

Local Matters

ANIMALS

OCTOBER 2026

Your guide
to local
animal shelters,
pet care, wildlife
management
and more

Dr. Bronwen Childs with Monty | 11

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Animal Matters

A Note From the Editor

We love our animals. They share our homes, our trails, our backyards and, occasionally, our chimneys.

With this special section, we wanted to create a useful, wide-ranging guide to the animals and animal services in our area — the kind of section you might want to hang onto. Because sooner or later, you may find yourself wondering: Who can groom my dog? Where can I take her to dinner? Who gets the bird out of the chimney? What do I do when there's a bear in the backyard? And where, exactly, can I find emergency veterinary care at 10 p.m. on a Sunday?

In these pages, you'll find answers to those questions and plenty more, along with stories about the people who spend their days caring for creatures great and small.

We hope you'll find something useful, something surprising and, most of all, something that makes life a little easier for you and the animals you love.

—Natalia Zukerman, editor



COVER PHOTO PROVIDED

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64 Route 7 N, Falls Village, CT 06031

James H. Clark, CEO/Publisher

publisher@lakevillejournal.com • 860-435-9873

lakevillejournal.com • millertonnews.com

Natalia Zukerman, Editor

Christian Murray, Executive Editor

Caitlin Hanlon, Production Manager

Mary Wilbur, Advertising Account Manager

Roxanne Lee, Advertising Account Manager

Thomas K. Carley, Chief Operating Officer

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Dinner with the dog

Dog owners know the dilemma: You're out for the day with your four-legged sidekick when hunger strikes. Fortunately, a number of area restaurants, cafés and breweries welcome dogs, mostly at outdoor tables. Policies and outdoor seating can change with the season, so calling ahead is always a good idea.

The White Hart and Provisions in Salisbury is particularly pet-friendly. The inn welcomes pets on request, and its front porch and sprawling lawn make inviting places to settle in with a canine companion. They even welcome well-behaved patrons — bipedal and quadruped alike — in the cozy dining area.

At Harney & Sons in Millerton, dogs are welcome on the outdoor terrace, where their humans can stop for tea, sandwiches, salads and other light fare. Nearby, The Millerton Inn has a spacious front porch for outdoor dining; the inn itself also accepts pets on request.

Le Gamin in Sharon has plentiful outdoor seating for you and your pooch. French bulldogs may feel especially at home but everyone is welcome.

Grassland Dessert Cafe in Lakeville makes sure four-legged customers aren't left out of dessert. Dogs can join their humans at the outdoor seating, and the cafe even offers a pup cup, because just watching someone else eat ice cream is too much to ask of anyone.

Mizza's in Lakeville welcomes dogs at its outdoor tables in good weather, making pizza night an option for the whole family — including the member who eats things off the floor.

In Wassauc, The Lantern Inn makes its position charmingly clear: "We love kind dogs, on leashes, with their owners." Dogs can join diners in the restaurant's outdoor garden.

Four Brothers Drive-In in Amenia may be the ultimate dog date night. The drive-in describes itself as designed with "families, friends & pets in mind," and leashed dogs are welcome to hang out on the lawn and around the drive-in grounds. There's even a section of the menu at The Shack called "Paw Treats," featuring "The Fiona," a serving of vanilla custard and



PHOTO BY NATALIA ZUKERMAN

Georgie, enjoying a late-summer "pup cup" on the porch at Grassland Dessert Cafe in Lakeville.

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peanut butter topped with a doggy biscuit!

Off The Trail Cafe in Falls Village has outdoor seating where diners can relax with their dogs, although seating is limited.

Farther afield, Market Place Tavern in Litchfield welcomes dogs at designated outdoor patio tables, while Rhinebeck's Smoky Rock BBQ has multiple dog-friendly outdoor tables. At Terrapin Restaurant, well-behaved, leashed dogs are welcome on the outdoor patio and in the covered, open-air pavilion.

For beer-loving humans, Subversive Malting & Brewing in Catskill allows leashed, well-behaved dogs outdoors and in its heated tent; Suarez Family Brewery near Hudson welcomes leashed dogs on its outdoor patio; and Union Street Brewing Co. in Hudson welcomes well-behaved dogs in its garden.

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A second chance in Wingdale

Meade Canine Rescue and Sanctuary is not the average rescue. Situated on a quiet dirt road on 8 acres in Wingdale, the dogs living there are, for the most part, uncaged, roaming the yard, sleeping in the house, resting in the shade of a tree or lounging in the open van that often takes them for rides.

"We go on lots of adventures," said the rescue's founder, Charlotte Meade.

Though she takes in dogs of all ages, including some with disabilities — and one resident cat — the rescue's motto is "Giving old dogs new lives."

Sadie, a sweet Carolina dog, was the first to greet visitors.

