Dealing With Animal Abuse to Alleviate Family Violence
by Joan Zorza, Esq.

This article discusses two new publications concerned with the connection between animal and family abuse. Both advance the proposition that we need to devote more attention to animal abuse to help treat and alleviate interpersonal violence, and they offer some constructive and promising strategies for addressing these problems.

I. Special Issue of Journal of Emotional Abuse on Animal Abuse
An entire issue of the Journal of Emotional Abuse (Vol. 7, No. 3, 1-126, 2007), simultaneously published as the book, Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Linkages, Research, and Implications for Professional Practice ($55 in hardcover or $32 in paper), by the Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press (10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580, www.HaworthPress.com) is devoted to the link between animal abuse and family violence. Marti T. Loring, Janessa Marsh, and Robert Geffner, the editors, introduce the subject by interviewing pioneer Frank Ascione, who first started wondering early in his graduate studies why so little attention was paid to what he realized was “an important area: the role of animals in the development of children.” He credits battered women and their children for teaching us how important animals are to them, how profound their pain is when their pets are threatened and harmed, and how much more difficult it is for them to leave abusers knowing their animals face serious harm from their abusers. Ascione also notes “the growing recognition of the relationship between animal maltreatment and empathy” and how “those who abuse animals . . . [have] so little empathy for their discomfort or the anguish of their human owners.” He calls for more research and collaborative efforts, particularly in the largely ignored area of sexual abuse of animals.

The Link Between Family Violence and Cruelty to Family Pets
Judee E. Onyskiw, R.N., Ph.D., of Canada, provides data from population-based surveys from the U.S. and Canada showing that “25 to 50% of women report being physically abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lives,” and that “11% of all family violence crimes in the U.S. are committed against children. In Canada, 25% of all victims of physical assaults and 61% of victims of all sexual assaults are committed against children, with parents committing 70% of physical assaults and 40% of sexual assaults that are family related. The types of family violence greatly overlap, and there is also a strong connection between acts of animal cruelty and the various forms of family violence. She explains how difficult it is to define intimate partner [IP] abuse, child abuse and neglect, and animal abuse, and how, along with elder abuse, the disciplines dealing with these different types of abuse have developed separately from one another, further making the links less obvious. She uses IP abuse to mean "physical, sexual, psychological or emotional mistreatment, and other controlling tactics such as economic or spiritual deprivation against an intimate partner (including married, cohabiting, or dating, current or estranged intimate partner) by the other partner" and “is best conceptualized as a pattern of behavior and experiences used to achieve domination and control in the relationship.” She states that abuse often begins in difficult to detect subtle forms before the actual violence begins. Onyskiw uses a definition of child abuse and neglect to include “any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child (a person under the age of 18) by a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child’s welfare.” She discusses the increasing trend to include witnessing domestic violence in the definition of child abuse and neglect (as has been included in the definitions in Alaska, Georgia, Minnesota, Utah and six of ten Canadian Provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland), but observes it is unclear whether including exposure to domestic violence is in the best interests of the child or the mother. She defines animal abuse as “socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally or unintentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or death of an animal” and that it encompasses “physical abuse and neglect, including acts of commission and omission, and sexual abuse involving bestiality.”

Onyskiw then discusses the history of the link between animal and child abuse, which began coincidentally in 1983 in both the U.S. and Canada. An examination of the files of 23 British families brought to the attention of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals found that the children in 82% of the families were known to local social service agencies for signs of abuse and neglect, and that probation knew 61% of the families. A New Jersey investigation of mistreatment of animals in 53 families where child abuse or neglect had been substantiated found animal abuse in 60% of the families, ranging from causing pain or death to animals. Most often the abuse was caused by “an abusive parent or stepparent who targeted one or more children, as well as a pet, and used violence against the pet to intimidate or control the child.” The likelihood of animal abuse was much higher (88%) when the children had been physically abused than when the children had been emotionally or sexually abused or neglected (34%). While parents committed most of the animal abuse, “children were reported to hit, kick, pester or annoy pets in 26% of the families.”

Pet Abuse in the Lives of Abused Women. Onyskiw notes that one of the first studies to examine pet abuse in the lives of battered women surveyed 101 women in Utah shelters and compared their responses to 60 women not battered, all of whom owned pets.

