

SNR staffer has gone to the dogs

Kellie DiFrischia (DEE-Frish-e-ah), a six-year veteran staffer in the School of Natural Resources (SNR), has gone to the dogs—literally.

DiFrischia works with people throughout SNR, especially in the areas of wildlife, soils, and in Parks and Recreation. In her spare time, her world revolves around helping canines. DiFrischia is actively involved in finding new homes for dogs.

A native of New Castle, Pa., DiFrischia set out to devote time to an animal humane society, but in 1998 she founded the Columbus Dog Connection.

“My co-director (Mirna Bowman) and I started Columbus Dog Connection six years ago. I had fostered a few dogs from a recent puppy mill situation in Madison County and from that, we decided to start Columbus Dog Connection,” says DiFrischia, “There were a few independent rescue people trying to place dogs and we decided to pool our efforts.”

DiFrischia has had a great deal of success placing dogs in good homes with new owners.

“Personally I have fostered about 80 dogs in the last six years. As a group, we have placed over 1,200 dogs and puppies,” DiFrischia said. “Fostering dogs is so much fun because you could never have this many dogs in a lifetime. I’ve had the opportunity to handle many different breeds and personalities of dogs.”

Mary Emmenegger, SNR assistant to director, appreciates DiFrischia's efforts for OSU, as well as her personal time endeavors.

“Kellie is a pleasure to work with. She never hesitates to offer a helping hand in our administrative office and to our faculty, staff, and students,” says Emmenegger, who commends DiFrischia for her unselfish commitment to the Dog Rescue Operation that consumes much of her personal time.

DiFrischia says her organization has been well-received locally. “The Columbus community has been very supportive of our efforts. Being a volunteer, non-profit organization, we rely on the community to help us help the dogs,” she said, adding, “We could not do what we do without the support we get from veterinarian offices and the people who regularly donate to our cause. We have a few fundraisers a year, but we try to focus our efforts on adoption events.”

Once a month, Columbus Dog Connection holds an event, 'Mingle With Our Muts'. “This is a twice monthly dog and cat adoption event we help coordinate with our county shelter,” DiFrischia says. “You can see dogs from more than over 20 rescue organization and shelters at this event.”

Mingle With Our Mutts is held on the first and third Sundays of each month. Before the event, on the third Sunday of the month, DiFrischia appears on the Newschannel 4 Sunday morning news program on WCMH-TV in Columbus. The station's Sunday anchor and fellow animal enthusiast Mindy Drayer credits DiFrischia for the success of the appearances.

“One of my most favorite features on our Weekend Morning News is our Mingle with Mutts segment,” Drayer said. “If it wasn’t for Kellie’s drive and commitment, those segments wouldn’t even be possible. She is very easy to talk to and does a great job during our on-air monthly interview spots.

“Kellie is blessed with a great personality and wonderful communication skills. But most importantly, she has pure compassion for animals. She has dedicated a great deal of her life to help our four-legged friends. She gives them love, care, attention, and new homes. Sometimes people need a second chance in life—and because of Kellie, dogs and cats are getting a second chance too!”

DiFrischia is grateful to Drayer and Channel 4 for the opportunity to promote her monthly event as well as for dog rescue in general. “Mindy is a dog lover and has always been supportive of all the animal groups in Columbus.”



SNR's Kellie DiFrischia finds refuge for homeless dogs with the help of Mindy Drayer of Newschannel 4 in Columbus.

Drayer isn't the only one at Channel 4 who has been helpful to the dog rescue efforts. "Meteorologist Marshall McPeck has been great, too," said DiFrischia. "Not only did he adopt his pooch, named 'Pogonip' (a weather term meaning 'frozen fogs of fine ice') from us, he promotes us and dog rescues quite often."

In addition to monthly television promotions, DiFrischia's group also sends mail and faxes to 150 vets, groomers, trainers and pet supply stores.

"Fax Daily has been gracious as well by listing our Mingle event each month. Many of the dogs highlighted get adopted as a direct result of being listed in the *Suburban News*. And many rescues and shelters become known to the community as a result of this ad as well."

DiFrischia encourages people to become actively involved in dog rescue and placement activities, either by adopting a pet or in some other manner. "Our web site (ColumbusDogConnection.com) lists all the rescues and shelters in Ohio. There are over 200 purebred rescues and many more all breed rescues in Ohio," said DiFrischia. "If you are looking for a dog and live outside of Franklin County, you can find your county website on our "rescues & shelters" link."

DiFrischia's efforts seem to pay off and are well worth her efforts. "There are two best times when I get great feedback," DiFrischia says. "When a homeless, shy dog comes to me and evolves into a happy, more confident pooch and when I get an e-mail a few months later from the new guardians saying they have the best dog in the world!"

Whether DiFrischia is assisting helpless canines or serving fellow staffers, students and faculty in the School of Natural Resources, she gives it her all. Her dedication is evident in the results she achieves.

written by David Meckler, Communications and Technology