

Art for Animals fundraising dinner set for Saturday

Event helps paint a picture of the importance of P.E.I.'s low-cost spay and neuter program

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When journalism student Krista MacLean stopped at an A&W in June, 2007 for a milkshake, she had no idea she would be heading home with a "Brew".

That's what she named the frightened and emaciated beagle she discovered begging leftovers from customers outside the fast-food restaurant. When A&W staff told her the dog had been hanging around for days, Krista decided to take the flea-ridden dog into her home and to do whatever she could to find its owners. Despite her best efforts, no one ever came forward to claim the dog, which ultimately claimed MacLean as his guardian.

"After a few days of looking into those sorrowful brown eyes, I knew I had to be the one to take him in," she said. "It has been the best decision I ever made. The little beagle has become my loyal companion and best friend."

Living on a student budget is tough, and the expenses associated with nursing Brew back to normal health virtually exhausted MacLean's savings.

She wanted to be a responsible dog owner and have Brew neutered, but could never manage to build her savings back up to reach that goal. When she heard about SpayAid P.E.I., the Island's low-cost spay and neuter program for low income pet owners, she was quick to submit her application.

Shortly after, she was approved to receive a voucher which will pay for two-thirds of the expenses to neuter Brew.

This is typical of the success stories associated with this innovative non-profit organization which, with the generous help of a number of P.E.I. veterinary clinics, has successfully subsidized spay and neuter surgery for more than 150 cats and dogs on Prince Edward Island since its inception in January 2007.

The benefits of this program are many-faceted, says SpayAid P.E.I. founding member Joy Tremblay.

"By enabling low-income families to spay or neuter their pets, we reduce the number of unwanted pet litters in low-income homes," says Tremblay. "It is hoped that this will reduce the numbers of surrenders to the P.E.I. Humane Society, as well as the numbers of animals that are abandoned or dropped off in the countryside.

Tremblay said fewer surrenders of companion animals will reduce the population pressure at the P.E.I. Humane Society and will allow a larger percentage of the surrendered animals to be adopted to new homes.

The all-volunteer non-profit organization is funded primarily by individual and corporate donations, and is holding a fundraising dinner and art auction at the Culinary Institute in Charlottetown on Saturday, Sept. 13, at 6:30 p.m.

"We're really looking forward to celebrating the success of SpayAid P.E.I. and raising funds to help even more low-income pet owners in the future," says SpayAid secretary and event organizer Jane Thomas.

"Not only are we able to offer the wonderful cuisine of the Culinary Institute but we're following that with something to please practically every artistic taste as well. As there also is a silent auction, with a large variety of items, everyone should leave the building satisfied, especially knowing they are helping solve a very real problem none of us can afford to ignore."

Tickets for the event are available at the P.E.I. Humane Society, and are \$50 each, which includes an official tax receipt for \$25.