



Happy Tails

Save a Life. Adopt a Rescued Pet.

September

Vol 4

No. 3

Animal Aid of SWMI
717 St. Joseph Drive
Suite 217
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 934-SPAY

PLEASE NOTE
NEW
ADDRESS!!



Animal Aid meetings are held
at the Maud Palenske Memorial
Library in downtown St. Joseph
every 3rd Wednesday of the
month at 6:00 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings:

September 16
October 21
November 18

MISSION STATEMENT

ANIMAL AID OF SOUTHWESTERN
MICHIGAN IS AN ALL VOLUNTEER
ANIMAL WELFARE/RESCUE
ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO
PREVENTING THE SUFFERING OF
INJURED, ABUSED, NEGLECTED
AND HOMELESS DOGS AND CATS
IN BERRIEN COUNTY.

2015 Officers

- President Margo Klein
- Vice President Beth Wild
- Treasurer Open
- Secretary Judy Curry
- Dog Coordinator Margo Klein/
Pam Gillespie
- Cat Coordinator Beth Wild
- SoCo Coordinator
- Web Page Becky Cooper
- Newsletter Editor Open
- Volunteer Coordinator Open

Please
Report Animal Abuse
or Abandoned Animals
Hotline:
(269) 934 - 7729

SPECIAL MEDIEVAL MUTT MARCH EDITION

On August 22, along Lake Bluff Park in downtown St. Joseph, the mythical Kingdom of Dunroamin rose from the imaginations of a trio of dog lovers. Long before the sun spread across the lake, Shield Signs, identifying every vendor, were placed marking 41 spaces and awaited their shopkeepers in the medieval marketplace. Tables, chairs and tents were quickly placed as the excitement mounted and the be-decked and costumed vendors arrived to take up their places in anticipation of greeting the "beasties."



While it is true, "Dunroamin" is make-believe, it has been a very real part of my life, that of my co-chair, Deb Lightner and our publicity chair, Vicki Dunlop, for the past eight months. As a "wrap-up," I wanted to share some of the history of this event -an event which, I believe, has been smiled upon by someone much bigger than any earthly force. Whether you call it "The Universe," "Dumb Luck," "Karma," "God" or even Animal Aid founder, Cindy Bravender sending her blessings from above, early on it became evident to me that this year's Mutt March would be a very special and guided event. So, sit back & please read on and judge for yourself as I present

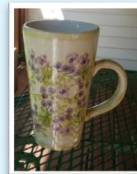
THE DIARIES OF DUNROAMIN

November 2014 At the monthly Animal Aid volunteer meeting, Becky Cooper suggested a "medieval" theme for next Mutt March.

December 2014 A visit to City Hall to obtain the paperwork to clear the date for an August event along Lake Bluff Park, SJ.

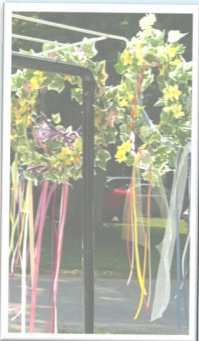
January 2015 Paperwork submitted to the city & a presentation by President Margo Klein to the city commissioners for permission to put August 22 on the City of SJ calendar. With the red tape taken care of & a firm date in place, we could start making concrete plans for our medieval extravaganza. While the snow was on the ground & the holiday decorations were twinkling along the bluff, photographer Arlene Alsup accompanied me to take panoramic shots of the park. This was to be the first of many walks along the bluff as the concept developed in the minds and hearts of those to be involved. A week later, I dropped a friend off at her house in Watervliet & observed a "castle" in her yard which she confided had been there for 22 years. And yes, we could borrow it!

February 2015 The original concept was drawn up & presented to the Animal Aid Board & the following week to the volunteers at their monthly meeting.



With the ideas enthusiastically embraced by Animal Aid membership, the first of many planning meetings between Deb & myself took place at area Taco Bells, as inspiration was served up along with bean burritos and nachos.

March 2015 A list of props was created & Deb and I were off with literally pennies in our pocket. But early on the miracles began. Deb suggested we needed chain to cordon off the "portal" area. At the Busy Bee Flea Market, a water-stained cardboard box in a dusty corner of the flea market offered up a dirty plastic chain- exactly what we needed. We picked up several other items that day & the cashier reduced our bill by more than half- turns out she owns several rescued dogs. Down the road at another resale shop we found a bag of cast-off wedding decorations which became the basis of the 23 crowns which were to be created by Deb in months to come.



