



A twelve-week old black Lab puppy sits in his newly assigned cage at the Quinte Humane Society. Many cats and dogs are either abandoned, such as this dog, or dropped off at the shelter until they find a home.

My Forever Home

WHILE families in the Quinte area settle into the new year, the Quinte Humane Society prepares for the next couple of cold winter months ahead.

In the last few months, the Quinte Humane Society has been experiencing an overflow of cats and dogs, fluctuating at 200-300 cats and 30 dogs at a time.

Winter months are the least favourite time of year for the Quinte Humane Society because more animals are found on the streets and brought into the shelter, causing less room for the animals.

Much like 5,000 community animal shelters nationwide, the QHS relies only on generous donations of the community, which at this time of year gets especially hard due to the other charities that also need help in the cold months. Despite the phrases 'humane society' and 'SPCA', many shelters that do use those names are not part of an organization or the OSPCA.

"Although our spring and summer months get busy with animal offspring, winter constantly brings in more and more homeless animals that we struggle to find space for every day," said Marja Bernhardt, a long-time employee of the Quinte Humane Society.

"Dogs stay here until they are adopted or transferred to a local shelter or the Toronto Humane Society. We are a no-kill shelter. The amount of time a dog stays here depends on how full we are. They could be here for five days or five weeks," said Bernhardt.

The Toronto Humane Society is a non-profit organization funded through charitable dona-

tions, completely separate from the OSPCA (Ontario Society for Prevention to Cruelty of Animals), not receiving any government funding.

The THS takes in animals of every shape and size from local animal shelters as well as surrendered pets of the city. They do not put down their animals due to lack of room at the shelter or an expiry date, but keep them there until the right home comes along through extensive application and interview processes.

Only two percent of cats that are brought into an animal shelter are ever returned to their owners, and only 15-20 percent of dogs are returned to their owners, both being identified by microchips, tags or tattoos.

The Ontario SPCA takes the issue of euthanasia very seriously, although sometimes despite best efforts, animals must be put down. Reasons the OSPCA euthanizes include: terminal illness or injury with no recovery, behavioural problems that pose a threat, disease, old age, as well as the unfortunate cases of stray or feral overpopulation and shelter overcrowding.

Animal shelters nationwide try their hardest to find homes for animals elsewhere, including other shelters in the area, hospices, and foster families. Unfortunately due to best efforts our government spends approximately \$2 billion dollars to round up, house, kill, and dispose of homeless animals.

"We do our best for our animals, we give them a chance for hopes to either adopt them out or relocate them somewhere else," said Bernhardt.

Photos and story by Samantha Quinn



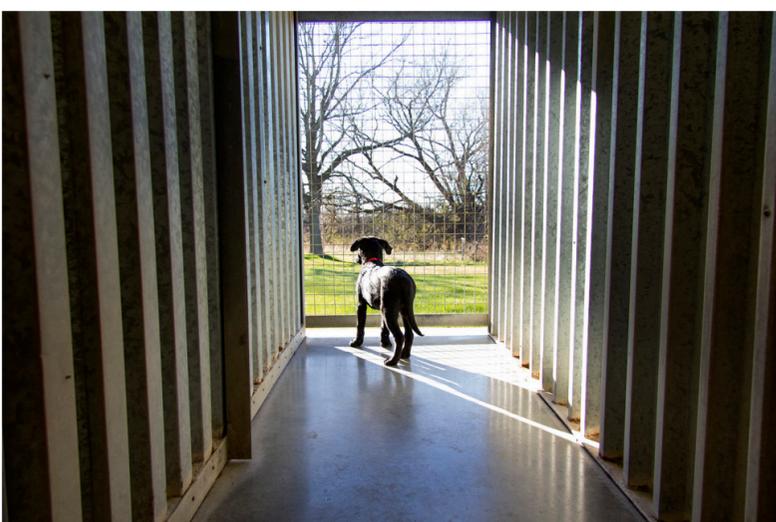
A co-op bring in the male dogs from the outside cages at the Quinte Humane Society. All of the dogs at the shelter spend a majority of their time in either the indoor or the outdoor cages unless they are walked by the volunteers.



A child cradles a tabby kitten at the Quinte Humane Society. Once given their shots, many of the kittens are put into playgrounds for people to take out and play with.



The dogs spend most of their time in either the indoor or outdoor cages unless they are being walked or played with. Thankfully the shelter is mostly volunteer oriented and the volunteers spend most of their working hours with the animals of the shelter.



Twelve-week-old unnamed black lab puppy sits in his newly assigned cage at the Quinte Humane Society. Many cats and dogs are either abandoned such as this dog until found a new home.



Many people who choose to adopt from the Quinte Humane Society mail in photos of their newly adopted family members, sometimes even with messages such as this.