See ANIMAL ABUSE, next page
Three times as many women in shelters as nonabused women reported that their partners had threatened to harm their pets (52% vs. 16.7%) and they were 15 times as likely to report that their partners had actually harmed or killed their pets (54% vs. 3.5%). Furthermore, most of the women in shelters reported that their partners had harmed their pets in multiple incidents. Another study published in 1997, looking at the largest shelters in 49 states and the District of Columbia, found that among the 96% of programs that responded, 85.4% of the women reported that their pets had been abused. In a survey of 38 women seeking shelter at a safe house, 71% said their partners had threatened or killed at least one of their pets. An Ontario study where over 100 battered women were interviewed at 21 shelters throughout the province found that battereders had abused or killed the family pets of 44% of the women. Pet abuse is not limited to opposite sex families; another study found that 38% of abused lesbian mothers reported their IPs had harmed family pets.

Studies have found that pet abuse was a risk factor for IP violence, although one study found it was not linked to whether IPs were killed. Where a woman’s IP had abused her pet, she was 7.6 times as likely to be abused by her IP, and “pet abuse was a stronger risk factor for abuse than having poor mental health . . . , having problems with drinking . . . , or drugs . . . , or not completing high school,” factors generally accepted as increasing a woman’s risk for IP abuse.

Women were not the only ones aware of pets being abused. Almost half of children in one study of sheltered women (vs. only 4% of children of community women) had witnessed their pets being abused, with children in safe homes 20 times more likely than community children to have witnessed pet abuse. Two other studies that Onyskiw discusses found even higher rates of sheltered women reporting that their children had witnessed the abuse of their pets (76% and 65%).

Why Abusers Target Pets. The majority of homes in the U.S. have pets, and most pet owners are very emotionally attached to them, considering them to be members of their families. The chaos, isolation, and emotional trauma may make abused women even more strongly emotionally attached to their pets. Pets may be a substitute for human interaction for the many abused women who are isolated by their abusers, and in any event “are an important source of support” and companionship for them, particularly when they do not have children. The stronger the emotional attachment that women have to their pets, the greater the chance that their abusers harmed their pets. Likewise, the abusers who harmed the pets of abused mothers were considerably more likely to abuse their partner’s children, as compared to abusers who did not harm their pets.

Abusers send a strong “message warning women that they may be next” when they threaten to abuse or actually abuse a pet, and by doing so emotionally terrorize their IPs by exerting domination and control over them while simultaneously eliminating their source of comfort. It also makes it much harder for women to leave knowing their pets may be harmed. Research has been split on whether physical abuse lessens or heightens when abusers use such emotionally abusive tactics. Child sex abusers also often use “threats of abuse or harming pets . . . to gain control over [a targeted] child, ensuring their silence and submission. In both cases the victim is “forced to choose between their victimization and their pet’s survival.” Abusers who consider their pets to be property are more likely to harm them. Seventy percent of women in shelters reported that their abusers considered their pets to be property, and that abusers were more likely to harm a pet the less positively they viewed the pet. “Ninety percent of pet abusers were reported to never show their pets affection, while 57% of pet non-abusers showed affection at least occasionally . . . . Ninety-five percent of pet abusers were reported to speak to [pets] only using commands, whereas 79% of non-abusers were reported to speak using a conversational style.” Those who abuse pets experience little cost or deterrence, since few cases are reported or detected unless “living conditions are deplorable.” Even when pet abuse comes to public attention there are few formal sanctions, sanctions are rarely implemented, and when they are, the sanctions are rather low. While cruelty to animals has been taken far less seriously than other crimes, Canada has been considering amendments to its criminal code to upgrade the crime to a criminal offense and not a property one. Even enactment would not change things unless they are enforced, Onyskiw reminds us.

Barriers to Recognizing the Link. To the extent that violence in the family has been recognized in Western society, it has happened through separate organizations looking in isolation at only women, children, elderly people, or animals. The first recognition of “the need to protect animals from abuse and abandonment” came to fruition in 1824 when the British Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was formed. Similar organizations were formed in North America: in 1865 in the U.S. and in 1869 in Canada. Efforts to protect children only “developed as an outgrowth of this humane work for animals . . . after the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children” successfully argued a case to protect a starving, beaten, imprisoned child as an abused animal. That case resulted in the formation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. However, the “anti-child abuse movement . . . lost visibility until mid-twentieth century” when “Henry Kempe described child abuse as a clinical condition with physical symptoms and named it the ‘battered child syndrome.’” Woman abuse was not recognized for another decade, although it “had existed for centuries and had been sanctioned by society and deeply entrenched in cultural, legal, political, and religious traditions and institutions” that viewed “[a]ll family members as the property of the head of the household” who had not only the authority but also the responsibility “to punish and discipline their wives and children.”

