



# NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence against people and animals*

**The LINK-Letter Vol. 8, No. 2 February, 2015**

*A monthly report of news from THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER*



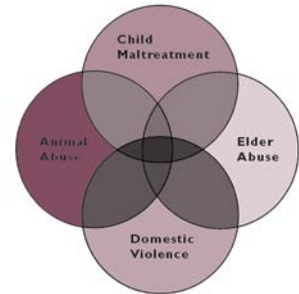
**ON THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE**



[www.nationallinkcoalition.org](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org)

[Phil Arkow](#), Coordinator and Editor

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## *THE LINK AND... CRIMINAL JUSTICE*

### **Virginia Attorney General Establishes Link-Based Animal Law Unit**



Virginia Attorney General Mark R. Herring made groundbreaking news in January with the designation of the nation's first "Animal Law" unit to be organized by an Attorney General. While numerous municipal and county prosecutors have established similar units in recent years, this is believed to be the first organized on a statewide level.

The unit will consist of a small group of staff attorneys who will spend a portion of their time, as needed, as resources for local law enforcement and state agencies on animal welfare, fighting or abuse issues. Because of the specialized and relatively infrequent nature of cases involving animal welfare, many prosecutors and law enforcement agencies have typically sought assistance from the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute cases. The unit will formalize the delivery of training and assistance the office already provides. The team will be led by Assistant Attorney General Michelle Welch.

"We've seen firsthand in Virginia that animal fighting is associated with other serious crimes such as drug distribution, possession of illegal alcohol or firearms, assaults, and illegal gambling," said Herring. "There's also evidence that abuse of animals or exposure to animal abuse, especially by young people, can be predictive of future abusive or criminal behavior."



**Michelle Welch**

"Over the past twenty years, there has been a growing realization that cruelty toward animals is a criminal act that cannot be tolerated in a civilized society. All of the evidence shows a very direct link between animal cruelty and violence against women and children," said Anthony Spencer, Caroline County Commonwealth's Attorney.

## Police Chiefs' Magazine Describes Dogs in Child Abuse Courtrooms

For centuries, dogs have provided comfort and friendship to humans. Over the past 40 years this concept has been the basis for programs that bring the healing power of pets to people in a wide range of environments, from hospitals to long-term care facilities to rehabilitation centers to correctional institutions. The presence of a friendly animal can decrease anxiety, reduce blood pressure, lower heart rate, decrease depression, increase speech and memory functions, and heighten mental clarity. Because many in the criminal justice system recognize the positive effects of having a "comfort item" such as dolls or toys to aid victims and witnesses during testimony, this concept has been expanded to courtroom settings.



Writing in the December, 2014 issue of [The Police Chief magazine](#), David LaBahn and Amy Farina of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys trace the history and case law underlying these remarkable animals' work in cases of child sexual abuse. Research has shown that the effects of courtroom dogs are stronger than those of comfort toys or support people. They provide emotional support and comfort in both the witness room and the courtroom. Today, 41 courtroom dogs are working in 19 states and Chile.



All lower courts in the U.S. have upheld the concept. Florida enacted a statute in 2011 that permits courts to set any conditions it finds just and appropriate on the taking of a child's testimony in sexual abuse cases including an evaluated and registered service or therapy animal. The court shall take into consideration the child's age and interests, the rights of the parties to the litigation, and other relevant factors that would facilitate the child's testimony.

The presence of courtroom dogs not only calms the victim but also has a positive influence on the judicial process, they write, creating an efficient system that allows everyone involved to accomplish their goals. The animals' unconditional love helps children relax enough to be able to tell investigators what happened to them, and to help prosecutors get to the truth and get to justice more easily.

Only dogs professionally accredited by a service dog organization may accompany a witness, and criteria for the animals' personalities and behaviors have been established.

LaBahn and Farina discuss cases in which courtroom dogs were challenged as being distracting or prejudicial to juries, and procedures which have been developed to avoid such disputes.

-- LaBahn, D., & Farina, A. (2014, December). *Providing comfort, companionship and relief: The use of courtroom dogs.* *The Police Chief*, 81, 24-29.

## Law Enforcement Coalition Plans 2015 Programming

Members of the National Link Coalition turned out in large numbers on January 23 for the second meeting of the National Coalition on Violence Against Animals. [NCOVAA](#), inspired by the National Sheriffs Association, brings greater awareness to the law enforcement community of animal abuse as an indicator of violent and other crimes. The group set planning goals for the coming year.



Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration to address overarching issues. “What breaks my heart is to see turf battles among advocate groups,” said John Thompson, Deputy Director of the National Sheriffs Association and a member of the National Link Coalition’s steering committee. “There’s too much work to do. When we fight, animals lose.”



His thoughts were echoed by Mark Murtha of the [National Native American Law Enforcement Association](#). “Law enforcement is relationship-based. Your connections are building blocks. That’s how you win people over.”