"She could really use a home," Meade said.

Then came Bonnie and Clyde, rat terriers; Negra, a small terrier mix; Sampson, a blind hound mix; and Jay Z, a terrier mix who was emaciated when Meade took him in and has since filled out, with fur regrowing over previously bald patches. Wesley, a young, shaggy mix



PHOTO BY L. TOMAINO

Sampson, a playful and independent blind hound mix, explores the rescue's large yard.

whom Meade calls "a very good boy," is also in need of a home.

Meade began rescuing dogs after going to Waterbury to adopt one and learning that, by the end of the three-day weekend, the dogs she was looking at would be euthanized to make room for others.

She went home and started her rescue in New Preston, Connecticut. After five years there, she moved to California, where she rescued dogs from overcrowded pounds for 13 years.

Meade, a busload of dogs and her cat moved back to the Northeast a little more than a year ago.

Ninety-nine percent of the dogs at the rescue come from pounds, both locally and in California and New York City.

"We are more than happy to place dogs with older people, and we are also willing to give support after the adoption," Meade said, noting that some rescues will not adopt to people over 60.

For those who cannot adopt, the rescue needs donations of old blankets, dog and cat food, cleaning supplies, puppy pads and dog treats. Monetary donations are also welcome and can be made through the rescue's website. Meade also welcomes volunteers to help with the dogs.

Contact Meade at 805-239-4004, 860-866-7986 or 4dots@att.net to arrange a visit or drop off donations. For available dogs and more information, visit meadecaninerescue.org.

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Wesley, a young, exuberant mix, is looking for an active home.



Sadie, center, a Carolina dog, plays with her friend Negra, a terrier mix. Bella Linda, the small poodle, has since been adopted.



PHOTOS BY L. TOMAINO

Bonnie and Clyde, an affectionate terrier pair.



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A home for the rest of their nine lives

The first thing a visitor notices when entering the main building of The Last Post is the smell.

There isn't one.

This is noteworthy because the room is filled with cats.

The Last Post is a private cat sanctuary in Falls Village that provides a permanent home to more than 140 cats.

The organization was founded in 1982 by Pegeen Fitzgerald, a New York radio personality and animal welfare advocate.

Executive Director Susan Leach-Gregan said Fitzgerald started taking in cats at her city apartment, but the number of animals increased to the point that she began looking for more room.

The Belden Street property in Falls Village had been a camp for New York City firefighters. That concept faded, and Fitzgerald bought the property in 1982. The Last

Post opened in 1984.

The organization does not allow people to adopt cats. Leach-Gregan said adoptions were possible early on, but "we ran into trouble with unsuitable applicants."

The cats are left to The Last Post in wills and through estates. When they arrive, they are kept in a separate area until they become accustomed to their new surroundings.

The Last Post takes care of the cats' medical needs, using Sand Road Animal Hospital in Falls Village as its primary veterinary provider.

Lauren Mucha described her job as "cat caregiver and executive assistant." She has been at The Last Post for 10 years.

While showing a visitor around, she greeted the cats by name: Othello, Rocket, Stormy, Fuzzy Wuzzy and Max.



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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Lauren Mucha with a resident of The Last Post.

The Last Post in Falls Village is home to about 144 cats.

The cats also made the visitor welcome.

While moving from one building to the next, a man carrying a bag walked down the driveway.

He explained that his cat had died the night before and that he wanted to donate his stock of canned cat food, which Mucha accepted with thanks.

In another building, several older cats lounged outside on the deck with two women. Mucha explained that the women are regular weekly visitors who come to see the cats they brought to the sanctuary.

The man whose cat had died came out on the deck with a cat on his shoulders.

“You can’t put your head down or you end up with a parrot,” he said with a grin.

The cats in the main building have outdoor access, including a fenced-in yard.

Mucha said they mostly congregate on the deck.

The cats stay at the sanctuary for the remainder of their lives. Mucha said that a few years ago, the sanctuary had a large number of older cats that died, so the population is currently somewhat younger than usual.

Generally, the cats come in ones or twos, but sometimes the sanctuary gets a call from someone with more. Mucha said 14 of the cats in the main building came from the same home, where an elderly couple was in failing health.

Mucha said the facility has undergone significant upgrades during her tenure, in particular a new HVAC system that helps keep a room full of cats odor-free.

Large plastic tubs lining two walls serve as litter boxes. They are filled with sawdust and changed daily.

“The sawdust helps with the smell,” Mucha said.

The Last Post is at 95 Belden St., Route 126, in Falls Village. It is a nonprofit organization and accepts donations. The facility is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead, especially on holidays, at 860-824-0831.



