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Ohio Horse Trader Exposed

A Summit County common pleas magistrate has sent a strong message to northeast Ohio horse trader Louie Simboli. Simboli offered to take horses from owners who could no longer care for them and place them in adoptive homes. Instead, he sold them for slaughter. GLRO diligently tracked complaints about Simboli’s activities, but it was two years until he was caught in the act of taking a horse to an auction where “killer buyers” purchased horses for slaughter.

That’s when HSUS secured the services of an Akron area attorney willing to search out persons who might have been harmed by Simboli. Jeffrey Holland, Esq., identified eight people who had given horses to Simboli after being promised that their beloved pets would end up in adoptive homes, and that they could even continue on page 4

Thanks to GLRO’s efforts, an Ohio man was made to pay for selling horses to slaughter whom he had promised to find homes for.

Finding Solutions for Michigan Felines

They frequent the dumpster behind the local fast-food restaurant. They grab leftover food from pets’ bowls around the neighborhood. They bring their babies to live under porches. They’re beautiful and largely untouchable. And they’re probably one of the most challenging problems faced by animal care and control organizations nationwide. Who are they? Feral cats.

Experts suspect that there are as many feral cats as there are pet cats in the United States. Animal shelters in many cities are struggling with increasing numbers of unwanted cats and kittens at the same time as their numbers of puppies and dogs are steady or dropping. Many of the cats in shelters are euthanized for lack of adoptive homes. A large number of rural shelters are not equipped to handle cats at all, leaving few options for residents with feral cat problems. Private volunteer-based cat rescue groups report being overwhelmed with requests for help from citizens.

Why is everyone so concerned about these cats who are too unsocialized to be placed in a typical household? First, there are humane concerns about the suffering of feral cats from disease, exposure, and injury. Upper respiratory viruses, ringworm, feline leukemia, and other transmissible feline ailments can contribute to shortened life spans for ferals. Frostbitten ears and tails aren’t uncommon in Michigan’s winter climate. And how many cats are killed by cars in the state each year? No one knows. But judging by those seen lying dead at the side of the road, the number could be alarming.

Feral cats may form colonies around food sources, impacting a few houses or a whole city block. Some people dislike it when feral cats use their gardens as litter boxes. Bird lovers are concerned about the not-well-understood effects ferals may have on songbird populations. While unneutered males fight with each other and with outdoor pet cats, the females can produce up to three litters of kittens every year. These “untamed” felines look just like our own pet cats, but may bite and scratch if handled.

While problems surrounding feral cats are easily identified, solutions have yet to be adequately studied and implemented. In late 2003, GLRO and Capital Area Humane Society convened a state roundtable that includes a wide variety of groups concerned about feral cats in Michigan. Animal control agencies, public and private animal shelters, cat rescue groups, and veterinarians brought their questions and ideas together, with the goal of identifying approaches to reduce the number of feral cats in the state. Specific aims of the group include determining the extent of feral cat problems in the state and continue on page 2
T he Appalachian Project does not bring its free spay/neuter and animal wellness clinics to exotic island nations or to the vistas of the American West as other Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) programs do. But the small towns and tree-lined winding roads of Appalachia still attract veterinarians and students from all over the country. Dr. Sue Berlin, a small animal veterinarian in Indiana, is one of them. Although she has volunteered on one RAVS Native American reservation trip, fortunately for the Appalachian Project, its shorter, weekend clinics are a better fit for her. Over the past three years, she has shared her time and talent at nearly 20 clinics in Tennessee and Ohio. As she puts it, “You don’t have to go very far from home to find people who need help.”

Dr. Berlin knows first hand that there are many who can’t afford veterinary care, especially the cost of spay/neuter surgery, which is so important to reducing the number of unwanted dogs and cats. With RAVS, she helps needy pet owners, their pets, and the communities. She also enjoys helping student volunteers gain valuable experience. It’s rewarding to share her knowledge and skill, and she appreciates an environment in which everyone can learn from everyone else. She wishes there had been a program like RAVS when she was a veterinary student. The 1990 Texas A&M graduate finds that interacting with students and veterinarians from all over the country is a fantastic form of continuing education. It’s also fun.

Dr. Berlin says that she is in awe of how many people are involved in making each clinic a success. “Local humane societies, RAVS staff, student and veterinarian volunteers—so many people are helping and learning at the same time. Absolutely everyone benefits.”

Veterinarians from Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin have volunteered at Ohio clinics. Applications and guidelines for veterinary students and professionals interested in volunteering for RAVS clinics are available at www.ruralareavet.org.

Since the Appalachian Project kicked off in November 2001, Ohio has hosted 29 clinics, amounting to 60 full days of examining, vaccinating, and sterilizing 2,339 dogs and cats. The project has helped Sherry Breneman give her pets the care they need. She is shown here with her dog Spot.

I’d Like To Support the Appalachian Project.

Donations to the Appalachian Project go a long way to help needy animals and their owners. For example, $15 buys a box of syringes, $35 spays or neuters one animal, and $100 buys enough medicine to manage pain in 100 animals. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of $______.

