

Score One for Dogs & Cats . . .

by Rod Bunt

Score one for dogs and cats, the local business community and an important non-profit. On August 24, Allen Harris, the President and Founder of Berkshire Money Management, presented a twenty five thousand dollar check to the Eleanor Sonsini Animal Shelter in Pittsfield. The check was presented at "Chamber Night" sponsored by his company.

On a mild summer evening, from under the tent outside of the Berkshire Money Management offices on Merrill Road, Harris took advantage of an opportunity to combine two of his dear philanthropic interests - animal rescue / adoption and the strengthening of the business community through increased membership in the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. Harris had promised to donate \$1000 to the Sonsini Shelter for every person who joined the chamber through Berkshire Money Management in a fund drive that extended through September 7.

"In my business you try to create synergy and leverage in investments. I thought I would try it on the non-profit side," Harris explained. "The Sonsini Shelter needed improvements and when we heard about the Chamber's membership drive, we wanted to do something different." By linking the two seemingly unrelated areas together, Harris has been able to get the community involved in two worthy causes; an action that could provide a blueprint to all area non-profits.

Animal Life spoke with Berkshire Money Management Chief Operating Officer Stacey Carver and asked why Harris chose the Eleanor Sonsini Shelter. "We respect the work of the Berkshire Humane Society and all the local shelters, but for us, Sonsini has always been 'The Little Shelter That Could.'"

The couple has had a significant history of giving through Berkshire Money Management, including but not limited to hundreds of pies and turkeys to the Salvation Army, Wohrle's Foods (for families in need of assistance) and

The Christian Center for their Thanksgiving meal program. Their philanthropy is not limited to donations of treasure, though. Carver is the President of New England Basset Hound Rescue Inc., and she and her husband's efforts extend from the ground up, including fostering the hounds in their home.

Animal Life asked Stacey how she became such a strong animal advocate: I guess it's because of my Mom. We always had pets growing up (horses, dogs, cats, guinea pig, hamster, even a sheep at one point) and some how the lost, lonely, unwanted and injured always seemed to find us (or I guess my Mom). The most memorable and I guess the reason why I have such a draw to helping animals is Tokie. SD's Miss Tolanka was her official name. My Mom bought her at a big sale out in Ohio, I believe. At the sale she had appeared beautiful and almost angelic in the way she moved and behaved.

But when she got her home we slowly realized that she was foundered (which is a condition where a horse can become pretty much crippled). She had been doped up by her previous owners so that she would appear to be the perfect show horse.

As the dope wore off she literally couldn't walk. She got off the trailer walked into our pasture and didn't get back up. The vets told us that she would never walk again and that we should put her down. My Mom wouldn't give up though. The three of us siblings at the time were only children; I may have been 10 or 12. We didn't quite understand everything that was

going on, we only knew that she was hurt and sad. We helped our Mom morning, noon and night with our new pony. We brought buckets of warm water and soaked her tired, sore hooves in Epsom salts for days trying to give her relief. I'm sure there were some other medications that were probably given as well, but I was too little to know about any of that. I just knew that we loved that pony like she had been ours forever. We sat with her, fed her, brushed and petted her and waited. Days later she finally stood and she slowly heeled. My Mom told us it was a miracle and that it happened because we loved and cared for her so much. We were able to ride her and continue loving her until the day she finally passed on. I was in college by then. Tokie was with us for more than 10 years. I think that's when I learned how awful humans can be to beautiful, innocent, yet helpless



Berkshire Money Management presents a check for \$25,000 to Eleanor Sonsini Shelter representatives. L to R: Sassy (Dog), Mary Ellen Morris, Eleanor Sonsini Volunteer, Allen Harris, Berkshire Money Management C.E.O, Carol Lew Eleanor Sonsini Shelter Board Member, Larry Hazzard Eleanor Sonsini Shelter Board Chair, Stacey Carver, Berkshire Money Management C.O.O.

animals and that sometimes love and affection really can go a long way. Carver has organized an upcoming fundraiser for the Basset hound group in Sturbridge and she'll be on hand throughout the day. Harris will be there as well, decked out in his Basset mascot outfit.

Allen Harris is the owner of & a registered Investment Advisor Representative for Berkshire Money Management, an SEC-registered investment advisor. Stacey Carver is Chief Operating Officer. Call 413.997.2006 or <http://www.berkshirermm.com/> For the Eleanor Sonsini Animal Shelter, <http://www.pittsfieldanimals.org/>

I think that's when I learned how awful humans can be to beautiful, innocent, yet helpless animals and that sometimes love and affection really can go a long way.