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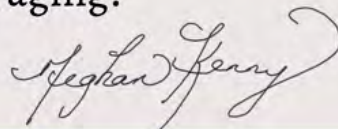
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Meghan Kenny
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A lifetime of loving animals

Dr. Bronwen Childs, a board-certified specialist in veterinary diagnostic imaging, grew up in Norfolk and knew early that animals would be part of her life.

Her parents encouraged her interest, with one rule: “No snakes or pets that require live food.”

The household included pocket pets, as well as goats, a sheep, Fjord ponies and even a raccoon. At 13, Childs got Monty, a 5-year-old horse who remained her companion for the next 27 years.

Naturally drawn to science, Childs found her way to veterinary medicine through mentors at Kent School, including former Olympian Michael Page. “It was the way of treating animals like family that stuck with me,” she said.

A graduate of Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Childs trained in radiology at the University of Georgia. Today, she is a staff radiologist at Pieper Veterinary Hospital in Middletown, which provides general and specialty care for dogs, cats and exotic pets. She also consults on equine imaging and provides traveling ultrasound services to Litchfield County clinics through Berkshire Veterinary Imaging.

Radiology, she said, allows her to help animals and fellow veterinarians while living in Norfolk near her family. “Specializing in radiology has been the best decision of my career.”

Monty died recently, a significant loss after nearly three decades together. “He was a constant when things were changing,” Childs said. “I know I am who I am today because of our experiences together.”

At home, the family has a dog, Bandit, while Childs’ children regularly collect frogs, toads, newts and worms from the yard. “They keep the kids excited about being outdoors,” she said, “and that is the start of it all.”

“It was the way of treating animals like family that stuck with me.”

— Dr. Bronwen Childs



PHOTO PROVIDED

Bronwen Childs, at 13, with Monty.

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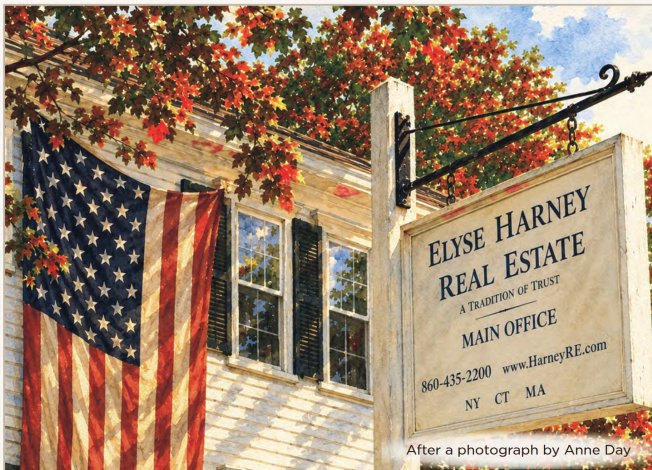
A bear outside Cornwall Consolidated School in West Cornwall.



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The bear necessities of living in bear country

This here is bear country. In fact, Connecticut has an unusually high rate of bear home entries compared with neighboring states. So far this year, the state has documented more than 60 home entries, and bears have been spotted in all 169 towns and cities.

Bears are also part of life in neighboring Dutchess County. But don't worry. It's not as bad as it sounds.

The first thing to know is that we only have black bears round these parts. Black bears are generally not aggressive toward humans, although they are wild animals and can behave unpredictably. Even in autumn, when bears are actively bulking up for hibernation, attacks on humans are very rare. Luckily, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, or DEEP, has tips and tricks for living safely and comfortably in bear country.

If you see a bear from your car, stay inside and enjoy nature's majesty from a safe distance. Give the bear plenty of room and never approach it.

If you encounter a bear while outside, additional caution should be taken. Do not approach or corner it. DEEP recommends "hazing," or scaring a bear away, in certain circumstances.

Leave the bear alone if you are in its habitat, it is already running away or climbing a tree, it is a lone cub, or scaring it could drive it toward people, dogs or traffic.

If a bear lingers in your yard or another developed area, however, hazing may be appropriate, but first get children and pets inside.

The best way to scare a bear is to make eye contact, get big and get loud. If you have a whistle or air horn, use it. Pots and pans can also do the trick.

Barring those instruments, your hands and voice can work wonders. Clap loudly and yell firmly.

If a bear enters your house, keep your distance and back away. Next, open as many doors and windows as possible to give the bear an easy escape route. Again, do not approach the bear.

Making sure your home is not actively attracting bears in the first place is even better. Take down bird feeders when bears are active. Secure garbage cans left outside, and never leave pet food or trash on porches, screened-in

Take down bird feeders when bears are active. Secure garbage cans left outside, and never leave pet food or trash on porches, screened-in or otherwise.

or otherwise. And make sure you pack away those pick-a-nic baskets.