☑ My check, payable to the Appalachian Project, is enclosed.

☑ Please charge my □ VISA □ MasterCard □ American Express (check one).

Expiration Date __ / __ (month/year)

Account # __________

Signature _______________________

Name ____________

City _________ State ________ Zip ______

Please use the enclosed envelope to send this coupon and your donation to GLRO. Gifts made to the Appalachian Project are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

RAVS Close-Up

Dr. Sue Berlin (left) performs another life-saving surgery during an Appalachian Project clinic.

Compassion for All

H ave you ever thought to yourself, “I could never work in an animal shelter?” Have you ever heard about a particularly sad animal cruelty case and found yourself wondering how the humane officers do what they do? Animal shelter employees, animal control officers, and animal cruelty investigators hear comments like these all the time. They do a tough job that certainly isn’t for everyone. Humane work obviously attracts animal lovers who want to dedicate their time and talents to animals in need. It can be very rewarding to bring relief to a suffering animal, reunite lost pets with their human companions, and introduce adopters to their new best friends. But this work also requires individuals to deal with the tragic consequences of animal cruelty, neglect, and overpopulation. Consistent exposure to working with suffering animals takes an emotional toll. “Compassion fatigue” is the name given to the long­term stress associated with human emergency workers and rescue personnel. Compassion fatigue among animal control workers has only come to the forefront in the last few years. Also known as secondary post-traumatic stress disorder, compassion fatigue affects the well-being of animal care workers personally and on the job. The HSUS understands that in order to provide the best protection for animals, it is also necessary to be an advocate for their human caretakers.

Humane Society University (HSU) delivers training to the leaders of animal care and control organizations as well as workers who have direct contact with animals in their care. Through HSU, The HSUS has increased efforts to bring compassion fatigue training to animal care workers. In 2003, we held compassion fatigue training in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Columbus, Ohio. In 2004, the training went to the statewide conference of the Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia.

Local animal care and control services often reflect the communities they serve in terms of the resources available to them and the extent of the problems they face. Your support matters, whether it is in the form of responsible pet ownership or volunteer work.

I want to learn how I can help our animal friends and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

Please send me information about

Making a donation to honor the life of a pet, friend, or relative.
Providing for my pets in my will and in case of emergency.
Planning my estate and will to help animals and The HSUS.

□ Using charitable gift annuities and trusts to support The HSUS. □ Giving The HSUS a gift of stock.

Helping those who work in animal shelters do the best job they can is a goal of The HSUS.

Humane Solutions

S pring heralds new life for our wild neighbors. While many people enjoy living in close proximity to wildlife, others experience conflicts with wild animals. But with the right tools and knowledge, these conflicts can usually be resolved humanely.

The HSUS brought this message to wildlife professionals and residents of northwestern Indiana in February through our Wild Neighbors workshop. Co-hosted by Wildlife Orphanage, Inc., and La Porte County Parks Department, the event fea­
tured experts from the United States and Canada speaking about humane wildlife removal, preventing conflicts, wildlife laws and regulations, and more. GLRO Regional Coordinator Linda Reider spoke about Canada goose solutions. HSUS produces a host of publications to help homeowners with these issues. Learn more at www.wildneighbors.org.

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Michigan has finally begun to decline, sending a strong message to the rest of the country that goose conflicts can be managed in urban areas without killing adult geese.

Animal Sheltering
Several shelters in the Great Lakes region have graduated from our Pets for Life training, designed to teach shelter professionals how to implement behavior and other assistance programs for their communities and the animals in their care. GLRO developed and delivered Shelter Toolkit workshops region wide. Through Project Outreach, GLRO brings specialized training and resources to previously underserved shelters and organizations in Ohio. Humane Society University online training courses (including a course developed in this office) are accessible to anyone on the Internet.

Disaster Response
HSUS is taking a much more active role in responding to animal-related disasters. GLRO staff members have been on the ground helping animals and agencies during recent flooding in West Virginia and tornadoes in Ohio. Sometimes our help is of a different type—money that helps rebuild damaged facilities or acquire pet food and supplies for local needs.

Animal Cruelty
GLRO has held multiple First Strike workshops about the connection between animal abuse and human violence in all four of our states for social workers, judges, prosecutors, teachers, animal cruelty investigators, and many others. I currently hold two advisory positions on the boards of several shelters in the Great Lakes region.

With these victories under our belt, just imagine where we are headed in the future. Of course you—the members and supporters of The HSUS—have made all these victories possible. In this, our 50th year, let’s all celebrate our advances for animals.

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visit them in these new homes. Holland brought a court case on the owners’ behalf, and Judge Judy Hunter handed down a decision in late 2003. She stated, “Such conduct by the defendant was particularly egregious, as the defendant knew full well he was preying upon persons in desperate circumstances to find a home for their horse and by persons who could not economically maintain the animals and had no place to turn.”

The magistrate concluded that Simboli’s representations to the horse owners proved to be false and were made with malicious intent, with the specific purpose to misrepresent to the owners their animals’ fates so as to allow him to sell the animals for slaughter or profit. The judge awarded each horse owner a significant sum.

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