

Friends of Animals in Victoria: Local Activist Gets Funding

Posted by

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PEJ News - Julie Muir - August 29, 2006: Animals in Victoria have a new "Friend" and some stronger support now that local activist Dave Shishkoff is starting a satellite chapter for Friends of Animals, an animal advocacy group based out of the States. Dave was only joking when he suggested to the organization's president that they should expand into Canada, after refusing an offer to be interviewed for a position in Connecticut. But Priscilla Feral took him seriously, creating the opportunity for Dave to work on local campaigns for animal rights which will be relevant to Victoria and the Island.

www.PEJ.org Friends of Animals has been incorporated as a non-profit since 1957, providing funding to projects which advance the cause of animal rights, especially in relation to free-living ("wild") creatures. The organization has sponsored research in Alaska since 1993 to document the importance of wolves to the ecosystem, in order to fight the continued shooting of these wolves for "predator control." They also fund campaigns in the US to oppose hunting, promote vegetarianism, and promote spay & neuter programs for pets. In 2005, about 70,000 spay/neuter operations were provided by F.O.A., helping reduce the overpopulation of cats and dogs (and therefore preventing the abandonment and suffering which "excess" animals may face).

So what will Friends of Animals be doing in the Victoria area? Dave's main projects will centre on issues with horse-drawn carriages in Victoria as well as the local dairy industry's connection to veal. At first these concerns may sound trivial, but he argues persuasively for their relevance to the well-being of animals. Both Friends of Animals and Dave are of the opinion that "horses and traffic don't mix:" the animals stand on concrete when not pulling their loads through summer heat or winter rain, while breathing the exhaust from cars. Occasionally the horses break free, causing minor incidents in the last few years and posing great risk to themselves as well as to people.

Shishkoff is also worried about the apparent lack of accountability on the part of the carriage companies. His initial research has found that they have not reported any accidents to ICBC in the last five years, despite a number of James Bay residents who attest to having witnessed accidents or incidents between the horse carriages and other traffic. According to a few who have been personally involved in incidents, the company will offer a cash settlement to the vehicle owner on the spot with nothing reported to the authorities. This lack of reporting is of concern since it helps maintain a common impression that the horse carriage business in Victoria is benign, as Dave points out. He hopes to have a bylaw passed banning the horse drawn carriages, following in the footsteps of cities such as London, Paris, Beijing, Las Vegas and Toronto.

Dave's other main focus is public education and investigation into the dairy industry, which sends male calves to be chained in place, malnourished (to preserve the character of their baby flesh), then slaughtered after a few months for veal. In fact, some animal rights activists recommend that dairy and eggs be the first thing cut from one's diet, not the last, since the suffering of the animals in these industries is often the worst and most prolonged and the disposal of male babies especially callous. Though local company Island Farms has a "clean" public image, it seems that they still support veal production's atrocities, so Dave will be turning on the heat!

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Also in Dave's sights are a Vegan guide to Victoria or possibly the whole of Vancouver Island, "vegan outreach" through handing out leaflets, and discussion forums for issues about animal rights and veganism. To find out more about his sponsors, see www.FriendsOfAnimals.org, and watch for updates locally about his campaigns. You can find information about Dave Shishkoff's activist works with the local "Animal Rights Kollektive II" at <http://www.ark-ii.com/westcoast>

. Finally, if you would like to be involved in any of these campaigns, or other animal rights or vegan efforts you are welcome to contact him at

Dave@FriendsOfAnimals.org

or at (250) 588-0482.