On October 28, 2014, the animal rescue team from the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society arrived at a home in Schaghticoke with New York State Police to remove what we believed would be approximately 60 cats. The home was owned by Bertha Ryan, who lived there with her sisters, Mary Ryan and Regina Millard, and nephews Edward Ryan and Earl Millard. This was not the first time the family had been involved in an animal cruelty investigation. The family members had previously been arrested at the same house in Schaghticoke and at another home in Halfmoon, and were also arrested in Vermont while traveling through the state with 80 cats in 2 cars. All together, those cases resulted in 300 cats being seized.

That was three years ago, and the probation for those cases ended six months before our rescue team donned equipment to protect them from the fleas, filth and stench in which the cats were living every day. As our team would soon discover, the family had gone right back to the same cruel treatment other cats had suffered at their hands. Over the course of several days, 143 cats were removed from the house. More than half were caught on the first day, but the remaining cats were able to get inside the walls of the house and would hide there when rescuers came in the house. Unfortunately, 11 of the cats were already deceased when we arrived at the house. It was too late for them, but the others would soon be safe.

At the Humane Society, each cat was examined by our veterinarian, with many suffering from respiratory infections, all of them covered with fleas, and others suffering from a wide variety of ailments. Several of the cats were blind or had missing eyes due to chronic untreated infections. Treatment started immediately and the cats were made comfortable. We created new spaces for cats anywhere we could find them. Our staff and volunteers stepped up to make sure each and every cat would get the care it needed. Five of the cats gave birth during the first week, so we found ourselves with even more cats in need of help. The moms and kittens were cared for in volunteer foster homes until they were ready for adoption.

(story continued on page 2)
In this issue of Capital Pet you will read a story of which you may already be aware. In October we were called to a home in Schaghticoke where the residents had too many cats. Just how many, we wouldn’t know until our rescue team was in the house for several days. You can read the details of the incident in this issue, but there is a larger problem we need to address together.

The people who committed crimes against the 143 cats we seized with State Police had done this before. This was the fourth time members of the same family had been arrested for the same thing: hoarding cats.

Hoarding is a mental illness, just recognized in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Those of us in the animal protection field recognized for many years that people who lived with dozens or hundreds of animals in their house must have a mental disorder. Anyone who walks into a house like this is immediately overwhelmed by the odor from the feces and urine covering every surface. Our staff and State Police had to wear protective clothing to enter the house where these people were living, eating and sleeping every day.

One thing is clear about hoarding: people who do not receive treatment will repeat the same pattern again, as we see in this case. As soon as the family was off probation and no longer being monitored, they started hoarding again. People suffering from a mental illness might repeat the same behavior without proper intervention, but it is time for those of us working to rescue animals to think differently about this issue.

It is with that new way of thinking in mind that I have begun working with the New York State Animal Protection Federation to revise our approach to hoarding throughout the state. As protectors of animals, we need to engage organizations and state agencies that are working to help people in need of mental health counseling, so they can get the help they need before finding themselves in the legal system. We are beginning to look for partners to create strong coalitions that keep animals safe and people healthy.

At the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society we are responsible for the daily care of animals in need. At the same time, we always have an eye toward the future. We ask ourselves how we can prevent animal suffering before it happens, rather than only treating animals who have already been harmed. I will continue to update our supporters as we work locally and throughout the state to find a more effective approach to animal hoarding.

143 Cats Rescued from Schaghticoke Home

continued from page 1

Today all of the cats have been adopted to new, loving homes. This rescue was only possible because of a tremendous, unprecedented outpouring of support from our community. Scores of people came in daily with cat food, litter, supplies and cash donations to help us get these cats healthy and make sure they would never be in such a terrible situation again. Thank you!
Haile
And Her Happy New Family

This darling little 12-week-old puppy came in with both bones of her lower front left leg broken. She was brought to Miller Animal Hospital, where Dr. Rice x-rayed the leg to determine the extent of the injury. Haile was given a pink cast with “Adopt Me” written across it, so she could begin her search for a new home right away.

The cast had to stay on for four weeks before Haile could be re-assessed. During that time she rested comfortably with Jamie, one of our volunteer foster parents, and had fun with the resident dogs and cats. She was then officially available for adoption and ready for a home.