April 2015 With graphic wiz Vicki Dunlop on board, the art-work took on a new inspired look. Vicki created Princess Michaela who welcomed all at the entrance of the Kingdom. We sought out rescued bait dog, Moses, to take photos of him clothed in a crown & regal robe. And Moses, being his old cute self, cooperated beautifully. Vicki's keyboard magic turned our "*once pauper*" into the "*Prince*" we always knew he was. When the coloring contest became a reality & Vicki created coloring sheets, I headed to the Dollar Store for crayons. In route, I happened to stop at a garage sale & found several gallon bags of crayons for 25 cents. When a pile of sparkly gold & silver fabric caught my eye, a chat with the cashier ended up with her donating another \$10 worth of materials "for the animals." A petition to a local printer garnered a grant for free printing of all of our posters, maps, flyers & coloring sheets.



May 2015 My own Bella, dressed in her princess finery, accompanied me over the next five weeks as we visited each veterinarian office, boarding facility, pet groomer, pet store & other pet related businesses to hand deliver a parchment invitation to participate in this year's Mutt March. It was so great to meet everyone and we welcomed the many who participated in this year's Mutt March.

A chance meeting in the lobby of Wil-o-Paw Animal Hospital one Saturday brought forth another miracle, in the form of a most generous animal lover, DeeJ Leggit. Through her we were to meet our "king," "queen" and "clockmaker." Incidentally, DeeJ is a rescuer of horses.



When some of the original ideas for props fell through, the May Antique's on the Bluff event provided more miracles. Many of the booths that day had beautiful arches which carried pricey tags. The "Arbor," which was to be used as our "portal to the past," was found in pieces at one of the last booths and for sale at a drastically reduced price. I brought it home & then through yet another heavenly happenstance two weeks later, met a young couple -Michaela Moss, a master of paper mache art who created our "Dragon of Dragonwycke" and Paul Volk, a talented welder, who generously put the arbor back together in perfect shape and all with their donated time and talents.



The project of the Princess hats passed through a couple of people before landing with cousin Janie Jesweak who visited one weekend from Cadillac to complete many of the hands-on tasks. The paper for the hats came from outdated wallpaper sample books, another freebee. Ribbons & netting were either donated or found at garage sales.

June 2015 When Deb asked me to be on the lookout for "silk flowers" for her wreath crowns, two days later I happened upon a pile of boxes & bins at the curb of a house that was being emptied out. In the last blue bin I picked up were dozens & dozens of useable silk flowers. When I suggested it would be really cool to have a Styrofoam "head" to display the crowns on, a \$5.00 price tag at Meijers seemed quite extravagant, until I found a slightly damaged head & a kindly store manager ended up giving it to me free!



Originally "the wishing moat" was to be designed by a volunteer but when he backed out, we fell back on an original idea & once again the universe provided as one morning, I happened upon a pile of "free toys" at the end of a driveway. And the "moat?" A child's pool bought for \$1.50 at a half price sale.

Due to the length of the marketplace, we wanted a second castle located near the King and Queen's throne area but finding just the right boxes to create the "cardboard castle" would prove to be a challenge...that is, until I felt prompted to pop by my former place of employment. In the warehouse, six huge boxes were headed for the trash compactor but instead found their way into my trunk. But, even more amazing, as I played with the boxes on my driveway over the next few weeks, arranging & re-arranging them to resemble a make-believe castle, a neighbor who happened to be walking her dogs, stopped to observe the process & then offered eight blue turrets she just "happened" to have in her basement from a project she had been involved with five years earlier. Her "turrets" fit our castle perfectly. The drawbridge "chains" were made from a belt which was taken apart and restrung.

