

# SPCA offers free spay/neuter program

## Low-income families eligible

By GRACE R. DOVE  
Post Staff

Area veterinarians have joined hands to help the community in a free cat spay/neuter program for low-income families offered by the Luzerne County SPCA.

According to SPCA shelter manager Ed Gross, the cat population in Luzerne County is skyrocketing. Of the 4,000 cats taken in at the SPCA between May and November, 1992, only 490 were adopted.

"We have euthanized 3,510 cats in the past six months," Gross said. "We estimate that our spay-neuter program will prevent the birth of 10,000 kittens over the next 30 months. I would much rather prevent these kittens being born than have to keep euthanizing them by the thousands."

Families must apply for this service at the SPCA, on a first-come-first-served basis. They must be Luzerne County residents and meet state low-income guidelines, Gross said.

The cats must be at least six months old and have their distemper, cat pneumonia and rabies shots before the surgery.

The SPCA offers the distemper/pneumonia shots through a free program; rabies vaccinations are the owner's responsibility. Pennsylvania law requires all cats older than three months to have rabies shots, Gross said.

He commended the veterinarians, who will spay or neuter 25 cats each, for their generosity in contributing to the program.

Participating veterinarians include Dr. Sharon Horn of Pet Care

Associates; Dr. Jerry McDonald, Dr. John Bucha and Dr. Mark Stair of Trucksville Dog and Cat Hospital; Dr. Robert Bishop and Dr. Jim Hyssong of Brook Hill Animal Hospital in Conyngham; Dr. Rich Kaufer of Kingston Veterinarian Clinic, and Dr. Inayat Kathio of Pittston Animal Hospital.

"The cat population in Luzerne County is running rampant," Dr. McDonald said. "I have a long list of cat owners looking for homes for their unwanted kittens."

The average unspayed female cat can produce two or three litters a year, averaging between four and five kittens per litter, Dr. Horn said.

In her practice she has seen many instances where people dump unwanted kittens and cats in rural areas, mistakenly believing that "the farmers will take care of them."

"The farmers have enough cats of their own. They don't need any more," she said.

Prices in the Back Mountain for spaying a female cat range from \$45 to \$60, while neutering a male cat costs between \$30 and \$40.

"We have to charge more to spay females because the surgery is much more complicated," McDonald said.

Low-income families interested in the free spay/neuter program should contact Ed Gross at the Luzerne County SPCA at 825-4111 as soon as possible. Families will be selected on a first-come-first-served basis.



### Finishing touches

Dallas Borough roadmaster Denny Parsons stands in the bucket of a front-end loader to adjust the lights and decorations on the borough's Christmas sign on the lawn of the Dallas Post Office. (Post Photo/Grace R. Dove)

### Telescope

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Comets close-up resemble fiery fountains of sparks, but are better seen with binoculars or the naked eye.

Stars really don't have points; they're round. The points are optical illusions created by the telescope and the earth's atmosphere.

"The best time to look at the moon is during its first quarter, not while it's full. The first quarter light is less intense, allowing us to see details on the surface. I can show you where the first astronauts landed, but I can't show you their equipment," Bennett said, as spectacular closeups of lunar craters flashed onto the screen.

Groans of disappointment filled the auditorium as the slide show ended.

Visitors were invited to stay for a snack and a tour of the Friedman Observatory on the front lawn of the Center for Technology.

Eight-year-old Jared Warunek climbed the 26 step spiral stairway to the observatory deck for a look at the new telescope.

"The steps were kind of scary," he said. "But I liked the pictures of Saturn. The colors are bright." He said that he will ask his parents to bring him back on a clear night so that he can look at the planets.

Paul Luksa, a second-grader at Dallas Elementary School, has visited the observatory before with his Tiger Cub pack. "I want to come back," he grinned, climbing onto a stand to look at the telescope's eyepiece. "This is neat."

Bennett's godmother, Mrs. John Pirnick of Wilkes-Barre, drove out with friends for the unveiling. "Walter has been fascinated with astronomy since he was a child," she said. "He built his own observatory in his back yard in Wilkes-Barre - it looked like a lighthouse. We always compared him to Thomas Edison because he was interested in everything."

Bennett teaches astronomy at Penn State Wilkes-Barre and is superintendent of the world-famous Mount Wilson Observatory in California, where he is responsible for maintenance of eight research instruments and telescopes. He commutes between the two jobs.

The Friedman Observatory has been funded through a gift from the Friedman family of Kingston. The new telescope with its 14-inch mirror has made the observatory one of the finest in the area, according to campus chief executive officer Dr. William Pearman.

In addition to Walter Bennett, observatory staff includes John Rosser, David Raker and Dr. Tom Winter.

Observatory hours are 7-9:30 p.m. Friday and Sunday nights. Groups interested in observatory tours should call Dr. Winter at 675-9278.

Visitors are requested to dress as warmly as possible during the winter, as the observatory is not heated.

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### DAMA

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up their trash. But Krohn said that DAMA and the municipalities have the right to contract garbage and recycling collection service, which they did with Danella Environmental Technologies of Taylor. That right was upheld in a ruling earlier this year by Luzerne County Chief Judge Patrick Toole.

The authority has a 30-month contract with Danella and, according to Krohn, the people who have not paid are acting illegally. "They are in violation of the law, and if the municipalities are called upon, they should aggressively work to collect what is owed," Krohn said.

"We are filing municipal liens and will report unpaid bills to the individual municipality and a credit agency," Bagley said. He added that when a name is reported, it becomes a matter of public record within the municipality.

Krohn said that the method of collection is determined by the individual municipality. If called upon, Krohn said that he would advise Dallas Borough to file liens against property in order to collect. Dallas resident Joe Kunec believes is wrong.

"The municipal authority is taking over the billing for a business, and the threat of making bills public information is not right," Kunec said. Prior to the contract with Danella, garbage collection was done by several private haulers. While the move to a single hauler has lowered the cost of collection for most residents, Kunec is concerned about the affect which this has had on private haulers.

Kunec is one of the over 800 customers who he says are protesting DAMA's business practices by not paying their bills. He believes that the move to a single hauler has hurt the private trash haulers who formerly serviced the area.

"DAMA is becoming a monopoly by only allowing one company to take over the collection service," Kunec said. He said there is a lot of resentment against DAMA. "We have the support of the local trucking companies whose livelihood has been taken away and a class action suit has been filed against DAMA," Kunec said. "The over 800 residents in our group will not be intimidated." Kingston Township solicitor Ben Jones said that position is too simplistic. Jones believes that there is a warning process prior to reporting a name to the municipality.

"Some people have been warned by DAMA, but the problems occur when a person will go to sell a house and the bank discovers that there is a municipal lien on the home," Kunec said. Bagley said that different people have different reasons for being delinquent on their municipal bills. Jones said that not all of the people who have been delinquent are protesting DAMA's program. "It can't be said that said that everyone who has not paid is protesting, because of the recession, some people do have problems paying their bills," Jones said.

### Dallas Youth Basketball raising funds

Dallas Youth Basketball is in the process of selling sweatshirts, sweatpants and basketball shorts in its first fundraiser. If you are interested in making a purchase, you can order through any DYB child, stop in the Fieldhouse or call Lynn Jumper, 675-4023.

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