The development of “separate organizations to respond to the needs of abused animals, women, children and even the elderly” has resulted in “[s]eparate advocacy groups . . . each championing their own cause. The separate development may have further “obscured the fact that these various forms of violence do not occur independently of one another” and
forced the separate systems to “compete for scarce resources, a factor which only serves to intensify separate agendas,” compartmentalizing or balkanizing the problem of family violence. Researchers have also focused their efforts on only one form of abuse, presenting their findings in journals and conferences that specialize in only that form of abuse, further obscuring the connections. Onyskiw notes that several scholars strongly recommend a collaborative approach to address all of the forms of family violence.

The Need to Address Cruelty to Animals Within Families. Not only do animals in their own right deserve humane treatment, but the problem deserves recognition because “animal abuse is a disturbing, antisocial, and illegal behavior and a sign of serious psychopathology” which may indicate that others in the family are at risk. Furthermore, addressing the “cruelty to animals may eliminate or at least alleviate a significant barrier for women wanting to leave an abusive situation.” Already, 48% of female victims delay seeking shelter out of concern for the safety of their pets, and 25% of those who do return to their abusers out of concern for their animals (pets and farm animals). In rural areas farm animals are not only of concern for their emotional attachment, but they are often a financial consideration, and sometimes are the sole livelihood for IP violence victims. Animal abuse can also be an indicator that other violence in the family is escalating. Children who witness pet abuse are traumatized and desensitized to violence, both in childhood and when they become adults. Not only are they more likely to abuse other people, but they are more likely to abuse animals, and also more likely to engage in criminal behavior. Those who abuse animals are more than three times as likely to commit other criminal offenses than those who do not abuse animals (70% vs. 22%). Retrospective data from male convicted felons and serial killers reveal high rates of cruelty to animals in their childhoods. Indeed, cruelty to animals is listed as a symptom of childhood conduct disorder and serious psychopathology in children in the DSM-IV. Children traumatized by seeing pets harmed, particularly when done by a parent, “feel helpless to protect their pet [and] sometimes experience emotional detachment and a reduced capacity for empathy in order to psychologically cope with the trauma.”

Implications for Professionals. Because concern over pets is such a strong barrier for battered women wanting to leave their abusers, service providers need to ask battered women to discuss concerns about their pets and address pets in risk assessment and safety planning for the women. In addition (and as partially addressed in Part II of this article), they need to help women make arrangements for the safety of pets when women go into shelters. Onyskiw mentions an animal foster program at a Colorado shelter for abused women and their children, noting that many of these women report they would not have left their abusers had they not had somewhere safe to take their pets.

She also notes that collaborative approaches are needed for human and animal welfare organizations to better identify homes where any type of violence is occurring, and particularly those homes experiencing multiple forms of violence. Similarly, these agencies and the police need information sharing policies and cross-training and cross-referrals for collaborative approaches to work, and ultimately for violence to be detected and prevented. These efforts should include health care providers, since abused women seek them out, at least on behalf of their children. Onyskiw, a nurse, observes that “[h]ealth care providers need to be particularly vigilant when people suffer animal-related injuries,” which are often the result of pets lashing out against humans in “react[ion] to being teased or terrorized.” Indeed, a family member is far more likely to be abused by a pet in homes where pets are being abused than where they are not abused (69% vs. only 6%). Finally, Onyskiw also urges that other professionals need to be included in collaborative and holistic approaches to dealing with all forms of family violence, including lawyers, teachers, child and adult protection workers, and home care workers.

