



Lakes Animal Friendship Society

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREAT BIG LOVE FOR FURRY FRIENDS

Community members and volunteer team provide health care to hundreds of pets, help and educate hundreds of families.

BURNS LAKE – In 2011 the Lakes Animal Friendship Society hosted the largest spay / neuter event in BC history, with close to 250 animals spayed and neutered over an eight day period. It was a huge success, but due to the overwhelming response dozens of lower-income families had to be turned away. The Canadian Animal Assistance Team, which is made up of volunteers from across Canada, was eager to return and help these families, and got permission from the College of Veterinarians of BC to hold another animal health event in the Burns Lake Area from May 28th to June 5th.

As expected, families brought their pets and lined up even before the doors were open each day. In the end, the Team spayed and neutered 183 animals and performed health checks, vaccinations and de-worming on 125 more. Only a handful of lower-income families were turned away on the last day when the surgery schedule was full. Laura Sutton, the team leader and registered veterinary technician from Ontario was encouraged by the response. “The numbers of spays and neuters were down a bit from last year, and we hope that means the trend is in the right direction. We had more clients for the other services, and many of those pets had been spayed and neutered at the event last year. Talking to the community members, there is an amazing level of awareness of the needs of animals, and people are very grateful for the care we provided. All of our Team members loved to talk to the guardians, meet the pets, answer questions and provide helpful advice.”

Community members were encouraged to make a donation of whatever they could afford. “A lot of time, effort, and money go into holding an event like this” says Valerie Ingram of the Lakes Animal Friendship Society. “No one at the event is paid. The volunteers are taking time away from their families, their pets and their jobs to be there. The Canadian Animal Assistance Team members pay their own travel costs. Local groups are providing facilities, food, accommodations, supplies and support. It is not “free”. It is important that people understand the value of health care for all members of the household, including the four-legged ones. Being a guardian has costs that need to be considered when you are thinking about bringing an animal into your life.”

The Lakes Animal Friendship Society also distributed dog houses that were built by the College of New Caledonia Residential Building Maintenance class. These houses were painted by Susan Russell’s grade 3 / 4 / 5 class at Grassy Plains School, using paint that was donated by the community. With the distribution of these houses the Society has provided warm, dry shelter to 82 dogs in the Burns Lake area. “We built the first 14 houses from scratch in 2009” says Alistair Schroff. “After that we refurbished 23 more, doing repairs and insulation on old houses donated to the Society. Between the CNC class and Dirk Hofer’s industrial arts class at the high school, 45 houses were constructed in the last 8 months!”

Local rescue groups Turtle Gardens Animal Rescue and Mother Millie stepped forward to take in any animals that were surrendered during the event. “We are very thankful to have these amazing local groups to rely on when an animal needs to find a new home” says Schroff.

Raising community awareness of bite safety, animal care and compassion is a primary goal of the Lakes Animal Friendship Society and a focus of the Community Animal Care Event. Valerie Ingram is a certified teacher and classroom volunteer. “I speak to about 700 students in our area, usually twice a year” says Ingram. “Last year a number of students came out to the event to see the Canadian Animal Assistance Team in action and learn more about animal care. This year we really wanted to encourage

participation and we offered buses for classes to visit the event. Hundreds of students from elementary and secondary schools travelled to the event, asked lots of great questions, and helped out. We hope the students are inspired to make a difference and maybe even pursue a career in animal care! The students even helped come up with a new name for the 2012 event. Ava Nealis from William Konkin Elementary School made the winning suggestion: "Great Big Love for Furry Friends Event".

The very successful education program in Burns Lake is catching the attention of other community groups. On June 1st and 2nd, the Lakes Animal Friendship Society held humane education workshops for school staff and volunteers who work with youth across BC. "Education is a pillar of any program to keep children safe, improve animal care and increase compassion for others. These workshops and follow-up mentoring will help bring humane education to more schools and communities, including remote locations like Dease Lake. Poor understanding of dog behaviour and lack of training leads to kids getting bitten and dogs ending up in shelters, so we also invited certified master trainers Judi Dowson (from Canines with Class) and Bev Kerr (from Houndsense) to share their knowledge. Doggone Safe and the BC SPCA helped provide educational materials for the workshop attendees."

Jeff Young, a veterinarian from Denver, Colorado is a long-time advocate of spaying and neutering programs. He has performed over 165 000 surgeries in his career and supports programs for spaying and neutering through his charity, Planned Pethood International. Dr. Young was hosted by Dr. Lois Martin at the Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic for training and demonstrations of spay / neuter and other preparation and surgical techniques. Dr. Martin and her staff are very supportive of local animal welfare projects and operate the Simonds Sanctuary, a cat shelter. Dr. Martin donated supplies, staff time and use of her clinic over a four day period. Veterinarians and support staff from across the region were invited to attend. Over forty surgeries were performed on animals from lower-income families.

