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Shy Wolf Sanctuary event raises money to help rescued animals

By **VICTORIA MACCHI**, Daily News correspondent

Saturday, September 8, 2007

Facing mounting veterinary bills, Shy Wolf Sanctuary held its first "Sticky Paws" Ice Cream Social and Silent Auction on Saturday to raise money for the nonprofit's operations.

The event at the Naples Hilton will contribute to the care of the 60 to 70 exotic animals living at the no-kill sanctuary.

From wolves and wolfdogs to "big cats" like a Black Asian Leopard, and the junior member of the motley crew, a Gopher Tortoise named Sara, Shy Wolf Sanctuary "is all about taking care of animals that have nowhere else to go," said its owner, Nancy Smith.



Photo by David Albers / Daily News

Naples resident Joey Ficere nuzzles with Tekaan, a wolf dog from the Shy Wolf Sanctuary at "Sticky Paws" Ice Cream Social &



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According to Smith, traditional shelters won't accept these animals because they are not easily adoptable.

"I came because I love wolves ... they're big and different than a normal dog," Jackie Easley, 11, said.

Her friend and schoolmate, Hailey Podzunus, also 11, won a photo of a wolfdog at the event.

"I've been to the sanctuary before. ... Because I enjoyed (it) so much, I figured I'd bring the girls up here on a Saturday afternoon and get some ice cream," said Easley's grandmother, Naples resident Patricia Miles.

In addition to raffles and door prizes, attendees also could win items like multicolored blankets made with wolf hair through the silent auction.

Although none of Shy Wolf's animals are from the wild, their histories are varied. Some were surrendered by ill or aging owners, while others came from sanctuaries and zoos being closed down.

The most graphic cases are of the animals seized due to neglect.

"What happens is that people realize 'this is not the pet I thought it was going to be' and a lot of them are abused, very viciously ... (their owners) don't know how to deal with them _ they don't want to deal with them," Smith said.

"People breed them because they think it's cool and then they dump them," she said.

"We had one that was hit in the head with a frying pan, and another that had a collar embedded in his neck," explained Kathy Ward, a Sanctuary board member and volunteer for the past two years.

"People think that wolfdogs are a dog that just looks like a wolf, and they're not," Smith said.

Auction to benefit the efforts of the Shy Wolf Sanctuary Education & Experience Center at the Naples Hilton on Saturday afternoon, September 8, 2007. The first annual ice cream social for the wolf rescue sanctuary featured raffles, live music from local cellist Christa Hussey and photographs taken with the wolf dog to support the privately funded program.

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"It's man that's got the problem. (They) want to beat them, starve them, drag them behind a car into submission. ... They expect them to be dogs, and they're not. At the sanctuary we accept them for what they are."

Federal and state regulations vary, and wolves with even minimal lineage traceable to domesticated dogs are sold as wolfdogs, skirting the necessity of the permit for a pure wolf.

Even if the animal is "98 percent wolf and 2 percent dog," the animals are being bred and sold as domestic pets and can cost up to \$1,200, according to Smith.

"Anybody can order anything over the Internet, if they've got the money for it ... it's all about money," she lamented.

This is how a small fox from Brazil arrived at the sanctuary after being imported illegally through a local broker.

Although wolves and wolfdogs aren't the animals most people immediately think of as being affectionate, "When I'm at the sanctuary and getting kisses from the wolves, or petting the jag through the fence, all my troubles are gone," said Naples resident Susette Lewis, who began volunteering at Shy Wolf last summer.

She first was intrigued by a sanctuary while in North Carolina on vacation, and immediately began volunteering at Shy Wolf when she returned home.

"It takes a while to form relationships with some of them, and it just takes a lot of patience. But it's so gratifying when you finally form that relationship," board member Kathy Ward said.

Although many of the animals at the sanctuary will be there for life, others are adoptable.

The process includes a five-page application and a home inspection. In order to adopt from the sanctuary, adopters must own their home and have a fenced yard with at least a 5-foot or 6-foot fence.

Wolfdogs generally are better off in homes without children and free of small pets.

The most important factor is the patience to deal with them, Smith said, adding, "They have to go to people who truly understand and love them."

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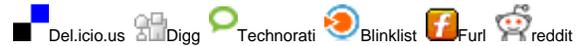
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The bills to run the sanctuary, however, can be daunting. Liability insurance costs \$9,000 annually. Last year, raw meat to feed the animals cost more than twice that amount, according to the nonprofit's Web site. And still, the volunteers recall multiple instances of receiving four phone calls in one day to rescue exotic animals.

"We're pretty much filled as much as we can have right now. ... We have to turn them down a lot," Smith said.

A list of adoptable wolfdogs and further information about the organization is available at www.shywolfsanctuary.com or by calling (239) 455-1698.

Contact this correspondent at vmmacchi@gmail.com



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Great idea. I hope the event was a success.

— [NastyCrackr](#) (anonymous) at 9:55 p.m. on September 8, 2007 ([Suggest removal](#))

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