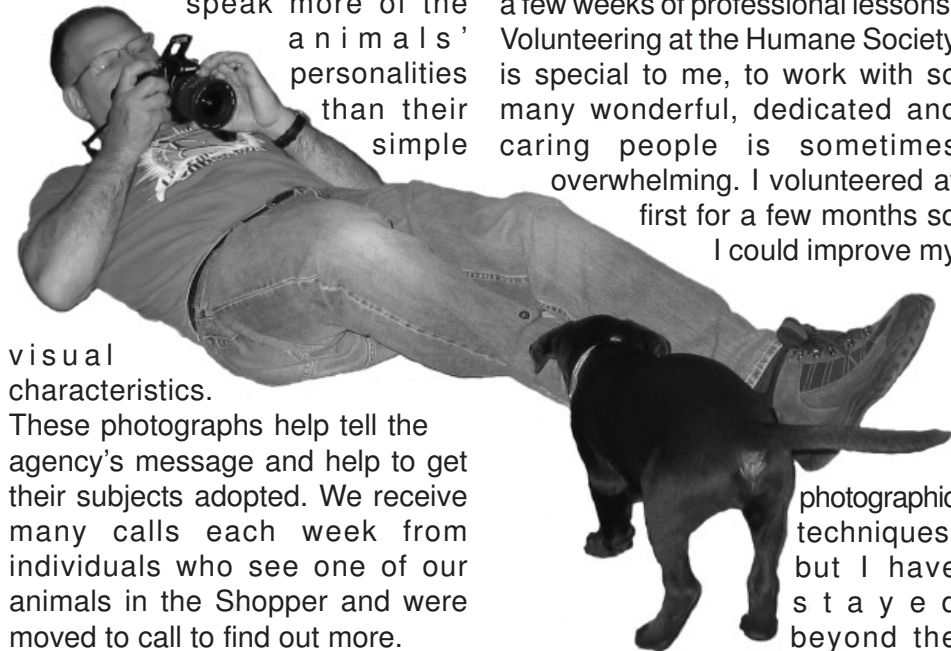
These photographs help tell the agency's message and help to get their subjects adopted. We receive many calls each week from individuals who see one of our animals in the Shopper and were moved to call to find out more.

The Humane Society of South Central Michigan is incredibly lucky to have the talents of photographer and volunteer Ray Closson. Each week, Ray stops out to the shelter to spend time with the staff members and animals, and document our programs and services.

What brings Ray to the shelter? We asked Ray to tell us a little about himself and what makes him volunteer, week in and week out.

"I live in Marshall, Michigan, married to the beautiful and very patient Lori, with three grown children living in Ann Arbor, Marquette and Grand Rapids, four and half fur children (3 cats: Smokey, Domino and Bama Bear, and 1 1/2 dogs: Sugar and

Zen). I have always been an animal lover, growing up with dogs, helping raise an injured raccoon and squirrel when I was a very young person, a horse club while in the Air Force, to working with Military K-9s as the catch person (the person the dog bites!). I love digital photography and have studied a little bit with books, some State of Michigan training, and a few weeks of professional lessons. Volunteering at the Humane Society is special to me, to work with so many wonderful, dedicated and caring people is sometimes overwhelming. I volunteered at first for a few months so I could improve my



photographic techniques, but I have stayed beyond the time limit I gave myself because I love what the Humane Society of South Central Michigan does for the animal community and the people of Battle Creek and Calhoun county. So a couple of hundred photos later here I am. Thanks for allowing me to capture a few of the moments of tenderness and love that our animal friends show to us."

We are so thankful that Ray continues to spend time with us, helping us to find forever homes for homeless cats and dogs!

To learn more about volunteer opportunities for all ages and skills, contact Volunteer Coordinator Alexis at 269.963.1796, ext. 10.

## Cat Room Companions

When working for an organization such as the Humane Society, you see scads of new faces, day in and day out. Some people just want to see the animals. Some individuals and families want to adopt a pet and many people of various ages and for various reasons wish to volunteer their time with us. It is a wonderful feeling to see familiar faces of people who make the Humane Society and its animals a part of their regular life.

One particular group of regulars here at the Humane Society is our cat room ladies: Leslie Hartom, Betsy Briere, Alice Johnson, Elaine Kovach and Jean Bremer. This group of women are pleasant to watch as they all sit together with the cats in the adoptable cat room, adorning them with love. On occasion, I manage to snap some fun photos of everyone gathered together. Like recently, when Jean, Elaine and Leslie got together to refill our bird feeder, which hangs just outside the cat sanctuary window. These ladies know just how much the cats here appreciate the simple pleasure of watching the birds outside.

I must remark that it is a truly beautiful and heartwarming experience, to see people build new friendships through their volunteering. How better to meet kindred spirits but through doing something you care about which you have an interest!

