

## From Coast to ... Further Down the Coast

Maryland-based animal control academy is a hit with fresh-faced newbies and seasoned officers

BY CARRIE ALLAN

Like so many people in this field, Cathy Sullivan is trying to make changes for the animals in her community. But her challenges may be bigger than most: The police department in her city of Claremont, New Hampshire, doesn't have a budget for animal control. While officers respond to reports of loose dogs, they refer all other calls to the local humane society or state wildlife officials.

Sullivan hopes to persuade the city to create an animal control position, but until then, she's working in the electronics section of the local Wal-Mart, volunteering with the police department, and running her own small animal control operation that rescues and fosters out animals in need of homes. And as part of her mission to make it a government-sanctioned function, she wanted to get professional training so she'd be prepared to fulfill the official role if it's ever created.

It was that passion that led her to pay her own way to attend the East Coast Animal Control Academy (ECACA), hosted by Carroll Community College in Westminster, Maryland. Since it launched in the fall of 2003, ECACA has graduated 46 students. Developed through a collaboration between the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commission, the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, and The Humane Society of the United States, the 11-day course covers a large scope of issues—from dealing with difficult people to investigating crime scenes.

Sullivan, the only member of her class who paid her own way, found the training useful. "I learned about animal handling, proper equipment, equines," she says, adding that the course's on-site training at Days End Farm Horse Rescue was particularly helpful. "We've got a lot of equine issues up here."

The school's not just for bright-eyed and bushy-tailed newbies like Sullivan, though. Paul Howard, an animal control officer for the last four years in Hope Mills, North Carolina, attended the same class as Sullivan. He too found the training helpful and energizing. "It showed me a lot of things I was doing right and a lot of things I could be doing better," he says.

Howard had been trying to attend another animal control academy for a while but then learned that ECACA provides the same basic training, plus an extra eight hours. And, he says, it cost him \$1,200 less to attend the Maryland-based school.

While some complained about the Spartan lodging and food provided during the course, Howard—who was in the Army before retiring and later becoming an ACO—says he didn't understand the complaints. "Everybody was saying, 'Oh, the rooms were so small,' but I mean, my gosh, you had a nice latrine facility right there in the room, you had ample space to do your studies, you had a desk, you had a TV—it was fine!"

The educational opportunities were even worth the frustrating commute, which included the typical traffic jams around Washington, D.C. ("It didn't take Grant that long to get around the city," Howard jokes.)

Not only did both Sullivan and Howard appreciate the training itself, they enjoyed meeting the other students—and each other. "I teased her constantly for being a Yankee," Howard admits.

The next class starts October 1. For more information on the East Coast Animal Control Academy, visit the Carroll Community College website at [www.carrollcc.edu](http://www.carrollcc.edu) or call 1-888-221-9748. AS

