

The Suburban

magazine

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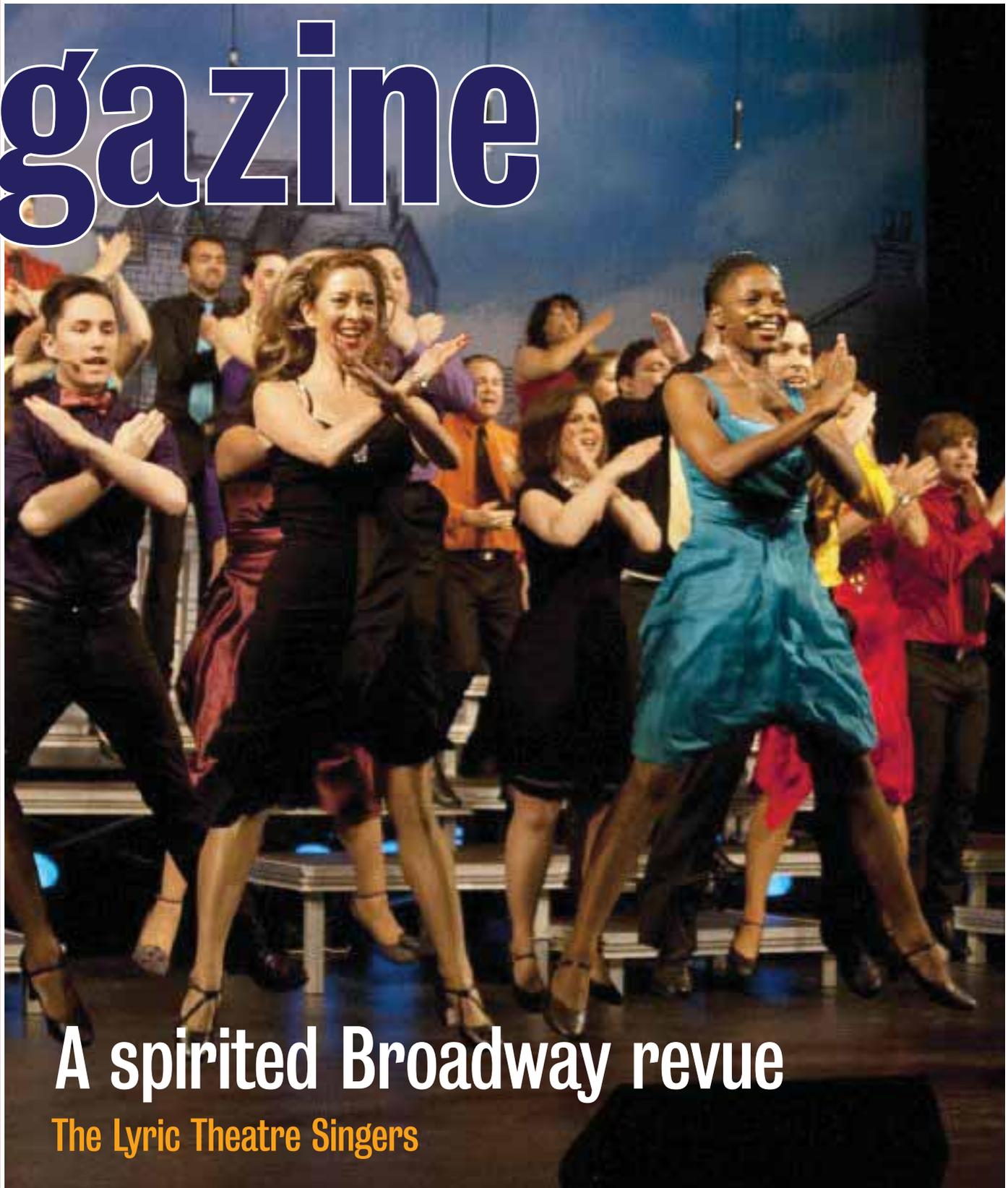
in this issue

ENTERTAINMENT

- The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz: The Musical
- Kaléidoscope photo exhibition now on at Maison de la culture
- Iris to screen at Cinema du Parc
- Retro Roundup: Lobby and ye shall receive
- In the movie theatres

LIFESTYLES

- Dr. Joe Schwarcz releases 15th book
- New Senate Speaker committed to modernizing Upper Chamber
- Mike Cohen: National Animal Welfare Conference
- Frank Kermit: Sex education in schools is a must
- Suzanne Reisler Litwin: The gift of giving
- Paula Lorimer: Infertility: sorrow of Mother's Day
- Tracy Satov: Can drinking water help with weight loss?



