

Rescue Ink offers tips, encouragement to animal advocates

Unique animal advocates bring their personal brand of support to F City

David Nichol
FH Staff Writer

"The more people you have who want to see something done, the more you'll get done."

Those are the words of Joe Panz, a member of Rescue Ink, a group making a visit to Forrest City to encourage animal lovers and also to do some training.

Five members of the group made the trip, and spoke to around 75 people Tuesday night at the Larry S. Bryant Multi-purpose and Wellness Center. Note that some of the members prefer to be known by their street names.

Panz also offered advice for those who see animals being abused — call the authorities, especially in the case of suspected dog fighting.

"Don't take the law into your own hands," he said. "Don't put yourselves in a bad situation. Some of the people who abuse animals are really dangerous people. It's not your job. Call the police."

He also said that sometimes, Rescue Ink members will confront an abuser.

"When we come to your home and confront you, you don't want us to come back," said Panz. "We

solve problems. We go into situations and find out what the problem is."

He said Rescue Ink was interested in coming to Forrest City because of some bad things they had seen on the Internet — things which he said are not only seen nation-wide but world-wide.

"The Internet has a life of its own," said Panz.

However, he added that there was a kind of surprise when they arrived.

"We came to Arkansas to look at the situation at the shelter," said Panz. "We had seen a lot of videos. We came expecting to see a horror story. But since Dwight (Duch, the police chief) took over, he has turned the situation from horrendous. The place is clean, the dogs are being washed, they are being fed, there is compassion."

He led some applause for Duch.

He said one of the things most needed at the shelter is more volunteers, particularly volunteers who know what to do, "where everybody knows what their job is, or else you get everybody changing the water" while other things aren't getting done.



Rescue Ink: Five members of Rescue Ink are currently in Forrest City. The animal advocate group is giving encouragement and advice to local law enforcement, the Forrest City Area Humane Society and the community in general. Members of the group, who prefer to be called by their street names, from left, are: Stevie D, Joe Panz, Big Ant, Eric B and Scott the Knife.

David Nichol • Times-Herald

"We're not here to tell anybody what to do," said Panz. "We're here to let you know some of the things we've been through. We've been in these situations before."

He recounted a case where they encountered a house with 180 cats. Panz said in that case, the woman who had the cats was not a bad person, but well-meaning. Things had simply gotten out of control. And that, he said, is a good reason for spaying and neutering.

Panz handed the microphone over to Big Ant, who runs a shelter. He continued on the subject of spaying and neutering.

"One of the reasons your shelter is full of animals is because of a lack of spaying and neutering," he said, then he joked about the 180 cats. "Any of you ever tried to catch a cat?"

He talked about a T&R (trap and release) program, which catches cats, has them "fixed" and then releases them. Such a program has been shown to reduce the number of feral cats in a so-called cat colony.

Spaying and neutering also helps reduce the number of unwanted dogs, he said.

Big Ant turned it over to Eric B, who has a training facility and

sanctuary in New York State. He told the group that there are three vital ingredients to a successful and humane animal control program — community support, law enforcement and volunteers.

"You've got two of them. Now in order for the shelter to continue to advance, you really need the community," he said.

He said there needs to be more activities to increase the financial support from the community. He suggested barbecues and parties as two possibilities.

Scott the Knife is into grooming. See **ANIMALS** on Page 2

ANIMALS

(Continued from Page 1)

and also runs a boarding kennel.

"You not only have to keep the cages clean, you have to keep the dogs clean, too," he said. He added that a little grooming can go a long way toward making a dog more attractive to a potential adopter.

Panz commented, "We bring messages to Scott. He turns them into masterpieces."

Stevie D is a trainer and behaviorist.

"It's important to have a dog with manners," he said, and added that when a new dog is brought into a home, "You've got to set the tone immediately."

He also said it's a good idea to have dogs fostered out when possible because it helps to socialize them.

During a question-and-answer period, a lack of foster homes in the area was mentioned, which came back to a need for more volunteers and community involvement.

Panz also suggested that humane shelters in different towns cooperate with each other. There were representatives from the Wynne shelter at the meeting.

All the Rescue Ink members encouraged adopting from a shelter. But if someone chooses to go to a breeder, they also said there are ways to check up, and make sure that a breeder is reputable and not just a puppy mill.

One person asked Panz to comment in defense of pit bulls. He responded that pit bulls are loyal and not naturally vicious.

"Helen Keller had a pit bull.

Teddy Roosevelt had a pit bull.

The dog in 'Little Rascals' was a pit bull," said Panz. "They are one of the most loyal dogs, who will do anything to please their owner. And that's their downfall. It's not the dog, it's the people."

Duch attended the meeting, and said the men had been by the shelter earlier that day and had made some suggestions on how to continue improving the situation.

They were also planning to be back at the shelter today, and those at the meeting were asked to come out.

Rescue Ink has its own television show, "Rescue Ink Unleashed," on the National Geographic Channel.