

NEWS RELEASE – October 20, 2010

October is Awareness month for pets needing a home

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October is Awareness month for pets needing a home

During the month of October the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is encouraging the adoption of shelter animals and in Clay and Dickinson counties there are plenty of pets looking for homes.

Nationally, the recession is forcing pet owners across the country to give-up animals they can't afford to care for. In a recent article in USA Today, it was reported that animal shelters across the country are overwhelmed with homeless animals.

Locally, the Humane Society of Northwest Iowa and People for Pets are both dependent on the contributions from individuals, families and businesses to keep their doors open. Both are non-profit organizations that must have community volunteers in order to care for all the animals put in their care.

One Northwest Iowa resident and his two rescued dogs are campaigning for the millions of voiceless dogs across the country in hopes their story will improve the quality of life, one dog at a time, as well as put an end to senseless abandonment and death of unwanted pets. The trio is actively promoting Adopt-a-Shelter-Dog month in October.

Lee Youde has been caring for unwanted animals most of his life. It is not surprising that he was involved, along with other local good Samaritans, when a shoot-to-kill order was issued on the Phantom dog roaming the countryside near Spencer. The sheriff's office believed the animal to be a potential traffic hazard.

Because Youde had worked with Kate Whitrock, director of the Humane Society of Northwest Iowa, in the past, Youde drove to Whitrock's office in Milford to request assistance for the abandoned dog. Ultimately it was Dr. Mark Reese, Youde and Whitrock that created the plan that led to the capture of the phantom dog that had been in the wild for over a year.

Youde was later selected by Whitrock to act as a handler and foster home parent for the dog. The bond between the dog and the handler was almost immediate, and on September 3, 2010, Youde officially adopted the dog everyone affectionately called Phantom.

Phantom has adjusted well to her new family, which includes another shelter rescue dog named Nikki. Nikki and Youde are building a relationship with Phantom in her new family via morning walks, playful exercise, clear communication, respect, and lots of love.

"Loving Phantom is easy, she is like having a child that loves you unconditionally and is always there to meet you with affection when you return home," said Youde.

Each of the local shelter organizations charge a fee for adopting, but the fee only defrays some of the costs of each animal's stay and adoption.

Youde says dogs make fantastic companions. "In most cases a new owner can bond with a dog in less than 24 hours."

Living arrangements are important when adopting a pet from shelter. Larger dogs, like Phantom, generally need a bigger space to run around. Anyone living in an apartment might want to consider a smaller breed.

Youde said adopting a shelter dog is a life-long responsibility, and worth it. "I prefer to adopted rescued dogs as it gives them a second chance, and usually you do not have to deal with poppy training a new puppy. And, I believe that 90 percent of rescued dogs turn out to be great dogs as they seem to know that you are their last chance and hope of them having a great home," said Youde.

You can learn more about the Humane Society of Northwest Iowa on their website at <http://humanesocietyofnwia.com> or People for Pets at <http://www.peopleforpets.org/>. Cats are also available for adoption at both shelters. If you'd like to learn more about Phantom and join her in promoting and celebrating Adopt-A-Shelter-Dog month in October, visit her online at www.phantomthedog.com.

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Pictured in photo is rescued shelter dog Nikki, Lee Youde, and the newest member of the family, Phantom.