Impact of Animal Abuse on Family Victims

Karen D. Schaefer’s article, “Cruelty to Animals and the Short- and Long-Term Impact on Victims,” discusses how family violence usually includes many forms of abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional, neglect). Only 5% of family violence victims experience only one type of abuse, and abusers often target more than one victim. There is an additive effect on victims producing more distress and traumatic symptoms when there are more forms of abuse. She notes that “animal abuse could actually constitute a form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse,” as well as “add[ing] to the severity of a [child or adult] client’s symptomology and psychological distress.” She favors, citing Judith Herman’s *Trauma and Abuse*, not just the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis in the current DSM-IV, but a “complex post-traumatic stress disorder” for those attempting to cope with chronic abuse and experiencing “alternations in various aspects of the survivor’s functioning and belief system.” These include “alternations in: affect regulation (e.g., persistent dysphoria); self-perception (e.g., sense of helplessness, self-blame, defilement or stigma, different from others); the perception of the perpetrator (e.g., preoccupation with the relationship with the perpetrator); relations with others (e.g., isolation, withdrawal, struggle with intimacy); and systems of meaning (e.g., sense of hopelessness or despair).” She notes that adults who suffered emotional abuse and neglect in childhood visit doctors more often and experience higher levels of anxiety, somatization, depression and PTSD. Furthermore, compared to children from nonviolent homes, 40-60% of children who witness domestic violence “are at higher risk for developing psychological problems.” She also discusses the greater problems that adult survivors of sexual abuse experience. All of these abuses can result in both externalizing and internalizing symptoms, and survivors of multiple types of abuse experience higher levels of PTSD symptoms, depression, suicidality, low self-esteem, anxiety, and aggression.

Schaefer reports specifically on the impact that animal abuse has had on family violence victims, how abusers use pets to terrorize children to obtain their cooperation or silence them.
Women whose pets had been abused experienced an initial "acute crisis stage that included shock, disbelief, and rage" following discovery of the abuse, generally followed by "complicated grief reactions and/or guilt, especially" if their abusers had killed their companion animal. Interestingly, women often later "attempted to find something positive of the experience," e.g., crediting the animal as causing them to finally leave their abuser. Other women reported becoming much more attached to an animal that had tried to protect them. She notes studies that found that compared to girls, boys who saw adults abusing animals were twice as likely to commit animal abuse and that witnessing and being a boy were the two variables that most predicted who commits animal abuse.

**Harm to the Animals.** Of course, animal abuse harms the abused animals directly, who can suffer as a result of being "tortured, burned, shot at, poisoned, given drugs and alcohol, mutilated, drowned, suffocated/strangled, sexually abused (bestiality), or being physically assaulted (hit with a fist or other object, kicked, biten, thrown, shaken), ... abandoned, deprived of food, water, shelter, necessary veterinary care, ... exposed to dog or cock fighting, deprived of social contact, exposed to conditions whereby the animal does not thrive, not given necessary affection and attention, or be emotionally terrorized and/or isolated."

**Implications for Therapists.** Schaefer discusses how animals can be used in the clinical setting for therapeutic effects on humans, noting that companion animals present an excellent opportunity to enable "children to learn how to express compassion, empathy, and nurturance to others," particularly for boys who generally have fewer socially accepted ways to express nurturance and empathy. For these reasons, companion animals are used increasingly in "treatment programs for delinquent or disturbed children, teens, and adults."

She advocates that therapists and others who work with abuse victims should be trained in animal abuse, and how to report it, and in asking battered women if fear for a pet is one reason they may not be leaving their abusers. She suggests that therapists can help to find ways to enable pet owners to safely leave their abusers, whether by changing their laws (as Maine did) to allow protective provisions for pets in their orders of protection, or in helping shelters to find ways of fostering animals so that companion animals are no longer a barrier for women to leave.

### Animal Abuse in Hispanic Homes

Catherine A. Faver and Alonzo M. Cavazos, Jr. report on a survey they did of 151 pet-owning women, 74% of whom were Hispanic, who sought assistance from two Texas domestic violence programs near the Mexican border. It is the first study examining pet abuse in homes of abused Hispanic women, particularly those who are Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals living in the U.S. Over a third of the women (36% overall and 32.4% of Hispanic women) reported that their IP abusers had threatened, harmed, or killed a companion animal and (35%) worried about the safety of their pets from their abusers. Over a fifth of all the women (20.5%) said that having pets delayed their seeking help, particularly for going into shelter, although for two women fear for their pets prompted them to seek shelter. This study establishes conclusively that Hispanic women and their pets are also vulnerable to pet abuse from IP abusers. It also notes that the study may have undercounted animal abuse because it is common for some Hispanic women to intermittently care for stray animals which many may not consider "pets."

