

Gregory's overcomes hurdles to rescue animals

BY JACKIE GRUMISH
Staff Correspondent

NEW RICHMOND — When the Pierce County Humane Society closed its doors several years ago, Colleen O'Shaughnessy knew she had to take action.

At the time O'Shaughnessy operated a small animal rescue facility. It wasn't until 2006 that she took the steps to have it become an official nonprofit organization.

"We're here. We've been here for six and a half years," O'Shaughnessy said.

Although there are local groups attempting to get an animal facility up and running, O'Shaughnessy said it's too much talk and not enough action.

"We're here taking care of them," she said as she motioned to the dozens of animals housed at Gregory's. "We've been here while they're just sitting on the money waiting for a \$1 million building."

O'Shaughnessy admits it would be wonderful to have a state-of-the-art facility for the animals, but she said it's more important to have an operating facility than a dream.

"We've had four dogs in a few days," she said. "We've had to go out and rescue them from the cold. Without us, where are these animals going to go?"

Many of the abandoned or surrendered animals come from owners who blame the economy for their troubles.

"This is not an economy situation," O'Shaughnessy said. "That's just an excuse. This is an irresponsibility situation. Don't get a pet because it's cute and furry."

Along with the economy issue, many pet owners also



Colleen O'Shaughnessy, with one of her rescue dogs, founded Gregory's Gift of Hope in 2003. O'Shaughnessy says it's her duty to be a voice for "those who speak another language."

blame behavior for the reason for a surrender.

"Behaviors can be remedied," she said. "We just need to provide education and keep these animals in their homes."

Gregory's Gift of Hope, 1374 Hwy. 65, is an animal rescue unlike any other local organization.

"We're not of the humane society mentality," she said referring to the humane society's euthanasia policy. "I understand that mentality, but I will never agree with it."

Gregory's is a no-kill facility, O'Shaughnessy said. Some of the animals living at the shelter have been there for more than two years.

Though the facility is housed in New Richmond, the animals there come from all over the county and country.

"We have animals from Hudson and River Falls," she said. "Just because we're based in New Richmond, doesn't mean all of our animals come from here."

O'Shaughnessy said she's

worked hard to make Gregory's Gift of Hope into what it is today, but she could not have done it without the community's support.

On Dec. 11, Gregory's hit a major hurdle when the roof of its indoor arena collapsed under the weight of heavy snow.

The damage, while inconvenient, hasn't stopped Gregory's from helping its four-legged friends.

"We've continued to take in dogs and cats from the coun-

ty," O'Shaughnessy said. "A few have gone to foster care. Others have been adopted."

O'Shaughnessy said donations started arriving shortly after the collapse. From cleaning supplies to monetary donations, nothing went unnoticed.

"It's still filtering in," she said. "And we owe everyone a huge thank you. I can't even imagine what it would've been like. We would've made it through, but it was amazing."

Gregory's isn't one to ask for much, O'Shaughnessy said. "We're not big on putting our hand out to people," she said. "We've been operating. We just ask for help with what's already up and running."

Although the collapse eliminates the use of an indoor exercise facility, O'Shaughnessy said it did bring awareness to the community.

"We've gotten so many things," she said. "People have been great."

Repair work on the indoor run is scheduled to begin later this week, she said. At that time, the animals being sheltered at the facility will be moved to another building on the property.

"I'm not sure I want anyone in here when the work is being done," she said. "I just want to make sure everything is safe."

Local vets, including Countryside Vet, Somerset Animal Clinic and New Richmond Vet Clinic, along with many volunteers and a few national organizations — Humane Society of the United States and The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals — have been in contact with O'Shaughnessy to help wherever needed.

"We were underinsured," O'Shaughnessy said of the policy on the building, "but we're going to rebuild it better and get the best for our money."

O'Shaughnessy said she hopes to include additional kennels in the rebuild.

"As the only facility in the county, we're kind of being forced to grow," she said. "We're expanding to fit the need."

Although they're bursting at the seams, O'Shaughnessy said it takes just one look into the eyes of an abandoned animal to make her remember why she does what she does.

"These animals are not garbage," she said. "Would you put your mother or your family member out on the curb?"

When looking for a pet, O'Shaughnessy urges people to consider a rescue animal.

"They're not the rejects," she said. "I'm already doing what I can for them — and I will until I can't."