Contact wildlife authorities if a bear is highly agitated, sick or injured, approaches people or does not leave after hazing. In Connecticut, call DEEP's 24-hour emergency dispatch line at 860-424-3333. In Dutchess County, contact the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation at (518)402-8044.



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When your pet needs help after hours

Anyone who has ever had a dog swallow something it shouldn't, a cat suddenly struggle to breathe or a pet get hurt late at night knows how quickly panic can set in. In our corner of the world, there's an added complication: emergency veterinary care may mean getting in the car and driving some distance.

That makes it worth knowing your options before you need them — and knowing the difference between a local veterinary practice that can handle an urgent case and a fully staffed, 24-hour emergency hospital.

For Berkshire County residents, VCA All Caring Animal Hospital, 440 Stockbridge Road in Great Barrington, can be a nearby first call. The full-service hospital offers diagnostics and hospitalization and asks clients with an emergency or a pet requiring immediate attention to call rather than use its online contact form.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Newtown Veterinary Specialists

It is not a 24-hour emergency hospital, however. Current hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. It is closed Sunday. Call 413-528-8020.

Poughkeepsie also has several options for urgent care. Creature Comforts Animal Hospital, 64 Pine St., is a full-service veterinary hospital offering emergency and critical care during regular business hours. The hospital treats dogs and cats as well as birds, reptiles and other exotic pets. Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. It is closed Sunday. For after-hours emergencies involving dogs and cats, the hospital refers patients to regional emergency facilities. Call 845-625-2474.

Community Animal Care, 269 Titusville Road, offers urgent and emergency care during operating hours and asks pet owners to call ahead. Regular hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. Urgent care is available daily by calling ahead, with extended hours until 9 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. The practice also offers after-hours veterinary triage by video to help owners determine whether a pet can safely wait or should be taken to a 24-hour facility. Call 845-471-7459.

When an animal needs care in the middle of the night, on a holiday or for a potentially life-threatening condition, the options become more limited.

Guardian Veterinary Specialists, 4 Hardscrabble Heights in Brewster, is a 24-hour emergency and



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specialty hospital, open seven days a week, 365 days a year. Its emergency department is staffed around the clock, with on-site imaging and laboratory services. No appointment is necessary for an emergency, although calling ahead is encouraged when possible. Call 914-704-3400.

Newtown Veterinary Specialists, 52 Church Hill Road in Newtown, Connecticut, also provides emergency care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays. No appointment is required for emergency care, although the hospital recommends calling ahead when possible. Call 203-270-8387.

Pet owners should remember that emergency veterinary hospitals operate much like human emergency rooms in that patients are triaged according to the severity of their condition, so animals with less critical



PHOTO PROVIDED

Newtown Veterinary Specialists

problems may have to wait.

The best preparation is simple. Keep the number of your regular veterinarian and at least one 24-hour emergency hospital in your phone, and know roughly how long it will take to get there. If circumstances allow, call before leaving home to confirm where your pet should be seen.

When something goes wrong at 10 p.m. on a Sunday, knowing where you're headed can make a frightening situation a little less overwhelming.

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BY MADI LONG

Saddle up

From international show jumping to hunter paces, trail rides and hands-on workshops, there's plenty happening for horse lovers this fall. Here are a few ways to get in the saddle — or simply enjoy the view from the rail.

Highlands Hudson Valley Horse Show

Amenia, New York/ Sept. 30-Oct. 11

Top-level show jumping returns to Amenia this fall as the Highlands Horse Show brings two weeks of international equestrian competition to Highlands Hudson Valley at Keane Stud.

Following the Discovery Land Company Masters Sept. 30-Oct. 4, the Highlands Cup runs Oct. 7-11, featuring CSI5* show jumping and Major League Show Jumping competition. The week will bring some of the sport's top riders and horses to the Hudson Valley, culminating in the \$340,000 Highlands Cup CSI5* Grand Prix on Sunday, Oct. 11.

Beyond the competition ring, the event includes shopping, food, art and other activities throughout the grounds. Learn more at highlandshudsonvalley.com.

White Memorial Conservation Center

Litchfield, Conn. / Year-round

Saddle up and explore more than 4,000 acres of fields, forests and wetlands at White Memorial Conservation Center. Riders can access miles of designated roads and trails throughout the property, with trailer parking in Sawmill Field. Group rides require advance registration. Learn more at whitememorialcc.org.

Fox Crossing Equestrian Thrills in the Hills Show

Morris, Conn. / Oct. 25 or Nov. 15 (TBD)

Fox Crossing Equestrian invites riders to bring a little pink to the ring for this annual hunter-jumper show supporting breast cancer awareness. The show features a mix of rated and special classes, along with raffles, vendors and a silent auction. A portion of the proceeds will benefit breast cancer awareness. Learn more at foxcrossingequestrian.com.



