

Pet TimesTM

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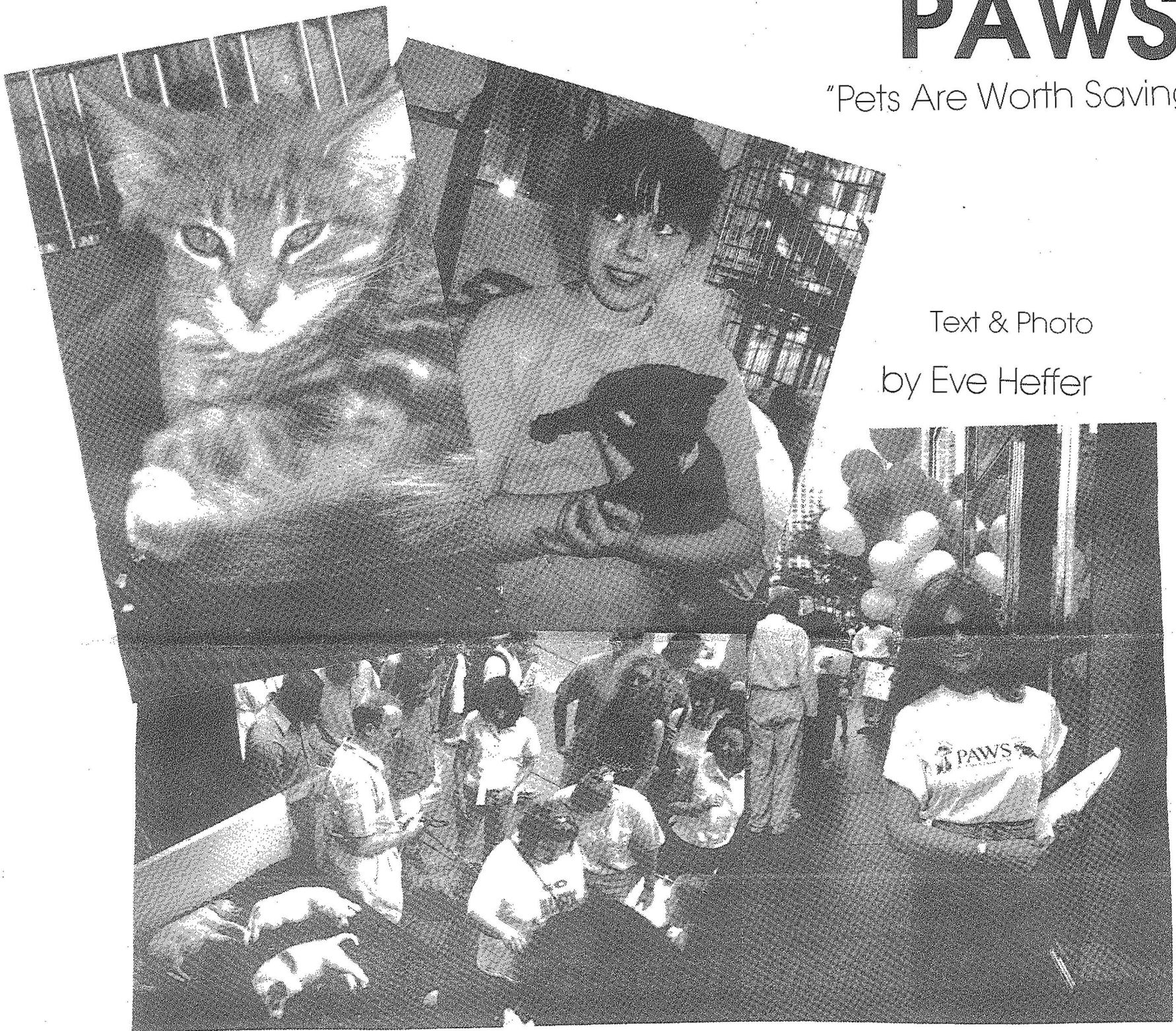
Pet Newspaper

July/August, 1998

CHICAGO WELCOMES PAWS

"Pets Are Worth Saving"

Text & Photo
by Eve Heffer



Have you heard about PAWS? They're a great new group in town, dedicated to changing the sad fate of Chicago's countless numbers of homeless animals. PAWS stands for Pets Are Worth Saving, and the group's aim is to stop the senseless killing and save the lives of thousands of shelter animals each year by helping them find good homes. How are they doing this? Well, since not that many people think of the shelters first when they are getting a pet, PAWS is bringing the pets to the people. Firm believers in the benefits of high visibility, PAWS started by putting

adoptable shelter pets in store windows where lots of people shop on week-ends. The first PAWS Animal Walk on Sunday, May 31st from 12 noon to 5 p.m. at stores along Oak Street and North Michigan Avenue was a great success.

