

Heart of Michigan in The News

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A big heart for dogs and cats Marie Chapin makes animal rescue program her pet project

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By JERRY NUNN, TIMES WRITER

You might think working as a full-time nanny to 17-month-old twins, being active in the Red Hat Society's Cinnamon Hot Flashes and serving on the board of the Midland Citizen's Police Academy Alumni Association, a benevolent community organization, would be enough to keep Marie Chapin of Midland plenty busy.

Yet, Chapin still finds time to dabble in her other pet project.

Last year, that project - Heart of Michigan Animal Rescue - saved and cared for, and eventually placed in homes, about 85 rescued pets, said Chapin, president of Heart of Michigan.

Chapin deserves much of the credit for the group's success, according to members.

"We are making our mark in our own little way and a lot of that is because of Marie," said Kay McEntee, treasurer of Heart of Michigan. "She is very good at organization. She's always recruiting, she's always promoting us.

"We are just her little workers. Marie is the one out pounding the pavement."

Yet, Chapin calls the dependency mutual.

"We work as a team," Chapin said. "I just ask them to be there and they are right there. That's how we get things done."

It appears getting things done is what Chapin's team does best.

In May, the group hosts its annual pet expo, an adoption day invitational that will have at least 12 rescue and adoption groups from across the state convening at the Midland Fairgrounds. For the most part, Heart of Michigan Animal Rescue sticks to dogs and cats, though in the past they have taken in and found homes for a turkey and a pair of geese. Other animal rescue groups in Michigan specialize in horses and donkeys, birds or reptiles, or are breed-specific in the dogs and cats they accept. More than half a dozen will have a presence at the expo, offering pets up for adoption.

"That expo takes a lot of work," said Chapin.

While nearly two dozen front-line members take in and foster the found, unwanted and previously not-care-for for pets, nursing them to health and then adopting them out, Chapin said the other couple dozen supporters help raise funds, transport animals, haul feed and supplies, and help out in other ways.

"We couldn't do it without them. If it wasn't for them it wouldn't get done," she said. "There are a lot of ways they support us. Not everyone has to take in pets."

All rescue groups taking part in the Adoption Expo are non-profit organizations and money raised goes to pay for veterinary care, as well as pet food and supplies. Chapin gives credit to local grocers, pet supply stores and individuals for donations that keep Heart of Michigan afloat.

One of those businesses, PETCO, in Midland, could be viewed as a complement to Heart of Michigan: The pet supply store takes in and adopts animals, but unlike Heart of Michigan, the animal supply store does not handle dogs or cats.

So, every other weekend, PETCO manager Bud Keidel invites Heart of Michigan to display its furry little charges at the store and offer them for adoption.

"I can't say enough good about them," said Keidel, noting the care given and condition of Heart of Michigan's dogs and cats influenced him to open the store's doors to the group.

Keidel said the group's spirit was demonstrated on a pre-Easter weekend, when Heart of Michigan offered public photo opportunities with the Easter Bunny. And exemplifying that spirit was Chapin herself - dressed in the bunny costume.

"She does a lot for the community and a lot for animals," Keidel said. "I haven't seen anyone better or more involved than Marie."

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