Gregory's Gift of Hope is in need of your support. To help "those who speak another language," please consider donating:

Dog toys, cat toys, cat litter (clumping only, please), one office desk chair, HP5180 black printer cartridges, Febreze, Purina cat chow, Purina kitten chow, Purina dog chow, little bites, fit and trim, one, Beneful healthy weight and healthy morsels, paper towels, Odoban (Home Depot and Sam's Club carries this product), fleece blankets, gift cards/certificates to Countryside Vet, Somerset Animal Clinic and New Richmond Vet Clinic (any dollar amount), gently used rugs, blankets, sheets and towels.

Homeless shelter in River Falls eyes new location

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN
dgriffin@rivertowns.net

The volunteers operating Our Neighbors' Place, a River Falls-based homelessness initiative, are seeking approval of a special-use permit to establish a shelter in a different location rather than its current location at 235 W. Johnson St.

ONP seeks the permit for a four-plex building at 215 W. Cedar St., which sits between Lewis and Clark streets a block north of City Hall.

ONP asked the River Falls Plan Commission at its Jan. 4 meeting to approve the permit.

It will take its request for a final decision to the City Council at its Jan. 11 meeting. ONP also plans to formally ask for the \$120,000 it has been planning to borrow from the city to help buy a building.

It plans to buy the Cedar Street property before the end of January and repay the loan within three years.

City Planner Tony Steiner confirmed what an internal memorandum says: The Plan Commission will recommend that the council approve the special-use permit.

ONP operates a Day Center

on Riverwalk and a Backpack Program to feed hungry children on weekends. It began in the fall a capital campaign — the Campaign for Hope — with a goal of raising enough money to take advantage of grants and buy the eight-plex building at 235 W. Johnson St.

There it has been leasing space in which to house the homeless and plans to honor those leases until they expire later this year.

The capital campaign did not yield the money needed to buy the Johnson Street property, so ONP began seeking a building it could afford and found the four-plex on Cedar.

If the organization gets the special-use permit for the Cedar Street property, it would continue renting apartments in the Johnson Street property until the lease(s) expire.

Says ONP board member Mary Joan Sutton in a Dec. 17 letter to the Plan Commission: "The tough economic climate has not made that (eight-plex) possible and recently we have had to accept that we need to look for a smaller building."

She says the Cedar Street building has four two-bedroom apartments and off-street parking in an area that is



Our Neighbors' Place set its sights on a different location — a four-plex building at 215 W. Cedar St. — to house families in need from Pierce and St. Croix counties.

already high-density residential.

Steiner said the city sent notices Dec. 21 to the people living within 300 feet of ONP's target property. He said as of Monday, Jan. 3, he had not had

anyone contact him with concerns about the requested permit.

Steiner said the city also provided ONP with a list of neighbors nearby the property. He knew the organization had

also conducted a notification campaign.

A memo from Steiner to the Plan Commission says the special-use permit complies with the law and requirements including a complete applica-

tion, correct zoning and fitting with the city's comprehensive plan, which calls for "quality of life with the goal of ensuring the availability of community services."

Now Showing

Movies showing daily at 7:00 & 9:00 pm

Sat & Sun Matinee 2:00 pm

Adults \$3.00

Children \$2.00 (12 and under)

Blockbuster movies at small town prices!

Call for showing!

715-425-2811

Falls Theatre

105 S. Main St. • River Falls

We've Helped Thousands TO HEAR BETTER!

Trust your hearing professionals

AUDIGY CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS

Raising the standards of hearing care

Visit Your Local AudigyCertified™ Audiologists

Michele Drevnick
M.S., F-AAA

Carrie Bell
M.S., F-AAA, CCC-SLP

Kate Bobholz
Au.D.

- Hearing evaluations by licensed audiologists
- 75-day trial of technology
- Locally owned and operated since 1990

Hudson Hospital | Baldwin Area Medical Center | Westfields Hospital
715.338.3179
www.hudsonhearing.com

HUDSON HEARING & Speech Clinic
a member of AUDIGYGROUP®

PORTAGE & MAIN

OUTDOOR WOOD BOILER

Burn 1/3 to 1/2 Less Wood. GET MORE HEAT.

PROVEN EFFICIENT DESIGN INCLUDES

- Multi-pass heat exchanger - maximum heat recovery area of any outdoor boiler/furnace
- Water-cooled grates
- Easy to dump ash pan keeps ash away from firepot to reduce ash insulation
- Double boiler style welded joints
- Strong round firepot requires fewer welds and has less risk of warping or cracking
- Industry's best FULL warranty
- Free Estimates

QUALIFIES FOR \$1,500 FEDERAL TAX CREDIT!

Wood is money, quit burning your money!

STEINER
PLUMBING-ELECTRIC-HEATING INC.
N8230 945th St. River Falls • 715-425-5544
www.steinerinc.net

523108
49-51ep