### Animal Abuse in Child Welfare Cases

Mary Montminy-Danna surveyed 500 child welfare workers and learned from the 121 workers (25%) who returned surveys, that in 22.5% of their cases, there had been a disclosure of animal cruelty. (Actually, only 111 of the returned surveys were used because 10 turned out to be duplicates.) All but three of the respondents said that they documented animal cruelty somewhere in the client file. The animal abuse perpetrators were boys and girls (interestingly in equal numbers, in contrast to other surveys, which have all found boys far more likely to abuse animals), relatives or caregivers. The five question survey was sent to family service workers, intake workers, juvenile probation officers and counselors from the juvenile secure detention facility. Over 95% of the used returns were from the family service workers, who were a majority of the workers within the state child welfare system. Among responders who offered willingness to provide further information, four individuals were interviewed and two focus groups were held, each comprised of four child welfare workers, a training specialist and an interviewer, with people selected as representing the diversity of the population served and one-half of the statewide reporting regions. They learned that animal abuse does not result in cases coming into the child welfare system, but that the workers generally learn about animal abuse after the family is involved with the system, although there is no statutory or regulatory mandate for reporting animal abusers, so there are no question(s) about the topic on their intake form. Yet workers did report on cruelty or death of pets, including neglect; deliberate physical abuse; sexual abuse; withholding food, exercise or water; and rough handling of pets, such as throwing animals or pulling ears, tails or fur. "Dogs were burned and stomped on. Cats were drowned and slammed on the ground. The necks of cats, rabbits, and birds were snapped, resulting in death of the animal," and some animals in the wild were captured and killed, with some children having attempted to hide the remains and others having flouted the carnage. Disclosures came from a child, parent, sibling, or the foster family. The caregivers who abused pets did so "to ensure that children ... submit to certain behaviors or be made to keep secrets," so they would not disclose sexual abuse. All of the interviewees stated that animal abuse was a red flag prompting them to further investigate whether an abused or neglected child in the care of the child welfare department was also a victim of sexual abuse. They also stated that cases involving child maltreatment and animal cruelty were among their most challenging cases. Many workers suggested the need for mandatory training on animal cruelty for current and new workers.

See ANIMAL ABUSE, next page
Implications for Policy and Professional Standards

In discussing the link between animal abuse and family violence, Mary Lou Randour notes that 61.54% of children of domestic violence victims (vs. 2.9% of children from a control group) have witnessed pet abuse. Already there is some recognition of the link between the two issues, as seen by the fact that some criminal cases deal with both issues (e.g., threats of animal abuse to silence child sex abuse victims in rape cases) and the trend to create “Safe Haven” programs to shelter pets of domestic violence victims. But she notes that much could be done to change public policy, legislation and professional standards to better address both issues.

Criminal Law. Randour notes the marked increase in states (from seven in 1990 to 42 states and the District of Columbia by 2006) that have made some animal cruelty crimes felonies, often giving prosecutors more tools with which to try related cases involving drug and substance abuse violence, family violence or certain offenses against property. But, she adds, their effectiveness has been limited by the failure of state and federal juvenile and adult crime data reporting systems to establish a separate category for or track cases involving animal cruelty, in contrast to what is done regarding either domestic violence or child abuse and neglect. Furthermore, police in some counties do so in ways that are useless for tracking the problem. E.g., police in Montgomery County, Maryland record animal cruelty crimes as “Other traffic offenses,” making it impossible to know how many cases involve animal abuse. The FBI does not collect animal cruelty crimes as such, if at all, in its crime reporting data systems, so that there is no “access to ‘sound data’ … needed to design, implement, and evaluate interventions.” Similarly, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) records animal cruelty crimes in its “all other offenses” category, again preventing any tracking or analyzing of these offenses. Just as the national attention to domestic violence and child abuse, particularly that resulting from the enactment and funding for VAWA, has drastically reduced the incidence of these crimes, Randour tells us, more federal attention could do the same with animal abuse, which appears to be increasing.

