

Coverage won't change, says UCHS chair

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"The Upper Credit Humane Society is still a humane society," she said.

Regarding Waldbusser's comments about the board members, she said the new members on the board were brought in after the decision was made not to be affiliated with the OSPCA.

Yorke also disputes Waldbusser's claim that 28 kitten program volunteers have resigned. She said 15 have resigned, but the program still has active volunteers.

"We are sorry to see some of our dedicated volunteers leave over this decision, they will surely be missed and we do hope that they reconsider," said Yorke.

She stressed the "decision will in no way effect the way in which animals in our shelter and your community are cared for."

Yorke said she spoke with the chief investigator with the OSPCA and he "guaranteed to me it would not affect the (animal cruelty) investigations" in the area covered by UCHS. "They're mandated to do it," said Yorke.

Alison Cross, a spokesperson with the OSPCA backed up Yorke's assertion.

"There won't be a change in the coverage," said Cross. "It will be the same coverage as before."

She explained the only difference now is that people who have an animal cruelty complaint will call 1-888-ONT-SPCA (668-7722) instead of UCHS.

"You call the 1-888 number and we would send our available agent, or you could also call the police," said Cross.

Yorke said the decision regarding OSPCA affiliation was based on finances.

"When the new board took over the shelter we were two weeks away from closing the doors. Our finances were deep in the red and we were scrambling to pay our bills. By the end of the year, through hard work, dedication and fundraising we were able to close the year with money in the bank," said Yorke.

She said the annual fee for affiliation with the OSPCA is approximately \$1,500, with monthly cruelty expenses of \$1,200.

"The cost associated with being affiliated with the Ontario SPCA is an expense that we can no longer afford," said Yorke. She added the UCHS never did cruelty investigations, but was responsible for paying the costs associated with them. "These investigations will still be carried out by the Ontario SPCA, just at no cost to the UCHS."

Yorke said the UCHS would continue to respond to injured animal calls, and take in lost or stray cats and kittens.

"Only now we have more financial resources to put into that care," said Yorke.

Barb Johnson of Georgetown is one of the volunteers with the UCHS Kitten Foster program who has left. For several years she headed that program.

She's upset the board made this decision regarding OSPCA affiliation, and made it without making a plea to the public for financial support.

"They haven't told the public where the donations are going," said Johnson. She said when the public makes a dona-

tion they will think they're supporting the OSPCA, but now it's "just a dog and cat shelter."

She said the cruelty investigations will be done out of Orangeville or Newmarket but worries "not in a timely fashion."

She's wondering if the board was misinformed when making its decision, and hopes it will reverse it. Since the decision was made she had received an email from an OSPCA staff member stating that if UCHS became an affiliate again it wouldn't have to be responsible for investigation and enforcement costs and the OSPCA would review the annual affiliation fees.

Yorke looked into the offer after it came to her attention, but said she hasn't received specific details on the financial impact for the Upper Credit Humane Society.

Due to public outcry from the volunteers Yorke said the UCHS board has decided to take the decision to the organization's membership, which will be voting tonight (Tuesday) at its AGM to decide whether or not to re-affiliate with the OSPCA.

"If the vote is in favour of re-affiliation we will reapply to affiliate with the OSPCA," said Yorke, but she stressed she still stands by the original decision saying it was in the "best interest of the UCHS at this time."

The only board member to vote against dropping the OSPCA affiliation, former board chair Deb Delorme, has since resigned. She said Halton Hills and its animals and wildlife "would be best served with local access to the protection, guidance and mandate of the OSPCA."

Mark and Nanci Llewellyn of Georgetown, two other local volunteers with the Kitten Foster Program, also resigned over this issue.

"This will have a big impact on Halton Hills and the animals in the care of the UCHS animal control officers will no longer respond to calls for assistance at locations outside Erin Township," wrote the Llewellyns in a letter to this newspaper.

Yorke said the UCHS animal control officer "will continue to respond to injured animal calls throughout the communities (covered by UCHS), which includes Halton Hills."

The Llewellyns also said a large part of funding for the UCHS comes from Halton Hills through the Moore Park Thrift Shop and Kitten Program adoptions, "this money will now flow to an organization which will not provide services here in Halton Hills."

"Without an OSPCA affiliation the public has no assurance of the direction of the UCHS policy making or what they decide their responsibilities are. This will put public and corporate sponsorship and fundraising in jeopardy," said Llewellyn.

Yorke said that's untrue and added public donations as in the past will continue to support the animals of the UCHS.

Sandra Ross, a long-time supporter of the UCHS is "upset, angry and perturbed at the decision."

"I feel that the board should have taken this decision to the members and to the public prior to making any decision of this magnitude," said Ross.



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