

Cat rescue

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savings. Originally organized in the late 1950's as the Northeast Pennsylvania Cat Club, Wyoming Valley Cat Rescue is no longer simply a club for cat fanciers, Balester said.

Swoyersville resident Nancy Boyer took over the former Cat Club's charter to form the area's first non-profit cat rescue organization about four years ago. Balester came on board soon afterwards.

"We changed our name to reflect our mission - to place homeless cats in good, adoptive homes," Balester said. "All our cats have been spayed or neutered and have been wormed and received their inoculations against rabies, leukemia and other common cat diseases. Many have stayed at foster homes in the area to become accustomed to families before being placed."

VCR's cats come mainly from people who have taken in healthy strays and can't keep them for some reason. Because VCR has limited resources, it can't rehabilitate sick or severely traumatized animals, Balester said.

Adoptive families must sign a contract to keep their cat indoors, never decalw it and return it to Valley Cat Rescue if for any rea-

"When he walked out of his carrier, he immediately started purring.."

Andrea Mitkus
Jackson Twp.

son they can't keep it, instead of sending it to an animal shelter. They also pay a placement fee of at least \$25.

"It's a bargain, considering that you get a cat which has been spayed or neutered and has received at least \$100 worth of veterinary care," Balester said.

Several of the organization's success stories are in the Back Mountain, where VCR has placed cats.

Elvis, a petite nine-month-old gray female, moved in with Donna Bullock and her daughter, Katrina, just before Christmas. The Lehman Township family had tried to find a pet at the SPCA but didn't see any cats which appealed to them there.

"The SPCA is good, but they aren't familiar with the cat's personality," Donna said. "Valley Cat



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

Katrina Bullock, left, offers a toy to her feline friend, Elvis, snuggled up with her mother, Donna Bullock.

Rescue conducted a detailed phone interview with us and tried to fit a cat to our family. The cats come from foster homes and are socialized and have received veterinary care."

Donna and Katrina had originally wanted a cat between three and five years old, but decided on

Elvis instead.

"When we first got her, she was a bit scrawny," Donna said. "Now she eats like a horse."

Donna believes something frightened Elvis when she was a baby because she's very shy, especially around strangers. But she's "the world's purring cham-

pion" and great company for Katrina.

"I wanted someone who would greet me at the door," Katrina said. "We like to play together. Elvis wakes me every morning when Mom opens my door and pesters me until I get up."

Katrina dresses her in doll clothes. In return, Elvis loves to steal small toys, which she hides under Katrina's bed.

"She drags the Barbie dolls around by the hair," Donna said, laughing.

Elvis has set up her own private den behind the kitchen stove and also enjoys sitting in Katrina's big dollhouse. The young girl and her furry friend have built a special relationship, Donna said.

Donna and Katrina are considering volunteering with VCR to help raise money "to help more cats."

"If I had a bigger place, maybe we would become a foster home," Donna said.

Shavertown resident Michael Trimblett volunteers raising funds for Valley Cat Rescue because he loves animals.

Not surprisingly, he also adopted a VCR cat, Panther, two months ago.

"I always wanted an all-black cat," he said.

Panther has set himself up as the boss of the house, keeping Trimblett's small dog in line and watching the pet snake in its terrarium and the fish in a 55-gallon aquarium.

"Panther is fascinated with the fish," Trimblett said. "He jumps onto the aquarium cover and tries to get them."

To settle the score with the family dog which steals his dinner, Panther has cultivated a taste for dog food.

Patch, a handsome two-year-old black and white male, joined the Mitkus family in Chase in 1994. Andrea and Bob and their three daughters, Danielle, Janine and Nicole, have made him a member of their family, even making sure that Santa and the Easter Bunny leave him treats.

"The girls told us we forgot to get him a Valentine last week," Andrea said, laughing.

Although he has his own bed, which Nicole selected, his favorite sleeping place is with the girls. In return, he makes sure the family gets up when the alarm goes off.

A family friend had referred them to Valley Cat Rescue.

"Heather brought him right to our door," Andrea said. "When he walked out of his carrier, he immediately started purring and headed straight for the girls. We fell in love with him right away."

Valley Cat Rescue can always use donations, volunteers and foster homes for cats waiting for adoption, Balester said. Upcoming fundraising activities include a rabies clinic, bake sale and spring yard sale.

For more information on Spay Day USA or Valley Cat Rescue, call Heather Balester at 824-4172.

Highway work

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northbound and southbound lanes between Harris Hill and Carverton roads and updated signals.

Mattei announced at a meeting of the Transportation Management Association February 15 that the contract has been awarded to Kuharchik Construction of Exeter.

The Route 309 intersections with Franklin Street and Main Road, which meets the highway at an approximate 45-degree angle, will also receive additional lanes for right turns onto and off the highway.

Route 415 and Center Hill Road posed additional problems with drainage, which delayed the final designs, Mattei noted.

"When it rains, Toby's Creek fills up quickly and everything backs up," he said. "The parking lot of the American Legion gets flooded because a drainage pipe running under the highway has collapsed."

