

Animal lover keeps going

By Ross Blair

Reporter for the
BRYAN COUNTY NEWS

I can't say I have ever met a lady quite like Joy Bohannon. She's driven, dedicated, and a very viable candidate for being the hardest working woman in Bryan County.

Here's the catch: all of her tireless efforts are directly targeted toward the eradication of the vast stray animal population here in Bryan County. Unlike many shelters, her eradication methods do not utilize euthanasia as it would contradict the mission of her organization — GARD, or Georgia Animal Rescue & Defense.

GARD is a non-profit animal rescue group formed by Bohannon and her husband Philip Rutherford this past December.

Shelters beware: Before you pick up the needle, pick up the phone! GARD is here now and willing to help.

Every time I have called Bohannon, it wears me out just listening to her. This time she was simultaneously transporting four orphaned newborn kittens rescued by RH firefighters to a

new home. Their mother perished in a residential fire. Bohannon also was arranging surgery and placement for an abused dog that had to have a foot amputated, and doing volunteer work at the Richmond Hill shelter.

Bohannon's family has taken an active role in her crusades as well. Her mother JoAnne helps with placement of the pets via commutes to Vermont where they have had much luck with adoption due to the more comprehensive laws involving strays there. Bohannon's amazingly energetic 83-year-old mother-in-law Elaine moved here from Florida last month to assist the organization which she has since taken a very active role in.

Bohannon's children Anna May and Shane are strong players as well. Beyond that, it is up to Bryan County residents to make GARD a stronger organization which in turn would bring happy endings to countless animals in neglect or abuse situations. How can we help? There are many ways we can do so.

"Volunteer work would be more than welcome as we have dozens of projects on the table right now," said

Bohannon. "Adopt a pet through GARD! Whatever type of dog or cat you may be interested in adopting, call us. We will have one to closely match your description (many, but not all, are photographed on our Website)."

She said pet supplies or financial contributions would be greatly appreciated. "You must keep in mind that there is no big company backing GARD, just my family out of our own pocket! You can reach us at 653-2480 or 802-989-0539 or on our Website at www.gardonline.org."

GARD is also looking toward the future. "How bad is the stray situation in Bryan County? You'd be surprised ... and there's no hope for the future unless several steps are taken," she said.

Bohannon wants Georgia to pass legislation making it mandatory for pet owners to spay and neuter cats dogs. She also wants to spread this message in schools so that this message can be passed on to future generations.

Local schools are encouraged to call Bohannon at the number listed above to schedule a presentation for your students.