Haile’s new family was so happy with their adoption, they wrote us this note:

“My family recently adopted a puppy through MHHS, and I want to thank you all for the level of care and the high standards that your organization employed throughout the adoption process. Although we were anxious to be able to bring the dog home as soon as possible, we appreciate that MHHS wanted to be sure her medical issues were resolved before adopting her out.

“She’s been with us for a week now and is a healthy, happy, loving and active puppy. We also want you to know how much we appreciated working with Jamie. She has been fabulous every step of the way, and continues to advise us as we learn about puppy training and health considerations.

“Thank you to everyone who made our pet adoption possible. We appreciate everything you’ve done!”

Turner
A Small Dog with a Big Heart

He came to the Society after wandering the streets of Albany. We’ll never know how long he was living on his own. We’ll also never know how long his eye had been severely injured, but it appeared to have been quite some time.

In spite of his injury, Turner still had a wonderful, friendly attitude. He had no sight in the injured eye and it left him susceptible to future infection or other complications. Our veterinarian performed surgery to remove the eye, requiring several weeks of recovery.

Turner quickly became a staff and volunteer favorite because of his sweet, outgoing personality. He was constantly looking for attention, or just a little love. Once he recovered, he went on Steve Caporizzo’s Pet Connection on WTEN. He was quickly adopted to a new home where he is loved and cared for.

We were able to perform his surgery because of caring, generous supporters who provide the needed funds for veterinary care for homeless animals. Thank you all for helping Turner.
The Mohawk Hudson Humane Society is hosting a “Be Kind to Animals” Poster and Essay Contest. The competition is open to grades 1 through 5, middle school and high school students as part of Be Kind to Animals Week, May 3–9.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Be Kind to Animals Week. Highlighting compassion towards animals, this event was started by the American Humane Association in 1915. For 100 years it has been celebrated nationally through poster and essay contests just like this one. Animals cannot speak up for themselves, so it’s up to us to consider their needs and feelings. From caring for your own pets to respecting wildlife, we can all be kind to animals every day.

Schools and individuals will be able to submit entries and a panel of judges will select winners from each of the lower grade levels and the middle school and high school groupings. Watch our website and Facebook page for more details, theme, deadline and other information. An awards ceremony will be held in mid-May and winning entries will be displayed at a location to be announced.

Please visit www.mohawkhumane.org for more information.

Save the Date
8th Annual Gala

The 8th annual Gala is only a couple of months away! Paul Harding and Steve Caporizzo are back as our Event Chair and Emcee, respectively, as is Grand Central Station. Assemblyman Jim Tedisco, key proponent for the passage of the landmark Buster’s Law, and Libby Post, Executive Director of the NYS Animal Protection Foundation, have graciously agreed to serve as this year’s Honorary Chairs.

Our live and silent auctions are looking to be bigger and better than ever! New this year is a Tower of Diamonds raffle. Each .75-carat center diamond is surrounded by a halo of 0.19 carats, for a total weight of 1.88 carats. These stunning earrings, generously donated by Philip Messina of Philip Alexander Jewelers of Loudonville, could be yours!

Make your reservations and mark your calendars to join the fun and excitement at the Hilton Garden Inn in Troy. Please visit www.mohawkhumane.org or call (518) 434-8128 ext. 206 for more information.
300th Adoption at EAC

On December 26, the Everyday Adoption Center at PetSmart in Latham celebrated the holidays with great news: the 300th adoption since its grand opening in August 2014. Melinda Whisenhunt and her three children (Alex, Kira and Will) adopted a five-month-old kitten named Leia. Thank you to everyone who has supported the EAC and made it such a great success!

Empties for Animals Sets New Record

Hard to believe another year has flown by! The Empties for Animals recycling program set a new all-time record of $126,843 in 2014. Thanks to all our donors and our partnership with the Goldstein Auto Group, we raised almost $18,000 more than in 2013, a 17% increase. That means our intrepid all-weather volunteers sorted over 1.5 million bottles and cans! We are very grateful to our volunteers and donors for their support of this important fundraiser.
Tributes listed here were processed 9/1/14 – 1/18/15.