

Youth 'Do Something' with Jr. Pets & People

By Alicia Monroe
Staff Writer

The bushy brown and black beast lying in the far left cage occasionally raised her head to follow the trail of passers-by.

A yellow index card dangled from her cage like a tag fastened to a present. It read "McKenzie. One-year-old chow/Aussie mix. A big fur ball with a heart of gold."

McKenzie and her companions filled a booth at Canadian Valley Vo-Tech's recent Success Celebration. They were part of a pet adoption fair sponsored by Pets and People and its budding junior organization.

Two Central Elementary students formed Jr. Pets and People in 1995 after winning a \$500 "Do Something" grant. These grants help young people nationwide form programs to benefit their communities.

Katrina Wright and Colin Wagner, both age 10, were the youngest applicants to win a "Do Something" grant. The standard age is between 17 and 30.

Colin and Katrina were inspired by their mothers, Jody Harlan and Pam Wright, founders of Pets and People Humane Society.

Pets and People concentrates on getting dogs and cats spayed or neutered, vaccinated and adopted.

"We knew we needed to do more educating, but no one really had the time," Harlan said.

Colin and Katrina said since Pets and People members were too busy to teach, it became the junior organization's mission. They used the grant money to put together information packets and distribute them during presentations at Yukon schools.

"We're helping kids learn about animals," Katrina said.

Their message focused on responsible pet ownership. They promoted spaying and neutering and offered advice on caring for pets.

"We're proud of our kids," said Pets and People member Glenda LoBaugh. "They help us educate everybody through peer influence, and they have helped bring national recognition to our parent organization."



Colin Wagner (wearing ball cap) collars one of the dogs which sought adoptive parents as Melanie Foster, with Pets N' People of Yukon, prepares the dog's leash for a walk. The pets were on display as Wagner and other Junior Pets N' People tried to find homes for the four-legged orphans. (Photo by Mike McCarty)

each one."

He pointed to McKenzie. "She was found in a cave she had dug underneath the old Food Lion," he said.

No one adopted McKenzie that day. Pets and People averages three to four animal adoptions a week.

"We need people," Earl Foster said. "That's what we're looking for - volunteers - no matter how much or how little time they have to give."

Anyone who wishes to help by adopting an animal or as a volunteer is encouraged to call 350-PETS.

Harlan said the kids have benefited not only from helping animals, but also in ways such as talking to the press.

"They've learned media skills and negotiation skills," she said. "Now they are learning to bring other people in and to work with other kids who have new ideas, skills, abilities and interests."

Harlan said the group has grown to about 60 or 65 young members, and it continues to grow each week. There are even a few members in other states.

A spokesman from Purina, one of the young group's sponsors, identified this particular group as the only humane society in the country that is actually run by kids.

The children are always accompanied by adult sponsors, whether at outings or simply helping out with the animals at the shelter, Harlan said.

"It's great getting to walk and play with so many animals before choosing one," Colin said. "And fostering lets you know how to choose the right one."

Pets and People members serve as foster homes for many animals. They also volunteer at the Yukon Animal Shelter.

"The most important thing we do is love and pet and keep the animals so they are happy and socialized," said Pets and People volunteer Melanie Foster.

"It's neat to follow one animal through the program and get it placed," said Melanie's husband Earl. "There are stories behind

Jody Harlan
426 Poplar Avenue
Yukon, OK 73099-2659
(405) 354-3189

February 27, 1996

Alicia Monroe
Yukon Review
P. O. Box 851400
Yukon, OK 73085

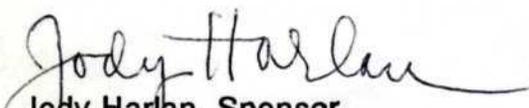
Dear Alicia:

Thank you so much for writing the article "Youth 'Do Something' with Jr. Pets & People" which appeared in the **Yukon Review** on February 17, 1996. Because of your comprehensive research, in-depth interviews and professional writing talent, this story captured the spirit of both the adult and kids' humane societies and generated a number of calls from readers who adopted pets or joined our organizations. We also included your feature on the first page of a package requesting grant funding that we recently submitted to Seagate Technology.

As you know, Pets and People volunteers work hundreds of hours each week on projects that include adoption fairs, foster home recruitment, Yukon Animal Shelter assistance activities, pet rescue services, a thrift store, other fund-raising efforts and nursing center visits. After focusing on the pets, we don't have much time left to promote the organization, seek new volunteers and educate pet owners about responsible pet care and spaying and neutering. We appreciate the time, energy and space you devoted to helping us achieve these people-oriented goals.

It would have been easy for you to write a couple of paragraphs with a few basic facts about our organization. Instead, you gave this assignment everything you had, ensuring that your wonderful story would interest readers and encourage Pets and People volunteers to work a little harder than before. If the talent and energy you have right now are any indication, you have an outstanding career in journalism ahead of you. Go for it!

Sincerely,


Jody Harlan, Sponsor
Junior Pets & People Humane Society
& Nursing Center Visit Chair,
Pets & People Humane Society

c: Conrad Dudderar, Managing Editor