

Sox General Manager Ken Williams and about 30 players, coaches and their families got a VIP tour of the White House on Monday and a brief meeting with the president. **TALK, PAGE 3**

## OBAMA: FIRST 100 DAYS

### Following FDR's path

So far, Barack Obama's presidency looks a lot like the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's. But a lot can change after the first 100 days in the White House. **NEWS FOCUS, PAGE 4**



### Economy's latest victim: Midway deal

Mayor Daley's deal to privatize the airport falls apart, but city gets to keep \$126 million. **PAGE 17**

**Clout Street:** How independent is aldermanic Class of '07? **PAGE 7**

### Goodman play wins Pulitzer Prize

Lynn Nottage's "Ruined" is best drama.

LIVE!

List of journalism winners.

PAGE 15



## WEATHER



See Tom Skilling's forecast on the back of Live! **SECTION 3**



Bruiser, whose owner put the boxer in foster care at PAWS Chicago, waits to be placed with a temporary family. **CHARLES CHERNEY/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

# BRUISER NEEDS A BAILOUT

More people in financial crisis  
choosing to give up beloved pets

**By Sara Olkon**  
TRIBUNE REPORTER

When people showed up to give away their dogs and cats at a local shelter last year, the main reasons they cited were "no time" and accidental pet pregnancies. This year, the No. 1 reason is a lot simpler: no money.

As the recession takes hold, Chicago animal control workers are taking in about 11 percent more pets than they did a year ago. And shelters are caring for more high-priced pets, including purebred and "designer" dogs, as people who are unaccustomed to economic distress start feeling the pinch.

Animal care workers are seeing more neglected pets, as well as animals who have had ID chips implanted, indicating that someone loved and cared for them before the financial downturn made ownership untenable.

"People are making very hard choices," said Rochelle Michalek, executive director of PAWS Chicago, a no-kill shelter. "Do I put food

Please turn to **Page 11**



Take your family out to the ballgame on the cheap.

**IN SPORTS, PAGE 6**

## Art Institute is told to repeal fee hike

Alderman tries to block increase, cut price for residents

By Hal Dardick  
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Saying the Art Institute of Chicago isn't affordable for many city residents, Ald. Ed Burke (14th) Monday increased the pressure on the world-famous museum to reverse its looming 50 percent increase for admission.

Burke, chairman of the Finance Committee, pushed through a resolution urging the Chicago Park District to repeal the increase it approved in March and force the museum to offer reduced fees for Chicagoans.

The full City Council is expected to vote Wednesday on the resolution, but aldermen have no authority over the Park District Board of Commissioners, whose members are appointed by Mayor Richard Daley. Park Board President Gery Chico was out of town and unavailable for comment.

The fee increase, which takes effect May 23, will raise general admission to \$18 from \$12, and student

and senior admission to \$12 from \$7. But the museum notes that, unlike now, the new fees will include the costs of exhibitions.

In return for the museum's annual property tax subsidy, which totals about \$6.6 million a year, the institution should provide reduced fees for city residents who pay the taxes, Burke said. The Museum of Science and Industry, the Field Museum and the Shedd Aquarium all offer reduced fees to Chicagoans, he said.

"If they want to be a private institution and do whatever they want, that's fine," Burke said. "Once they accept taxpayer dollars, it's a different story."

In an exchange of letters with Burke, Art Institute President James Cuno noted admission is free "401 hours per year."

Admission is free Thursday evenings all year, Friday evenings in the summer and all of February, he said. Children 11 and younger, city school groups and active-duty military personnel always get in free. All Chicago students on school trips also get a free family pass.

hdardick@tribune.com



Alex McLellan (left) and Meredith Rock are foster parents to Hamper. CHARLES CHERNEY/TRIBUNE PHOTO

## More people amid crisis forced to give up pets

Continued from Page 1

on the table? Do I feed my kids? It's heartbreaking."

Jeff Lapp, 47, is among those making difficult choices.

The Braidwood man was laid off from his job as a personnel investigator last June. By March, Lapp and his wife had lost their home. With four dogs to care for, they decided their two youngest and healthiest dogs would have the easiest time getting adopted. Lapp called Midwest Dachshund Rescue, which found a new home for 2-year-old Sammie. They brought Thor, a 6-year-old Norwegian elkhound, to PAWS, where he was snapped up within two days.

"You feel like you let them down," Lapp said of letting the two go.

For now, the motel where they are staying is letting them keep Rex, a purebred golden retriever who is 11 and has epilepsy, and Art, an elkhound-coyote mix who the couple found orphaned and rolling in mud a decade ago in Aurora.

At Chicago Animal Care and Control, staff took in 11.5 percent more animals that were lost, abandoned or surrendered in the quarter ending March 31 as compared with a year ago. Charles Craft, director of programs and services, said 5,201 animals were taken in during that period, versus 4,666 from the same period in 2008.

Some pet owners bring in animals in need of expensive veterinary care. In one case, a pet owner turned in a 7-year-old toy poodle that had multiple mammary tumors, staff later learned. The dog received surgery and was adopted, Craft said.

In March, Nadine Walmsley, vice president of devel-

opment for the Anti-Cruelty Society in Chicago, watched as 33 pets were relinquished by owners citing poor finances. In March 2008, only four pet owners cited money as the reason, she said.

About twice as many dogs who end up homeless these days appear to have come from good homes: Their coats look good, they are plump and they are well-socialized, Walmsley said.

"They were in a very stable environment—and suddenly they are in a cage," Michalek said.

The difficulties can reduce the most stoic of pet owners to tears. In February, Rebecca Weeks' divorce was finalized, shortly before her family's Bartlett home went into foreclosure. Forced to crash with friends, she was heartbroken to learn that she couldn't take along Hamper, her 4-year-old collie-Rottweiler-shepherd mix.

