

Dr. Sue Carstairs: Saving One Turtle At A Time

By Hannelore Volpe

I saw a random act of turtle kindness the other day. It happened only days before a renowned turtle doctor from Stouffville, Sue Carstairs, told me, "If everyone saves one turtle in their lifetime, it will make a difference."

I saw the little turtle ambling across the road near our house when a big white truck approached, perilously close. Instead of roaring by, the driver scooped the creature up into a big sheaf of papers and gently released it at the pond's edge--in the direction the animal was travelling.

Dr. Carstairs would have approved. As executive director and chief medical officer of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre in Peterborough, Ont., she and her team devote countless hours to healing the injuries of turtle adults and hatching out turtle babies by the hundreds each year. The centre does its work with few staff members, about 100 dedicated volunteers and despite scarce financial resources.

Dr. Carstairs is also a professor of veterinary medicine at Seneca College, with 20 years of experience in wildlife medicine.

Working to save animals and their habitat has been "a lifelong passion," she said.

If Sue Carstairs' name seems familiar to you, that may be because she was part of the Stouffville Studio Tour for

a number of years, showing her pastel and pencil portraits of companion animals, horses and wildlife, but now "turtles have taken over my life!", the turtle doctor said.

The reality that confronts staff at the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre every day is that of the 2,000 or so eggs incubated this year, only half will hatch. The centre keeps as many turtle hatchlings as they can for several months so the creatures have a better chance of survival once released.

In the wild, about one in 200 survive to adulthood. Most are injured or killed by vehicles. Many are threatened by habitat loss, pollution, hunting and natural predators.

That's why seven of Ontario's eight native turtle species are at risk.

If a turtle can reach adulthood, however, things look brighter. They can live anywhere from eight to 25 years.

To test how effective their efforts are, staff at the centre have fitted 49 of the turtles they have released with tiny radio transmitters so they can be tracked and compared with a similar group of "wild" turtles.

Getting the word out about turtles is another priority with the centre. To help children - and adults - understand what can be done, Dr. Carstairs has written a new book, *Saving Turtles: A Kids' Guide to Helping Endangered Creatures*. It talks about turtles world-wide and the efforts to save them.

Staff from the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre visit

schools, naturalist clubs and other groups to talk turtles. One of these was the ECO Club at Glad Park Public School in Stouffville, where the youngsters were inspired to make their own 'painted turtles' using found rocks. They enthusiastically tell their schoolmates - and anyone within earshot - what they have learned about these animals.

The young students must have been fascinated by the fact that this creature has lived on our planet longer than even the dinosaurs - around 220 million years. But now their numbers are dwindling alarmingly. More than half of the world's 300 or so turtle species are threatened with extinction.

The Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre's work is funded by private donations and it welcomes volunteers, visitors - and donors.

It is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you find a turtle that has been injured, call the centre at 705-741-5000 to alert them and for instructions on how best to safely transport the animal. It's probably wiser not to pick the animal up with your bare hands. Snapping turtles, for instance, can make a good dent in a hockey stick.

The centre is part of the OntarioWildlifeRescue.ca network, which will link you with other such centres throughout the province.

Check out the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre's website at kawarthaturtle.org to learn more or to donate.



She likes turtles: Dr. Sue Carstairs with one of her charges.