Administrative Approaches. Some state approaches being considered, though not yet enacted, Randour tells us, are bills that would impose severe sanctions against those committing acts of severe violence in the presence of children, some of which specifically include pet abuse. Other state and local approaches under consideration would mandate cross-reporting of animal cruelty and child abuse. However, even without formal legislation, agencies can do cross-training, and inter-agency agreements can provide for sharing of relevant information.

Professional Standards. Although no states have as yet instituted standards for continuing education (CE) requirements for mental health professionals that specifically include training in the assessment and treatment of animal cruelty, many (but not all states or professional licensing organizations) have CE requirements, a few of which already include domestic violence or child abuse. Randour points out that states could mandate animal abuse identification, treatment, and cross-training to CE and licensing requirements.

[Editor’s Comment: Most of the requirements regarding domestic violence are woefully inadequate. E.g., the much praised requirement that California licensed psychologists have a one-time course in domestic violence, or that Florida ones have a minimum of one hour CE credits on domestic violence every two years, have proven inadequate for making those trained proficient at even basic recognition of these issues.]

Similarly, and in marked contrast to “batter intervention [standards, currently], there are no local or state agencies that are responsible for overseeing the development and delivery of mental health services related to the treatment of animal cruelty” or identification thereof. The national organizations such as the American Psychological Association and National Association of Social Workers, have yet to “recognize that the assessment and treatment of animal cruelty is an emerging treatment area . . . [no less in need of similar] guidance and standards as previous emerging treatment areas, such as batterer intervention programs, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress, and others.” Yet Randour notes with some concern the clear trend in some state legislation to inappropriately address animal cruelty. Although 27 states contain counseling provisions for juveniles, “these laws are being crafted so that they specify treatment before an assessment is made, and many specifically mention ‘anger management’ as the type of treatment that should be ordered by the court,” . . . [even though it is] specifically excluded in the specifications for batterer intervention programs.” (emphasis in original). Randour points out that assumptions should never be made about the cause of abuse, and that anger is only one of many possible causes.

Assessment Instruments. Not only should crime collecting data include animal abuse, but all professionals coming in contact with families and children should “include animal-related questions [in] screening instruments.” She mentions three excellent ones focusing specifically on animal-related experiences: the Boat Inventory of Animal-Related Experiences, Frank Asicone’s Children and Animal Assessment Instrument (CAAI), and the new P.E.T. Scale for the Measurement of Physical and Emotional Tormenting against Animals. While Asicone’s instrument “requires extensive time to administer and to code . . . [so that] its use may be limited to research and clinical settings,” Randour notes that the other instruments are short and easily used.

Professional Pet Assisted Therapy

In the final article of the special issue, Gary P. Cournoyer and Clarissa M. Udley discuss the promising Professional Pet Assisted Therapy (PPAT) program Cournoyer has developed for Rhode Island children who are incarcerated or being treated at a community mental health program for significant psychiatric problems. The PPAT program use Cisco, his chocolate Labrador retriever dog, as a therapy pet for group and individual sessions. Even when he is roaming around the Rhode Island Training School, Cisco had a
very positive effect on both students and staff. Over 2½ years, 50 incarcerated students ages 13–18, with parental consent, participated in the PPAT program at the training school over six group sessions, each involving a maximum of six incarcerated students. (The article does not discuss those in individual treatment or Cournoyer's work since April of 2006 at the Newport County Community Mental Health Center.) Students in the PPAT program showed considerable improvement in student behavior, although by far the largest improvement was in the first group. The only group comprised of repeats showed no additional improvement the second round, but no lapse in their improvement either. Early on in each group, when one of the boys has noticed that Cisco was neutered, "a good discussion [invariably comes up] on how being a man is not necessarily connected to having children," as well as on responsibility, particularly in the context of how many "unwanted pets... are euthanized yearly because of people’s failure to neuter and spay their pets." The authors note that in contrast to the boys, who were very physical with Cisco, the girls in the only group for girls "were much more loving and caring than the boys. They wanted to cuddle pet and hug Cisco and have him give them kisses, and there was very little playing, chasing, and physical horseplay," unlike with the boys. Perhaps the most promising result of the PPAT Program is that only two of the approximately 50 students who graduated from the program and were released by the Rhode Island Training School have been re-sentenced. The article concludes by noting that Cournoyer taught what is believed to be the first college course in Rhode Island for credit on Professional Pet Assisted Therapy, and that the students gave it very positive feedback.

