

Orangeville and District SPCA celebrates Volunteer Week, honouring the critical support provided by volunteers

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The Ontario SPCA and Humane Society Orangeville and District Animal Centre is marking National Volunteer Week by recognizing the contributions of community members who play a key role in caring for animals and supporting adoptions.

Among them is volunteer Jen Lipinski, who has spent the past three years working with cats at the local shelter.

After retiring early, Lipinski said she gravitated toward animal care, something that has long been part of her life. With a household already full of pets and past experience volunteering, joining the SPCA felt like a natural fit.

"I've always had cats and dogs in my house," she said. "I really wanted to spend some time doing things for myself, as opposed to things you have to do to make money. Before the SPCA, I volunteered at a farm rescue. When that kind of tied up, I came here."

At the shelter, Lipinski primarily works with cats in the adoption area, helping with daily care routines that include cleaning enclosures, feeding, and spending time socializing the animals. She said the role offers a sense of fulfillment that goes beyond traditional work, describing it as something she looks forward to each week.

"I work primarily in the adoption room," she said. "These are the cats that are ready for adoption, not in quarantine or anything anymore. I come in, and I check their feeding schedules and everything. Then I go and get my cart with all the stuff that I need, and I do a full cleaning of all their cages, and then give them their breakfast."

Her efforts, like those of other volunteers, also help prepare animals for adoption by improving their comfort levels and behaviour around people.

Lipinski said that volunteering allows her to help more animals than she could by adopting alone, emphasizing the impact of giving time rather than taking animals home. She added that there are many ways for people to get involved, from hands-on care at the shelter to fostering animals.

"A lot of people have said, 'I don't think I could do it, because I would end up taking them all home,'" Lipinski said. "I always say that when I come in here, I can help multiple cats, whereas if I keep taking them home, I have to be at home taking care of them, and then no one is here. I can help a lot more by donating my time."

Shelter staff from the SPCA say volunteers like Lipinski are essential to their operations.

Julie Woods, manager of the Orangeville and District Animal Centre, said the organization relies on volunteers for a wide range of roles.

"We just wouldn't be so successful with our adoptions without the volunteers," she said. "We have volunteers that help provide animal enrichment and care, like Jen, and we also have others, such as drivers to help us with transportation, and photographers too that help promote all the dogs and cats and other animals."

These efforts, she said, directly help animals find homes more quickly by improving their socialization and overall well-being.

With a steady flow of animals coming through the shelter, staff say community involvement remains critical.

As Volunteer Week is observed, the Orangeville SPCA is highlighting the ongoing need for volunteers and foster families to support its work and ensure animals continue to receive the care and attention they need.

For those looking to volunteer their time, go to <https://ontariospca.ca/volunteer/>.