

Activist Corner

A Punishment To Fit the Crime: Indiana Takes a Closer Look at Animal Cruelty Offenders

By Julia Janak

“To think that I made that happen through sheer stubbornness...and a little finesse!”

About a year ago the DDAL's headquarters in Washington, D.C., received a phone call from a woman in Anderson, Indiana, who wanted to do “something for animals.” Maleah Stringer loved animals, had rescued animals, and for two years she had been writing to her legislators about animal cruelty issues asking for help — to no avail. We identified an opportunity for her talents, experience and dedication. The recent enactment of a Class D Felony provision for animal abuse in Indiana provided the right motivation to introduce a mandatory counseling bill for persons convicted of felony level animal abuse. Like a number of states, Indiana notes, but does not require, psychological counseling and anger management as viable treatments for animal abusers.

As the founder and president of the non-profit organization Animal Protection League, and proud guardian of four cats, four dogs, a rabbit and a ferret, Stringer is a busy woman. Yet it was time for her to “walk the walk,” as she put it, and put her concern for animals into further action.

Armed with 150 introductory letters, copies of draft legislation and the *Violence Connection*, published by DDAF, Stringer began her search for a sympathetic legislator. She sparked the interest of one lawmaker in particular, Indiana State Senator Tim Lanane. “It just makes sense to require someone convicted of abusing an animal to receive counseling,” said Senator Lanane after agreeing to introduce the legislation. “Plenty of studies show that people involved in beating or abusing another person got started by abusing an animal.”

As soon as Senator Lanane filed the bill, entitled The Mandatory Counseling for

Convicted Animal Abusers Bill, local paper *The Herald Bulletin* ran a front page spread quoting Stringer and Senator Lanane. Stringer told us recently, “To think that I made that happen through sheer stubbornness...and a little finesse!” She still marvels at her success in introducing the bill.

Soon she was enlisting the help of other organizations in her area. She found that at the local emergency shelter for victims of family violence, women who call the crisis line often will not leave pets behind with the abusive man. “For perpetrators, [animals] are just another way to control,” explains Jenny Davis, Program Director for Alternatives, Inc., a local domestic violence organization.

Unfortunately, Stringer discovered that many judges were aware counseling is an option, but did not seem to take animal abuse seriously or consider it a “real crime.” So long as counseling was just an option, and not mandatory, it was likely that few judges would prescribe it for animal abusers. This lack of awareness of the connection between human and animal abuse encouraged Stringer to press the issue with more judges, and she was encouraged to learn there are some judges who strongly supported her effort to make the counseling mandatory.

There are precedents. Similar laws have been passed in California, which will help as new states try to enact legislation.

Senator Lanane plans to reintroduce the bill next session, and Stringer hopes to secure a local celebrity endorsement as a

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Julia Janak is the Grassroots Advocacy Manager for the Doris Day Animal League. She monitors and reports on state and federal legislation and manages the grassroots activity for the League. Julia initiated the Activist Recognition Program last year to acknowledge the outstanding work League members are doing for animals.

Cloud's Legacy: The Wild Stallion Returns

By Ginger Kathrens

Growing up in the flat lands of northwestern Ohio made me yearn for mountains, wide open spaces... and adventure. My wish came through in a big way when I started traveling around the world filming wild places and wild animals. Grand as those experiences have been, however, they cannot hold a candle to my adventure tracking the wild stallion, Cloud, in the rugged Arrowhead Mountains of southern Montana.

From the moment his mother brought him out of the forest in front of my camera, I knew something magical was happening. I named the newborn Cloud, and prayed he would live. I needn't have worried, for Cloud blossomed into a vibrant colt who could run circles around his older sisters. Right from the beginning I believed he would become a band stallion like his powerful father, Raven. "Cloud: Wild Stallion of the Rockies," the television documentary which originally aired in 2001, covers the first five years of Cloud's exciting life.

"Cloud's Legacy: The Wild Stallion Returns" is the next chapter in the Cloud saga. Two sons dominate the story. Flint is not Cloud's son by blood but his in every other sense of the word. Bolder, is Cloud's spitting image. Dangers threaten — marauding bachelors, a government round up, killer lightning storms, lethal predators and a wildfire that roars through Cloud's mountain stronghold.

Although Cloud has been allowed to live free (because of his unusual color), many wild horses are not so lucky. Nothing is as important to a wild horse as their freedom or their family. Both are taken away when they are rounded up. Many will live

out their lives homeless and unwanted, trucked from one adoption to another. Others will be bought by well-meaning people incapable of handling a wild animal. Some will end up at slaughter.

In many cases, wild horses are being managed to dangerously low levels on our public lands by the very



Photo by:



Photo by:

agency charged with protecting them simply to make room for domestic livestock. I encourage you to stand up for their right to live free. Although Cloud speaks in big, broad, dramatic ways, he cannot talk to the policy makers in Washington, D.C. That is up to us!

Please visit DDAL's Web site to find out more about this issue and to send an action letter to your representatives in Washington (visit

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way to generate more publicity. The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence has assisted by placing the bill on its agenda. In the meantime Stringer will continue to coordinate her monthly meetings for the Animal Care and Protection League and has begun writing a weekly column on animal issues for *The Herald Bulletin*. We're delighted Maleah Stringer contacted us and that we've had a chance to see this activist at work. She is a great inspiration to all of us. 🐾

If you are interested in introducing similar legislation in your state, or if you live in Indiana and want to join the Animal Protection League, you can contact Maleah Stringer at:

www.ddal.org, and click on Current Campaigns).

"Cloud's Legacy" premieres Sunday night, November 23, on PBS's *Nature*. The companion book will be in stores in November. The Breyer four-model set (Cloud, his mare, sons Flint, and Bolder) will also be

available in November.

Ginger Kathrens is an Emmy winning filmmaker. Her first book was Cloud: Wild Stallion of the Rockies, winner of the Colorado Book Award for young adult readers in 2002. She is an avid trail and endurance rider and has two Spanish mustangs, Flint and Sky, in addition to her Arrowhead wild horse, Trace. 🐾

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These states have successfully passed legislation requiring psychological counseling for those who abuse animals. We thank them and urge the others to do the same.

Arkansas	Minnesota
California	Nevada
Colorado	New Jersey
Connecticut	New Mexico
Florida	Oregon
Illinois	Rhode Island
Iowa	Texas
Maine	Vermont
Maryland	Virginia
Michigan	Washington