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Time at home has eased burden on local shelters as families adopt pets

Community Cat Program faced pandemic related challenge By ROB PAUL

Local Journalism

Initiative Reporter

Many have felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways, and as it wears on people's mental health, a way to bring positivity into the home during these trying times is to adopt a pet.

In Caledon, the animal shelter has seen an increased interest from those hoping to bring a pet home.

?Since March of last year, the Town has adopted out 18 dogs and 111 cats,? said Caledon Communications Advisor Tony Maxwell. ?At the same time, the number of animals we have taken in has gone down, which means we have fewer than normal animals available for adoption. We have also been experiencing a high volume of calls from people looking to adopt a pet during the pandemic.?

For those interested in getting in touch with animal services to adopt a pet from the animal shelter, the shelter is located at 12889 Coleraine Drive in Bolton and open to the public Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. They can also be reached by email at animal.services@caledon.ca or by phone at 905-584-2272 ext. 4698.

Coinciding with residents of Caledon looking to help pets by bringing them into homes, there's been an effort put forth to focus on reducing the number of feral cats through the Community Cats Program and humanely making these cats safe in the community. The program is predicated on committed volunteers who want to help these animals.

?The goal of the Community Cat Program is to slowly reduce feral and homeless cat populations over time in a humane manner,? said Maxwell. The program started?and continues to be?a collaboration between dedicated volunteers and the Town.?

Animal Services assists volunteers with the program in humanely trapping, altering, vaccinating, microchipping, and returning the cats to their outdoor homes.

Originally a pilot program, the Community Cats Program is now a fully funded initiative in Caledon with the Council prioritizing it.

?The program began as a pilot and due to its success, it is now an added service level. In 2020, Council increased the budget of the program to allow for double the amount of community cats in the program each year,? said Maxwell. ?The pandemic certainly posed some challenges, but staff were still able to continue with the program.?

The key to the program's success though is the volunteers who are willing to commit their time for the greater good and they're always looking for more assistance.

?There is an existing core of volunteers assisting the Town, but we are looking for more to help care for the colonies,? said Maxwell. ?We recently advertised in the newspaper and from that received a positive response from several interested volunteers. Anyone wishing to help must be knowledgeable about caring for cats and willing to commit over the long-term to provide care for the cats within the colonies assigned to them.?

Prospective volunteers can contact Animal Services for more information at 905-584-2272 x. 4698 or email animal.services@caledon.ca. For more information about the program visit caledon.ca/cats.