

## Evidence of illness



By Nate Smelle

WHEN BANCROFT THIS WEEK began running the Looking for a Home column each week on behalf of the animals rescued by Home Again, it made me happy to think of how many animals would soon be enjoying their new forever homes. Now that a few months have passed I now see that the problem with animal cruelty and neglect runs much deeper than I first suspected. Originally I thought that maybe once every few weeks or so Home Again would rescue an abandoned cat or dog, that this column could assist in finding a new family to be a part of. Week after week as the images of newly rescued animals roll in, it becomes more and more apparent to me how great the need truly is for these love-starved creatures.

Some might say that there are bigger issues needing our attention than the welfare of non-humans?poverty, climate change, terrorism, the Toronto Maple Leafs?but not me. The way I see it, all of these social tragedies originate from the same seed...mental illness.

When a child starves to death while another dies of obesity, this is a product of mental illness. When Cpl. Nathan Cirillo was shot to death in the back while on guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa that was a heinous act of violence perpetrated by a criminally insane individual with a hunting rifle. When a family is displaced from their home due to war or environmental degradation, this is a consequence of criminal insanity. When the richest team in the National Hockey League fails its fans year after year just to earn its owners a few dollars more, this is also a sign of a greed-sick mind. Likewise, when an individual subjects another living being to unnecessary suffering for the sake of profit, or some other form of their own selfish enjoyment, this too stems

from the same sort of sickness.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, 'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.' I believe this statement can be applied on a communal and individual level as well. It is not that such cruelty is only endemic to North Hastings. It can be observed in every community in one way or another. This does not however make it acceptable. The cute and cuddly looking companions we all see every week Looking for a Home would tell us this if they spoke the same language. Although they may not speak English or French, they do communicate to us that they prefer to live a comfortable life and be happy. Every time they snuggle up by the fireplace or on our laps to enjoy the warmth and companionship they tell us this. Feed your animal companions well, show them love and compassion rather than cruelty or neglect. Like Stu Vickars pointed out a few weeks back remember that Golden Rule, 'Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.'