--Alexis Fidelman  
Volunteer Coordinator

# Focus On: *Volunteering!*

The entire Humane Society family would like to give a special thank you to Elaine Kovach. We can't say enough positive things about Elaine, as she is incredibly generous in her donation of time and more.

When Elaine first submitted a volunteer application, she had expressed interest in taking pets out to do pet therapy at local nursing homes. At that point in time, our pet therapy visits were non-existent. Elaine, on her own time, called various places to see if they had interest in the program and made arrangements to meet. She single-handedly resusciated our pet therapy program within the community. Elaine travels to various



Elaine (left) works to socialize puppies

nursing homes each week to allow the old and infirm the company of one of our loving pets!

In May, Elaine helped us out by volunteering nearly her entire day at our Humane Society garage sale. Then, she took one of our dogs to

Barnes and Noble for their "Be Kind to Animals" week for children's story time. She also covered the intake fee of three homeless baby kittens, who will now have safer, brighter futures.

On top of all of these extra-special efforts, Elaine always makes it in each week to spend time in the cat room, socializing and loving on all the cats and kittens as well as taking several of our dogs on walks throughout our dog park. Elaine is truly a woman with a huge heart, giving sympathy for animals of unfortunate circumstances.

On behalf of the Humane Society, animals and the community, thank you for everything, Elaine!

## A Very Special Thank You

Thursday, May 28, 2009, supporters of the Humane Society of South Central Michigan gathered together at Southern Exposure Herb Farm for a Wine Tasting event to help fund the agency's programs.

The event venue was perfect - a more beautiful setting could not be found. The talented staff at Southern Exposure, including Chef Elsie, prepared an incredible multi-course meal which served to bring out the best of seven different highlighted varieties of wine:

Cristalino Brut, Spain

Black Star Farms, Arcturos Semi Dry Riesling, Michigan

Woodbridge White Zinfandel, California

Redwood Creek Pinot Noir, bottled

in California, grapes from France

Duck Pond Cellars Chardonnay, Washington State

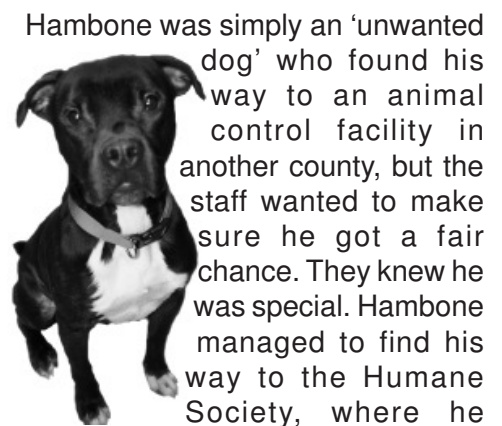
Sycamore Lane Cabernet Sauvignon, California

E & J Cask & Cream, California

The Humane Society board of directors and staff members would like to thank Curtis, Scott and the staff members at Southern Exposure Herb Farm for their volunteered time, skill and kindness throughout this event. Your support directly touches countless lives.

Please join us at Antiques for Animals on Wednesday, October 7, 2009 at Southern Exposure. To reserve your tickets or learn more, call 269.963.1796, ext.19.

## Spotlight: Success!



Hambone was simply an 'unwanted dog' who found his way to an animal control facility in another county, but the staff wanted to make sure he got a fair chance. They knew he was special. Hambone managed to find his way to the Humane Society, where he

quickly became a staff favorite as well. His gentle temperament made him a candidate for pet therapy, and he made weekly trips to facilities in Battle Creek and Albion. Intimidating in appearance, Hambone made quick friends with everyone he encountered due to his gentle nature. Hambone recently found his own forever home, and is another Humane Society success!

# Community Barnraising: A Beautiful Success

When I woke up the morning of June 13<sup>th</sup> I was full of anticipation. This was the day that after months of planning, coordinating, exchanging ideas and gathering all the necessary items, that the efforts of many people would come to a meeting point. This was the day of HandsOn Battle Creek's Community Barnraising, in which the goal was to transform the dog park here at the Humane Society.



Along with my anticipation was an underlying excitement for the arrival of over 60 volunteers, young and old. I kept looking to the sky at all the threatening clouds, hoping that the weather would favor the event and hold off at least for three hours to provide the best possible environment for all the outdoor projects at hand. The volunteers started arriving quite early. More than half the volunteers were ready and set to go even before Jim Pearl, Morgan Johnson, and Tiffany Blackman of HandsOn Battle Creek had finished setting up!

The moment everything was in order, the volunteers began to form groups and head off to various locations along the trail and other areas of the property. People

scattered about, pushing wheel barrels full of mulch and thrusting shovels into the earth to make way for new plants and landscaping.