Although the contract doesn't include any work on the stream channel, Mattei said his department would study installing a new drainage pipe which empties into the creek at an angle, rather than head-on, as it does

now.

In a money-saving move, the design for Route 309 and Center Street in Shavertown was changed, omitting most of the new signals, "much to Kingston Township's consternation," Mattei said.

"We're concerned that we'll be left with some ancient pedestrian crossing signals," said township manager Jeff Box. "They're a maintenance problem now, especially the one at Roushey Street. We would appreciate any consideration of installing new ones as you originally planned."

Once the signals and their computerized controls are installed, the municipalities in which they are located will be responsible for maintaining them.

Mattei said his staff would study various ways of protecting the controls, which he described as "the brains of the intersection," from being damaged by vehicles which might hit them.

"The weakness is in our design," he said. "We have had this problem on more than an occasional basis. The controller for a

\$50,000 signal can cost about \$15,000."

Referring to a recent accident at Routes 415 and 118, in which a fuel truck hit a signal controller which had just been installed, Mattei said the operator of any vehicle which damages a controller must pay for it.

A lack of funding has caused improvements at two other intersections - Dallas Corners and Hillside Road - to be put on hold indefinitely.

"These are the most expensive phases of the project," Mattei said.

The Dallas Corners five-leg intersection has been held up because the state must acquire land from the U.S. Postal Service to add a right turn lane from Route 415 onto Church Street. Because it's federally owned land, the state simply can't acquire it by eminent domain, Mattei said.

Construction of a jughandle from Route 309 north onto Hillside Road and improving the Route 309/Carverton Road intersection have also been postponed due to lack of funding, Mattei said.

"This winter the state had \$32 million in storm damage to its highways and bridges," he said. "Even if the federal government reimburses us for all our losses, we still need between \$6 and \$8 million to make up the difference."

Even the passage of an additional 5¢ to 12¢ hike in the state gasoline tax might not be enough to pay for the remaining Back Mountain projects. Although the federal government's share of the funding for the project was in place in 1992, the state's ability to pay its share is the deciding factor on whether or not the work is done, Mattei said.

"This is a new state administration with new priorities," said Representative Phyllis Mundy, who spearheaded the drive for the traffic signals. "I did the best I could, but it came out more expensive than was anticipated. I'll be relentless in following up to make sure the Back Mountain gets what it needs."

The work done so far on the highway corridor has cost \$2.4 million of the \$2.5 million originally allocated for adding traffic signals at intersections in the entire Back Mountain.

Plan doesn't sit well with Kingston Township

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

KINGSTON TWP. - Kingston Township officials aren't happy with the state's change of plans for two intersections, one of which was scheduled to be upgraded but has now been moved to the back burner.

Improvements to the Carverton Road/Church Road intersection have been postponed indefinitely due to a lack of funding.

"The township is concerned that Carverton Road has no definite timetable to be upgraded," said township manager Jeff Box. "It's the single busiest intersection in the Route 309-415 corridor, according to Department of Trans-

portation traffic counts, and has been the site of numerous accidents."

Comparing Route 309 to a funnel, Box said Route 309 at Carverton Road is where all traffic headed for the Wyoming Valley and points south converges.

"We want to see Carverton Road completed for safety reasons," said supervisor and retired police chief Paul Sabol.

Released in 1992, the original design called for widening the bridge across Toby's Creek, adding another lane to allow traffic to turn onto Route 309 northbound and a pedestrian walkway outside the existing bridge parapet to replace the one which would be taken for the lane.

Other improvements were new signals, a right turn lane from the highway to both roads, a barrier reaching from Carverton Road south to Knob Hill and straightening the intersection to make both roads meet the highway at a 90 degree angle.

"We had to scrap the original plan," said Penn-DOT district engineer Chuck Mattei at a Transportation Management Association meeting February 15. "Carverton Road really needs an entirely new bridge, which will cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000 alone, without the rest of the construction. There isn't enough money to do everything."

Kingston Township officials also aren't pleased with the de-

sign for East Center Street because it includes some old equipment which they say is too expensive to maintain. Although the intersection will receive a new computerized traffic light control box and two overhead signals, PennDOT also plans to continue using the existing lights and pedestrian crossing signals.

"They're a continuous maintenance problem for us," Box said. "Their lights are the old design, which takes special transformers and are very expensive to replace. The transformers must be specially ordered and it seems like we're always replacing one. We would like the state to install new crossing signals, which use a standard traffic light bulb

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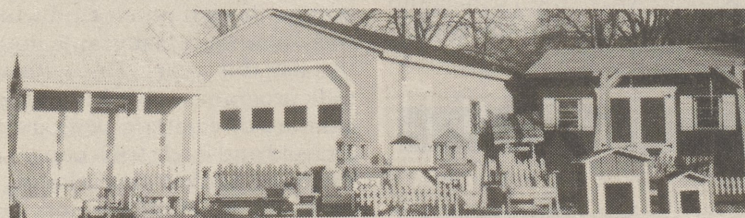


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