

Woman fights to break chains

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Nicole Simone wants your help to break the chain of animal cruelty in York Region.

More urgently, she needs your signature.

The 22-year-old York University sociology student and volunteer at Kennel Inn, the animal shelter in her native Aurora, is a passionate animal rights advocate.

If you would like to sign Ms Simone's online petition, go to unchainyorkregionsdogs.com

Starting in September, Ms Simone plans to petition the region's nine councils to pass effective bylaws banning the permanent chaining of dogs.

Her online petition has more than 125 signatures. She wants to address the issue armed with more than 1,000 names.

The laws in York Region state a dog may be lawfully chained permanently outside, as long as some sort of shelter is provided with a wind flap, along with proper collar, water and a minimum five foot leash, she said. Food does not have to be present but the dog has to look somewhat fed and in reasonable health.

Dogs may be left unattended for an undetermined period of time and many are not licensed.

Many chained dogs do not receive proper vaccinations and may have fleas and worms, which can spread to humans.

"We get chained dogs at the shelter that come in horribly beaten and burned, sick and severely abused," Ms Simone said.

"Often they have inappropriate collars. Their necks are raw and sore. About 30 per cent of them just can't be rehabilitated."

Not only is the chaining of dogs inhumane, it's a significant danger for people, children in particular, she said.

Chained dogs lack necessary socialization and may become territorial, she said. These dogs, deprived of human interaction and attention, become aggressive.

Dogs are pack animals. In the wild, canines live, eat, and sleep with their family. In the absence of dogs, humans

become their pack. A chained dog feels rejected and doesn't understand why, Ms Simone explained.

Like all animals, if threatened, their natural fight or flight instinct takes over. A tethered dog can't flee, so it will battle.

American SPCA research has shown chained dogs are nearly three times as likely to bite as dogs who are not chained.

"Unfortunately, it's children who are at the greatest risk of being attacked. Kids are the No. 1 victims of chained dogs. They unknowingly try to approach and pet an abused dog," Ms Simone said.

The number of chained dogs is difficult to determine, Kennel Inn general manager Gary Lawrence said.



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Nicole Simone with dog, Charlie, feels dogs need to be unchained and started a petition that will be presented to Markham council.

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