II. Pets and Women’s Shelters (PAWS)™ Program

As noted in the prior reviews, owning pets can be a real barrier for a battered woman to flee her abuser, particularly in going to a domestic violence shelter. In 2000, Frank Ascione drafted the groundbreaking manual, Safe Havens for Pets: Guidelines for Programs Sheltering Pets for Women who Are Battered, to encourage partnerships between domestic violence and animal rescue and veterinary programs so that when battered women go to shelters their pets can be housed safely off-site with animal protection and rescue groups, including veterinarians. Currently, more than 700 shelters in the United States provide such referrals and arrangements. However, Allison Phillips from American Humane has just written a 40-page manual, Pets and Women’s Shelters (PAWS)™ Program (which is available for downloading for free from http://www.americanhumane.org/site/DocServer/paws_manual.pdf?docID=6541) to take Ascione’s idea one step further. Her manual shows domestic violence programs how they can enable battered women and their children to safely bring most pets with them when they stay at shelters. As was the case when Ascione wrote his manual, Phillips’ idea is largely brand new in the domestic violence community. American Humane is aware of only four shelters in the country that actually provide on-site housing for pets, although it hopes to help interested programs begin 15 new programs in the next year. The manual grew out of the May 2007 American Humane partnership with the Doorways for Women and Families shelter program in Arlington, VA, which started an on-site housing PAWS Program for companion animals at shelter. It also gained insights from the Shelter for Abused Women and Children in Naples, FL, which runs a similar program (and at a cost of no more than $1,000 per year). As a result of these actual efforts, Phillips’ Startup Guide contains lots of practical advice, including information on fundraising, and all of the forms, checklists, and agreements needed for most shelters to start and run a PAWS Program: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Animal Shelter and PAWS Program, Shelter Supply Checklist for PAWS Program, PAWS Program Intake Form, PAWS Program Agreement Between Resident and Shelter, Procedures for Residents With Pets, Consent and Release for Boarding at Animal Shelter, PAWS Program Extended Care Contract, and PAWS Program Resident Evaluation (supplemented by a section on what factors to include). Most amazingly, the manual offers free guidance and technical support to shelter programs wishing to start a PAWS Program, by contacting American Humane’s Office of Public Policy at 703-836-PETS (7387), or emailing them at PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org.

The manual also includes most of the information needed for publicity and fundraising to start a PAWS Program. E.g., page 7 is filled with facts and figures documenting the link between family violence and pet abuse, and the ways that owning pets can further entrap battered women from leaving their abusers. Phillips also provides data showing how important and supportive pets are to abuse victims and their children, how children are adversely affected by witnessing animal abuse, and how the women and children can become entrapped into victimization in order to protect a pet, and are also at risk of committing more violence against others or animals, both as children and as adults.

Phillips advises shelters to make the PAWS Program a multidisciplinary team effort, including by informing the community of the existence of the program, particularly the police, prosecutors, child protection organizations, veterinarians and animal welfare investigators, health care providers, counseling centers, and hotlines. Every PAWS Program should have one person who acts as program director overseeing the entire operation, and in charge of maintaining appropriate supplies and medications for pets and an inventory of all pets entering and leaving the program (with delegation of authority, as necessary). The manual advises preparing written policies and procedures, welcoming pets (specifying which types, sizes and numbers, as well as which cannot be accommodated), but reserving the right to deny any pet admission due to overcrowding “or if the animal’s condition, temperament, behavior or other factors would compromise the health, safety or well-being of the residents or other animals.” For animals that cannot be accommodated, Phillips recommends having an MOU with two or more other shelters or animal rescue groups that could provide housing.
ANIMAL ABUSE, from page 76

The manual provides three possible not mutually exclusive models for accommodation:

- A separate room within the shelter where animals can be safely housed in separate cages or crates, an option that can minimize problems with allergies and noise;
- Allowing smaller, non-allergenic pets (like birds, fish and small pets like hamsters, rabbits, gerbils, guinea pigs, etc) to be housed in the resident’s room with residents responsible for their own pets’ care; and
- Providing secure and sheltered housing directly on the shelter property, with chain-link kennels or a small building or shed to accommodate larger animals.

