



EASEL founder is stepping down

Published: Sunday, January 23, 2011, 10:19 PM Updated: Sunday, January 23, 2011, 10:20 PM



By **Lisa Coryell/The Times**

EWING — Four years ago, township resident Kate Tuttle visited a local municipal animal shelter and was dismayed by what she saw.

“I decided the government should not be involved in the handling of animals,” Tuttle said. “I decided to start my own nonprofit organization to build a nonprofit animal shelter for all the unwanted animals in Mercer County.”

Now as Tuttle announces her retirement from the EASEL Animal Rescue League that she founded, she says she’s proud of what the group has accomplished under her guidance.

“We’ve made great strides,” Tuttle said. “I created a great team and I expect the team to work hard to accomplish the goals we originally set.”

Chief among them is the creation of a nonprofit, no-kill regional animal shelter. To that end, EASEL has generated interest among county and local elected officials who have joined the effort. Government leaders in several municipalities have said they will utilize the shelter if it’s built, and elected officials in Hopewell Township are negotiating the purchase of land in their town for the facility.

Tuttle said EASEL was instrumental in getting a trap-neuter-release program in Ewing Township to stem the ever-growing feral cat population. The idea, vehemently opposed when it was introduced, eventually garnered support from the local governing body.

“It was approved in a unanimous vote by the township council,” Tuttle said. “That was a very big deal.”

But Tuttle is proudest of what EASEL has been able to do for unwanted pets in Ewing.

“Throughout the years, our adoption days have found wonderful families and homes for so many dogs and cats,” Tuttle said.

Karen Azarchi, president of EASEL, praised Tuttle for her work.

“Kate’s dedication and passion of animal welfare has been inspiring to each of us.”

Azarchi said. "Because of Kate, EASEL is a vibrant, successful organization that continues to grow in membership and achievements.

"We all share Kate's passion to build an adoption center for all of Mercer County to help unwanted, abandoned and abused dogs, cats and horses from being euthanized," Azarchi said.

Ewing Mayor Bert Steinmann said Tuttle has been a voice for the animals.

"She was a very good advocate for the animals," Steinmann said. "Not that we always agreed on every topic, but she was very passionate and very hardworking."

Steinmann credited Tuttle with getting the ball rolling on a regional animal shelter.

"Those efforts are continuing today because of her tireless efforts," he said.

Mark Phillips, who has worked with EASEL since its inception, has been named executive director.

"Mark works tirelessly for the animals and everyone at EASEL is confident in his abilities to lead us to great success," Azarchi said.

EASEL will honor Tuttle at its first Casino Night to be held at the Trenton Country Club on March 26.

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