

Cheers to helping PAWS

Instead of covering a charity ball, our columnist heads to her favorite charity to see how your donations help homeless animals

BY LEE LITAS

Trend Columnist

In the spirit of the season we thought we would interrupt this regularly scheduled column, which normally features parties and galas, to give everyone pause for thought on why everyone at those parties and galas is actually celebrating.

Even though each week we focus on the total amount of funds raised at each event and what the various charitable organizations do with those funds, we recognize that pictures can speak louder than words and that the focus of an organization's hard work may sometimes be lost in the clink of a champagne glass.

So today we thought we'd take a closer look at one such organization — PAWS Chicago, the city's largest no kill humane organization, to see what it is the partygoers are actually cheering about.

On Nov. 11 PAWS held its 10th annual Fur Ball gala at the Drake Hotel. The pet-friendly soiree raised a record \$750,000 for the non-profit organization, which relies on donor support and

fundraising from events such as the Fur Ball to fulfill its life-saving mission.

Donor support has enabled PAWS to create, among other things, the GusMobile — a spay and neuter clinic “on wheels” in which veterinarians drive to low-income areas to perform surgeries free of charge in an effort to help reduce pet overpopulation.

As recently as 1997, the number of homeless pets killed in Chicago was a whopping 42,561. Since PAWS Chicago took its to the public, that number has been reduced by more than half to 19,701 pets euthanized in 2006.

And while financial resources are important, PAWS Executive Director Rochelle Michalek stressed: “So is time. Our volunteers enable us to dedicate those financial resources to life-saving programs.”

Last year volunteers contributed more than 29,100 hours of support to PAWS.

We think that is something to celebrate indeed!

See the whole story in our feature video presentation on PAWS Chicago at www.pioneerlocal.com.



Winnetka Animal Hospital Veterinarian Kurt Miller of Wilmette and his son Nolen, a junior at North Shore Country Day School, volunteer at PAWS Chicago. Kurt fosters animals in need of medical attention and Nolen volunteers at both the adoption center and a spay and neuter clinic. | ALL PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO BY RYAN PAGELOW-SUN-TIMES MEDIA



Lee Litas, from left, of Vernon Hills shares a cuddle with a cat at PAWS Chicago. Rochelle Michalek serves as the organization's executive director. The columnist takes the dogs to the streets with volunteers Jeffrey Shanken and Michael Yetrnikoff.