PHOTO BY MADI LONG

Megan McDermott competes with her horse, Nintendo, at the Discovery Land Company Masters at the Highlands Horse Show on Thursday, Oct. 1.



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PHOTOS BY MADI LONG

Horse and rider pairs compete for a chance to win \$31,000 at the Highlands Horse Show on Thursday, Oct. 1.



World-class equestrians will compete throughout two weeks of events at Keene Stud in Amenia, N.Y., as part of the Highlands Horse Show. Admission is free for spectators.

Barbara Meyer Memorial Hunter Pace

Amenia, New York/ Oct. 18

Ride across the scenic Wethersfield Estate during the Barbara Meyer Memorial Hunter Pace, hosted by the Millbrook Pony Club on Sunday, Oct. 18, from 9 a.m. to noon. Teams of two to three riders will navigate a 6- to 9-mile cross-country course, aiming to finish as close to the optimum time as possible. Registration is \$80 for adults and \$60 for juniors. Enter by Oct. 16.

The TAKHIN Method with Rupert Isaacson at The Equus Effect

Sharon, Conn. / Oct. 13-15

The Equus Effect in Sharon welcomes world-renowned horseman Rupert Isaacson for a three-day, hands-on workshop exploring Takhin Equine Integration. The approach brings together classical in-hand horsemanship, equine well-being, nervous system regulation and human development. Participants can work with one of The Equus Effect's horses or bring their own. The workshop runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day and costs \$900 per person. Registration is required. Learn more at theequuseffect.org.

Horse Portrait at Le Petit Ranch

Sheffield, Mass. / Oct. 17

Spend a Saturday with horses and art at Le Petit Ranch's Horse Portrait at the Ranch. Participants will learn about horse behavior, grooming and leading horses before creating their own art using drawing, painting and mixed media. Registration is required. The event is pay-what-you-can, with a suggested donation of \$40 for the first child and \$15 for each additional child. Learn more and register at lepetitranch.org.

Locust Hill Hunter Pace

Hyde Park, New York / Nov. 1

Test your riding skills on the roughly 10-mile Locust Hill Hunter Pace, winding through countryside, farmland and wooded trails. The course features a variety of jumps, with go-arounds available. Teams can include two to four riders, with ribbons awarded through 10th place. Registration is \$100 per rider if entered before Oct. 20. Learn more at carlettefarm.com.

Equine Affaire

West Springfield, Mass. / Nov. 12-15

Horse lovers can immerse themselves in four days of all things equine at Equine Affaire at the Eastern States Exposition. The annual event features clinics, seminars, demonstrations, competitions, breed exhibits and a massive trade show with tack, apparel and supplies. Visitors can also meet horses and participate in hands-on activities. The event runs Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Each evening, Fantasia offers a two-hour celebration of horsemanship and music. Learn more at equineaffaire.com.



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Lee Sohl and her therapy dogs

Wylie is not just a cute dog who attracts attention wherever he goes; the Lhasa Apso also offers comfort and care to many.

Wylie is one of four therapy dogs owned by Lee Sohl. Along with Ruthie, a Pomeranian, and Gavin and Freddie, who are Yorkie mixes, they travel to schools, nursing homes, libraries and other facilities where they meet with those who can benefit from the interaction.

Sohl, a retired teacher, is the animal control officer in the towns of Kent, Cornwall, Salisbury and Sharon, as well as a professional dog trainer of several decades. She explained that all four, who are rescues, are trained in obedience and certified as therapy dogs.

“The right temperament makes the right therapy dog,” she said, noting that Wylie “is mellow, like a stuffed animal.” He proved her right. The interview was conducted on Main Street, where he sat on a blanket and calmly watched as pedestrians — several with dogs — walked by.

Sohl described the many visits to nursing homes, where the dogs snuggle with residents, bringing them so much joy. “One employee at a nursing home told me the visits are the best thing that happens to residents all week or all day,” she said.

Children often relate to the animals, openly sharing their feelings with them. The dogs are also part of a program in which children read to them to help improve their skills.

The dogs have been trained as canine first responders and are called in after traumatic incidents. The sooner the dogs get there, the more the effects of PTSD can be lessened. “Dogs can be the conduit to make them start processing,” Sohl said.

Sohl, wearing a T-shirt with the faces of the four dogs, said they have logged 254 visits in the past three years. Her work with the therapy dogs is entirely voluntary, and she makes visits upon request at no charge.

“I’m a talker. I enjoy meeting all the people,” she said. “I’m always gratified to learn later that a dog has helped people.”



PHOTO BY RUTH EPSTEIN

Lee Sohl and her therapy dog Wylie.

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Independent care at Copake Veterinary Hospital

Copake Veterinary Hospital, accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association, treats dogs, cats and some pocket pets, including hamsters, gerbils and rats.