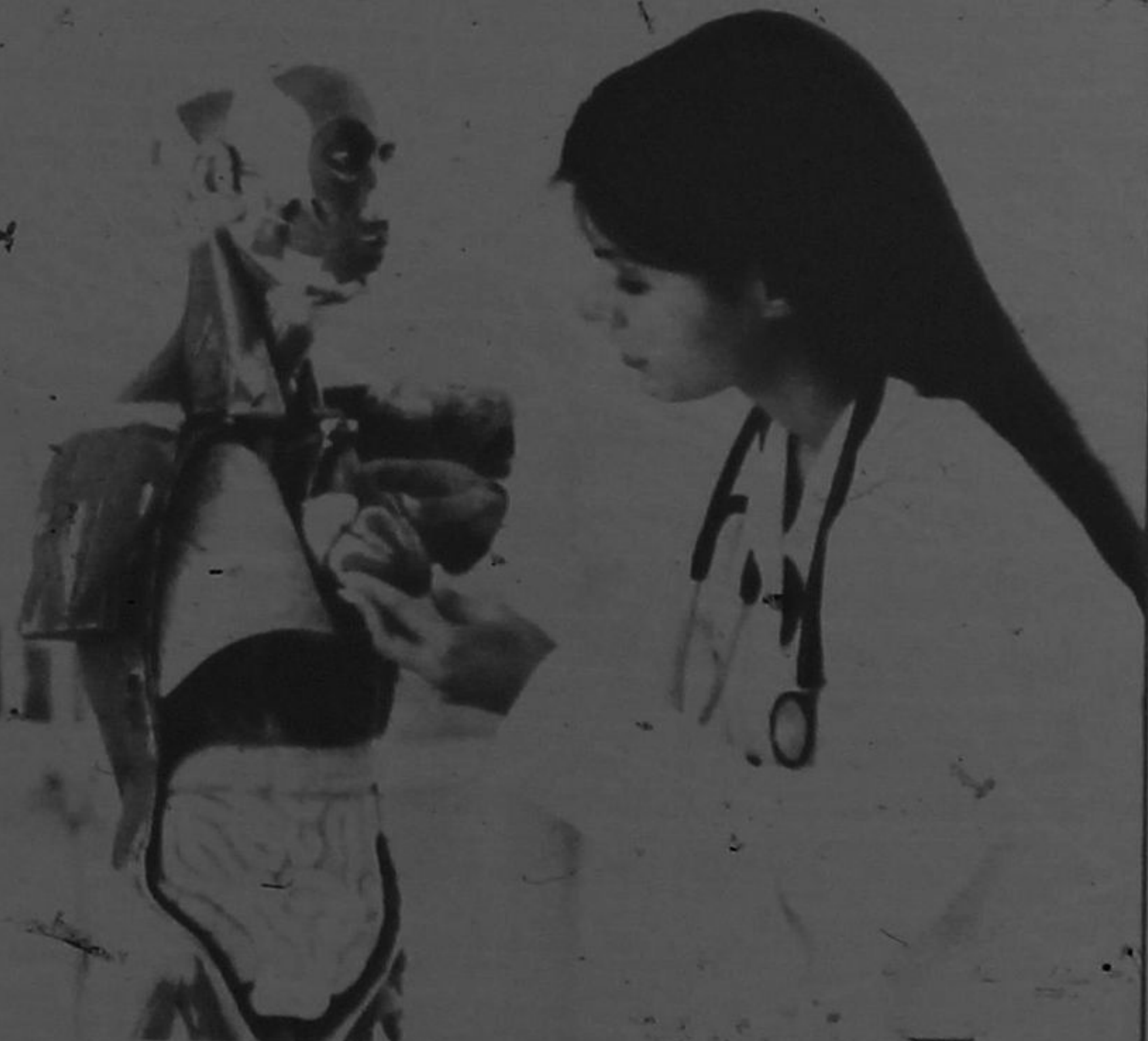
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has significant consequences, affecting almost every organ system in the body.

- Huffpost Healthy Living

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STOUFFVILLE SENIOR OF THE MONTH

Carol Wall

Age: Carol is 70 years old.

NUMBER OF YEARS IN STOUFFVILLE AREA:

Carol has lived in Stouffville for 12 years. She was born and raised in Markham, then lived in the Port Perry area for 32 years before moving to Stouffville.

CAREER: Carol worked for 10 years at a grocery store in Markham before becoming a stay at home mom. She served four years as manager of the Care & Share Thrift Shop at its original location on Main St. She operated her own gardening, catering and quilting business for 5 years, and still looks after the gardens of several clients in Stouffville.



HOBBIES: Carol has been a volunteer at the Care & Share for 31 years, following in the footsteps of her mother Erna Keeler, who convinced her to sign on.

FAMILY: Carol is married to Rick Wall, who also volunteers at the Care & Share where the couple first met. She has a daughter Debbie, a son David, and four grand children aged 21-29. She also has a step daughter, step son-in-law and 2 step grand kids. She has a brother Wayne.

PET PEEVE: "People who sit and text when they are sitting having dinner with you. I'd like them to talk to me."

LIFE HILITE: "Marrying my second husband Rick."

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY? "I'd buy all my kids and grand kids a new car and a house, give a lot of it to my church, then give the rest away."

IF YOU KNOW A SENIOR THAT IS WORTHY OF SENIOR OF THE MONTH GIVE US AN E-MAIL AT FARMERJACKS@ROGERS.COM

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