Protecting Our Pets

Ed Bartz of Blissful Acres Reserve (above) is a volunteer with the Pet Evacuation Team.

Photos by Nicole Werner

Thanks to the Pet Evacuation Team, pet safety is a critical part of local emergency response.

by Lori Gleichman, for The Bulletin Special Projects

It is Jamie Scanlon-Kanski's mission to encourage people to put as much planning and preparedness into their pets' emergency evacuation plan as they put into making sure their family escapes disaster safely.

But just in case, she and her team of 114 volunteers are on hand 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to make sure as many domestic animals as possible survive the unexpected.

Scanlon-Kanski is the director of regional coordination for the Pet Evacuation Team (PET), a local nonprofit organization that works closely with the local chapter of the American Red Cross and regional emergency services coordinators to ensure the safety and welfare of domestic animals during a natural disaster or as a result of abuse and neglect.

They can also use their expertise with animals to help people locate lost pets after a house fire or other catastrophe.

But evacuation is just the first step, explained Scanlon-Kanski. After that, animals have to be taken care of, which includes shelter, food and water, veterinary care, and sometimes arranging foster care for longer-term situations.

"Finally, we get to re-unite lost or sheltered animals with families after the threat is gone," she said. "This is the best part."

Last summer, PET used the rodeo grounds in Sisters to shelter animals during wildfires that caused entire neighborhoods to be evacuated. This was a safe place for residents to leave their dogs, cats and other pets if they had to stay at the Red Cross shelter or with friends who couldn't accommodate animals, according to Scanlon-Kanski.

For the Sisters and Black Butte communities, domestic animals also included horses, llamas and cattle.

"We try to accommodate any animals they bring to us," she said.

Scanlon-Kanski is grateful that evacuating animals is now an accepted and expected part of disaster planning.

"We had been operating out of the Redmond Humane Society since 2001, but it was after Hurricane Katrina (in 2005) that disaster planning for animals in large-scale events

became mandatory," she said.

It was also then that PET became affiliated with the American Red Cross so it can be more integrated with regional disaster planning and more efficiently respond to events when they happen.

Scanlon-Kanski calls the partnership with the Red Cross "unique and wonderful," serving as a model for other animal evacuation teams around the country.

Perhaps its because Central Oregon gets to "practice" so often because of the routine threat of wildfire that PET is so respected, Scanlon-Kanski speculated, but she also credits the in-depth training the volunteers complete.

Of course volunteers must love and respect animals, she explained.

"But if they want to work on evacuations, they also have to be available and flexible enough to respond at a moment's notice," she said.

It's also helpful if they are experienced with animals, have a relaxed and calm demeanor in an emergency, and are willing to get dirty.

Finally, they must complete three phases of training, which includes a basic orientation, animal first-aid with a veterinarian, and then field exercise.

PET also boasts volunteers who have completed more sophisticated training like water and rope rescue.

Jamie Scanlon-Kanski, director of regional coordination for the Pet Evacuation Team, does water rescue training using a stuffed animal.

Of course, PET never says no to someone who wants to help, according to Scanlon-Kanski.

"Even if someone can't commit to evacuations, we can always use help with office work, finding foster homes and rounding up supplies, and with fundraising," she said.

Currently, PET, which just received its 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation, is raising money to purchase small trailers filled with supplies to be positioned within each community in the region.

"I can't imagine anything worse than losing everything in a wildfire, unless it's losing a beloved pet too," said Scanlon-Kanski. "We need more people to know that help with pets is available."

friends for life | directory

All for Dogs Rescue of Central Oregon
541-848-1963 | www.allfordogsrescue.com
All for Dogs Rescue is an all volunteer foster organization that works to get once homeless dogs into their forever homes.

American Legion, The
541-389-2867 | www.bendpost4.org
Supporting strong national security, taking care of veterans, mentoring youth, and promoting patriotism and honor.

Archaeological Society of Central Oregon
www.ascoinfo.org
A group of amateur, avocational and professional archaeologists who share common interests in the history and prehistory of Central Oregon.

Bend Attachment Parenting
541-385-1787 | www.bendap.org
Supporting compassionate and peaceful parenting for families throughout Central Oregon.

Bend Genealogical Society
541-317-9553 | orgenweb.org/deschutes/bend-gs/
To provide essential resources for researching, teaching, exchanging and preserving the records of family history in the Deschutes County area.

Bend Senior Center
541-388-1133 | www.bendparksandrec.org/Senior_Center/
A gathering place for persons 50 years and older promoting active, healthy lifestyles by providing senior recreational activities.

Bend Spay & Neuter Project
541-617-1010 | www.bendsnip.org
Dedicated to ending pet homelessness by offering low and no cost spay/neuter services to the pets, strays and feral cats of Central Oregon.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon
541-312-6047 (Bend) | www.bbbsco.org
To empower youth ages 6 to 15 to achieve their highest potential through meaningful one-to-one relationships with caring mentors. Redmond: 923-2676; Prineville: 447-3851 x333; Madras: 475-2292 x351.

Blissful Acres Rescue Reserve (BARR)
541-388-0922 | www.blissfulacres.com
Providing quality care and lifestyles for all large animals for as long as they need it.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Oregon
541-617-2877 | www.bgcco.org
Boys & Girls Clubs aim to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Branches in Ariel, Bend, Redmond and Terrebonne.

Camp Fire USA Central Oregon Council
541-382-4682 | www.campfireusaco.org
Camp Fire USA builds caring, confident youth and future leaders. Five essential elements derived from our mission statement and core values drive every program we offer: 1) We are youth-centered, 2) We engage the entire family in fun and outcome-rich activities, 3) We are welcoming and inclusive, 4) We build youth and adult partnerships and 5) We provide service to others.

Central Oregon Llama Association (COLA)
centraloregonllamas.org.net
Central Oregon Llama Association, COLA, is an organization of llama owners and llama lovers who enjoy showing, breeding, hiking and packing with their llamas.

Central Oregon Old Car Club
www.coocc.org
The Central Oregon Old Car Club does not discriminate on the make of classic car you appreciate. From Mopar to Bow Tie or Blue Oval, Cord, Hudson, Graham Paige, Oldsmobile, AMC, Nash or Studebaker, all makes are welcome. You don't even need to own a classic car, just appreciate classic cars is all that we require.

Central Oregon Street Rod Association
www.centraloregonstreetrods.com
A family oriented car club dedicated to the building and preservation of the 1948 and older street rods and 1965 and older custom cars. COSRA is committed to the safe and sane enjoyment of a traditional automotive hobby.

Chimps Inc.
541-385-3372 | www.chimps-inc.org
Chimps Inc. is a sanctuary specifically designed to provide lifetime care to captive chimpanzees. We are dedicated to overcoming exploitation and cruelty that they and other captive wild animals can face through advocacy, education, and conservation.

Crooked River Ranch Senior Center
541-504-8236 | www.councilonaging.org
The Crooked River Ranch Seniors meet through each month to engage in a variety of activities throughout Central Oregon.