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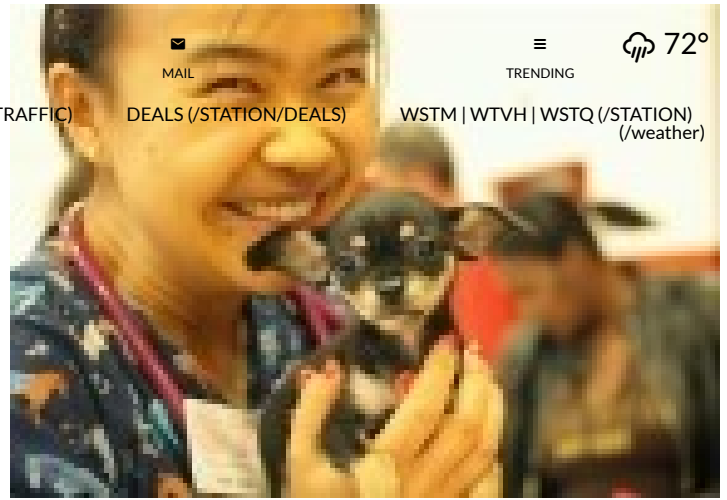
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The stories behind the pets and people of the Healthy Pet Clinic: Matt's Memo

by Matt Mulcahy
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Tue, 11 Nov 2014 02:31:20 GMT — The couple used a box that once contained reams of copy paper as a carrier for their beloved cat named Vicky. I couldn't resist taking Vicky's photo as she popped her head out from under the open box lid. A couple stood next to the [Healthy Pet Clinic \(http://www.shamrockanimalfund.com/\)](http://www.shamrockanimalfund.com/) table beaming with pride about their adorable pet. That's when they told me the story behind the white and gray short haired cat.

It turns out the cat was named after the couple's three year old little girl. She was killed in a car crash on I-81 in Syracuse a few years ago. Her name was Victoria. The cat is their living reminder of her.

That was one of many stories of the challenging lives of many of the clients we see at the Healthy Pet Clinic. Those personal stories underscore the importance of offering low cost vaccinations, exams and other care for people in under served neighborhoods of Syracuse.

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There was the young woman who brought her little dog to get care. She recently found herself on her own and the end of a relationship. She was staying with a friend because money is so tight. Food stamps help feed her, but the ten dollar fee for the Clinic was more than she could afford. Admitting to her misfortune brought tears to her eyes. She was lifted up by a generous donor who stopped in the Clinic on his way into mass at St. Lucy's across the street earlier that morning.

Then there was the 19 year old who rode his bicycle on a 45 degree day from the northside of the city to the near west side. He told me he rode at an easy pace so his dog could keep up. He recently took in the stray when no one else would. The young man is a high school graduate hoping to get to college. Polite, but unemployed and living with his mother. He came along way because someone told him about the Clinic. Our volunteers pitched in to pay his \$10 fee.

Then late in the day a young couple walked in with their dog. They admitted they had bounced from home to home, but were currently living under a I-81 bridge using a tarp as cover. They had nothing to their name. A friend had given them a ride to get to the Clinic before it closed. Again, the generous volunteers made it possible for them to get care for their pet.

It's worth noting organizers stress the need for pet owners to find a way to gather the \$10 cash fee per pet (<http://www.shamrockanimalfund.com/healthy-pet-clinics.html>). Pet owners should fully understand the commitment and responsibility that comes with the joy of having a dog or cat in your home. Our dedicated volunteers always have a tough time turning away someone who shows true need.

These are just a few of the many personal stories that play out at each Clinic. Vicky the cat, the boy on the bicycle and the couple that lives under the tarp. And, then there are the other 150 animals and the stories that surround them that we also helped on this day.

A ny questions or comment please forward them to mmulcahy@sbgvtv.com (<mailto:mmulcahy@sbgvtv.com>) . I may even use some of your thoughts on NBC 3 News at 5:00, the 10:00 News on CW6, CNYcentral.com or social media.

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