The hospital's owner, veterinarian Dr. Tyler Hotaling, bought the practice in 2024. He is dedicated to providing the best care possible to his patients and pointed to three factors that help achieve that goal.

First, "We are independently owned. Most other vet clinics in the area are corporate," Hotaling said. He said corporate ownership can contribute to higher costs because of added pressure to show a profit.

Second, "We take pride in our AAHA accreditation. Less than 10% of veterinary clinics achieve it." Copake follows protocols designed to deliver high-quality patient care and employee training.

Third, "We deliver high-quality, evidence-based care

"We are a very close-knit team. Everyone here is like family."

— Trisha Burlingame, veterinary assistant and clinic coordinator

— which is not uniform throughout the profession."

Copake Veterinary Hospital has an in-house lab and can provide ultrasounds, laser therapy and advanced digital X-rays.

To further expand services, Hotaling has also returned to school to learn new surgical techniques. He recently used his training in advanced orthopedic fracture repair and internal fixation to repair the leg of a puppy that had been hit by a car. He expects to soon complete a course in tibial plateau leveling osteotomy, or TPLO, which will allow him to repair cruciate ligament tears in dogs.

Offering these treatments in Copake rather than sending clients to more expensive specialty hospitals can help keep treatment costs down.

Dr. Emily Reilly, one of five veterinarians at the practice, added as she examined Chloe, a yellow Lab, "We try to keep it low stress and use low-stress handling."

Veterinary assistant Ehren Melius described another element that benefits Copake's patients.

"We believe in community-based medicine, which is vanishing in this day and age," Melius said.

The staff also pointed to teamwork as an important part of the practice. Trisha Burlingame, veterinary assistant and clinic coordinator, praised the work environment.

"We are a very close-knit team. Everyone here is like family. Dr. Hotaling is a great boss, very flexible and family-oriented," Burlingame said.

Copake Veterinary Hospital is located at 7915 State Route 22 in Copake Falls, New York. Its team welcomes new patients. It is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The hospital accepts emergencies during regular business hours.

For more information, call 518-329-6161 or visit copakevethospital.com.





Veterinary assistant Ehren Melius examines Chloe, a Labrador retriever, at Copake Veterinary Hospital. Melius worked in animal welfare for nearly two decades before joining the practice.



Veterinary assistant and clinic coordinator Trisha Burlingame with Scarlett.

PHOTOS BY L. TOMAINO

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Animals matter at the Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo

A visit to the Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo at Millbrook School brings home the importance of living responsibly in partnership with the natural world. There is a strong commitment to supporting conservation and protecting wildlife. Animals clearly matter.

Now in his 36th year with the zoo, including 12 years as its director, Alan Tousignant embodies a lifelong commitment to animals and the workings of a modern zoo. He began as a young intern at what was then the Trevor Zoo — and stayed.

“I’ve always loved animals,” said Tousignant, who was raised on a dairy farm in upstate New York near Lake Champlain. As a young man, he wanted to become a veterinarian but later expanded his interests to other careers, as long as they involved animals. That exploratory process led to an internship at the Trevor Zoo.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Hands-on experience is key to the educational program at The Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo at The Millbrook School. Students regularly assist veterinary staff in the care of the zoo’s resident animals and birds.

The Trevor Zoo was established in 1936 by Frank Trevor, the school’s first biology teacher. In 2025, the zoo added the name of Tom Lovejoy, a Millbrook alumnus who had been taught by Trevor and went on to become a pioneer in the field of conservation biology.

Today, the zoo features a 6-acre exhibit area within a 16-acre parcel. It is a recognized wildlife rehabilitation site with a 50% to 60% success rate. Ten full-time staff members are assisted by 10 part-time and seasonal staff members. The zoo also works with approximately 200 volunteers from the local community, colleges and universities, as well as Millbrook School students.

“If you really want people to develop a good conservation ethic, it has to be hands-on work,” Tousignant said of the zoo’s mission and its value to students.

“Nothing can replace the experience of the sights, the sounds and the smells of the living aspects of the natural world,” Tousignant said.

A new master plan for the zoo was developed in 2024 and outlines growth in phases. The first phase includes an animal wellness center, allowing for better animal care on site. Millbrook students will also benefit by being able to observe veterinary care of exotic and native animals.

The zoo’s most recent acquisition is a binturong, an Asian mammal also known as a bearcat that smells like popcorn, Tousignant said. The tree-dwelling animal,

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Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo Director Alan Tousignant offers a treat to one of the zoo's pair of Red Pandas.

whose population is declining and is therefore of concern to conservationists, came from Mesker Park Zoo in Evansville, Indiana.