Instead of viewing designer fashions, shoppers at Barney's that afternoon were surprised to see multi-level cat condos featuring kittens from the Anti-Cruelty Society in the show windows. Those frisky fellows captured the attention of so many would-be shoppers, I heard 28 cats got adopted. Strolling down Oak Street you could see cats,

dogs and even rabbits from other shelters, (including the no-kill ones like Feline, Inc., Animal Adoption Associates, Tree House, and Lake Shore Animal Foundation) as well as the city pound, featured in our city's most exclusive boutiques. You could visit with them at the St. John Boutique, Atlas Galleries, Billy Hork Galleries, La Salle Bank, Ralph Lauren, Escada, and FAO Schwartz, among others.

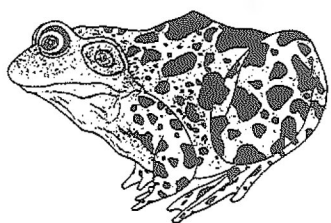
Many of the shelters did on-site adoptions, which is really the best way to make a sale. Colorful balloons marked each location, and you could see PAWS

volunteers at each one distributing brochures called "Angels With Tails" created by Ogilvy & Mather, featuring PAWS information as well as thank you's and ads for all the participating sponsors. Volunteers also helped shelter personnel meet and greet, and in some cases even drove people to shelter headquarters to complete the adoptions.

The weather was perfect, which helped bring people out. All along the street you could see people of all ages admiring the kittens and puppies. I later heard the blond mixed labs at Ralph Lauren, who were such a big

hit with the kids, all found homes. And further down on Oak Street, the folks from the city pound, who started the day with an assortment of mixed breed pups and tabby cats, reported only three dogs were left. Among the cutest and most popular displays I saw were those from the Animal Welfare League in Chicago Ridge at FAO Schwartz. They were showing pets available for adoption in cages right next to their stuffed counterparts. This store was one of the most crowded. I'm not sure what their count was, but during the brief time I spent there, I saw quite a few people exiting carrying those cardboard cat carriers. Later I heard that 85 out of the 110 animals shown that day found homes.

That afternoon proved to be such a success, people were asking when the next PAWS Animal Walk would be. With so many animals waiting for adoption, it didn't make any sense to wait a year. So they have scheduled the next one, "Adoption on Armitage" for Sunday, July 26th, at Armitage and Halsted Street, with local stores and shelters participating. Meanwhile, the North Community Bank Facility, at 2335 North Clark Street, has started hosting a weekly on site adoption event for Chicago Pound dogs, every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Last year the CHICAGO SUN TIMES ran a feature charging that over 40,000 animals (most of them once somebody's pet) were put to death in Chicago's shelters in 1996, a record that puts our city among the worst in the country. But despite a reaction of temporary outrage, nothing was done to improve the situation. A reliable source revealed that for 1997 the numbers look even worse. Of the 56,000 animals that were turned in, only 7000 got adopted. You don't want to hear about the other 49,000.

Paula Fasseas, founder of PAWS Chicago, told me that the group has as its mission to raise people's awareness to the crisis of animal homelessness and to work toward making Chicago a "no kill" city that places 100% of its adoptable pets. A big part of it is an educational program. People need to learn to look to shelters instead of breeders or pet stores when choosing an animal companion. Studies show that shelter animals make the best pets, and our aim is to make more people aware of this fact, so that more of them will make a choice that will put hundreds of cats and dogs in homes instead of cages.

Next, people need to understand how important it is to spay and neuter. The uncontrolled breeding of just one pair of cats can quickly populate a neighborhood with hundreds of unwanted animals who live in the street.



