



## ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF THE SCITUATE ANIMAL SHELTER

by founding member Elaine Birrell

Our story began in September 2001, shortly after 9/11 when I decided to volunteer at the local Shelter, something that I had thought of doing for a long time. I knew nothing about shelter work when I started but met another volunteer, Pam Pawlowski, who had worked at shelters for over 20 years. She proceeded to show me the correct protocol for caring for the animals. The Animal Control Officers (ACOs) were doing the best that they could with the funds that they received from the town (most towns and cities put animal care at the bottom of their budgets), but there was not enough money for sick or injured animals. As a result, many of them were euthanized. By January of 2002 Pam and I had decided that the only way that we could raise money to help these animals was to start a non-profit 501(c)(3). We had our first meeting on January 25th.

We were able to raise enough money, and, with the help of our local vet, Scituate Animal Hospital, we were able to start caring for the medical needs of the animals. However, the shelter facility was totally inadequate and desperately in need of repair. The cats and the dogs were together in the same room. Virtually nothing had been done since the shelter was built approx 30 years before. In 2002 we started asking the town to enlarge and remodel the existing shelter. By this time we were well known to the people of Scituate and they backed us in our endeavors to improve the facilities for the animals. We finally prevailed on the town to float a \$100,000 bond for the project and we donated over \$20,000 more to the project. I will not say that these early years were easy; it was a tough fight to get all these changes made. But with the help of ACO Pat Howarth, a town councilman and member of the Friends Robert Budway, our wonderful volunteers, the support of the people of Scituate, and a young reporter from the Providence Journal who took up our cause and brought it front and center to the town, we succeeded. The project took a lot longer to complete than we would have liked -- there were many ups and downs and a lot of frustration -- but the building was finally completed in 2007.

Besides the renovations and addition to the shelter, Leslie Davis and I met with two members of the town council and Pat, the ACO, over the period of several months to work on several issues, including the town funding of the shelter. The town is now setting aside more money for the basic care of the animals which allows us to take on the more expensive medical cases, and also fund the medical needs of the animals if the town funds run out. A basic protocol policy for the care of the animals was also set up.

This past September we had a dedication ceremony for the beautiful memorial walk and gardens which was designed and the construction managed by our Vice President, Richard Pincince. We also had an open house for the completed shelter and the beautiful new outdoor exercise area that one of

our supporters donated in memory of her mother-in-law. Our Treasurer Leslie Davis was the project manager.

In January we had our 6th Anniversary Luncheon that was open to the public. Usually we have 30 or 40 people in attendance. This year we had close to 100 and it was standing room only.

If I were to sum up the success of the organization it is our dedication to the animals and our working together for the benefit of the animals. We also try to have some fun, especially when we are doing our fundraisers.

As a volunteer organization, some of our most active members are Richard Pincince who also writes all of our grant applications, Leslie who also works at the shelter with dog training, Kim Mack who runs the Petfinder site and screens the adoptions of the cats and Michelle Cantini who works on the training, screening and adoption of the dogs.