

National Wildlife Centre to open in Caledon

Universal health care should include all Canadians, like beaver, geese, eagles, turtles, moose and bears to name just a few.

In 2002, while volunteering at the Prestige oil spill cleanup in Spain Sherri Cox, a vice-president at a Fortune 500 company watched helplessly as a heavily oiled seabird slowly died. The huge, oil drenched gannet was sitting on the bow of a fishing boat, too far away to be saved. It died along with 300,000 other animals in that one catastrophe.

She realized that, unlike all the Cuddles, Snoopys, Tweety Birds and other pets with names and owners, that majestic, wild bird had no one to take care of it.

Within a year, Sherri was preparing for veterinary school and by 2009 had left the corporate world, earned a veterinary degree and was working at a wild-

life centre in Toronto. In 2014, she started driving her travelling veterinary hospital all over southern and eastern Canada attending to injured, sick, dying and orphaned animals. But all that hard work and sacrifice just increased her understanding of the sheer magnitude of the life and death problems facing wildlife across Canada.

The problem needed a national solution. Since its start in 2014, the National Wildlife Centre has cared for more than 5,000 wild animals representing more than 200 native species.

While there are thousands of dedicated wildlife rehabilitators across the country, only trained veterinarians can perform the surgeries and other delicate veterinary procedures that can save the lives of these wild creatures. So, many injured, sick or orphaned animals are euthanized due to a lack of



available veterinarians, especially in rural areas.

In 2019, with support and startup funds from the Gordon and Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation, a 100-acre site was obtained, and plans initiated for the first National Wildlife Centre in Caledon.

Another \$4 million is needed to build the first facility, organize a national network of local “rehabbers,” and train the dedicated wildlife veterinarians to work with them. The first veterinary internship was completed in 2018, and plans are in place to train five or more additional wildlife vets by 2022. To make it all happen, they need help.

The National Wildlife Centre has a mission – to protect Canada’s varied

populations of native wild animals and provide medical and surgical services for sick, injured and orphaned animals. By educating the public, creating collaborative opportunities for scientists and wildlife conservationists, and providing training to students, veterinarians, and wildlife rehabilitators, the Centre will be home base for a national network. Canada’s National Centre of Excellence in Wildlife will be the leading provider of surgery, rehabilitation, conservation and education for Canada’s wildlife.

To donate and learn more about the NWC and the ways you can get involved in your community, please visit nationalwildlifecentre.ca or contact Jamie Lea Foss at info@nationalwildlifecentre.ca

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