

# Science & Technology

## Our Companions animal sanctuary breaks ground

By Patrick Mondaca

For the Journal Inquirer

**A**SHFORD — Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary announced its presence in late August as volunteers and well wishers gathered at the future site of its new pet resource center and a celebratory groundbreaking.

The event, which featured a presentation by U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, was hosted by WTC-FM96.5 radio personality Damon Scott, who added an element of fun to the occasion while attired in a spotted dog costume. WFSB-TV3's Scot Haney also was on hand, dressed as a larger-than-life fluffy white cat.

Susan Linker, CEO and co-founder of Our Companions, was impressed with the crowd turnout and the success of the event that attracted about 100 people and 30 of their canine

friends. As well as serving as a groundbreaking for the new center, the event was "a kind of group-hug, a thank you to all of our donors, volunteers, and supporters," said Linker, who

spoke of the "great vibe" surrounding the occasion. Construction is scheduled to begin this month on the former site of an old egg farm. The pet resource center and sanctuary will eventually function as a home and rehabilitation center for needy domestic animals including dogs, cats, and smaller pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs, and caged birds who otherwise might have been euthanized.

The center will provide homes for these animals and will feature a spaying and neutering clinic, affordable training classes for dogs with behavioral issues, and a variety of animal welfare education programs geared toward different groups such as school children and animal welfare organizations. The neutering clinic will include the "neuter commuter," a service that will provide transportation for those who may not have the resources to get to the center. The service will focus on the need for affordable and accessible sterilization for feral cats, cats that live outside of a traditional home type environment and are otherwise wild.

Visitors and volunteers to the new center also will have the opportunity to visit and interact with many of the animals at the center as they undergo various stages of rehabilitation and recovery. An adoption center will permit visitors to meet, bond with, and adopt a new animal friend. While dogs will be housed in specially created houses featuring two levels for romping and napping, cats will be treated to specially designed cat condos that will feature ceiling rafters for above-floor travel and exploring and special nooks for hiding or napping.

A key advantage of these specially designed houses is that "it allows the animals to live a happy and enriched life in a home-like environment," says Linker. This environment serves dual purposes by allowing people to see how an animal might perform in a home-like environment and allowing workers to identify and treat behavioral problems that an animal might display.

The sanctuary also will offer three hiking trails, an "off-leash managed dog park," a pavilion for outdoor classes and picnics, and several benches for resting after exploring the



From left, Marie Joyner, Our Companions COO, WTC-FM96.5's Damon Scott (dressed as dog), State Rep. Diana Urban, U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, State Rep. Pam Sawyer, WFSB-TV3's Scot Haney (cat), and Susan Linker, Our Companions CEO.



Marie Joyner with Star, one of the members of the groundbreaking Canine Construction Crew.

grounds with pets, friends, or classmates.

The new sanctuary, when completed, will be one of the first of its kind in New England and will be, says Linker, a large step in the right direction of Our Companion's goal in "ultimately creating a time when animals are not destroyed any more."

Those wishing to volunteer at the new center or donate may contact Our Companions at Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, Box 673, Bloomfield, CT 06002 or e-mail: [info@ourcompanions.org](mailto:info@ourcompanions.org)