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Abandoned

THUNDER BAY'S sinking economic situation is straining every social agency in town. And it's not just the human condition that is causing problems. For every public concern about rising crime there is a complaint about domestic animals running at large. Unfortunately, for every unleashed dog and cat there are many more pets neglected, abused and abandoned.

Thousands of animals rely on the Thunder Bay and District Humane Society every year to provide hope for a new home and a new life of responsible pet ownership.

The society's shelter on Rosslyn Road is so strained for space that it has just launched a campaign to raise \$300,000. That's a considerable sum in a city that relies so much and so often on the charity of its citizens.

But the society does not only serve the city of Thunder Bay. As the district animal welfare agency it is responsible for pet problems from Wawa to the Manitoba border.

Theirs is an often thankless and always frustrating job as domestic animals of all sorts come under the careless or cruel hand of people who give up responsibility for their otherwise largely helpless pets.

Pet ownership brings with it the cost of care and the reward of an unjudging companion that can enrich human life to immense proportions. But too many pet owners decide they can no longer afford to keep an animal and simply abandon them, secure in the knowledge that some service will step in and pick up where they have left off.

The Humane Society is hardly alone in this growing task. Thunder Bay's Animal Services department is just as busy. Beyond these two leading services are a large number of voluntary groups whose members respond in other ways to the immense challenge of so many abandoned pets.

The Keri Chase Foundation supports stray, injured and lost animals in the district. It is named for the woman who, prior to her accidental death in 2001, saved injured and stray animals and found them homes or returned them to the wild. Earlier this year, through its fundraising efforts, the foundation awarded \$10,000 to five local registered animal welfare charities (the Humane Society, North Superior People Animal Welfare and Safety Inc., The Thunder Bay Therapeutic Riding Association, Flight of Fancy, New Hope Dog RESQ) and two non-registered animal welfare organizations (Hooper's Haven and Local Dog Rescue - Troy Way) for use in their support programs to assist animals and relieve animal suffering.

Animals enrich our lives but they rely on our care. The existence of these and still more pet rescue groups demonstrate the scale of human carelessness when it comes to pets, and the size of the ensuing task. Each of them deserve our charitable considerations, beginning with the Humane Society's new campaign.