

Animal welfare: Milner home CARES about cats



A Milner heritage site is the purr-fect solution for CARES, a cat shelter that was in desperate need of a home.

by Erin McKay - Langley Advance News, January 16, 2004

Carol and Ted

An old house is now a new home for Langley's lost and abandoned felines.

CARES, a volunteer-run organization which looks after cats in need, has moved into a heritage site in Milner.

The shelter took up residence at the old Moir House, at 6840 Glover Road, in early December, thanks to a partnership with Langley Township and the Langley Heritage Society.

"This is ours for as long as we want," said Sharon Ratcliffe of CARES. "We're just part of this community and we love it."

CARES, the Canadian Animal Rescue and Extended Shelter, was formed in Langley in 1993, and incorporated into a society in 1994.

The organization takes in homeless and abused cats, provides them with food, shelter, and medical care, and acts as a resource to cat owners. CARES, which has a "no kill" policy, will help cats and owners in times of crisis, and takes in feral cats who have been surviving in the wild.

Animals are adopted out from the CARES shelter, and through the Luv a Pet program at Petsmart.

For four years, CARES operated out of rented land and buildings on 206th St., but on New Year's Eve Day, 2002, it received a rental termination from the property owner.

"We had such a horrible year," said Ratcliffe.

CARES was desperate to find a new home, but no one from the community came forward with land. In March, 2003, CARES representatives appeared before Township Council, looking for help.

When no action was taken, "We were really devastated," said Ratcliffe.

Then Mayor Kurt Alberts approached the Langley Heritage Society, and a solution was found.

The Moir House was built in 1909 and is owned by the Township of Langley. The site features a home and several outbuildings on property next to a park.

The Township provided a matching grant of \$7,500 to CARES - which came up with several

thousand dollars for the project - and an overhaul of the site was conducted by the Heritage Society under the direction of Fred Pepin and CARES Project Manager Dennis Ratcliffe.

In the meantime, CARES paid extra rent to stay at the old location.

At the new site, an old workshop was converted into homes for the cats, and Restwell Mattress Company donated a portable, which will be made into an education centre.

The Moir House itself was refurbished, a family has moved in, and the woman renting the home from the Heritage Society will be landscaping the property in the spring.

Dozens of volunteer hours and donations from Bridge Holdings, Fastech Services, Brookwood Veterinary Hospital, Britco Structures, Industrial Plastics, Tridon Trucking, and Mike Breed Transport made the project possible.

CARES's board of directors and volunteers are thrilled with the result.

"We're putting in as much as we can to make it ours," said Ratcliffe.

The new home has given the cats at CARES plenty of room to roam. Several runs have been built into the shelter, giving the animals access to the outdoors, and allowing cats with various conditions to be separated.

Some cats have allergies, some are on special weight-loss diets, and others are wild cats that need to slowly be socialized.

The goal, said CARES board member Carol Briner, is to rehabilitate and find homes for all the cats who come through the shelter - even the timid ferals.

"They came to us totally scared. Now they are not hiding," said Briner. "It's slow progress, but it is progress."

CARES volunteers are excellent with the cats, said Ratcliffe, and the animals get the best of medical care from Dr. David Marlow of Brookwood Veterinary Hospital.

The shelter also conducts school tours, hires students needing work experience, and regularly welcomes groups of handicapped individuals who interact with the animals.

"We are defined by how much work goes in to trying to involve the community," Ratcliffe said. "It's not just a shelter. People have a place here."