A group of men anxious to build something got right to work putting together our entry arbor. Meanwhile, single volunteers lined the trail from beginning to end, pulling out weeds and cutting back overgrowth.

A large group of ambitious volunteers gathered in the middle of the trail to completely clear out all overgrowth and foliage with the exception of one beautiful natural rose bush. Then, volunteers dug out earth to plant two delightful weeping trees and several shrubs. After covering the area with mulch, a comfy cushioned bench was placed directly between the two trees. The volunteers finished off this area by bordering it with landscaping stones.

Near the end of the trail another group of volunteers cleared out an area to place another cushioned bench and some shrubbery. This spot sits right on top of a hill and over looks the large field surrounding the Humane Society. A short walk down from this retreat at the very end of the trail, some volunteers cleared out a spot and put up a brand new dog waste receptacle and bag dispenser. What convenience!

There were various tasks being completed in several other areas around the facility. A group of women prepared and painted the deck off the cat room, while others painted the stairs, railings, road side posts and sign as well as our large storage trailer. Many of the child volunteers grouped together and painted terra cotta pots in bright vibrant colors. These can be found at the parking entrance as well as the arbor entrance. Several ambitious volunteers dug out the hard rocky ground to put in the new paw print shaped stepping stones which lead from the parking area to the trail entrance and give a really fun effect to the grounds!

For over three hours every volunteer remained busy and productive! The transformation taking place around the facility was fascinating as well as heart warming. When it became time to speak to this wonderful group of volunteers it was difficult not to be overcome with all the emotions and gratitude that saturated my senses. My hope is that they were able to understand the mission of the Humane Society and how all their hard work that day had so greatly contributed to that mission and the well being of our animals as well as providing an enjoyable space for the people of our community and their own companion animals.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to sincerely thank HandsOn Battle Creek and each volunteer who gave their time on that Saturday. Compliments pour in every day on the beautiful things you have done! There will never be a time when I walk the trail that images of everyone working together will not fill my mind and warm my heart!

-- Alexis Fidelman,  
Volunteer Coordinator

## Upcoming Events

### July

25, 26- Silver Leaf Renaissance Fair.

### August

Pencil Sale, all month long.

### October

7 - Antiques for the Animals, Southern Exposure.

31 - Log Cabin Animal Hospital microchip clinic.

### November

Battle Creek Holiday Parade

### December

18 - Holiday Open House event, 5:00 to 7:00pm.

# Special Thanks...

to Pastor Gary Stephens and Sandy Stephens at the Lighthouse Christian Life Center for allowing HSSCM to use their facility to hold our garage sale. This year's sale earnings will be utilized to help house and care for the animals at our shelter facility.

to our many foster families who open up their homes to provide a little extra TLC to our puppies, kittens, and adult animals. Foster homes give our animals a loving environment in which they can learn important social skills, recover from injury or illness, and reach their full potential prior to finding their forever

home. Many thanks to Alice Johnson, Stephanie Marszalek, Diane Sly, April Horning, Lori Lamkin, John and April Cerny, Charlie Caldwell, Lori Heisler, and Cindy Carstens for the love, attention, and extra care you give to our animals.

to Fremont Elementary School's second grade classes of Mrs. Kent and Ms. Kopf who raised \$489.70 from their annual jewelry sale, donating all proceeds to HSSCM. Thank you for your kindness!

to Elaine Kovach and Kim Brubaker for volunteering to read books at the

Barnes and Noble children's book reading in the month of May, in celebration of "Be Kind to Animals" month. This fun and interactive event highlighted the importance of proper animal care and handling to our children.

to the vets who continue to volunteer their services in the Low Income Spay and Neuter Program, including Dr. James Barron, Dr. Kent Beebe, Dr. Lori Coles, Dr. Jeffrey LaHuis, Dr. Christy Homik, Dr. Gary Ryder, Dr. Ron VanRyswyk and Dr. Pete Van Vranken.



Volunteers hard at work, improving the walking trails and building exterior at the Humane Society. Volunteers helped to scrape and paint the outside stairs and decking near the cat room and the large storage trailer, and installed an arbor, benches and landscaping along the trail. The Humane Society board members, staff and animals would like to thanks HandsOn Battle Creek and all the volunteers who worked so diligently to make a difference at the agency!

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Travis VanAvery - Kennel Technician

Justin Wetzel - Kennel Technician

Adrian Williams - Kennel Technician

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## Hours of Operation

Tuesday - Friday noon to 6:00pm  
Saturday - 11:00am to 4:00pm  
Closed Sunday and Monday

Phone: 269.963.1796  
Fax: 269.963.3365  
[www.hs-scm.org](http://www.hs-scm.org)



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