



Learning more about taking care of pets

When you are a dog person, you can get a little goofy about dogs.

For example, whenever I see a dog walking around the neighborhood, I can't help but stop and see if I can help it find its home and owners.

A few years ago, I did something unwise and frankly, rather dangerous, in my quest to help out a wayward dog. I spotted a golden retriever walking down a side street close to 47th Street and swerved over to park my car when I noticed that it looked like he was going to run out onto that busy thoroughfare.

I ended up going after him just as he stepped into the open lane. Somehow, I enticed him back to me, probably because I was waving my arms like a lunatic and shouting, "C'MERE DOGGIE! C'MERE DOGGIE! SUCH A GOOD DOG!"

The dog ended up safely back with its owner after I brought it home with me and checked its tag. Since then, there have been at least three pooches that I've come across and corralled until the police or owners came.

I never really thought much about approaching a dog, mostly because I like dogs and they all looked friendly enough. But, from what I've since learned, one has to be very careful when going up to a lost or stray dog.

I learned that from Kym Iffert, a LaGrange Park resident who is a dog lover, certified dog trainer and a long-time volunteer with the nearby Hinsdale Humane Society. Among other things, she specializes in working with therapy dogs and leading classes on dog obedience.

Indeed, Iffert is a staunch advocate of canine education in a number of ways.

For example, she recently took on another role at Hinsdale Humane Society as a humane education

coordinator, where she is working on various outreach programs.

"We go out to schools and try to teach kids to be safe around pets, showing them how to approach a stray dog, for example," she explains.

In an effort to foster greater understanding of pets and to build on

the success of the Hinsdale Humane Society and its many programs, such as a Junior Humane Society Program, humane education classes and more, Iffert is spearheading a donation drive called Pennies for Paws.

Pennies for Paws is a spare change drive running this spring, designed to bring humane educa-

tion into school classrooms while simultaneously raising money for homeless animals at the shelter. Iffert also provides teachers with lesson plans on animal safety and other topics.

The spare change drive has grown every year, she says.

"In the last four years, schools in this area have raised over \$22,000," she reports.

This year, the Hinsdale Humane Society is reaching out for the first time to public and private schools in La Grange, LaGrange Park and Western Springs.

"It's so easy to find spare change, digging out pennies from the couch and places like that," Iffert says, adding, "Everyone has spare change. We're not asking people to give \$50 or even \$10 - it can be just two dollars in spare change, but it makes a big difference."

If you want to make a difference, in gathering change, or supporting various aspects of the Hinsdale Humane Society, visit www.hinsdalehumane-society.org.

In the meantime, I'll be checking my couch for pennies. ■



LYNN PETRAK
HOME ON
LA GRANGE