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MAGAZINE CONFIDENTIAL

By MIKE COHEN

National Animal Welfare Conference provides a wealth of information about our pets

RICHMOND, BC - What more could an animal lover like myself ask for than to spend several days in the company of 350 people from across Canada who feel the same way? Such was the case May 1 to 4 when I attended the 2015 Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) National Animal Welfare Conference at the River Rock Casino in Richmond, BC.

What follows are some items I believe our animal loving readership would be interested in hearing about.

BC's GENEROSITY: Norm Letnick is the Minister of Agriculture for British Columbia. Canada nor the provinces have Ministers with actual "Animal Welfare" portfolios. It falls under Agriculture. In Quebec, Pierre Paradis plays this role. Letnick clearly has a soft place in his heart for companion animals and he proudly noted that his Ministry recently gave \$5 million to support the BC SPCA's Facilities Development and Services Plan. The latter is an eight-year strategy, totalling \$50.4 million to replace or renovate aging BC SPCA infrastructure in 10 communities across British Columbia – the largest capital plan in the organization's 120-year history. Projects will include new community animal centres, facilities to house seized farm animals, storefront adoption centres and facilities to promote increased community access to spay/neuter services. Amy Morris, a graduate of Concordia University and a policy and outreach officer for BC SPCA, told me she hopes the government will continue to contribute the campaign in the coming years.

There were a number of other Montrealers at the conference. They included Montreal SPCA Director of Animal Advocacy Alanna Devine and Johanne Tassé from the Kirkland based Companion Animal Adoption Centres of Québec (CaacQ). I asked them both for their assessment of Paradis, who has been in office for just over a year now.

"I do not really feel comfortable grading ministers," said Devine. "I can certainly tell you that Pierre Paradis has been the first Agriculture Minister since I have been at the SPCA who has made the commitment to improving animal welfare. He has stated that there will be revised provincial animal welfare legislation. He is also pushing for change to animals under the provincial code so this is certainly very encouraging."

Tassé has this message for Paradis: "I'd like to say to him that he has to look at establishing standards for rescues, SPCAs and human societies. Right now there is no governing body that oversees these type of organizations."

JOHANNE'S MISSION: After spending 10 years as a volunteer in the marketing and adoption-promotion department for a dog adoption agency, Tassé realized that despite all the efforts made by similar organiza-



The Montreal SPCA's Genevieve Pépin, Alanna Devine and the CaacQ's Johanne Tassé.

tions, the number of animals in shelters was consistently high. In 2008 she created the CaacQ to resolve the problem of animal overpopulation, to implement cost-effective solutions for the well-being of companion animals in our communities. Her organization is working diligently so the killing of healthy animals will only be a sad memory in our collective minds. "Adoption, sterilization and permanent identification is our message to the public and the authorities," she says.

CANADA POST STAMPS: Greg Kabatoff, director of retail business (Western Canada) for Canada Post, officially unveiled a new set of stamps under the theme "Pets are family too!" This stamp issue celebrates the companionship, joy and loyalty between pets and pet owners. There are five stamps that serve as reminders of the need for good pet care: spay/neuter; exercise; vet care; hydration; and identification. Designed by Lara Minja and illustrated by Genevieve Simms, this stamp issue is a collaborative effort with the CFHS. More than half of Canadian households are home to a furry, feathered or finned friend—including 10 million cats, 5.5 million dogs and many other types of pets. Our animal companions give us unconditional love and loyalty. In return, we take on important responsibilities for their care.

The Love Your Pet stamp issue was developed with the CFHS to promote ways to keep pets happy and healthy. The warm,

whimsical illustrations remind us of all the joy our pets give us. They bring to life five basic ways pet owners look after their furry friends: provide them with exercise, make sure they can be identified if lost, keep them cool in hot weather and never leave them alone in a vehicle in warm weather, spay or neuter them and regularly take them to the vet.

Tassé was very enthusiastic about Canada Post's new set of stamps for responsible pet guardianship. "I applaud their effort and that of the CFHS," she said. "I think it is just a reminder that companion pets are part of our family and they deserve some visibility."

PETLAND: I met with Amy Pawson Blackwell. She is the director of operations for Petland, a chain of pet stores stretching from BC to Manitoba. A one-time resident of Pointe Claire (and a member of the swim team there and at St. Thomas High School), she told me how Petland has partnerships with all animal welfare organizations and since 2010 has had 10,000 animals adopted. "It is our desire at Petland to make a difference

in the communities we serve," she said. "For more than 38 years, Petland has been the retail pet industry leader in the area of animal care with ongoing staff training programs, in-store animal care systems and community service programs aimed at placing homeless pets and curbing pet overpopulation in the community."

