

Elmbrook Humane Society quarantines cat areas after panleukopenia case

By Summer Fisher
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BROOKFIELD — The Elmbrook Humane Society has placed its cat areas under a two-week quarantine after a cat in its care tested positive for panleukopenia, a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening virus that affects cats. The quarantine began Wednesday and is limited to specific cat housing areas, while the rest of the shelter remains open.

"We still are doing adoptions in areas that were not exposed," Executive Director Natalie

Hoskins said.

A total of 18 cats are currently under quarantine. All cats listed on the shelter's website remain available for adoption.

The shelter identified one positive case. Hoskins said staff are treating the situation with an abundance of caution to protect animals and visitors.

"We always would react in an ... overly cautious way, you know, protect the rest of the cats in our care, and anyone who's coming to visit," she said.

Panleukopenia symptoms can develop quickly, especially in kit-

tens, and may include vomiting, lethargy and diarrhea. Hoskins recalled that this is not unusual for a shelter to get a case such as this due to the number of intakes coming from all different locations.

"They can dehydrate pretty quickly. ... When the kittens stop acting like kittens, we get a little bit nervous," Hoskins said.

If no additional cats test positive, the quarantine will end after two weeks. If another case arises, the clock resets.

Unlike some shelters experiencing outbreaks, Elmbrook has not

halted intake.

"We might be deferring some of our surrenders that can keep the cats for a little bit longer after the quarantine," Hoskins said, "but at this point, we have not stopped any intake."

She noted that the Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission has also seen a case and has temporarily paused intake due to a separate panleukopenia situation.

Dog and small-animal adoptions at Elmbrook remain unaffected, and viewing those pets is still open

to the public.

The shelter is requesting donations to support increased sanitation measures.

"Right now, our biggest needs are just some paper towels and wet kitten food," Hoskins said. "Monetary donations are always their most needed resource, because we need to get specialized protective gear for our staff going into the different areas for cleaning and disinfectants that we order that is specific to shelters that the general public would not be able to purchase."

Hoskins also gives thanks to the public for rallying around the shelter and said staff are staying optimistic.

"We thankfully do have good protocols, exposure happens, and we deal with it as it comes in," she said. "We are hoping that everything is contained."

Switching gears to craft his own niche

Former mechanic, now master sculptor, brings life-sized canine and restored statue to county

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WAUKESHA — In a wood and stone workshop, surrounded by wood shavings, European carving tools, and half-finished figures waiting patiently for their final forms, master sculptor Bryan T. Berenson recently put the finishing touches on two pieces now installed in Waukesha County.

Both projects, though different in material and meaning, represent what Berenson has built a career on: precision, tradition, and commitment.

"I studied my craft in Austria," Berenson said. "There's no place where you can really learn what I'm doing here in America. So, I went to Austria."

From diesel mechanic to master sculptor

Berenson grew up in Waukesha County and for a brief time was stationed in the Army in Germany.

After returning to Wisconsin, Berenson was diagnosed with arthritis in his body, a condition that made his previous work as a diesel mechanic impossible to continue. The setback forced him to reevaluate his path.

A magazine, "Chip Chats," a small publication dedicated to woodcarving, featured a carving school in Austria. Intrigued, Berenson and his wife traveled to see it.

"It was a light-bulb moment," he said. "I said, 'Yeah, this is what I want to do.'"

He enrolled and spent years overseas, training in wood and stone carving, first earning the title of journeyman sculptor, then later returning to complete the work required to become a certified master.

"When I was in school," he said, "the smell of the wood and everything ... I just fell in love with it."

Recent projects

One of Berenson's recent commissions involved transforming a stack of white-oak boards into a remarkably lifelike carving of Rocky, a beloved Great Pyrenees belonging to a Pewaukee family.

"It's a very large dog ... the largest dog I've ever seen," Berenson said with a laugh. "They're just massive."

Before carving began, Berenson sculpted a one-fifth-scale model, then created a full-size drawing to guide the shape, proportions, and muscle structure.

The finished piece stands nearly 38 inches tall, seated, and weighs an estimated 300 to 500 pounds, despite being hollowed out to reduce its weight. A crane was required to lift and install the sculpture on a tree stump at the family's home.

Work on the dog began in May and concluded in mid-October. The result captures the gentle, watchful posture characteristic of Great Pyrenees dogs, a proud tribute that will now overlook the property year-round.

The second project installed last month is a statue of St. Charles Borromeo at St. Charles Catholic Parish in Hartland. Over time it had slowly weathered due to rain softening the surface, and a delicate hand had been damaged repeatedly over the years.

"I carved a new thumb, attached it, and sanded the whole thing down," he said. "Then I sealed it."

Berenson's restoration work for churches spans Wisconsin and occasionally reaches beyond state lines. He approaches each project with careful attention, whether it's repairing a damaged statue or preserving a wooden sculpture.

His work fluctuates with demand; some years bring multiple restoration projects, while others are quieter. As he describes it, restoration work is "kind of like a roller coaster ride."



Photo courtesy Bryan T. Berenson

A Great Pyrenees wooden sculpture and a statue of St. Charles Borromeo are loaded into a truck before they're installed in Waukesha County on Oct. 28.



Photo courtesy Bryan T. Berenson

Bryan T. Berenson, artist, stands by a statue of St. Charles Borromeo on Oct. 28, which he just restored.



Photo courtesy Maureen Berkowitz

Cory Berkowitz looks happy after a wooden sculpture of his dog was installed in Pewaukee on Oct. 28.

Continuing European artistic traditions in Wisconsin

Though trained in Europe, Berenson's creative life remains deeply rooted in Wisconsin, where most of his client work resides. Still, echoes of his Austrian training are everywhere: in the classical carving techniques he uses, his preference for chisels and mallets over machines.

And though sculpting takes up most of his days, he still finds time for his hobby of painting, a relaxing contrast to the physical intensity of carving. In September, he won an award for his watercolor work from the Association of Wisconsin Artists.

Today, Berenson works almost exclusively on commissioned pieces.

His studio is a place where time moves at a slower, more intentional pace, each project requiring planning, drawings, carving, sanding, and finishing.

While his sculptures can take months to complete, he sees the process as part of the reward. Every piece tells a story, whether it's a dog immortalized in wood or a restored statue.

"It's my passion," he said. "You can't help it; it just pulls you in."

To see more of Berenson's work or inquire about commissions, visit www.btsculptor.com.



Maureen and Cory Berkowitz's family dog is a Great Pyrenees. The dog poses in front of his newly installed wooden sculpture in Pewaukee on Oct. 28.

Photo courtesy Maureen Berkowitz