

Local volunteers craft pet sterilization project

BY RALPH R. ECHINAW
STAFF WRITER

In 1993 the Michigan Humane Society destroyed almost 40,000 dogs and cats that their owners gave up on.

"It's a little disheartening that we sterilized 10,970 animals last year and yet we still took in over 54,000 animals and had to euthanize almost 40,000 of them," said MHS executive director Gary Tiscornia. "We aren't seeing a tremendous amount of progress. (People) treat these poor animals like disposable goods."

An informal area group called Animal Crafters, which includes several local members, is trying to change all that by putting up the money to pay for the sterilization of pets whose owners are elderly, poor or handicapped.

Among the current volunteers are Janet Bushey of Troy, Chris and Karen Czedik of West Bloomfield, Mary Davidson of Farmington Hills, Diane and Chuck O'Malley of Farmington and Ima Stobart of West Bloomfield.

Last year Animal Crafters paid for the sterilization surgery of 268 pets, according to Bloomfield Hills resident Jean Marx, the founder of Animal Crafters.

"We're not setting the world on fire, but we're a grass roots organization and we're making a dent."

Marx said she was heartened to hear recently that the Humane Society took in fewer animals in 1993 than it did in 1992 (54,566 last year and 54,841 in 1992). She likes to believe that Animal Crafters had a small part to play in the reduction.

Joan Wahl is a veterinarian working in the Auburn Animal Hospital in Rochester Hills on Auburn Road between John R and Dequindre.

Wahl knows Marx from when she worked for the Humane Society and Marx served on the board of directors. When Marx left the board in 1988 she took the society's crafting program with her. When Wahl left the society to



Cats galore: A plethora of cats decorate this fabric being sewn into a vest for Animal Crafters who will then sell it to help pay for pet sterilizations.

open her own clinic it was only natural that she'd team up with Animal Crafters to perform many of the sterilization procedures.

"There are people in the world who really want to do things right with their animals, and they're down on their luck," Wahl said.

She charges Animal Crafters about \$15 per sterilization, which covers expenses only.

The crafters raise their money by creating handmade items for and about pets. A short list includes catnip mice, dog sweaters and vests, crocheted balls and pet beds. And for the pet owners, the crafters create footprint earrings and tote bags.

In the last three months of 1993, the crafters raised \$3,600 by attending 13 craft shows around the Detroit area. That's a lot of crafts, considering that most items go for \$5 or less.

Marx employs 15-20 volunteer crafters in the Detroit area, but additional artisans are welcome.

"We're looking for more senior citizens who can knit and crochet, cross stitch, or even sew on a sewing machine," Marx said. "We always need people to make this stuff."

Stobart's contribution consists mainly of sewing, which she spends about eight hours a week at. "I feel like I'm doing something that really helps," she said. "I think there's an abundance of cats and dogs that have been abandoned or abused (and) it's a sad thing."

Other volunteers hail from Grand Rapids, New York, Sterling Heights, Dearborn, Roseville, Waterford Township and Detroit. If you would like to volunteer with Animal Crafters or inquire about having your pet sterilized, call Marx at 851-1433.

To purchase some crafts, attend the Animal Crafters next show March 25-27 at the Gibraltar Trade Center in Mount Clemens.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAN DEAN

Pur-r-rect purpose: Ima Stobart of West Bloomfield creates a vest for later sale by Animal Crafters, an organization dedicated to helping seniors, the poor and handicapped pay for pet sterilizations.

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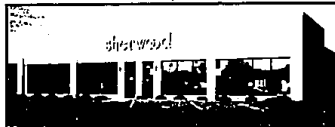
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