

# Activist Corner

## A New Mexico Activist's Work on the State Anti-Freeze Bill

By Julia Janak

'We want to work with groups that aren't traditionally animal-friendly, to give voters a broader perspective on animal issues.'

Earlier this year the New Mexico legislature passed the Antifreeze Safety Act, modeled on the federal bill crafted by the Doris Day Animal League (see Legislative Update, on page 5). The force behind this bill was state lobbyist Danielle Bays and the Animal Protection Voters of New Mexico, lobbying arm of Animal Protection New Mexico (APNM).

The antifreeze safety issue had a life of its own in New Mexico. The highly publicized death last year of a dog named Scooby made headlines across the state. Scooby was shot by an off-duty police officer who claimed he was barking aggressively. While in recovery, Scooby was poisoned to death with antifreeze. The sweet smell and taste of antifreeze attracts children and animals, but as little as a teaspoon can be deadly. In fact, thousands of antifreeze poisonings occur every year. "A lot of people didn't know about the dangers of antifreeze," Bays recalls, "And the people who did know began telling their stories." Suddenly lawmakers wanted to take action.

Legislators approached Bays to find out how they could help address the antifreeze poisoning issue brought to light by the death of Scooby. Bays in turn contacted the Doris Day Animal League for assistance, working extensively with DDAL lobbyist Nancy Blaney to craft a state bill that mirrored the language and purpose of the federal bill. "It was an amazing help to be able to go someone and get everything we needed to know," said Bays of working with DDAL.

A bill was drafted—HB 482—to require all ethylene glycol antifreeze and coolant sold in New Mexico to contain a bittering agent—denatonium benzoate, the bitterest known substance—to render it unpalatable. With DDAL's help, Bays connected with supportive members of the antifreeze industry. Antifreeze lobbyists actually joined Bays at

meetings in Santa Fe to demonstrate their alliance.

"We want to work with groups that aren't traditionally animal-friendly," explains Bays, "to give voters a broader perspective on animal issues." Legislators were impressed that animal protection and industry lobbyists had common ground.

Working with APNM has been the highlight of Bays' career. "We are making a giant step forward for animal protection by being recognized by the legislature. I think that legislators are beginning to understand how beneficial an animal bill can be for their career."

The House sponsor of the bill, Representative Kathy McCoy, is a former contributor to APNM. Because of her personal experience with the threat of antifreeze poisoning, antifreeze legislation became a cornerstone of her campaign for office. McCoy promised to introduce legislation to prevent antifreeze poisonings should she win office. She introduced House Bill 482. The Senate sponsor from last year did not run for re-election; however, his successor, Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino, followed through on his predecessor's agenda for the animals and introduced the Senate version, SB 497.

The antifreeze bill in New Mexico is an interesting case study; but realistically, many bills fail the first time out of the gate. The average legislative session in most states is 60 days, and the competition is fierce. "Some laws take many years to pass," Bays recognizes. "It is crucial to give the legislators

*Please see Activist Corner, page 23*



**Danielle Bays at the bill signing with Andrew Jarmillo, President of NM Animal Control (left), and Governor Bill Richardson (center).**



*Julia Janak is Director of Grassroots Advocacy for the Doris Day Animal League. She monitors and reports on state and federal legislation and manages the grassroots activity for the League.*



### **Praise for 'Mutts'**

Thanks to cartoonist Patrick McDonnell for his "Mutts" comic strip urging people to spay or neuter their pets. His special comic strip in support of Spay Day USA appeared in papers nationwide on February 22, 2005!



### **Prosecutors Respond to DDAF Letters**

DDAF works with prosecutors in animal cruelty cases to demonstrate that there is community support for them, and to offer them our resources, if needed.

For example, Manassas, Virginia, City Attorney Robert Bendall, who successfully prosecuted Karen Lee Morris for animal cruelty, contacted DDAF for assistance prior to her sentencing. Morris had been charged with animal-related crimes several times before, and was convicted on the current charge involving serious neglect that resulted in the death of one of her dogs. Mr. Bendall wanted to be sure that he had as much information as possible to ensure that Ms. Morris would receive an appropriate sentence.

DDAF contacted Ronald J. Casella's office to support his vigorous prosecution of the case of two 13-year-old girls charged with animal cruelty. Casella, a Cumberland County prosecutor in New Jersey, noted that acts of animal cruelty

are "warning signs we can't ignore." (For more on this case, please see Yips & Yowls on page 21.)

### **Companion Animal Memorial Honors Our Best Friends**

For many of us, lazy summer afternoons give us time to reflect on our lives and the precious moments we've shared with our animal companions, past and present. For example, on bright, sunny days, I can still see my beloved chihuahua, Minnie, wiggling on her back in the grass and absolutely loving life, after years spent in a puppy mill. It was a moment of unbridled joy. While Minnie is gone now, her spirit and that moment—along with many more like them—live with me still.

There is no depth of sadness quite like the one when an animal companion passes away. As we accept our loss, and later sift through photos, mementos, and recollections, the question arises: how do we make tangible the love and affection we felt for our special friend?

For that very reason, DDAF has established our Companion Animal Memorial, a commemorative wall plaque located in our Washington, D.C., headquarters. When you make a gift of \$250 or more, we add to the wall a specially inscribed plaque honoring your pet, or that of a friend. In addition, we annually publish Companion Animal Memorials in *Animal Guardian*. That your gift of \$250 or more is used to help other animals in need makes this program truly powerful.

My memories of Minnie have not faded. But I'll add her to the DDAF Companion Animal Memorial as an enduring symbol of our time together.

*To establish a DDAF Companion Animal Memorial, contact Ben Glenn, Director of Development, at [ben.glenn@ddaf.org](mailto:ben.glenn@ddaf.org).*

*Activist Corner, continued from page 8*

something good to work with, legislation that is necessary, well researched and prepared."

Each incremental success brings Bays and her colleagues more allies. "We know that year after year legislators are thinking about us and our position—which means they're thinking about the animals." 🐾

### **How to Contact Us**

To inquire about membership, Merchandise with a Message, publications, the Guardian Angel Society, our programs and campaigns, or to sign up for e-alerts, please contact us using the information below.

DDAL/DDAF  
Suite 100  
227 Massachusetts Ave, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Phone: 202-546-1761  
Fax: 202-546-2193

[www.ddal.org](http://www.ddal.org)  
[www.ddaf.org](http://www.ddaf.org)  
[info@ddal.org](mailto:info@ddal.org)