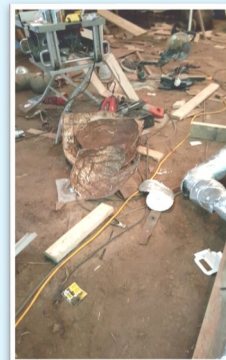


The Edict was another of Deb's special projects. We found old door knobs at a resale shop for pennies & with those Deb created a most elegant scroll for all to sign. The Edict asked all residents of the Kingdom to make a commitment to be Kind to All Creatures Great and Small, To Spay & Neuter & lastly, to consider Adopting before Shopping when looking for a pet. Deb fashioned quill-type pens from duck, turkey and peacock feathers provided by our friend, Liz of Blessings Farm in Coloma. Mini scrolls were rolled by volunteer Shirley Stinson, even tho' her health kept her housebound. Shirley also made the tags for the Angel Tree. The base of the angel tree- interlocking swans which fit our base perfectly by the way- was found in bins which were stacked at the end of a driveway



left out as "trash." Those same bins provided many items which were used as special effects to lend a rustic air to the marketplace.

We really wanted to have a suit of armor but as the months rolled by & offers to locate one in the community did not pan out, I had all but given up, then Matthew Coleman, our wonderful clockmaker, managed to find a shiny man in pieces. Under his skillful hands, our Knight was put back together to stand guard on one side of his magnificent Clock Tower.



The job of lining up publicity was handled by a stranger, soon to become friend, 16-year-old Bailey Klaus, who graced us for a short six weeks before heading off to school out of state, but in that amount of time, she lined up three radio spots, confirmed a television interview & posted countless posters in local businesses &



on social media. When this young lady hits the job market, watch out world! She is a fireball!

Our young magician, Zoltar, was trained by professional Bob ZENDOR Wigent specifically for Mutt March. Bob, who had a scheduling conflict the day of our event, spent hours teaching apprentice Travis Witt his craft & then rehearsing him as often as possible. Our magician added a very special layer of entertainment to the marketplace as did our very own heroes, Sir Lancelot Andrew Wade & Jester Noah Meyer, both who kept in character for the entire event! And, of course, the children loved it! (as did the adults!)

I happened upon the perfect "box" in a dumpster for our "Kissa Thy Beastie" booth. After I fished it out of the trash, the heavens opened later that day & it rained for the next two days. But this special box was safe & dry in my garage awaiting painting. The shields had been

found a few months earlier at a garage sale & Sir Barks-a-Lot was donated by Becky Cooper. It all came together beautifully!

August 2015 As my garage continued to fill with tables, tents & props, it became evident that we would need a huge miracle getting everything transported to the bluff. Amazingly, August 22 was deemed a Day of Service by one of the local churches, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Twenty-five families were assigned to Animal Aid to assist in our event & they were on the bluff from 7:00am until the last lance and shield was load-

ed well after 4:00pm. Without their assistance, their manning of booths, setting up tents & tables, baking dog treats & people treats, lifting & toting & escorting our vendors to their locations, I doubt we could have pulled off this ambitious of an activity. Even the water wagon youth, the Randall "princes" Logan, Eli & Tyson, donated their Saturday to collect money for our "beasties.."

You may remember the day after Mutt March, it poured, but our weather was absolutely "heavenly!" There are many more entries in the Diary, many more stories to tell. As chairman of this year's event, I felt it was important to set the record straight lest there be misconceptions that our event was underwritten by an enormous budget. Now, I imagine you are anxious to see the photos, which will follow shortly. Thank you to all who have sent in their pictures, both electronically and hard copy. I have received over 400 of them!

What a tremendous experience this has been working with like-minded people who gave their all. Because I have enjoyed this experience so much, I have decided to offer my services to any of the local animal rescue groups who wish to conduct similar fundraising events. I believe I have found my creative niche & have many more ideas to share & I have a terrific team to work with. Sadly, what this means, however, is that I will no longer be the editor of Happy Tails, the Animal Aid newsletter which I have written for the past five years & it has been necessary to resign from the

Animal Aid organization so I may be available to others without risk of any conflict of interest.

When all is said and done, it really is all about helping *all* the animals of Berrien County.

Now, on a very personal note, many of you met my rescue Gracie Moon, the blind Italian greyhound, in the Berrien County Animal Control booth. This dear sweet lady was diagnosed with a very fast spreading cancer at the beginning of July and is not expected to live much longer. If you had a chance to met her, you know how special she is. Gracie has been my inspiration for helping bring awareness of the many dogs who need our love and our homes, especially the senior dogs. Please, please rescue and tonight, if you are able, please say a prayer for yet one more miracle. Thank you. Toni Miller