Also included in the new master plan is the acquisition of a Przewalski's horse, considered the last remaining truly wild horse. Native to the steppes of Central Asia, the species became extinct in the wild before reintroduction efforts began.

"The Earth matters; wildlife matters," Tousignant said, speaking of the balance within the planet's complex ecosystem.

"We're good at manipulating the landscape. We're not good at taking care of it," Tousignant added.

The Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is the only accredited zoo in the U.S. located at a secondary school. It houses 70 distinct species, 10 of which are endangered.

For information about visiting the zoo, go to trevorlovejoyzoo.org.



PHOTOS BY LEILA HAWKEN

A pair of Emus enjoy some shade in one of the enclosures at the Trevor-Lovejoy Zoo at The Millbrook School.

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Who to call when things go flutter-scratch-thump

There are few sounds quite as alarming as the unmistakable flutter-scratch-thump of a wild animal trapped inside your wood stove chimney.

When it happened at my house, I did what anyone with a conscience — and absolutely no idea how to extract a terrified bird from a chimney — would do: I went on Nextdoor.

That's how I found Kyle McAward of Nutmeg Wildlife Management, a Sharon-based wildlife control business serving Connecticut and New York. I'm happy to report that the bird was freed and, as McAward put it, "hopefully living a good life."

"I love to do the ones where, at the end of the day, everybody lived," he said.

An outdoorsman his entire life, Kyle grew up in Sherman and has worked on farms and in construction, experiences that made wildlife management a natural fit. When he researched the business, he saw room for a different approach.

"A lot of the companies that you're going to find now, they tend to use poisons," he said. "I don't like the ecological impact of them."

Instead, Nutmeg Wildlife Management, which is licensed and insured in Connecticut and New York, emphasizes eco-friendly exclusion, humane trapping and remediation. McAward focuses on finding and sealing the places animals use to enter a structure and addressing what the industry calls "lifestyle issues" that attract them in the first place.

With rodents, that can mean keeping vegetation at least 2 feet from the foundation of your home, mowing lawns, moving bird feeders away from the house and keeping livestock feed at a distance.

"Usually there's a smoking gun," he said. His job is to find it.

The work can also get considerably more adventurous. McAward responds to calls involving birds and bats in chimneys, raccoons in crawl spaces and even timber rattlesnakes in yards.

"Any situation where someone's coming into interaction with an animal that they don't wish to, I come on



PHOTO PROVIDED

Kyle McAward of Nutmeg Wildlife Management.

by and provide help," he said.

Rattlesnakes, which are protected, require coordination with state wildlife officials. McAward admitted that maneuvering one away from a home can be exciting, but said crawling into dark spaces can sometimes be more unnerving.

"A cornered raccoon can be a little scary," he said.

Local homeowners praise McAward for being communicative, thorough and practical, providing clear explanations and photographs of completed work. His philosophy, though, remains simple: solve the problem without creating another one farther down the food chain.

"At the end of the day," he said of poison-based rodent control, "you could end up with just you, the mice and the poison."

Nutmeg Wildlife Management and Kyle McAward can be found on Nextdoor.com, reached at 516-491-6893 or by email at kylemcaward@gmail.com.

BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

A day in the life of a rescue dog

“It’s unbelievable that this sweet, loving boy hasn’t found his home yet,” said Tiffany Lemelin, shelter manager of The Little Guild, whose mission is to rescue, love and heal homeless cats and dogs. She smiled at the small dog wagging his tail. “This is one of the most deserving dogs you could ever meet, with so much love to give.”

Marsala is an energetic, 1-year-old, 45-pound black Labrador mix waiting to be adopted. He arrived March 25 as a stray named “Chicken” from Toccoa, Georgia.

The Little Guild is an animal shelter at 285 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike in West Cornwall. Founded in 1957, the organization rescues animals from local surrenders and under-resourced shelters. When a rescue animal arrives at The Little Guild, staff begins a careful intake and transition process to ensure the animal is safe, healthy and ready for adoption.

New arrivals are quarantined in-house. Vaccinations are verified as up to date, and staff assesses each animal’s medical, behavioral and placement needs. Rescues receive medical care, daily support and behavioral training to ease shelter stress. Once a dog has finished quarantine