Petland has taken a leadership role in the area of public education on spaying and neutering as a way to halt pet overpopulation, and implemented a pro-active adoption program for the placement of homeless litters of puppies and kittens, whether from a shelter, pet rescue group or just a member of the local community. Class tours are arranged for schools where youngsters learn to finger-tame a parakeet. Equally gratifying, she explains, is the look on a senior citizen's face while holding a Petland kitten. Petland therapy is a natural extension of their retail environment and the store's pet counsellors love visiting schools and nursing homes. Store operators collect donations for charities, hold fundraisers for local animal care groups and give generously of themselves with cash donations to select community causes. A number of important community service programs exist at Petland. They include: Adopt-A-Pet; Pets for a Lifetime; Pet Therapy; Stop Pet Overpopulation; and Spay/Neuter Your Pet. It is too bad they do not exist in Quebec!

AMONG ANIMALS- ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGH A MULTIFACETED HUMANE EDUCATION PROGRAM: Craig Naherniak and Paula Neuman from the BC SPCA gave an excellent presentation on how they go about sensitizing and engaging youth to issues revolving around animal welfare. The ages of eight to 13 rep-



One of the beautiful new Canada Post companion animal stamps.



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife Laureen adore cats.

represent the most critical point when empathy is developed among children. This process reduces bullying and encourages healing through the human animal bond. The goal is to prevent violence, cruelty and bullying before it occurs. Kids will become leaders and speak up for animals. One of the challenges they face is the fact that there are more girls than boys in their programs. So, in their latest Bark Magazine the cover shot was of Vancouver Canucks hockey star Henrik Sedin with a kitten. Noted Naharniak: "We were told when the magazine was brought into a school the boys said 'Oh cool, Henrik Sedin,' while the girls said, 'cool a kitten!'" Sounds like the Montreal SPCA should consider recruiting a professional athlete from one of Montreal's teams to do the same thing.

ANIMAL MATTERS-PUTTING ANIMAL WELFARE ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA: With the next federal election scheduled for October 19, 2015, it was emphasized how this is the opportunity to make animals matter. An animal cannot go up to Parliament Hill so we need to be their voice. The Federal Criminal Code is not strong enough when it comes to animal cruelty. Lobbying is very important at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. The Green Party has an animal welfare platform, but none of the others do. It was agreed that candidates from the

Conservatives, Liberals and NDP should all be approached and asked for meetings on animal welfare. Why do their parties not have a platform on this? Would they agree to work towards one? Andreas Krebs from the CFHS noted that the goal is to elect more animal friendly MPs - there are about 12 now and they wish to double this. There are a lot of animal lovers in Canada, but the major political parties don't seem to understand this. A survey will soon go out to candidates nominated, with a list of five questions. It is clear that Canadians love animals - two-thirds of Canadians have pets at home. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's wife Laureen is passionate about cats and has secured funding for initiatives. The PM does generally love cats. At 24 Sussex they have a cat room and Laureen pushes for the adoption of feral cats.

A REVIEW OF THE FUR INDUSTRY IN CANADA: Devine was one of the speakers at this very interesting session about the plight of fur bearing animals. Over three million animals a year are killed in Canada each year for their fur, 85 percent on fur farms. Worldwide the number is 100 million, "Keep in mind," she noted, "that every animal is an individual with feelings and personalities."

In terms of federal legislation, Devine

emphasized that there is none which governs the raising of animals on fur farms or the trapping of wild animals for fur. She also stated that in Canada it is actually legal to import and sell fur from dogs and cats.

The labelling of real fur versus fake in Canada is not mandatory. "When I approached some people at the Montreal SPCA one day and advised that they were in fact wearing real animal fur they were surprised that there was no labelling to that effect," she explained.

Some of the animals killed for their fur include mink, beaver, racoons, muskrats, wolves, foxes, coyotes, squirrels, otters, lynx and chinchillas.

