

PALOS  VERDES

PENINSULA NEWS

www.pvnews.com

Your Source for Local News Since 1937

© 2006 The Copley Press Inc.

PV on the Net Keeps Pets Safe

By Shanna Thompson

News Staff Writer (June 6, 2002)

All creatures great and small may benefit from Palos Verdes on the Net's latest undertaking.

In its ongoing quest to “provide services and enhance the quality of life using computer technology and the Internet,” the organization is in the initial stages of developing an animal-abuser database. When completed, it will serve as a resource for pet-rescue groups to ensure an animal is not adopted by someone who has been convicted of animal abuse.

“Over the past five or six years, we've received a lot of e-mails ... that talk about repeat animal abusers who have been convicted and then will continue to adopt or acquire animals,” said Ted Vegvari, director of PV on the Net. “We decided we would put together a database and invite people who love animals and support animals' rights ... to provide us with [newspaper] clippings or even go to the courthouses and pull the dockets and information of the conviction ... and fax, e-mail or mail us a copy of the conviction so that we can add it to our database.” Vegvari realized that database was necessary after finding out that nothing like it currently exists to weed out animal abusers. “Because of more and more of this type of activity occurring ... PV on the Net spoke with several organizations [and asked], ‘Is there any way that you can find out who these people are before you provide them with an animal?’ And the answer has been ‘no,’” Vegvari said. “We've searched the Internet, and we can't find a database of any kind that would help organizations identify these individuals prior to giving them an animal. It's timely, that's for sure. I believe all living creatures deserve a fair shake, and that's why we're supporting this project.”

The database will be accessible after PV on the Net collects several hundred names of convicted animal abusers – hopefully in two to three months, Vegvari said. Animal adoption agencies and vets can search the database by name, and newspaper clippings will be posted after being verified. And how will PV on the Net collect all these conviction records?

“We are really counting on the primary source of this information to be kindhearted people who run across an article and who know about us,” he said. “What we would really like is the cut-out article itself because we want to prevent any phony submissions. Preferably [we want] the whole page of the newspaper because that's nearly impossible to forge.”

To help with Vegvari's endeavor, PV on the Net has teamed up with Dr. Cassie Jones, veterinarian and owner of Point Vicente Animal Hospital in Rancho Palos Verdes, who will assist in an advisory capacity.”

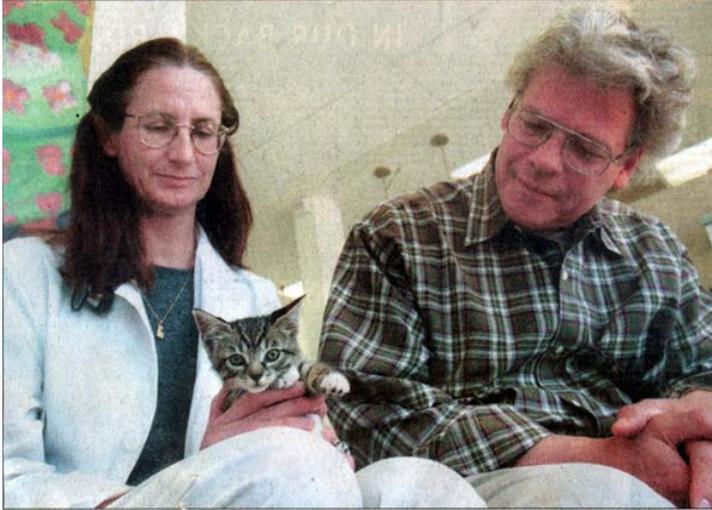


Photo by Tom Underhill

Ted Vegvari looks on while Dr. Cassie Jones holds a kitten that is up for adoption. PV on the Net's animal-abuser database will help ensure pets like this one get safe homes.

“Cassie has an incredible reputation for caring and quality of care. She's in it with all her heart,” Vegvari said. “It's important that Cassie is available to help us with questions ... because you have to have an expert; you need a team of experts to do something like this properly.”

Animal abuse happens more often than people realize, Jones said, and this database will help identify people who should not be pet owners.

“It's probably a lot more prevalent than we know because convicted animal abuse is probably the tip of the iceberg,” she said. “If we do have a client or patient where we are suspecting abuse, this way we would be able to look on the web and make sure that person has never been convicted.”

According to Jones, animal abuse falls into many categories, from physical harm to neglect, to unintentional harm due to a lack of knowledge about the needs of a pet.

“Many times animal abuse is well-intended. People think they are doing the right thing but end up almost caring too much,” she said. “They take on more than they can handle. Then they are unable to care for all the pets they end up collecting. And that can result in convictions for animal abuse because they can't afford to take care of 400 rabbits, for example, or 250 cats.”

Bona Tucker, founder of PetSave Foundation in Torrance, knows firsthand how much the animal-abuser database will help rescue agencies place pets in good homes. “It would be one of the tools we use for adoption screenings; it would be a power tool in a way. Right now, what we have to go by is instinct, interviewing a person and getting a feel of their intent,” she said. “We have a questionnaire and we do a home check, but if someone is an animal abuser, you could assume they may be well-versed in hiding that fact from you.”

Inherent in the work of an adoption agency, said Tucker, is the risk that an animal could be placed in a dangerous home, despite the organization's good intentions.

“It's probably a lot more prevalent than we know because convicted animal abuse is probably the tip of the iceberg. If we do have a client or patient where we are suspecting abuse, this way we would be able to look on the web and make sure that person has never been convicted.”

- Dr. Cassie Jones

“One of our worst fears as a rescuer is having to rescue the same animal twice,” she said. “[The database] is one more thing to help you feel like trusting a person you are giving one of your precious babies to. I think it's an excellent idea.”

To help PV on the Net collect information for the animal-abuser database, send newspaper clippings of reported convictions to AnimalAbusers.com, c/o PV on the Net, 30940 Hawthorne Blvd., Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. For more information, visit www.animalabusers.com, or e-mail reportabuse@animalabusers.com.