



Oakville & Milton Humane Society OSPCA agent Laura MacKasey loads one of the more than 100 cats seized from a house at 16574 Steeles Ave., west of Winston Churchill Boulevard, last Thursday.

Photo by Ted Brown

Rescued cats put strain on OMHS

By EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

The rescue of more than 115 cats from a Halton Hills home last week has left the Oakville Milton Humane Society (OMHS) scrambling to find homes for the 300 cats the Society already had in its care.

The OMHS executed a search warrant last Thursday at the 16574 Steeles Ave. home, just west of Winston Churchill Blvd., after receiving an anonymous tip that as many as 200 cats were living inside the house.

Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) agent Laura Mackasey is expected to be laying charges in the investigation.

On Thursday, 115 cats were transferred from the home to the OMHS shelter in Oakville. Ten dead cats were removed.

Volunteer veterinarians from the OMHS worked late into the night to treat and find accommodation for the felines.

"Many of the cats were very timid and shy, so great care has to be taken to remove them with as little stress as possible," said Kim Millan, executive director of the OMHS.

The OMHS already had 300 cats in its care before the removal. A temporary trailer was rented to accommodate the additional cats and the removal has severely stretched the resources of the shelter.

"We have had so much interest from people wanting to foster or to adopt (the rescued Halton Hills cats)," shelter spokesperson Brenda Dushko said.

"Unfortunately we're many weeks away from even the possibility of that at this

point," she said, urging people to consider the other cats instead.

The organization had to rent a trailer temporarily to accommodate its new guests after obtaining a second search warrant to continue removing the cats from the house Saturday morning. A time limit for the first warrant expired Friday night.

"A lot of stress is placed on the shelter when something like this happens," Dushko said, adding that they are using the bottoms of boxes as disposable litter pans.

The shelter is also monitoring a humane trap set up inside the home to catch any cats hiding in nooks and crannies of the house they may have missed. The trap is a cage with food and a door that shuts behind the cat as it goes inside.

"There were so many places that a timid or shy or frightened cat could hide," Dushko said. "We want to make sure that we have every single cat out of the home."

She said OSPCA agents were investigating, but she had no information about the residents of the home.

The cats have all been examined by veterinarians and are doing fine, Dushko said, though many are refusing to make eye contact with shelter workers.

In the wake of what Dushko said is "one of the largest removals in the history of this shelter," several donations have come pouring in, as well as calls inquiring about the cats' health.

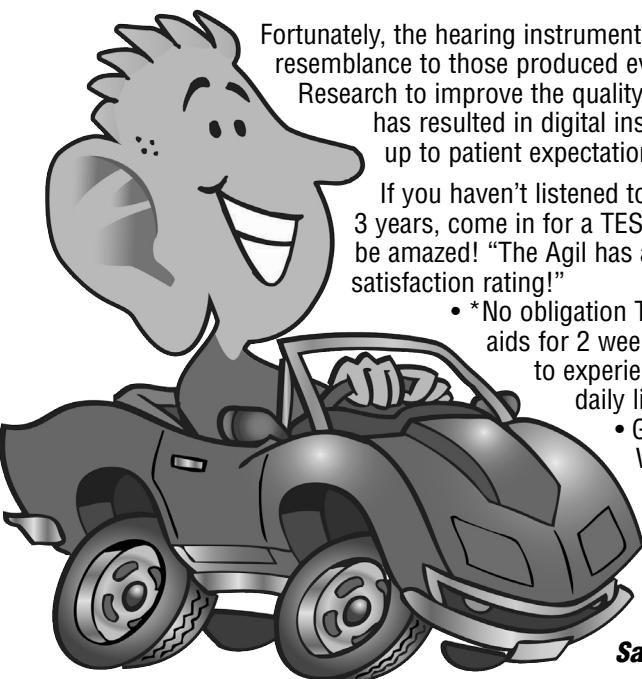
Beverlie Rockliffe and Friends are hosting 100 Reasons to Care—an evening to help the cats rescued by the OMHS, on Thursday, Sept. 19 at 235 Front St., Oakville from 7-10 p.m.

—With files from *Torstar News Service*

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