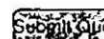


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**ANIMAL SHELTER'S FOUNDER DEVOTED TO ENDING
ANIMAL ABUSE : 'EDUCATION IS THE KEY' TO ENDING
THE ABUSE, SHE ASSERTS.(Jefferson County Post)
(Focus On: Neighbors Column)(Profile)Jean Woolery**Article from St Louis Post-Dispatch (MO) | December 17, 1998 | Seibert, Pamela |
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Jean Woolery of Byrnes Mill, founder of the Jefferson County Humane Society Inc., has a mission. To do everything she can to halt abuse and neglect of animals in Jefferson County.

Woolery grew up in St. Louis, then lived for 20 years in Florida and Texas before returning here nine years ago. While she was away, she and her husband, Ernie, helped set up animal shelters, and the couple also has taken part in searches and rescues of animals during disasters.

But Jean Woolery says she's particularly concerned for the well-being of animals in Jefferson County. After they moved here, she was shocked by the number of strays, dogs that either had been dumped or not properly confined at home. She saw them roaming and sometimes being hit by cars along Highway 30 and other roads, she says.

Jean Woolery says she also saw dogs on chains in yards and suffering because the chains were too short. Also, animals were frequently left outside in extremely hot or cold weather without adequate shelter. She noted that on summer days, water bowls often were empty or that there was no water bowl at all.

"I wanted to do something about it because clearly a lot of animals weren't being properly cared for," said Jean Woolery, 45. "But when I picked up an injured dog off the road and took it to (Jefferson County) Animal Control in Antonio, I realized they had their own set of problems."

Because of insufficient money, the shelter could provide only 16 runs and couldn't keep up with the numbers of lost, neglected or abused animals.

"The wheels in my head started turning, and I knew that sooner or later my job would have to be educating pet owners, one on one, about how to care for their dogs or cats," she said. "I also knew it would be important to follow up every case until the situation was corrected."

For a few years, the work was part time, while Jean Woolery cared for her daughter, Jenna, now 10. But some of the things she was seeing convinced her that her full-time work would have to start sooner rather than later.

Like some other county residents, she was helping strays on her own by taking them to the Humane Society of Missouri in St. Louis or the Animal Protective Association in St. Louis County, or finding veterinary care for the injured ones.

"Ernie and I also checked lost-and-found ads and sometimes were lucky enough to reunite animals with their owners," she said.

At the time, Jean Woolery was hearing horror stories about dogs left to suffocate in hot, parked cars, a pet dog that was stabbed; another that was attacked and killed by strays, one that was killed and skinned - and dozens of other stories.

"But the one that convinced me that we had to start a humane society here with a 24-hour hotline that people could call was the case of Angel," Jean Woolery said.

Angel was a young German shepherd mixture that belonged to a House Springs resident, she says. The dog, kept tied to a tree on a two-foot-long chain, had been left there when the owner went away on vacation, she said.

"Neighbors knew about it but were afraid to get involved," Jean Woolery said. "When one finally did, it was too late."

A sheriff's deputy went to check and found the dog, which had shrunk to a third of its approximately 70-pound normal weight, near death and lying in its own feces, she says.

Angel was taken to a vet but was starved, dehydrated and had severe untreated distemper.

"She died, but at least not at the end of a chain," Jean Woolery said. "Angel was the inspiration I needed to get organized and to set up a hotline."

She emphasized that people who call the number, 836-7585, to report cases of abuse or neglect may do so anonymously.

Jean Woolery and her husband set up the Humane Society at their home but soon realized they would need both moral and financial support to do an adequate job, she says.

"It quickly became more than full-time work," she said. "It couldn't be done with just two individuals."

The Woolerys filed for nonprofit status with the state, and in January 1996 their small shelter became the Jefferson County Humane Society Inc., although not associated with the Humane Society of Missouri. This nonprofit status enables them to receive donations and get assistance from the county sheriff's department in extreme cases. But she emphasizes that the sheriff is called in only as a last resort.

Such was the case with a 3-year-old sharpei named Magoo. On a February day, neighbors reported that the dog was caged in an empty, unheated trailer and the owner was coming twice a week to feed him.

"When my husband went to check, the owner wouldn't let him in, but he could see the dog in its cage, and that its eyelids were curling inward, a problem with sharpers that if left untreated causes blindness," she said. "The dog ended up in our custody, thanks to the sheriff's department."

Corrective surgery was performed, but the dog had lost much of its vision, she says.

"Our goal is to educate pet owners, but when we've been to a site three or four times and don't see any improvements, the sheriff's department can be called in to take over," she said. Animals can be removed from a home in extreme cases, she said.

Abusive owners can be prosecuted, although penalties are often not as stiff as Jean Woolery wishes they were. Nonetheless, she makes every effort to see that cases don't fall through the cracks. Magoo's owner was convicted of neglect.

State law requires pet owners to provide clean water, wholesome food, shelter and health care, she says.

"We follow up on every case, until either the dog is released or taken care of," she said. "We stay on till it's over, even though sometimes it takes a year or more."

Woolery has organized a network of vets who will provide care, such as inoculations, plus emergency treatment at reduced rates or no cost, she says. Also, when donations roll in, Jean Woolery spends the money on certificates for low-income pet owners, who can redeem the certificates at specified veterinary clinics for neutering or spaying services.

"We also serve as consultants and try to place cats or dogs people want to get rid of," she said. "We ask that they not dump the animal but call a pure-bred rescue facility or go to the Animal Protective Association, Humane Society of Missouri, which is open 24 hours, or another local shelter."

A state law against abandonment or dumping went into effect in August, 1998. "While the crime may be hard to prove, the law does serve as a tool," she said.

"Mainly what we want to do is help people become responsible pet owners," Woolery said. She is available to give talks on pet ownership to schools, Scout troops and other groups.

"Education is the key, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes," she said. "We need to educate to make it a humane community."