

Daily Reporter

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Nancy Rubino dies; founder of PAWS helped rescue thousands of unwanted animals

By **Ben Middelkamp** - January 12, 2019

GREENFIELD — Nancy Rubino always put others first, but especially animals.

That's what Parker Mohr, 21, remembers about his family friend, whose passion for caring for animals led him to choose a career as a veterinarian.

Rubino, 68, founder of Partners for Animal Welfare Society of Hancock County, died Friday morning at Hancock Regional Hospital. She had been diagnosed with colon cancer days earlier, said PAWS board member Sara Johnson.

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Rubino's impact on animal welfare in the county is incalculable. Through her efforts, PAWS has long promoted animal welfare through education and pet population control by developing education programs, promoting shelter adoptions and providing improvements to shelter facilities. Rubino also was a strong spay/neuter advocate.

Thousands of pets have been adopted through Rubino's work, her husband, Michael Rubino, said Friday evening. PAWS adopts out a few hundred pets a year, he said. That includes, of course, several that have found a home in the Rubino household.

Nancy Rubino helped to found PAWS in 2000, and the organization has grown over the years, operating a small retail store and cat adoption center at 3141 W. U.S. 40, in addition to holding adoption events at several Hancock County locations, including the Greenfield Tractor Supply Co. store and PetSmart. PAWS was able to place five to 10 more animals a month thanks to its partnership with the store, Nancy Rubino said in 2017.

Michael Rubino said his wife and a few others in the community felt there was a need for an animal welfare organization focused on rescuing and adopting dogs and cats and also controlling the overpopulation of pets. PAWS also offers low-cost spay and neuter services.

Johnson, who has volunteered with PAWS for nearly six years, said she's not sure what the future holds for the organization in light of Rubino's death.

"I don't have an answer right now," she said. "Right now, we're all pretty much devastated and dumbfounded that we've lost her."

Rubino had long been a dedicated servant to animal welfare in Hancock County, Johnson said.



Many people throughout the community remember Rubino's dedication to helping youngsters learn more about animals and how to take care of them. For many years, she volunteered in schools, teaching second- through fourth-graders, her husband said. She would bring animals, like hissing cockroaches, mini horses, tarantulas and alpacas, to show students. Michael Rubino said his wife used to teach 300 classes a year.

"Even last year, if we were walking through an event or a store, someone would always call out, 'Mrs. Rubino! You brought Lucy the Tarantula to my school!'" Johnson recalled.

Michael Rubino said it's been about 10 years or so since Nancy Rubino taught those classes.

"When she was in the hospital, one of the techs came up and said to her, 'You taught me in second and third grade,'" Michael Rubino said.

Mohr, whose family has a farm, discovered the organization through visits to the Greenfield Tractor Supply Co., but he already knew Rubino through her animal education efforts at local schools, he said. He remembered seeing her bring horses and other animals to Eden Elementary School while he was a student there.

Now a junior at Purdue University studying pre-veterinary animal science, Mohr was caught off-guard to hear of his friend's passing, he said.

"She was always there for us at our birthday parties," he remembered. "She was always a great person to be around and someone to look up to."

Mohr volunteered for PAWS for about 10 years, helping during adoption events and fundraisers, and it was through his time helping out with the organization he developed his own passion for caring for animals, he said.

A retired attorney, Rubino had dedicated her efforts toward animal welfare since at least 1999, when she volunteered to help Hancock County Animal Control, which had been mired in a wide-ranging assortment of misdeeds, to reform its practices. According to Daily Reporter stories at the time, she had helped at least two other shelters through the reform process by that time.

Shortly after, Rubino was named to a committee created to revamp the shelter after accusations of wretched conditions for the animals were made by former employees.

Rubino also talked to local clubs about pet overpopulation and was politically active in Greenfield, urging the city administration to create animal welfare ordinances. She had served as the publicity chair for the Hancock County Historical Society and volunteered her time with the Greenfield Chamber of Commerce as well, according to Daily Reporter archives.

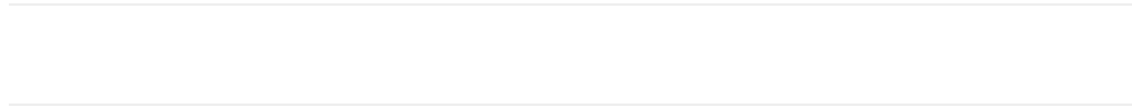
“She was always about educating and teaching kids the importance and love of animals,” Johnson said. “She was willing to share her knowledge, and if there was anything to know about animals, Nancy pretty much knew it.”



Rubino inherited her love for animals from her father, Michael Rubino said. Nancy Rubino grew up in a small town in Iowa, a place where she had plenty of access to animals and could interact with wildlife. In the 1970s and 1980s, Nancy Rubino worked as a wildlife rehabilitator.

Before the Rubinos moved to Greenfield, Nancy Rubino also volunteered with humane societies in Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Madison, Wisconsin, Michael Rubino said.

“I’m proud of everything she’s done,” he said.



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