Desperate, Weeks searched online and learned that PAWS Chicago had a foster program for pet owners in crisis. A week after she left Hamper at PAWS, a family scooped him up for safekeeping. Weeks plans to take Hamper back by the end of the month, after she moves into her own home.

"They say he is getting along with everybody," said Weeks, 29, who gets updates from PAWS staffers but isn't allowed to visit Hamper during his foster stay.

Similarly, dogs named Sasha and Kaiser had to adjust to life at PAWS Chicago's Little Village shelter after their owner lost her home in unincorporated Hinsdale.

"All my reserves were gone," said Maria D., 48, a real estate agent who didn't want her full name published because she was ashamed of temporarily giving up her dogs. She is now living with

### Some resources for pet owners

**PAWS Chicago:** Runs a safe-haven program to provide temporary foster homes for pets of families in crisis. The group also runs a pet food bank. Call 773-475-9426 or go to [pawschicago.org](http://pawschicago.org).

**Anti-Cruelty Society:** Provides short-term accommodations for pets whose owners are in crisis. Call 312-644-8338, ext. 354, or go to [anticruelty.org](http://anticruelty.org) and click on "S.A.F.E. Program."

**Animal Welfare League:** Offers a pet food pantry once a month for people age 65 or older or those on public assistance. Call 773-667-0088 or go to [animalwelfareleague.com](http://animalwelfareleague.com).

**Tree House Humane Society:** The no-kill cat shelter offers a cat food pantry. Call 773-784-5488 or go to [treehouseanimals.org](http://treehouseanimals.org).

### Court takes pit bull case

Supreme Court accepts case involving pit bull videos: [chicago.tribune.com/dogvideo](http://chicago.tribune.com/dogvideo)

her adult daughter in Burr Ridge, a home where the dogs are not welcome.

Since March 31, Maria's dogs have shared quarters at PAWS while staff members search for a foster home. The program is designed to accommodate 30-day foster stays, although pet owners in crisis sometimes request more time, Michalek said. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, people end up relinquishing ownership.

Of course, animal welfare

workers would rather owners bring their pets to a shelter than leave the animals to their own devices.

Sandra Alfred, acting executive director at Chicago Animal Care and Control, said her staff members have been picking up more and more ostensibly "lost" dogs who are outfitted with microchip IDs—tiny chips injected under the animal's skin that contain the owner's contact information.

"We call, and they say, 'Um, we can't take him back,'" Alfred said.

True street animals seem to have an easier time in the shelters, observers said. Perhaps the animals appreciate the steady food supply. Once-pampered animals, on the other hand, often experience terrible stress, bark and pant like mad and obsessively pace in circles inside their cages, Michalek said.

At PAWS Chicago, 35 percent to 40 percent of the dogs are purebreds, up from 20 percent to 25 percent in previous years. On a recent day, a sampling of such dogs at the Little Village shelter included a 6-month-old golden retriever; a young, fluffy white Samoyed; and an 8-year-old Pomeranian who likes to eat wet food only.

Their fate hints at a new desperation that many pet lovers never expected to face.

Allison Rhode, a house painter from Rogers Park, placed her dog, Dollar, in PAWS foster care after she was evicted from her apartment. She took him back a little more than a month later, after she settled into a new place.

Pets "make you forget about hard times," she said. "They are the one thing that helps you get through."

solkon@tribune.com

## Illinois schools to get \$1.4 billion from U.S.

The spigot of stimulus money intended to improve Illinois schools and avert federal layoffs has opened, federal officials said Monday.

Illinois will receive nearly \$1.4 billion to prevent layoffs and program cuts during the next two years. Some of the money could reach local schools within days, according to Gov. Pat Quinn's office.

Quinn has said about \$1 billion will be used to pay down the state's backlog of bills to school districts and avoid funding cuts, according to a spokeswoman.

Unpaid bills total more than \$1 billion as part of an overall \$3.6 billion backlog, a spokeswoman for the state comptroller's office said.

The governor plans to use the remaining money to increase the amount of per-pupil funding for the next school year to \$6,089, up \$130, as recommended by the state education agency. But the state budget must still be approved by the legislature before schools can count on that amount.

Illinois may apply for an additional \$678 million in school stabilization money this fall.

Also, Illinois schools have begun to receive another \$1 billion in stimulus funds targeted for specific programs, such as those that serve disadvantaged children and those with disabilities.

The state has received about half of that money.

## Latinos in city schools suffer from crowding, group says

Bolstered by a report indicating that Latino neighborhoods and students are severely affected by crowded Chicago schools, the head of a Latino community group on Monday asked Gov. Pat Quinn to use federal stimulus money to build 28 schools.

Flanked by half a dozen aldermen and a state senator representing heavily Latino areas of the city, members of the United Neighborhood Organization, or UNO, noted that of 64 crowded neighborhood elementary schools, 44 had a majority Latino student body.

The report, titled School Overcrowding: Limiting Hispanic Potential, was funded by the organization, which runs eight charter campuses for Chicago Public Schools. The report notes that of the 63,000 students

who attend a crowded school, 78 percent are Latino, said Juan Rangel, UNO's chief executive officer.

Officials said the Blagojevich administration failed to fund school construction and ignored crowded schools in Latino areas.

School officials then put schools in those areas on multitasked schedules and used cafeterias, hallways and storage closets as classrooms, Rangel said.

"Our kids get short-changed," Rangel said.

Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago) also called on Quinn to earmark money in the state's next budget to ease crowding in the Latino neighborhoods.

"We have a one-time opportunity," Sandoval said. "The message to Gov. Quinn today is don't leave our children behind."