

ANIMAL TALK

Kitten Season Is A Yearly Struggle For Shelters

Spring is a happy time for many people. Trees and flowers begin to bloom and milder weather makes for enjoyable days spent outdoors.

Spring is also a difficult time for many animal shelters across the country, including the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society. Unspayed cats begin having litters of kittens — so many kittens that animal shelters become overfilled with kittens that do not have homes. Because the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society is a no kill shelter, our space is limited and it breaks our hearts when we can't take in all the kittens that need shelter.

Greene County Animal Control is limited on space, and cats and kittens that end up there are in danger of euthanasia if the kittens are not claimed, adopted or rescued. Sadly, this is what happens each and every spring.

Did you know that an average cat has one to eight kittens per litter and two to three litters per year? During one female cat's life, she could have more than 100 kittens. A single pair of cats



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JANET MEDCALF

and their kittens can produce as many as 420,000 kittens in just seven years. This gives you an idea about the struggle that we face each year.

The solution is to have all cats spayed or neutered. Not only does this prevent unwanted litters of kittens, spaying your cat or dog helps prevent uterine infections and breast tumors, which are malignant in 90 percent of cats. Spaying your pet, cat or dog before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases. Neutering your male cat or dog prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems.

At this time, the Greeneville-Greene County Hu-



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN/LYNN MANNAN

Kitten season is a challenging time for the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society.

mane Society has several litters of kittens in foster care — some that came to us with their nursing mother, some as orphans. Because we have so many kittens, some in foster homes until they're old enough for adoption and some housed at the shelter, we are now closed for intake until further notice.

It can be incredibly difficult on staff and volunteers when we receive orphaned kittens, as we try to save

their lives.

Shelter assistant Katrin-ka Day, who has fostered numerous orphans in her home for the Humane Society, shares her thoughts from this past week.

"Fostering isn't always cute little babies eating from bottles, snuggles, being excited when they learn to eat and drink on their own, watching them play, and tucking them sweetly into bed at night," she said.

"Fostering is also tough. Late night/early morning feedings, baths, helping them go potty, and sickness. Sometimes it happens, and it's out of your control. Sometimes you just have to stay up all night and hold the little ones close and let them know they're not alone when they make their way out of this world. And it's not easy."

"I lost three last night. One, a runt that we first put with a mother nursing another litter. Unfortunately, it didn't work out. The little runt was returned to me, and I did what I could but it wasn't enough. She was the first," Day continued. "The other two were from a group of three brought to me a few days later. They had been found in a basement so full of trash, you couldn't see the floor. I fed, helped them potty, tucked them in. I found the second kitten gone when I went to feed before bed. The third kitten wasn't doing well at all. I fed his sister, the manx, who may or may not make it through this either, and then I tried to feed him. He didn't really care for it, so I held him for hours. I went to bed around 4 a.m. I put him in bed beside me and kept him warm with my

hand. Around 7 a.m. I woke up and he was gone.

"It looks cute from the outside," Day said. "All bottles and cute babies. But it's hard. And I lost three in one 24-hour period, and while I'd like to say, 'OK, that's it. I can't do it again, it's too hard,' I know I'll be at work, and we'll get a call, and I will once again say, 'How many? Bring them to me.' And I'll do it again. Because someone has got to love these babies, whether they make it or not. It makes it easier knowing that instead of a box, or in the trash, or in a cold cage somewhere, if they pass, at least they did so warm, fed and loved."

We appreciate your donations of cat food, kitten food, kitten formula, kitten bottles and clay cat litter. Our need increases at this time of the year so any donations of these items or monetary are very appreciated.

As always, thank you and God bless your support for what the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society does. We couldn't do what we do without you.

Janet Medcalf is a former president of the Greeneville-Greene County Humane Society.

QUESTIONS

FROM PAGE 5A

— which have driven our children into the streets in protest—but the numbers of gun crimes occurring in our state have increased as well. According to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, gun crimes have increased 25 percent in the past four years. More firearms are being stolen and those guns are being used to commit crimes. We are also seeing an increase in gun crimes being committed by and against our young people. As governor I will work with law enforcement to make sure illegal, unlicensed guns are off our streets.

U.S. SENATE

Marsha Blackburn, Republican

Public safety is one of government's foremost responsibilities, and it requires the federal, state, and local government to work

hand in hand. In Tennessee, we are blessed with an exceptional law enforcement community. In meeting with and listening to them, they expressed their concern with not only with opioids but also with the resurgence of meth, heroin and cocaine in our communities.

As a mother and friend, I am gravely concerned about the opioid crisis. In Tennessee alone, at least three people die from an opioid-related overdose each day, and that does not include the Tennesseans who have had their lives destroyed by addiction.

I have long worked to fight the opioid epidemic and other drug abuse, including the rise of methamphetamine use. In the state senate, I fought for drug courts and treatment programs and partnered with law enforcement and prosecutors to ensure they had the necessary tools. In Congress, I supported the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the 21st Century Cures Act; both bills took major steps to combat the opioid epidemic by supporting prevention, treatment and recovery programs that

proved effective.

Last month, I introduced the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act 2.0 to further strengthen the federal government's response, by increasing civil and criminal penalties for bad actors and authorizing vital funding. I will continue to work towards a systemic solution that involves tougher penalties on the distribution of illicit opioids and engages the community in prevention and recovery efforts.

Additionally, we are working to prevent horrific attacks involving gun violence. I recently participated in a bipartisan discussion at the White House, where I raised concerns that Tennesseans had brought to me about our mental health system and violence in our culture. I know we can protect our citizens in public spaces, while safeguarding our Second Amendment rights, and I am committed to that goal.

Philip Bredesen, Democrat

It's no secret that we have an opioid crisis in Tennessee, and there is no

shortage of recommendations to address it. Most of them include the word "billions": billions of dollars for research, billions for mental health services, billions for law enforcement.

But there's another approach that costs little and is far more humane: Stem the flow on the front end by demanding more personal responsibility from everyone involved in getting these pills into Tennessee medicine cabinets.

America is an outlier among nations in the volume of opioids that are legally prescribed: We consume legal opioids at 30 times the rate that the Japanese do, for example. Tennessee is an outlier in America: We have the third highest legal opioid use of any state.

Here's the thing: Tennessee is awash in opioids, and these are not illegal drugs from Mexico or China being pushed by some shady drug dealer. Every one of these pills was manufactured by a legal, regulated pharmaceutical laboratory. And every one of them was prescribed by a physician who is

properly licensed right here in America.

We should of course demand responsibility from pharmaceutical companies who manufacture and push these drugs.

But remember that Tennesseans don't get a bottle of pills until a physician writes a prescription. Tennessee's physicians need to step up and take some personal responsibility if we are ever going to beat this. Patients don't know the ups and downs of these powerful drugs; that's what doctors do. There are evidence-based standards for when and in what quantities opioid prescriptions are appropriate. If a physician regularly prescribes outside of these standards, and patients become addicted, shouldn't that physician bear a part of the responsibility?

Congress can, and probably will, spend billions on this. The truth of the matter, though, is that change will only come when everyone involved in getting these drugs into our medicine cabinets is forced to take some personal responsibility for what happens.

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