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## Working for the welfare of animals

By PAT LEE Staff Reporter | FIVE QUESTIONS  
Mon, Dec 21 - 4:46 AM



Kristin Williams has taken over as the as executive director of the provincial SPCA. (Christian Laforce / Staff)

THE NOVA SCOTIA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has had a rocky few years with the resignation of its president, vice-president and staff members over the handling of the Celtic Pets animal abuse case.

A year or so later, new board members are in place, as well as a newly hired executive director.

Besides helping with cruelty and abuse investigations, her job is to oversee the SPCA's lobbying efforts to get improved animal welfare legislation, better education programs and co-ordinated efforts to control animal overpopulation.

Kristin Williams, originally from Ontario, took over as executive director of the provincial SPCA in early December and comes from a public relations background as the former head of corporate communications

at Canada's Wonderland, an amusement park north of Toronto.

The mother of two young children has also volunteered and worked in the animal welfare field and was most recently on staff at the provincial office of the Ontario SPCA.

Ms. Williams said she grew up loving animals and always thought she might someday work to help them.

She recently spoke with The Chronicle Herald:

Q: Do you have pets?

A: I have a 10-year-old Labrador named Grace and she is a princess and a diva. I've had her since she was a puppy. I also just recently lost my border collie-Lab cross, who was adopted from the York region branch of the SPCA. His name was Bogie. I have two cats, both are rescues. One's name is Morgan, or Mojo, and he is a big, grey, gorgeous cat. And we have another little black cat who adopted us. She turned up in one of my horse paddocks one day. Her official name is C.K. . . . I thought she was initially my horse's kitty because she wouldn't come near us, but she eventually adopted us and it's short for Candy's Kitty. She is surly and independent. She definitely runs her own domain. She's a tiny little thing and when we first found her, she had frostbitten ears and half a tail and was skin and bones. Now she's just a gorgeous thing.

Q: What drew you to work in the animal protection field?

A: It was after being in the corporate environment for about 12 years and starting a family. I started to give real thought about the kind of legacy I wanted to leave my children and what I wanted them to be thinking about their mother and what kind of contribution she made to the community. They might have thought it was cool that I worked for Canada's premier theme park, but I felt that was not as significant as making the larger impact, and animals

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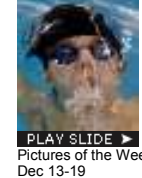
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have always been a great passion of mine. So upon a great deal of reflection, I knew I wanted to make the transition into the non-profit sector and it seemed like a perfect fit. I've always had animals in my life — fostering and had them as pets. I've been around animals my entire life.

Q: What is your vision for the future of the Nova Scotia SPCA?

A: There is so much potential and possibility for the Nova Scotia SPCA. This is a wonderful time in animal welfare in that we are really looking at all different models of education and animal care, and opportunities to advance the welfare of animals in the province. And it's not just the old models of shelter environments, but it's things like trap, neuter and release programs (for cats). It's networking with rescue organizations to increase the capacity for bringing animals into our care and adopting them out in greater quantity. It's retention programs and keeping pets within their home environment and educating pet owners about responsible pet ownership. There are so many resources that are now available to us and I'm excited to consider them strategically and how to move forward as an organization.

Q: What is the biggest misconception about the SPCA?

A: We're a unique charity in that we're mandated under the legislation to enforce animal cruelty laws, but we're not an agency of the government. We don't receive tax dollars to support us in that endeavour. Additionally, we're not what people would normally consider animal services, which is also a tax service. We're not your local pound. We are an organization that's mandated to prevent cruelty and protect animals from neglect and abuse. Those are distinctions I find I'm still encountering in the public.

Q: If you could create or improve one piece of animal welfare legislation, what would it be?

A: I've had an opportunity to work on legislation in Ontario that was recently amended and proclaimed that finally developed a provincial offence for animals being in distress. That didn't exist before. It was only for animals for hire, for sale or for breeding. Nova Scotia is ahead of the game in that regard, as there is an existing provincial offence for animals in distress. Additionally, there's new legislation (Bill 186) that has . . . been approved and is just awaiting proclamation. I look forward to seeing that come into effect. I think our next opportunity, where legislation is concerned, is instituting regulations that really define standards of care for animals so that people can really understand what their responsibilities are and there can be a clear structure in place for enforcement.

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