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FEBRUARY 24TH IS SPAY DAY USA

The Humane Society of the United States has declared February 24th Spay Day USA, a time to remind us to make sure all animals in our care are spayed or neutered.

Pet overpopulation is a very real problem. Unwanted animals are abandoned to starve, freeze to death or be attacked by predators. The sad fact is that there are not enough homes for all the litters of kittens and puppies born each year.

The staff at Second Chance Animal Center in Shaftsbury, VT, copes daily with the problem of pet overpopulation. They are forced to turn away people wishing to surrender a pet because the shelter is full of animals waiting to be adopted.

Consider this startling statistic from Channing Bete Company: "If a dog or cat has 4 offspring every year (a low number), 2 of them female...and each of these females also has 4 offspring a year, 2 of them female...by the 7th year, the original mother will have 4,372 descendents!"

"That is why it is so essential for people to have their pets spayed or neutered," stated Nancy Boardman, Chair of the Board of Second Chance, "Plus, animals tend to live longer and lead happier, healthier lives once their reproductive organs are removed."

While veterinarians may charge from \$147 to \$187 to spay a dog and \$147 to \$161 to neuter a dog, and \$122 to spay a cat and \$63 to neuter a cat, financial help is available to those who cannot afford these fees.

Three excellent programs offer spay/neuter assistance:

1. Second Chance provides surgery for cats through its Spay/Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP). The program provides help on an income-based sliding scale from \$35 to \$70 and includes rabies and distemper shots. The surgery is done every Wednesday at the shelter. SNAP also provides financial help to

spay/neuter dogs. To learn if you qualify for these services call Sharon at Second Chance, 375-2898.

2. For Vermont residents on state assistance the VSNIP program provides spay/neuter services for a co-payment of \$25. Second Chance takes care of cats through this program, while dogs are referred to area veterinarians. Call Sharon for an application.

3. For New York State residents receiving public assistance there is a low cost spay and neuter program available through the Department of Agriculture and Markets. Eligible families can have their animal spayed or neutered for only \$20. Call Sharon or go to www.agmkt.state.ny.us/A1/apc.html to download an application.

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