Dr. Young also visited the high school to talk about pet overpopulation, the benefits of spaying and neutering and to answer questions about animal health care and veterinary careers. He told the students to believe in themselves and that they can make a difference if they put their minds to it. He shared a quote from Henry Ford: "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right."

During the Event, Laura Sutton and Jeff Young made an evening presentation at the College of New Caledonia and shared their experiences from animal health care across Canada and around the world, from Nunavut to Slovakia, Mexico, Fiji and elsewhere. They also participated in a roundtable discussion with representatives from animal welfare groups, First Nations, and veterinary clinics from across north western British Columbia, and were joined by Staff Sergeant Grant McDonald from the RCMP. As the presentations and roundtable discussions showed, overpopulation and animal welfare issues are a regional and even global concern, Burns Lake is not alone.

Just as the event has grown since last year, so too has awareness of the key animal welfare issues and potential solutions. "Every animal guardian is responsible for the care of their pet and meeting its needs" says Alistair Schroff of the Lakes Animal Friendship Society. "But, it is not just the pet that suffers if there is not proper care. Nuisance, dog bites, and even higher levels of violence in society are some of the side effects. Even if you are not an animal lover, we all need to work together to ensure we have healthy and happy pets so we have healthy and happy families and communities. This extends outside our "local" community, as the communities in the region are linked in many different ways. Groups from across the northwest are starting to build stronger relationships with each other and passionate organizations like the Canadian Animal Assistance Team. This is why we formed the Community Coalition for Animal Welfare in BC in 2011 - to tackle the issues in a much more efficient and sustainable manner. We are optimistic that the coming year will see Coalition members working together to make the Northwest BC Animal Welfare Initiative a reality, with more community education and efforts to ramp up spaying and neutering between Prince George and Prince Rupert, and north to the BC border."

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with a Lakes Animal Friendship Society representative please phone 250 694 3696 or email lakesidelegacy@yahoo.ca.

Lakes Animal Friendship Society www.lakesanimalfriendship.ca Canadian Animal Assistance Team www.caat-canada.org

Community Coalition for Animal Welfare in BC www.animalwelfarebc.org

Planned Pethood International www.planetpethoodplus.com/id1.html

Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic – check out Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic on Facebook



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**A BIG “THANK YOU” TO ALL THE FOLKS WHO HELPED TO MAKE THE
2012 COMMUNITY ANIMAL CARE EVENT A SUCCESS!!!**

**Canadian Animal Assistance Team – Laura, Liz, Jen, Sammi, Earladeen, Jackie, Kristie, Andi,
Shaena, Stapley, Lorna, and Justin**

The Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic – without their strong support from day one the events would not have happened. We cannot count on a large event happening again, but thankfully our local veterinarians are always there for the community in so many ways, including reduced rates for lower-income families.

Jeff Young and Planned Pethood International

Rio Tinto Alcan, Lake Babine Nation, Burns Lake Band, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd, BC Community Gaming Grant Program, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, Lakes District Maintenance, Turtle Gardens Animal Rescue, Grassy Plains Community Hall, Southside Women’s Institute, the College of New Caledonia, Southside Health and Wellness Centre, Chief Louie Paddle Company, Audrie’s Band, the Robert Ancheta Band, R8Design, Flaming Pie, Subway, Lakes Artisan Centre, Burnt Bike, Home Hardware, Redfern’s, New Leaf Cafe, Grassy Plains Country Store, Karen Ritchey, Larry Eichar, Canines With Class, Doggone Safe, Allana Sullivan, Burns Lake and District Hospital, Southside Economic Development Association, Village of Burns Lake, Keefe’s Landing Cafe, Real Canadian Wholesale Club, Overwaitea Foods, BC SPCA, Burns Lake Motor Inn, LD Free Classifieds, LD News

Our dedicated volunteers Jan, Deneve, Bailey, Helene, Susan, Derrick and Lisa, Erin, Dave W., Dave L., Brian, the Barths, Liz-Anna, Erna, Senara, Matt, Jennifer, the Brauns, Zoe, the Hummels, the Vanderwolfs, the Ancheta-Zayacs, the Eriksen-McDonalds, Morgan, Jean, Jenelle, Mary, Cherill, and everyone else who pitched in, especially our younger volunteers.

All the students, teachers and staff who came out to the clinic and created posters, cards and artwork for the event. The positive and caring messages were enjoyed by everyone and many cards were taken by the crew as souvenirs of our community!

All the other animal welfare groups and government reps who participated in the event, including the Roundtable Meeting on Animal Welfare in Northern BC: the RCMP, Bev Kerr from Hound Sense, Julia Corbett, Linda Locke, Community Coalition for Animal Welfare, Animal Rez-cue, Northwest Animal Shelter Society.

All the individuals and families who gave donations at the clinics and community dinner or participated in the loonie auction, as donors and bidders!

And last but not least, all the people who trusted us with their loved and loving pets!!!

THANK YOU!



Thank you for helping out Pets and community We are so thankful for helping out to WU BY Dustin

