

Animals in north Pickering need land

Founder of animal sanctuary in Pickering fears what will happen to the critters once she's gone



Joyce Smith of the Second Chance Wildlife Sanctuary looks outdoors with one of her cats.

to the ones that need it and basically does this all day until she finally goes to bed for the night at around 1 a.m. As a result, sometimes she even forgets to take care of herself. She has some help in the day and welcomes volunteers. Ms. Smith has bonded with animals her entire life, having animal-lovers for parents and living on 10 acres growing up. She's always cared for them, but in 1996 she chose to open Second Chance on land donated by Cherry Downs Golf and Country Club in Pickering. Despite the generosity, she thinks it's only realistic the owners may want their land back one day.

or even eat. Honey, for example, has to be force-fed because she's so upset. Ms. Payne said she could tell she had a comfortable lifestyle before someone found her and dropped her off at Second Chance. "She's depressed, she's sad, she's heartbroken," she says. Ms. Payne adds she's watched others die of a broken heart.



Ms. Smith won't adopt the cats to just anybody. She has to be convinced they'll abide by rules she's put in place.

"I just don't understand how anybody can hurt something so innocent. It breaks my heart every day."

- Joyce Smith

By Kristen Galls
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PICKERING — As Joyce Smith shoos a couple of cats off a dining table chair, which hardly ever has room for herself, she warns of Jasmine the cat's tendency to "love bite."

And, after a tour of her home and animal shelter in Pickering, Second Chance Wildlife Sanctuary, it's clear each animal has a name and specific characteristics the workers are well aware of. That's part of the procedure at the sanctuary

that holds around 300 cats (200 live in the shelter; the rest, in her home) and 200 other animals; the small staff makes sure to inform potential adopters of the animals' personality traits and needs. This is because Ms. Smith sees too many abandoned animals and feels owners can give them up too quickly.

"I just feel so sorry for them because so many people just throw them away," she says. Ms. Smith gets up at around 5:45 a.m. each day to feed the cats, clean their litter boxes, give medication

once she's gone. She knows people who would run the shelter, but thinks that would only be realistic if she actually owned the land. Her dream is a land donation, she could leave in trust to the animals. Whether it's land with a home or not, it'll relieve a lot of the stress she's been facing. If there is no home or proper facility for a shelter, like the shed she uses now, she's prepared to raise funds to build it.

"They'd probably all be put down (without owning land)," she says.

"This is my nightmare." Christine Payne works part-time at the shelter, and tries her hardest to avoid attachment to the animals, but says "It's impossible." She, along with Ms. Smith, even names all of them.

"I wait until a characteristic hits me," she says.

Ms. Payne sees a lot of cats who have been abandoned and said just this month someone came to the sanctuary carrying four kittens in a wired cage only big enough for two cats. Since Ms. Smith was out at the time, Ms. Payne asked if the owner could return at a later time so she could approve it, although she knew the sanctuary would take them anyway. He said he would

and left with the cats. Later, they were found on the snowy driveway, completely covered in dirt and slush from passing cars.

"I mean come on, how could you get rid of this or just dump it in the snow?" she says as she strokes little Jet, a short-haired orange Tabby, part of the bunch dropped off.

Some are so attracted to their owners that, when abandoned, they won't socialize with the others



number of the ones that bypass the shelter and go into the woods get eaten by coyotes.

"I just don't understand how anybody can hurt something so innocent," she says. "It breaks my heart every day."

That's why the sanctuary is "very meticulous" about who gets to adopt the animals. People must physically come into the shelter and get to know the animals. Ms. Payne explains some will even come in for a specific cat and walk out with a different one because it best suits their personality.

If anyone can spare land for the animals, call Ms. Smith at 905-649-8282, e-mail joyce@second-chance.ws or visit www.second-chance.ws. Donations can be made online as well.

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See the video online at news.durhamregion.com

Art Auction Fundraiser

Artist Daniel Kelly is holding an art auction, HABT for P.A.W.S. (Paw Awareness with Shelter), on Friday, Feb. 22, coincidentally Ms. Smith's birthday. It will feature works by 20 local artists who will donate their pieces, as all funds raised will be split equally between Second Chance and Casey House in Toronto, which cares for people with HIV/AIDS. The event features live music, and wine and beer will be offered at a minimal price. It runs from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at Harmony Hall, 2 Gower St. (west of Victoria Park Avenue and south of St. Clair Avenue East) in Toronto. For more information, call Mr. Kelly at 416-898-8251, 416-220-2566 or e-mail zorrnkelly@sympatico.ca. Full details are also on the Second Chance website.



Below: Ms. Smith has many ducks and has taken in about 100 in the past couple of years. This ferret is only about six months old and was dropped off by a girl in tears. Middle: Billy the Goat is a permanent resident of Second Chance. Top Right: Guinea pigs. Ms. Smith says that although these animals are small, they have personalities too.



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