



A Suffolk tribute to Patsy Cline

Julie Johnson (above) to play 'Crazy' singer at Cultural Arts Center

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A caution to parents of students

Suffolk schools' Safe and Drug Free Committee warns against inhalants.

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Military spouses to be honored

2008 Heroes at Home awards cite those who hold down the fort.

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JOHN H. SHEALLY II | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Celebrating a beginning

DOGGED DETERMINATION | This month, the Suffolk Humane Society is marking a year of increasing its efforts to end euthanasia as a means of controlling the homeless pet population in the city. **PAGE 8**

CHILI COULD EARN \$2,000 PRIZE AT FEST

The Virginian-Pilot

SUFFOLK

If you brag about your chili, then here's a chance to put your chili peppers where your mouth is: enter the Suffolk Chili Fest on Saturday.

There will be up to \$2,000 in prize money for the team that earns the most votes for the People's Choice Award, among other awards, in this International Chili Society-sanctioned contest.

The event, at Bennett's Creek Park, 3000 Bennett's Creek Road, will be held from noon until 5 p.m. and is co-sponsored by Suffolk Parks and Recreation and Sertoma, an international volunteer service.

There will be other food vendors on site, along with a children's area. Local favorite, Island Boy, will provide music throughout the day.

Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the gate. Children 12 and younger are free. Tickets are available at the following outlets: McEntire Davis Architects, Pender and Coward Attorneys at Law, the Wine Cottage, D.B. Bowles, Ray's Florist, the Lion and Lioness Salon, the Suffolk Parks and Recreation Administrative Offices and the Suffolk Division of Tourism.

Proceeds will benefit the Bennett's Creek and Suffolk Sertoma Clubs, which help local children with speech and hearing impairments.

If you'd like to participate in the Suffolk Chili Fest or need details, contact Melanie Scoggins at 514-7267 or email her at msscoggins@city.suffolk.va.us.

Paws along the journey



JOHN H. SHEALLY II | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Humane Society volunteers at the Suffolk Animal Control Bureau feel that kittens should be looking out of windows in a home, not through cage bars.

Suffolk Humane Society celebrates year's effort at finding homes for pets

By Phyllis Speidell
The Virginian-Pilot

SUFFOLK
With soulful eyes, wagging tails and furry bodies quivering with excitement, dozens of dogs and cats poke their noses to the kennel wires, hoping for a kind word, a hug – and, maybe – even a home.

If the scene tugs at your heart, you need to know about the Suffolk Humane Society that's celebrating its first birthday this month.

The society's overall mission is to end euthanasia as a means of controlling pet overpopulation in Suffolk. The society's 200 members are dedicated to educating the public on responsible pet ownership, facilitating pet adoptions, sponsoring low-cost spay/neuter programs, and – long range – building their own shelter.

They also donate hundreds of hours to volunteering at the Suffolk Animal Control Bureau.

The city-run animal shelter is a refuge for homeless companions that have strayed or been given away. Some of the animals may have been removed from abusive homes – and some, like many of the hunting hounds, were abandoned on the side of the road.

An occasional snake, rabbit, ferret, parakeet or lizard finds its way into the shelter according to Harry White, acting chief animal control officer. Ten volunteers from the Suffolk Humane Society assist White and four other animal control officers in caring for – and loving – the homeless critters at the shelter.

"The humane society volunteers socialize with the animals, walking and playing with them," he said. "They exercise and bathe them and coordinate adoption events with us."

The volunteers also foster adoptable cats and newborn or pets with special needs.

Angie Chandler, executive director of the Suffolk Humane Society, said the humane society and the animal shelter work closely. She praises the shelter staff but laments the times when animals are euthanized.

Medical and behavioral issues may force the shelter's decision to euthanize but overcrowding can be a factor as well.

The shelter's facility on Forest Glen Drive, with 48 dog kennels and 16 cat cages, takes in not only abandoned, adoptable pets, but those that are being held in protective custody.

Lt. Debbie George of the Suffolk Police Department said for several months the shelter cared for five of the pit bulls taken from the Surry kennel that belonged to NFL quarterback Michael Vick.

More than 30 small breed dogs are housed at the shelter after being taken from a rundown kennel in south Suffolk recently.

There are seasonal surges in the shelter population, too, George said, at the holidays, in spring when dogs are having litters and at the end of hunting season when some hunters abandon their non-productive hounds.

"We frequently find our shelter full, but we aren't a private organization that can say no," she said. "We have to take what's there and

that means making unfortunate choices."

A new shelter is the humane society's long-range goal. Chandler said plans for a new shelter are fluid, but the organization is estimating the cost at about \$10 million. They're hoping to find corporations or individuals to support the project and are planning a major fundraiser – the First Annual Mutt Strut Dog Walk and Festival – for September at Sleepy Hole Park.

"We want our new shelter to be a fun, light place to be with the animals," she said. "We want it to be a green, sustainable building with a dog park – something Suffolk doesn't have now."

The group also works in other ways

Continued on next page



A time-worn hound responds to a pat on the head from one of the volunteers at the Suffolk Animal Control Bureau.



Harry White, acting chief Animal Control officer with the Suffolk Police Department, enjoys a moment with one of the dogs available for adoption at the Suffolk animal shelter.

Continued from previous page

to reduce pet overpopulation, a problem in every city, George said. In the past year, the humane society has sponsored 15 adoption events and taken photos of all the shelter's adoptable pets every week to place in newspapers, on five national data bases and on the society's Web site - www.suffolkhumane society.com

Their efforts led to 100 adoptions from the Suffolk animal shelter. Fifty of those were cats adopted by the society and cared for at the PetSmart store's public adoption center at Chesapeake Square until they were adopted into permanent homes.

The society has also sponsored 30 Suffolk Spay Days where 900 cats and dogs were spayed or neutered in addition to receiving discounted vaccinations, preventative care and microchipping. Thanks to the society's donation, Meals on Wheels has distributed 850 pounds of pet food to household residents with pets.

The society has logged more than 1,000 volunteer hours for the city's companion animals, including exhibits at 25 local events, such as Peanut Fest, to promote the organization and its mission

Next on their agenda is a feral cat program to reduce the number of feral strays taken to animal control and euthanized as unadoptable and expanded education programs in responsible pet ownership.

"What the humane society has been able to do for

going?

Celebrate the Suffolk Humane Society's first birthday at their Birthday Bash Saturday, 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Suffolk Museum, 118 Bosley Ave. Food, drinks, door prizes and live entertainment - the free party is open to the public to thank the society's volunteers and introduce its work to the city.

To join the Suffolk Humane Society or donate to them, call Angie Chandler at 319-0080.

The Suffolk Animal Control Bureau, 124 Forest Glen Drive, is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Adoptions are \$60 for cats and \$75 for dogs. Animals are spayed/neutered and vaccinated (dogs - DHP, bordatella and rabies cats- fvrpc and rabies) prior to adoption. Call 514-7855

OTHER EVENTS

- The Mutt Strut Dog Walk and Festival will be held Sept. 21 at Sleepy Hole Park for walkers raising pledge money to benefit the Suffolk Humane Society.

- The Suffolk Humane Society will co-sponsor the Just Fur Fun '08 event June 1 with Suffolk Parks and Recreation and Suffolk Animal Control in Bennett's Creek Park.

the shelter is remarkable," George said. "We don't have the manpower to do all that they do, their hundreds of hours of volunteer work would have to be paid for or would go undone."

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