

It's a *Happy Dogs Life*

Anyone who has visited our Serendipity Kennels near Cellerhead in the last few months will have seen it looking in better shape, though there is still much work to be done.

The new tarmac surface is visually much better than the old gravel, and is much safer for visitors and, of course, for the dogs. New fencing is another improvement, making the paddock more secure.

All the work done over the Winter months has prompted many positive comments from visitors, many of whom remark on how happy the dogs seem to be in this environment. This is a fine accolade to those



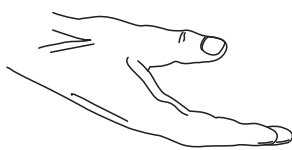
who put in time and energy at the kennels and make such an important contribution.



In the summer, re-painting and other improvements will be carried out, and we do need more willing hands to help tidy up, and with provision of materials (paint, slabs etc). If you can help, call Cassie on 01782 311893

Serendipity actually means 'making a happy discovery by chance', and we hope visitors going to the kennels do just that!

Nick Fletcher, Chairman of Trustees



GIFT AID

'VERY IMPORTANT'

Lifeline and other charities always try to promote the Gift Aid scheme, but it is clear from talking to various people that not everyone really understands just how Gift Aid works.

In essence, if you are a UK taxpayer and you make a donation to Lifeline, for every £1 YOU give, the Government will give us an additional 28p. You don't pay any extra - the Chancellor gives us the money!

This can really add up over the weeks and months. A £10 donation becomes £12.80, a £100 donation becomes £128, and so on.

To take part in Gift Aid, all you have to do is sign a once-only form which confirms you are a UK taxpayer and you want your donations to be treated as Gift Aid. And that's it!

If you would like a Gift Aid form, just ring 01782 311893 or write to Lifeline at PO Box 411, Longton, ST3 4SS. Or ask for the form at the Lifeline charity shops, or at our fund-raising events.

Gift Aid is a very important way for charities to gain extra funds, so do please consider joining in.



Call for severe sentences for cruelty

Local magistrates and judges have been criticised for being too lenient with those who are cruel to animals. In a strongly-worded letter published in the Sentinel, Lifeline chairman Nick Fletcher called for harsher sentences for those convicted of ill-treating or abusing animals. He also called for such people to be banned from keeping pets for life, not just five years, the penalty which is often imposed. He said 'Do magistrates really think that these nasty, uncaring, cruel people will undergo some change of character in

five years, and then become good pet owners? I assure them they will not.

'It is time that judges and magistrates started to treat cases of animal cruelty for exactly what they are – serious crimes which deserve severe punishment.'

In the letter, Nick said that Lifeline often took in dogs which had been starved, been beaten until bones were broken, or even tortured. Yet when the abusers appeared in court, they were given inadequate sentences. 'There is a weakness in the judicial system,' he said. 'Judges and magistrates are a soft-touch when it comes to cruelty cases.'

SUCCESSFUL YEAR

The Lifeline Annual General Meeting was held on February 21st at the Orme Centre in Newcastle. Chairman Nick Fletcher told members the rescue had had another successful year, re-homing more than 300 dogs and puppies.

He told members that Lifeline was a team, and that everyone involved deserved credit for helping make the rescue so highly-regarded by the public.

At the meeting, the four existing Trustees – Pat Lawton, Cassie Fletcher, Janet Finemore and Nick Fletcher – were re-appointed by unanimous vote for a further 12 months.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Lifeline charity shops at Newcastle and at Longton play a vital part in our fund-raising, and unlike many charity shops, are staffed entirely by unpaid volunteers.

However, maintaining a rota of volunteers is always a struggle, especially if someone is ill, or on holiday.

Becoming a volunteer, even for half-a-day, can be an enormous help to the rescue.

You can work behind the counter, or in the backroom, preparing and pricing items. You can make new friends, too!

If you can spare a couple of hours even once a week, why not pop in to one of the shops, introduce yourself and have a chat about what is involved?

In particular, our Newcastle shop is so short of help that it has to close on Thursdays because there is no one available. This means we lose a lot of potential funds.

Can you help? Or do you know someone who can?

We also need volunteers who can help Marie and her team with town centre collections in Hanley and Newcastle and Longton. It's not too arduous to stand with a collecting tin and a smile, and it raises vital funds for us.

Again, half a day would do. Please call Marie on 01782 614415 for details.

HOMES NEEDED

All the dogs at the Lifeline kennels deserve loving homes, but we sadly cannot feature more than a few in this Newsletter.

JACK is a happy Collie-cross with only one eye, but it doesn't bother him. He likes affection and would ideally suit someone who could provide one-to-one attention.



CIDER is a Retriever-cross, about 3 or 4 years old, with a friendly nature, mixes well, a good family dog.



BEN is a black Labrador/Staffie, about 8 years old, gentle and steady. Would mix with older children.



If you or anyone you know can give Jack, Cider, Ben or any of the dozens of other Lifeline dogs a home, please call us on 311893 or 638341.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Lifeline has two special open days and fund-raising events at our Serendipity Kennels at Cellerhead later this summer. Both will have stalls, refreshments and provide a chance to see the kennels staff, volunteers - and of course, the dogs!

The first event is on Sunday June 24th, the second on Sunday September 23rd.

Both will be open from 2pm-4pm. Do try to pop along.

CLIVE SPROSTON

It is with sadness that we report the death in May of Lifeline member Clive Sproston. Clive had continued to help out at our Newcastle charity shop despite ill-health, and had been a staunch supporter of the rescue for many years. He will be greatly missed.