HUDSON'S HAGEN A REMARKABLE MAN: I also met Hudson resident Mark Hagen, one of the owners and director of research for the West Island-based Rolf C. Hagen Inc., Canada's largest pet product manufacturer and distributor. Founded in 1955 and fueled by a love for animals big and small, Hagen is a Canadian-owned, independent, family-run business that has become a globally respected manufacturer and distributor of pet food and supplies. Committed to providing the highest quality nutritional pet foods, Hagen stands by its pledge of "No Bad Anything." Hagen's commitment to bettering the lives of all animals extends beyond food to include many long-standing relationships with organizations and charities that improves the lives of animals. These include donations of both food and money to underfunded animal shelters, animal hospitals and other organizations that care for animals. Its global head office is located in Baie-d'Urfe and was completed in June 2006. The company has wholly owned subsidiaries in the United States, England, France, Germany and Malaysia (South East Asia). Joint ventures include Japan, Korea, Thailand and South Africa. There are also numerous strong partnership agreements in quite a few other countries such as Spain, Mexico, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and the Philippines to name just a few. The company manufactures products related to pets such as aquariums, leashes, cages of all sorts, foods and has created a popular line of aquarium filtration.

"Giving back to communities across Canada by supporting volunteer-based organizations is extremely important to us," says Mark. "We truly enjoy supporting the volunteer shelters, as they believe in the education and promotion of companion animal health and well-being, which is an important part of our company's very core."

Mark's father Rolf C. Hagen founded the company. He passed away in 2011. Mark is the company biologist and formulates and tests the pet food they manufacture. "Pets are not only the heart of our business," he said, "they are the reason we are in business." They are continually investing in their research and development department inventing new and unique products for the pet industry.

In 1955, Rolf C. Hagen started by acquiring bird seeds from the Canadian prairies and exporting them back to Germany. His small export business eventually flourished and branched out into a solid, well-respected pet supplies business that today spans many continents. Soon after setting up his business in Montreal, his focus turned to the most significant import of his life: a beautiful young woman named Marianne Koch, whom he met in Hamburg and married in Montreal in 1959. His brothers Dieter and Horst subsequently joined the company, both of whom brought new ener-

gy and innovation to the company, taking it to new heights of success. The trio formed the first generation of an internationally successful family-based company that is now managed by Mark and his brothers Tom, and Rolf Jr.

Mark Hagen notes that cat overpopulation is not just a local problem, it's rampant across Canada. "Cat ownership comes with many responsibilities," he says. "It must be viewed as a lifelong family commitment and every effort should be made to ensure proper and humane care for all felines."

"Companies such as Hagen can only do so much to help support rescue centres across Canada. I think government agencies, as well as vets, breeders, pet shops, and shelters should come together in every region to address and find solutions for controlling the cat population, thus relieving the burden on cat shelters. Where none exists, a central animal care facility funded by cat licensing could be a practical solution," said Mark Hagen. "Some cities, such as Calgary, are being proactive and achieving success. Their cat control program could serve as a good model to educate, promote, and support responsible cat ownership."

Mark received a Master of Agriculture degree from the University of Guelph. He concentrated on nutrition and zoology for his Bachelor of Science degree, and attended a semester at the University of California, taking courses in cage bird medicine, nutrition and avian science. After five years of housing birds indoors in a converted warehouse, he designed the Hagen Avicultural Research Institute (HARI) facility in Rigaud, in 1989, which incorporated the latest techniques in environmental control. Over the course of the past 26 years, HARI has gained a worldwide reputation for its ongoing studies into captive breeding, maintenance and nutrition of companion birds. Current areas of study include disease control, pair bonding, nutrition, early parrot education, and the influence of temperature, humidity and light cycles on breeding.

A firm believer in sharing his knowledge and experiences, he has published dozens of papers relating to the work at HARI, including egg incubation, oil and nutrition, formulated diets, husbandry and sanitation disease control, cage design, ventilation, and pediatric care. Many of his papers have been presented at most of the avicultural conferences held in the USA, Canada and Australia.

To mark its 25th anniversary, Mark and his team at HARI opened a new division dedicated to the long-term study of the health of reptiles and small animals with a strong focus on exploring new alternatives for dealing with common health concerns that the veterinarian community sees with species found in captivity.

Mark has also been deeply involved in supporting the avian community, providing personal as well as Hagen funding to a variety of organizations, including The World Parrot Trust, Loro Parque Foundation, and Parrots International. He also coordinates food donations to parrot shelters around the world.

With conservation being one of his main passions, Mark travels widely around the world to directly experience birds in their natural habitat to ascertain ways of improving preservation. He has personally seen over 50 parrot species where they occur on most continents.

Have you got something to share? Email mcohen@thesuburban.com or call 514-484-9203, ext. 307. Follow me on Twitter @mikecohencsl and at <http://blog.thesuburban.com>



Mark Hagen