



## Lakes Animal Friendship Society

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **VETERINARY CREW WITH BIG HEARTS HELPS FAMILIES AND THEIR FAITHFUL FURRY FRIENDS**

Northwest BC community animal care event helps a record number of families and animals, with big milestones in Burns Lake.

BURNS LAKE – When Laura Sutton and the other members of the Canadian Animal Assistance Team arrived in Northwest BC on May 29<sup>th</sup>, they were excited to once again be providing veterinary assistance to animals from lower-income families. In this visit, they provided services at Stellaquo and Kitwanga in addition to Burns Lake. In spite of the long travel distances and extra set up and take down, the Team of twelve put in long days to try and help all the animals they could. They achieved amazing results, with 582 animals coming through the clinics for vaccinations, deworming and health checks and 293 of these animals spayed or neutered. This is a new record for spay / neuter events in BC and a great step forward in controlling pet overpopulation which is the root of many community health issues.

Their return to Burns Lake marked the third time CAAT has been to the community. After two years, the efforts are really starting to pay off. Laura Sutton led the 2012 team and was impressed with what she saw a year later: “Many families proudly returned with their animals for vaccination boosters after getting their animals spayed and neutered last year. The animals were healthier and the community really seems to understand the importance of veterinary care” says Sutton. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, a dog named Simba was neutered and this lucky dog marked the 500<sup>th</sup> spay / neuter surgery the team has completed in Burns Lake.

The education opportunities of the event included lots of one-on-one discussions between the Team, volunteers and community members, as well as school and student visits. Lakes Animal Friendship Society (LAFS) volunteer Valerie Ingram travelled to schools in Stellaquo, Gitseguecla and Kitwanga during the event. She also speaks with hundreds of students in the Burns Lake area at least twice a year. “We need these big events and clinics to help get pet overpopulation under control” says Ingram. “In the long-run, however, education is a big piece of the puzzle. That is why CAAT and LAFS devote a lot of time and effort to community education about animal care and compassion, as well as bite safety. Proper care and compassion is not just good for the animals, it helps families and helps the community to be a better place – where people treat each other with more respect.”

During the event in Burns Lake, LAFS volunteer Alistair Schroff worked with community members including students from Babine Elementary-Secondary School who came all the way from Granisle to build dog houses for animals without proper all-weather shelter. The students helped build and paint several dog houses, and took two of them back to distribute to dogs in need in the Granisle area. Thirteen houses were completed and to date LAFS and its community supporters such as the College of New Caledonia, Lakes District Secondary School and Grassy Plains School have built or refurbished, painted and distributed over 100 shelters in the Burns Lake area. LAFS took the components for six houses to Kitwanga where the students from Gitanyow completed them for distribution in their community.

In addition to building dog houses, the students from Granisle donated dog and cat beds they had sewn as a school project. They also donated an amazing book with artwork that illustrates the verses of the LAFS theme song “Teach My Person How to Love Me”. In recognition of all the great work these students did for the animals they were allowed to name this year’s event. Inspired by the song, and knowing that they need to take care of their animals forever, not just until they are no longer a cute puppy or kitten, they named the event “Faithful Furry Friends Forever Event”.

In Burns Lake, the efforts of the Canadian Animal Assistance Team, Lakes Animal Friendship Society and local volunteers and donors have produced benefits beyond healthy and happy animals and families. After the first two years of joint efforts, the Village of Burns Lake impoundments are about a third of what they were before the first event. “Based on the Village’s own statistics, it is clear why they are reporting less animal complaints and bylaw issues” says Alistair Schroff. “The Village is progressive in ensuring that all unclaimed animals are spayed or neutered before being turned over to a shelter. With less dogs requiring impoundment and spaying and neutering, the Village taxpayers are saving over \$8000 per year. The total savings of resources across the community are much greater. For example, local shelter Turtle Gardens Animal Rescue statistics show that surrenders from the Burns Lake area have declined to less than half of previous levels.”

Now that the Canadian Animal Assistance Team members have returned home for a well-deserved rest, planning is underway for other projects around the world, and hopefully a return to help more animals in Northwest BC. The host communities and local groups are carrying on their ongoing work. As Valerie Ingram sums it up: “We all have to be proud of the achievements, which would not have been possible without the support of the community and the Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic in particular. Our community has made tremendous progress in three years of working with CAAT and has opened the eyes of communities around Northwest BC. If you take action, you can make a difference! But the need for ongoing programs is critical. Three years without these sorts of spaying and neutering services and community education would let the problems rise back to the critical levels we started from.”

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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](mailto:lakesidelegacy@yahoo.ca).

Lakes Animal Friendship Society [www.lakesanimalfriendship.ca](http://www.lakesanimalfriendship.ca) {check out the “Theme Song” link to hear “Teach My Person How to Love Me” – CD copies are available free on request}

Canadian Animal Assistance Team [www.caat-canada.org](http://www.caat-canada.org)

Community Coalition for Animal Welfare in BC [www.animalwelfarebc.org](http://www.animalwelfarebc.org) {The Hofer Dog House design used in our dog house project, including detailed instructions is available free of charge under the Resources section, under Downloads.}



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**A BIG "THANK YOU" TO ALL THE FOLKS WHO HELPED TO MAKE  
THE 2013 COMMUNITY ANIMAL CARE EVENT A SUCCESS, AND  
WHO SUPPORT OUR ACTIVITIES YEAR-ROUND!!!**

**Canadian Animal Assistance Team – Chris, Laura, Liz, Veronica, Rob, Earladeen, Cory,  
Kamila, Diana, Angie, Kris, Darci, Jodie, Katie, Shar, Cathy and Justin.**

The Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic – without their strong support from day one the events would not have happened. Our local veterinarians are always there for the community in so many ways, including reduced rates for lower-income families.

Lakes District Maintenance, Rio Tinto Alcan, Burns Lake and District Community Foundation, Lake Babine Nation, Bandstra, BarkBox, Burns Lake and District Hospital, The Pines, Burns Lake Band, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Bev Inglis and the Rottweiler Rescue Association, BC SPCA and PetSmart Charities of Canada, Susan Russell and Burnt Bike, Larry Eichar, Jennifer Pedersen and the WOW Bus, Starland Supply, Home Hardware, Petland, Redfern's, Subway, Alternative Grounds, Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd, Village of Burns Lake, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, Turtle Gardens Animal Rescue, Southside Women's Institute, the College of New Caledonia, Southside Health and Wellness Centre, Chief Louie Paddle Company, Burns Lake Public Library, R8Design, Lakes Artisan Centre, Doggone Safe, Allana Sullivan, Southside Economic Development Association, LD Free Classifieds, LD News, Northwest Animal Shelter Society.

Our dedicated volunteers and supporters Emily, Gail, Dawn, Daisy, Bertha, Eva, Bev, Ben and Zea, the staff and students of Babine Elementary Secondary School, Laurence, Nikki, the Fietz family, Tracy, Kim, Meghan, Madison, Tina, Bonnie, Keith, Kyra, Bailey, Kayleigh, Jamie, Sophie, Liz-Anna, Jim, TJ, Laurie, Louise, Sue, Gwen, Gaydene, John, Matt, Senara, the Martin family, Brandie, Michelle, Hayley, Kim, Katelyn, Susan, Helene, Brooklyn, the Gooding families, Jan, Elma, Dotty and everyone else who pitched in, especially our younger volunteers.

Cynthia for organizing and hosting the Stellaquo event and Lorna and Valerie for organizing and hosting the Kitwanga event.

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

All the individuals and families who gave donations at the clinics.

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

**THANK YOU!**