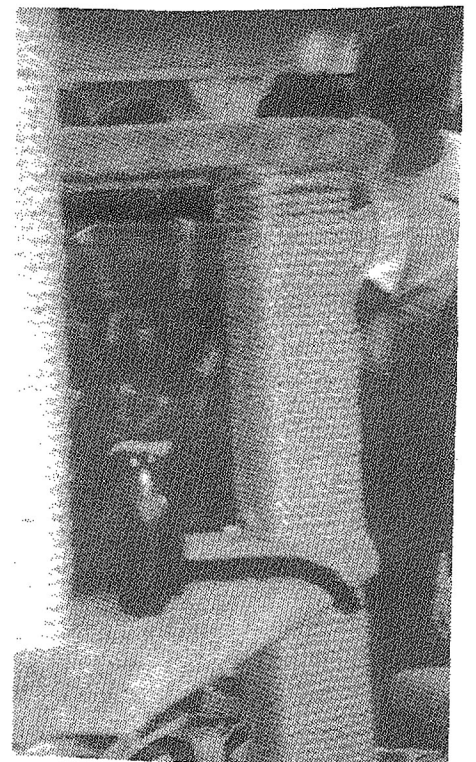
Providing free neutering services to underprivileged neighborhoods is also on the agenda, geared to overcoming some cultural biases among those who object, or those who claim they lack the funds or transportation to get their pet to the vet. Often any excuse will do for them, but you know in the end it's the animals who are left to suffer.

Also being considered are trap-neuter-return programs, like the ones that have succeeded in reducing the populations of homeless cats in other parts of the country. They have one in San Diego, and now even in Pittsburgh has caught on. What I'm talking about is a "feral fix" designed for caregivers who encounter alley cats (many of whom have never been touched by human hands) to teach them how to trap them, bring them in for free neutering, and

return them to their neighborhoods. The program would include an educational workshop designed to teach feral caregivers how to trap, provide cages, and enlist volunteers help capture.

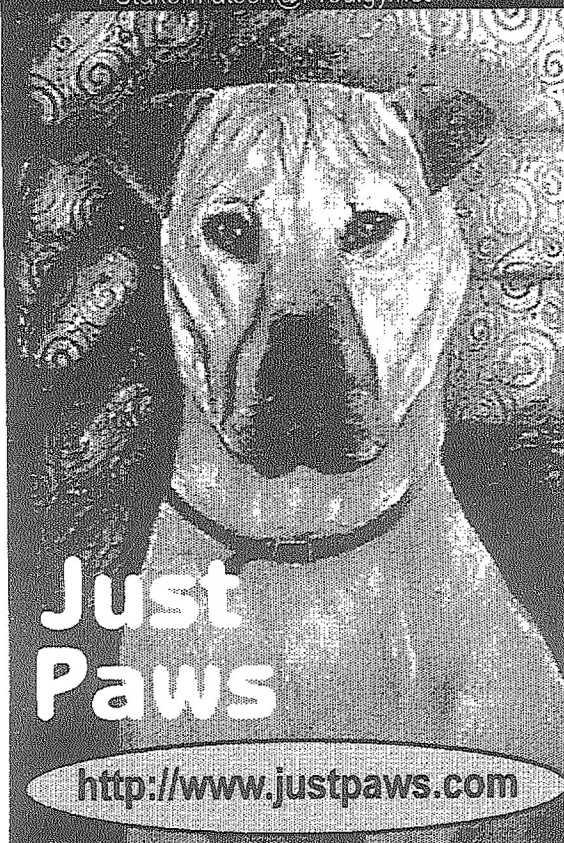
Further down the road there are plans to develop a web site, linking all the shelters and their clients, providing lists of lost as well as adoptable animals. You know, there is really a need for this. Many people haven't a clue about the shelters. Of course that doesn't mean they can't find out. But in places like San Francisco and now even Las Vegas, there's a greater effort now to place 100% of adoptable animals in homes. With determined effort and the support of a lot of concerned people, I'm sure there's also a good chance to succeed here as well.

For further information about PAWS contact Paula Fasseas at 773/244-3248.



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