

Finding **Forever** Families



*Shelter's Mission to Rescue
and Find Homes for Abandoned,
Injured and Homeless Pets*

By Chaille Holt : Photos Ashley G. Quinn



When Loch Ness showed up at Sierra's Haven for New and Used Pets, she was missing one ear and was unable to chew because of a broken jaw and terrible scarring along one side of her face. The calico cat had been surviving in a McDonald's dumpster by sucking food through a small opening in the front of her mouth. Loch Ness is tiny; it was assumed she was a kitten, but upon examination,

she was found to be around two years old, her growth stunted by malnutrition. Sierra's Haven held fundraisers to pay for Loch Ness to have a \$2,500 corrective surgery at Ohio State University's School of Veterinary Medicine. Despite horrific injuries, probably inflicted by getting caught in an automobile's fan belt and the harsh lifestyle she had lived, she is a very sweet, trusting animal who loves purring and being held. She has been adopted into a forever family and now eats with great enthusiasm.

with the concept of Sierra's Haven and began forming a board of directors, and after five years of fundraising and planning, her dreams came to fruition.

The shelter is run by a staff of eight and a group of volunteers who work to provide medical treatment and housing for approximately 80 dogs and puppies and 200 cats and kittens who are available for adoption. All pets housed there have been spayed or neutered, are up-to-date on vaccinations and are on heartworm prevention as of the date they are adopted. Sierra's Haven also provides spaying and neutering to animals belonging to low-income families for a fee of \$15. From 2006 to the present, the shelter has saved the lives of nearly 6,300 animals.

It costs approximately \$250,000 annually to operate Sierra's Haven, which is a non-profit organization. Funds are gained through pet adoption and relinquishment fees, fundraisers such as yard sales and raffles, spaying/neutering fees, grants, and donations by individuals and businesses. A few of the businesses that contribute to Sierra's Haven include the Southern Ohio Medical Center, Applebee's, Glockner Chevrolet, the Scioto Foundation and the Marting Foundation. With the continued success of such fundraisers, future plans include expanding Sierra Haven's foster home program and enriching the animals' environment through the addition of more playgrounds and other outdoor amenities.

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- Dr. Gail Counts



"It can be disheartening at times, working so hard and always taking in so many animals. Sometimes, it seems that we're not making much of an impact. Then you realize that since we opened, the county pound has gone from euthanizing around 2,000 animals per year to less than 50 per month," said Dr. Counts, who also emphasizes that the number one cause of death in dogs and cats is euthanasia. Spaying and neutering is a valuable tool in lowering the number of unwanted animals that are euthanized. According to a study published by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, one unfixed cat with its mate can potentially be the starting point for more than 670,000 kittens during the course of seven years.

Dr. Gail, when asked what people can do to help homeless animals, said, "I wish people would consider a shelter before they go out and buy a pet somewhere. There are so many great little animals out there already, and generally, the shelter animals are healthier, they're already fixed and they are so happy to have a home and somebody to love them. Also, I would like people to consider giving locally when they feel a need to donate. Look at the people in your community who are really working hard, putting themselves out there and using your money right. Sierra's Haven is also always looking for volunteers." **RM**



Dr. Gail Counts

INFO:

For further information on pet adoption, the spaying/neutering program and donating



time, funds or supplies to Sierra's Haven, go to their website at www.sierrashaven.org, send an email to sierrashaven@hotmail.com or call or visit the shelter.

Sierra's Haven for New and Used Pets

80 Easter Drive
 Portsmouth, Ohio 45662
 (740) 353-5100
 Open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday by appointment