

Pacific Animal Foundation

www.PacificAnimal.org

PAF and SNAPPS GO TO SCHOOL By Lana Simon

On the bright, sunny morning of May 17th, 4 volunteers on the PAF/SNAPPS team went to Canyon Heights Elementary School in North Vancouver. Right after morning recess, about 25 keen little faces from Grade 3 filed into the school library and sat cross-legged on the carpeted floor.

May is "Be Kind to Animals" month and the PAF/SNAPPS team were there to talk to the children about pet care and how they help with their animals at home. The excited answers ranged from cleaning their pets' food bowls, walking their dogs, and brushing their pets, to filling their water dishes daily as well as playing and cuddling with them. When a child takes part in looking after a beloved pet, it teaches the child responsibility and discipline. It gives them a sense of self-esteem and contributes to the well-being of the pet and the family as a whole.

After this enthusiastic response, we asked the children to imagine how their pet would feel if they forgot to feed it, or the pet was left outside on a dark, rainy night when the rest of the family was inside the house, warm and cozy. Hands shot up and insightful answers came: "neglected, unloved, and lonely" were some of the responses. We led a discussion about how pets have feelings and want to be loved and cared for and not teased or bullied. We drew some parallels about how the children might feel if they themselves were left out of games with friends or called names and how they would react. Would they feel "neglected, unloved, or lonely"? When children learn to extend mercy and kindness to animals, it also teaches them to become more considerate and caring in their relationships with classmates and others.

A unique part of our classroom discussion involves talking about feral cats and a program known world-wide as **Trap/Neuter/Return** or "TNR". It is important for children to learn what a feral cat is, how quickly they can multiply in a community, and what positive steps can be taken to help the cats and lower the numbers of unwanted feral kittens. We explained that the TNR program is humane and the feral cats are not harmed by trapping them and taking them to a veterinarian for spaying and neutering. The children were fascinated by our demonstration in the classroom of how a feral cat trap works. With an explanation of why the cats are too wild to be adopted, the children understood that it makes sense to return the spayed cats to their home environment that is familiar to them, and perhaps lets them live amongst other feral cats. With the mom cats no longer having endless litters of kittens and the dad cats not fighting over females and territory, the children could see that the adult cats could live healthier and calmer lives. We explained that these feral cats have a job to do in every community! Cats are unmatched when it comes to rodent control so, by catching mice and rats, these feral cats reduce the numbers of rodents around our homes, gardens, industrial areas, and businesses. By teaching children a caring, effective way to help reduce feline overpopulation, we give them the tools to be compassionate and successful in a positive way.

Taylor Wheeler of PAF produced some fantastic flash cards in her presentation to explain why declawing a cat is harmful to a cat's health and why chaining a dog often makes the dog fearful, aggressive, and unsocial. Lorrie Cole of SNAPPS explained to the children what her group does on the Squamish Nation reserve in North and West Vancouver. For more information on the Squamish Neighbourhood Animal Partnership and Protection Society (SNAPPS), please visit its website at www.snappsociety.org
The PAF/SNAPPS team has been invited to do a presentation at Norgate Elementary School in June and we are hoping to do many more presentations at schools starting September 2012.



Off to school!



Grab bags for the kids contained PAF & SNAPPS "glow-in the dark" wrist-bands, & kindness fridge magnets.



Lorrie and Taylor set the trap with tuna fish bait! Along comes Sylvester, the feral, and the stuffed cat gets trapped!

