

## RIPOSTE • CHARITIES

## Chihuahua rescue group fills clear need

BY NATHALIE HOULE

Sorting through 79,000 charitable causes would definitely be a chore, as the *Citizen* pointed out in an April 25 editorial (*Sorting out 79,000 causes*). How the organization I co-founded came to be singled out in that editorial was then, certainly, an enormous surprise.

I and several others co-founded Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport in 1999 as a way to formalize our efforts to care for neglected dogs. The Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport is breed-specific, as are hundreds of dog rescue groups in North America, because we have detailed knowledge about the temperament, behaviour and needs of Chihuahuas. We work in conjunction with all-breed rescue groups, local SPCAs and Humane Societies across Canada to take in Chihuahuas, attend to their medical needs and adopt them out to carefully pre-screened homes. Shelters all over the world are inundated with unwanted dogs on a daily basis, and rescue groups do their part by relieving some of that burden.

Our organization is also very involved in pet-care education. It is one of our strongest mandates. Any of our volunteers can relate a story about visiting a puppy mill to speak with the owners about closing their operation, chatting with a Chihuahua owner about a dog's particular medical problem, or dispensing behavioural advice to a new pet owner.

Our volunteers donate their time, money and efforts not only to the CCRT but to their local animal shelters as well. They care for dogs that have been abused by their owners, represent their local Humane Society at events such as "Be Kind to Animal Week" in local malls and participate in fundraising events such as walkathons or "Pet Pics" with Santa.



Anchovi is one of the Chihuahuas awaiting adoption on the Web site of Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport.

Our volunteers are committed to practising and preaching responsible pet ownership. Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport volunteers have written letters to local, provincial and federal politicians in support of increased fines and punishment for those convicted of animal abuse or running puppy mills and voicing their opinions on proposed changes to animal cruelty bills, and to their local newspapers urging people not to buy pets as birthday or Christmas presents.

The editorial discussed the questionable and sometimes annoying methods of fundraising and soliciting of donations some charities use. The CCRT does not solicit funds, nor have we ever done so. We do not maintain mailing lists. We do not knock on doors looking for donations. We do not advertise. We do not actively seek financial resources from any individual or organization. To

fund our organization, we rely exclusively on our Web and auction site ([www.ccrt.net](http://www.ccrt.net)), unsolicited donations, occasional garage sales by our volunteers, and adoption fees.

More importantly, we rely on the generosity of our volunteers, who buy food and supplies for their foster dogs, drive thousands of kilometres every year to pick up dogs, and bid often and zealously for items on our auction site.

In our last fiscal year, the organization spent more than \$14,000 on medical care for our rescue dogs. We spent less than \$850 on administrative costs for postage, bank service fees and mileage reimbursement for our volunteers. We often wonder how we do it, yet we simply do.

Obtaining charitable status has not only legitimized our already legitimate organization, it allows us to repay the generosity and kindness of our supporters by giving them tax receipts for their unsolicited donations. It allows our organization small perks such as a 50-per-cent refund on the GST we pay on medical costs and necessary supplies — that money will go right back into veterinary expenses. It lends credibility to our group when we participate in events such as Pet-Fest at the Central Canada Exhibition.

But, most importantly, it recognizes the Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport as an organization devoted to the care and well being of pets. Those pets, in turn, then devote themselves to the almost 150 families that have adopted them to date.

Editorials are a newspaper's way of presenting opinions on various subjects. Citing our organization as a cause that is possibly undeserving of charitable status was one opinion.

This is mine.

Nathalie Houle is co-founder and treasurer of Canadian Chihuahua Rescue and Transport.