

# Nashvillian creates new magazine for pet lovers

By PATRICK TEMKIN

For The Tennessean

Heather Davis has always loved pets. She recalls that during her childhood in Chattanooga, her mother was constantly taking in stray animals.

"They seemed to migrate to our front yard," Davis said. "Whenever a stray cat or dog came by, we'd take them in. . . . I can't remember a time when we didn't have pets."

Those childhood experiences fostered her passion for animals. And, knowing there were others out there like her, the 28-year-old freelance writer is launching a magazine devoted to pets, just for Nashville.

Davis hopes *NashvillePAW*, whose debut issue is set for April 4, will bring together local pet lovers who want to make a difference.

"I was chewing on the idea for a couple of years," said Davis, who moved from Chicago to Nashville last year with Bill, her husband of eight years.

She began working on the project full-time in August. After months of research to see if the project was even feasible, Davis began developing ideas, recruiting volunteers and writers, finding a printer and designers.

Celina Weissenborn, the Nashville woman who recently founded the Tennessee Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, appreciates the work Davis has put into the project.

"It was really hard to come to Nashville and not have the resources to achieve the goals she wanted to achieve. The hard part was connecting to the right people, and she didn't have any help. She started

## Where to look for *NashvillePAW*

The first issue of *NashvillePAW* will be printed April 4, with some 10,000 copies distributed in Nashville and outlying areas.

The magazine should appeal to "all types of folks," including diehard pet lovers and shelter volunteers, says founder Heather Davis.

The magazine will be available at more than 150 "pet friendly" businesses in the area, including:

• **Nashville Humane Association**

• **Wags & Whiskers**, east Nashville

• **Dizzy's Dog Wash**, Berry Hill

• **Hair of the Dog Grooming**, Hendersonville

• **The Farm at Natchez Trace**, Franklin

• **The Hairy Moose Pet Resort**, Gallatin

• **Humane Association of Wilson County**, Lebanon

• **Just Dogs Gourmet**, Opry Mills mall

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sending e-mails, started getting people excited — mainly at the beginning there was a struggle because of the uncertainty, whether or not it was going to happen. It was difficult trying to get a large group of people to work together."

Davis concedes that "it hasn't been an easy task." She's spent many 16- to 18-hour days "just stuck in front of my computer, trying to get things done."

But she knew there was a niche for *NashvillePAW* that wasn't being filled by local and national pet publications.

Those often revolve around "being trendy and stylish" — the equivalent, she said, of a *Vanity Fair*, when what the pet world needs is *Newsweek*. The literature, she said, is not placing the focus where it should be — on humane education, adoption and spaying and neutering pets.

Enter *NashvillePAW*, which will spotlight how locals can help our four-legged companions.

Davis believes Nashville needs such a magazine because, as the city grows, animal welfare is becoming an increasingly dire problem.

"I've talked to many people in shelters and rescue workers, and they're all telling me they're getting burned out," she said. "They feel the progress has been slow."

Part of the frustration may stem from a simple lack of networking.

"I think one of the reasons is that people here want to make a difference, but it's hard when you're not connected to others who want the same," she said. "Hopefully, [the magazine] will show people how to get involved."

*NashvillePAW* aims to educate its readership about making a difference for pets in the community. It will be released the first week of every other month. The first issue will include, according to *NashvillePAW.com*, stories on adopting shelter pets, how to help feral cats, proper nutrition for pets and how to keep animals parasite free.

"Some of the main things the magazine will highlight is spaying and neutering pets and law enforcement for animal cruelty," said Weissenborn. "The mission is to stop animal cruelty, and for people to become

aware of what's going on in Nashville/Davidson County."

She adds: "Everybody's excited about it."

The magazine will also embrace the lighter side, Davis said.

"We don't want it to become a completely heavy magazine about everything that needs to be done," she said. "It will be balanced with fun articles, too." For instance, the first issue will include articles on the new Centennial Dog Park and pet-friendly dating, and Davis said she plans a full spread on pet-friendly traveling destinations for this summer.

*NashvillePAW* is not-for-profit, and any money generated from ad sales will merely recoup the cost of publishing, Davis said.

Though she hopes *NashvillePAW* will grow, both in distribution and resources, for now it's a tiny operation. She dipped into her own savings to fund her venture, and the only staff besides Davis is her husband, who is copy editor and Web master.

Davis and a handful of volunteers will even take delivery into their own hands, divvying up local neighborhoods to distribute the issues.

Davis has her sights set high for *NashvillePAW*. While in Chicago, she watched a pet magazine grow from a similar size to a distribution of more than 100,000, and said it had a significant impact on everything from grassroots networks to legislation. She says that magazine really motivated people to get involved.

"I'm hoping we can do the same thing here," she said. "I'm hoping we can make an impact." ■