

## **Northwoods Humane Society – 1 year later**

### **Vallie M. Szymanski – Northwoods Humane Society Board Member**

Holiday reflections....in December of 2019, I was truly humbled by the invitation to join the NHS Board of Directors by its President, Deanna Persson. Lucky me, the Board of Directors approved my nomination.

To say that 2020 has been a remarkable year is an understatement. So what have I learned this past year? Oh let me give you just a partial list...the volunteers, including a very active Board of Directors are many and are totally dedicated "to the animals" who find themselves at the shelter on O'Brien Road, 4 miles east of Hayward, WI on Highway 77. Without flinching and during a global pandemic, these amazing folks just kept on moving forward.

Let's start with the huge revenue success of the Thrift Shop located at 15861 W Third Street, Hayward, WI under the direction of Deanna Persson and Barbara Hoeft. The Shop is run entirely by volunteers who are kept very busy and they have a lot of fun! They sort and price donations and then artfully display the merchandise. Once our valued customers have found their "goodies" they are "checked out" by our skilled cashiers. And there are volunteers who continually mend and launder all sorts of items; clean the store; recycle books and transport the donations that we cannot use to other thrift outlets in the surrounding area.

The Shelter itself is a dream - the facilities include 87 beautiful acres of grounds include two miles of walking trails, an outdoor pavilion for meetings, picnics, and gatherings, and the "Bark Park". The "Bark Park" consists of two outdoor dog parks, one park for large dogs and a separate park for small dogs. Both are open to the community. The primary shelter includes 16 indoor dog kennels, a large outdoor play area for dogs, including outdoor kennels, two large indoor/outdoor cat rooms with 20 cat kennels and play area isolation area for cats in transition, laundry room and food prep area, office and visitation room. The training center includes seven indoor/outdoor runs for dogs in transition, cat isolation area for ill cats, an "Other" room for bunnies/birds/etc, grooming room with walk-in shower, training and indoor exercise area, and storage for food and equipment.

I have personally witnessed on several occasions what the Shelter Staff, led by Alecia Austin do for the animals. I am continually heartened by the compassion they have for the animals. It can be a cat, dog or bunny who may have come from an abusive home situation or one whose "person" has passed away. Or it can be the many homeless puppies, kittens, dogs and cats that descend upon the shelter from near and far. They take the time to work with all of the animals – whether to reassure them that they are safe or to teach a feline to "High Five" for treats. I am especially impressed with their daily and sometimes hourly updates of new arrivals and successful adoptions. They have their finger on the pulse of the current "adoptable animals" and it is just so refreshing! And I am so impressed with all of the volunteers who man the office; clean the shelter; bathe and groom dogs; socialize kittens and puppies and walk dogs on the beautiful trails surrounding the shelter.

And most importantly, the Northwoods Humane Society offers several programs to help pet owners with financial assistance in getting their cats and dogs spayed or neutered. It may be free or at low cost

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for the owner. I have had the opportunity to volunteer at two feline spay and neuter clinics and the pet owners are so grateful.

I could go on and on about the Northwoods Humane Society and all the value that it brings to this community. So after a year, I am sure you have gathered that I am quite content to be a part of such a vibrant organization. I look forward to 2021 as that “bright star” at the top of the NHS holiday tree continues to lead us in such a positive direction.