Heating and cooling options must be considered if pets are housed outside, and every program needs an outdoor “run” area and accommodations for animals to relieve themselves without contamination, again with suggestions provided. Another section discusses some safety precautions a shelter can take when animals are housed and exercised there. Not only does Phillips discuss veterinary care, keeping records, dealing with noise problems, and how to minimize allergy problems, she includes sections on dealing with abused, aggressive or stressed animals, warning that staff members should never “attempt to calm a stressed pet unless the staff member is trained in animal handling and/or attempts this through a kennel or cage door that provides protection from bites and scratches.” She also discusses procedures that may be necessary when residents return to the abusive partner when laws require that the local animal welfare agency be notified. Phillips also encourages having a trained pet bereavement counselor available to provide support to families when needed.

In addition, the manual discusses a number of legal issues, from confidentiality, court orders that protect pets, custody and ownership issues, insurance/liability for bites and other injuries from pets, kennel license and special permits. This manual is invaluable, particularly with its offer to provide free guidance and technical support to shelters starting a PAWS Program.

THERAPEUTIC JURISPRUDENCE, from page 72

clients and positions, stems from the frequent “high conflict” created by unreasonable clients, or the high emotional toll their cases are taking on them. Others have retained their enthusiasm by becoming ideologues, including proponents of bad science favored by their own favorite therapeutic jurisprudence colleagues. These lawyers take only those cases in which they will not feel conflicted or simply suspend their judgment and integrity in the interests of churning cases and making money. For example, this is seen among lawyers who assert in case after case with very different facts that their clients have been the victims of “parental alienation”. The fathers’ rights advocates also would lay this charge on the domestic violence practitioners. Whether the ideological lawyer is taking cases which do involve only one kind of client position, or whether the lawyer just “sees” the same things in different cases is not the issue. The issue is that the lawyer has resolved his cognitive dissonance by committing to propositions outside of law and outside of the lawyer’s academic expertise, and—maintaining a deliberate self-serving ignorance—is carrying both good and bad ideas into the media of the legal field. This alone explains the constant propagation in family law of bad science, and the seemingly endless “controversies” over bad psychological ideas that are pervasive in the justice system but which do not get resolved by any amount of publication of “good science”.

Some lawyers caught in this vortex have justified their lack of vigorous representation, and the coerced settlements they’ve foisted on some clients, as having from a pretextual concern for “the best interests of the [non-client] children”, or as taking the reasonable compromise position, or the high road, or “just helping people to get along”. These lawyers have attempted to redefine their jobs, paternalistically as dictators who must “control” their clients, instead of being agents at law for them. And again, therapeutic jurisprudence explains why this problem has become so much more pervasive in family law than in other areas of law.

Other lawyers profess to themselves and each other and everyone else around a great affinity for mediation and therapy and collaborative resolution, and all manner of alternate dispute resolution (therapeutic jurisprudence) as being superior to traditional justice system litigation and negotiation practices, and in the interests of everyone, because they have been encouraged to think this way by a steady drip of literature emanating from the mental health trade organizations—as well as new referral retainers. Little in the way of objective research substantiates these opinions, or justifies the resulting negative impact many of them have on formal justice system procedures and due process. This kind of thing again is just not as pervasive in other areas of the law, no matter how heated the conflicts get, and it is one substantial reason the public has such a generally dim view of the family courts and family lawyers. “Therapeutic jurisprudence” is a primary reason the family courts are seen as not working, unjust, and broken.

How Are We Going To Fix This?

Given that clients are entitled to their choice of attorneys, and are entitled to independent, unconflicted agents at law who are committed to furthering their interests and goals (as the client, not the attorney, has defined them), one immediately viable solution would be a rule of disqualification of any GAL or forensic expert who previously was associated in any prior case with either of the lawyers in a current case, and the striking and nullification of all testimony and reports of that expert, no matter at what stage the lawyer may have entered the case.

Court appointed witnesses and parties in other people’s private civil cases are interlopers in the justice system and must be excised. The very integrity of the justice system is at stake. To the extent well-meaning individuals promoting these ideas did not fathom the repercussions of them, and were swayed by sweet-sounding “solutions” that simply do not work well in practice, it’s time for an honest reappraisal.

See THERAPEUTIC JURISPRUDENCE, next page