PHOTO BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

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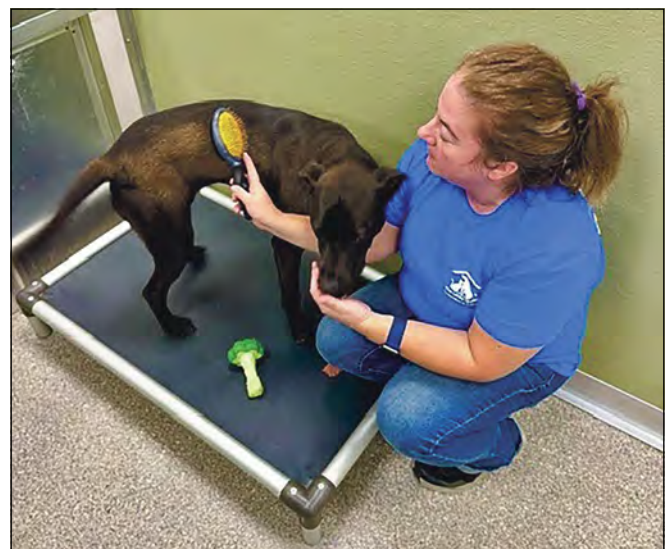


PHOTO PROVIDED

Tiffany Lemelin, shelter manager, brushing Marsala upon arrival.



Michael DeBarba, certified dog trainer working with Marsala.



Marsala wins a heart.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER ALMQUIST

and is ready for a home, its profile is published at littleguild.org.

Prospective adopters fill out an online application with information about their household and veterinary and personal references.

The next step is for the prospective adopter and family members to meet the dog. If there is already a dog in the household, a meet-and-greet is scheduled so the dogs can get acquainted.

The animal care staff offers guidance based on its knowledge of each animal's personality, needs and quirks to help families find the best fit.

Once a match is made, the adoption contract outlines aftercare. Adopters agree to return the animal to The Little Guild if the adoption doesn't work out. The organization's commitment continues after adoption, with six months of free training and follow-up from staff to answer questions or address concerns.

"Please don't pass Marsala by," Lemelin said. "He loves people and other dogs. He's a lap dog who lives for snuggles, cuddles and face kisses. Marsala deserves a family, a soft bed and a lifetime of being chosen."

To find out about Marsala and other rescue dogs and cats, visit littleguild.org



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A gentle touch at Rosie's Grooming

Hand-scissoring is just one of the reasons discerning dogs choose Rosie's Grooming for their beauty needs. Once they have experienced the care Rosie Urena provides, using only organic products, they and their owners tend to become regular customers.

Urena has 35 years of experience in dog grooming. Her fully equipped salon accommodates small, medium and large dogs.

Urena owned and operated her first shop at Trump Plaza in New York City for more than 16 years before moving the business to LedgeWood Boarding Kennel in Millerton, where she operated for another 16 years. She has been at her present location in Amenia for three years.

"Every dog is different," she said, explaining that she does not post a rate schedule or quote prices over the

phone. She needs to meet the dog first.

"Money is not everything," Urena said, adding that her shop offers a service where the dog comes first. She believes in keeping customers happy, which may explain why she has so many repeat clients.

"I treat people and dogs the same," she said.

"I speak to the dogs in Spanish," Urena said, explaining that she calms them with her quiet demeanor. "My demeanor sets the stage for the grooming."

While their owners are present, Urena explained, dogs can instinctively pick up on stress and react to it.

During the interview, a customer came to retrieve Scarlett O'Connor, 6, a standard poodle from Lakeville and New York City, who had finished her grooming appointment in great style.

"Not every poodle can support this haircut," Urena



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PHOTO PROVIDED

Baby is ready to go home after enjoying a visit to Rosie's Grooming.

said, describing the precision cut preferred for Scarlett, who proudly held her head high in a show of attitude.

Another customer came to pick up Ollie, a pleasant, well-behaved shih tzu from Millbrook who had been in for a bath, trim and blow-dry for extra fluffiness.

Asked about differences between city and country dogs, Urena said they are mostly the same. "In the country, though, we have a lot of sporting dogs," she added.

Urena grew up on a small farm in a village in the Dominican Republic, hoping as a young child to become a veterinarian.

"We were in charge of all of the animals," she recalled. "I loved that life."

In time, she broadened her career plans and earned an associate degree in animal science.

Two rescue dogs, both described by Urena as great dogs, have joined her household. Brissa, 17, is a Chihuahua-terrier mix from the Dominican Republic, and Milo, 5, is a Havanese, the national dog of Cuba. Milo had been tossed from a moving car in Rhode Island and was picked up by state troopers.

"I would never make a dog suffer so the customer can see hair," Urena said when asked what she would want a new customer to know. The well-being of the dog comes first.

"I refuse to brush a dog in need of a short haircut for hot weather or to counter coat matting, nor will I do a shave-down just to make more money or to please a customer's aesthetic taste," she said.

Rosie's Grooming is located at 20 Lango Road in Amenia. For more information, call 845-332-5366.



PHOTO BY LEILA HAWKEN

Trimmed to perfection at Rosie's Grooming in Amenia, a standard poodle named Scarlett O'Connor is ready to strut. With 32 years of grooming experience, Rosie Urena has welcomed customers at her Amenia shop for three years.



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