

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

Over the past several years, I have mentioned the organization OCSA – Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness. OCSA's primary goal is to bring awareness to both men and women about the symptoms of ovarian cancer and to encourage early detection. The symptoms are bloating, pelvic pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, urgency, higher frequency, inability to urinate, difficult menstrual cycles, headaches, unusual weight gain, indigestion, pain, pain with intercourse, constipation. Everyone in the family is affected when a woman is diagnosed with the disease. Men can carry the gene and pass it along to their children.

OCSA advisor Dr. Julian Schink of Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago says, "If you have any of the ovarian cancer symptoms for two weeks or more and you have history of ovarian your mother's side or father's, make an appointment to see your doctor. If your doctor dismisses you concerns? Get another doctor."

What does OCSA have to do with the Northwoods Humane Society? The human/animal bond.

OCSA was inspired by Susan Roman, aka 'Goose' and her dog Bacchus. Susan thought her dog, Bacchus, identified her cancer and helped during recovery. Prior to diagnosis, he laid his head on her abdomen when she tried to do sit ups. He'd never done that before and ultimately his attention spurred her to visit the doctor. After her surgery, he helped her measure recovery as she increased the length of her walk and the pace she could maintain. Joe Farone, of Hayward, WI had a similar tale. However, his dog detected that he had pancreatic cancer before Joe knew.

Over the past 8 years, Dr. Cindy Otto has been doing research at the Penn Vet Working Dog Center (WDC). OCSA has been sponsoring a summer intern that works with Dr. Otto. The WDC has worked for several years, capitalizing on dogs' intense olfactory sense to identify the scent of ovarian cancer – affected cells. Because the dogs have successfully delivered 'the goods,' the next phase is to commercialize the positive results. Dr. Otto is now working with the National Institutes of Health and other entities to create a program including clinical trials in 2022. OCSA board member shared that the dogs can also detect pancreatic cancer which was one of my life challenges. My dog 'Joy' was Susan's dog Bacchus.

OCSA has embraced the Northwoods Humane Society by sponsoring the Purple Cat Van Free Spay and Neuter opportunity for cats, hosted and worked the First Annual 1K dog walk at the shelter, sponsored the Dining for Cats and Dogs at Lynn's Custom Meats and Catering, and promoted NHS at the Farmers Market as well as promoting awareness of Ovarian Cancer.

The following letter was sent to me by Vallie Szymanski, the founder of OCSA and also a NHS Board Member: ***"Deanna - I wanted to share some amazing news with you - I had a conference call with Dr Cindy Otto, and Vicki Berkowitz (her deputy) recently and the ovarian cancer dog sniffing project is moving into a new phase. The project itself will be closed down at Penn Vet WDC because the dogs have successfully delivered "the goods". That also means that the OCSA Veterinary Student Intern program is over. The next phase is to "commercialize" the***

*positive results. She is working with NIH and other entities to create a program that will include clinical trials that will include both ovarian cancer and pancreatic cancer that will begin this year. As it relates to the OCSA Documentary Project - Dr Otto has agreed to a remote interview with her team to talk about this new phase and what it means. She also suggested that we interview all of the OCSA interns over the years because the experience has profoundly changed their lives and they are literally scattered around the world now. She and I are already working on those details. Of course I will let you know how the interviews with Dr. Otto and the OCSA Veterinary Student interns progress in the next 9 months so you can share that with the NHS team. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and OCSA has been a part of it, and we could not have done it without your support.”*

When you look at your dog – remember the power of the ‘nose’!

Dates to Save: March 10 and 24 and April 7 and 21<sup>st</sup> – Bingo at Powell’s on the Lake – 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.