The group considered more effective ways to introduce animal cruelty training to state law enforcement academies, in-service education and shift roll calls. “We’ve all taught at law enforcement academies,” said Michelle Welch, Virginia Assistant Attorney General. “What’s been missing is a systematic approach.”

The group considered more effective ways to introduce animal cruelty training to state

One workshop discussed challenges and strategies to help the FBI rollout and implement its new procedure of including four types of animal cruelty and neglect among the crimes already included in the National Incident-Based Reporting System’s Uniform Crime Reports (See [LINK-Letter, October 2014](#)).

The 2015 meeting also focused on the growing issue of police officers over-reacting and shooting families’ pet dogs: over 1,000 incidents have exposed municipalities, departments and individual officers to liability claims and punitive damages. Police officers may not appreciate how many people have strong emotional attachments to their pets. As one participant said, “Dogs have come from the barn to the backyard to the bedroom.”



**Phil Arkow, National Link Coalition Coordinator, poses with actors Grant Alexander (left), known for his work on daytime soap operas, and Erik Estrada (right), a reserve police officer who starred in CHiPS. The two celebrities are NCOVAA spokespersons.**

## *ANIMAL ABUSE AND... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

### **Grants for Pet-Friendly Shelters Increase...**

Eleven domestic violence shelters received \$39,000 in grant funds in 2014 from RedRover to enable them to accommodate the pet members of displaced families. And thanks to a generous grant from the Trustees of the William H. Donner Foundation, grants in 2015 are expected to increase.

The grants are part of the [Safe Housing program](#) started by RedRover, a Sacramento, Calif. nonprofit. Domestic violence shelters were eligible for up to \$3,000 in grants to help them build facilities for the animal survivors of domestic violence. In 2015, that figure will increase to \$6,000.

The following shelters received Safe Housing grant awards in 2014:

- Anna Marie's Alliance, St. Cloud, Minn.
- Colorado River Regional Crisis Shelter, Parker, Ariz.
- Domestic Violence Intervention Services, Tulsa, Okla.
- Dove Center, Oakland, Md.
- Family Support Services, Amarillo, Texas
- The LeeShore Center, Kenai, Alaska
- Safe Embrace, Reno, Nev.
- SAFEHOME, Inc., Overland Park, Kansas
- Sojourner Center, Phoenix, Ariz.
- Quincy Area Network Against Domestic Abuse, Quincy, Ill.
- Underground Railroad, Saginaw, Mich.



“When a victim of domestic violence believes that there is nowhere safe for them to escape to with their pets, they may stay with the abuser out of fear for their pets’ safety,” said Nicole Forsyth, RedRover President and CEO. “Their pets are often also victims of abuse, suffering from injuries and neglect. RedRover’s Safe Housing grants make it possible for victims to receive lifesaving sheltering services, reassured that their pets are protected.”

### **... and are Available from Several Sources**

Meanwhile, a second stream of funding is available for domestic violence shelters seeking to start pet-friendly programs. The Banfield Charitable Trust – working since 2004 to ensure that wanted and loved pets stay in their homes with strong and healthy bonds with their people – offers



[Pet Advocacy grants](#). These help local pet-focused organizations to address unique needs facing their communities and develop innovative projects that offer new ways to help pets.

In 2014, Banfield Charitable Trust funded 14 programs, 11 of which were exclusively devoted to sheltering pets of domestic violence survivors, and 3 that provide temporary shelter for pets and people. The domestic violence grants are part of a larger humanitarian program offering safety net housing for animals whose people have been displaced by disasters, military deployments, homelessness, or illness. Grants are available only to organizations: no direct assistance grants are made to individuals.

Darlene Schwartz, Program Manager, says, “What is really amazing is that so many domestic violence shelters realize how important it is to have the families’ pets on-site. The emotional support that the animals provide is just fabulous. It’s a pleasure to know that the people will get away safely and their pets will, too.”



## Guide for Colorado Link Advocates Published



**Animal Welfare  
Institute**

Fresh on the heels of its new manual to help attorneys and advocates in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia work with human and animal survivors of domestic violence ([see LINK-Letter, January 2015](#)), the Animal Welfare Institute

has published a second manual for Colorado.

“We hope to increase awareness about the options domestic violence survivors have for their companion animals,” said AWI President Cathy Liss. “Colorado provides important protections for pet-owning domestic violence survivors, and this publication provides advocates and attorneys with concise and comprehensive guidance on how to use those provisions to benefit their clients.”

The manual summarizes legal issues surrounding the inclusion of pets in civil protection orders with specificity to Colorado’s laws. It is available on the [AWI website](#).

## Baltimore Ravens Suspend Player Amid Allegations of Animal Cruelty



**Terrence Cody**

In the wake of the uproar over the National Football League’s response to the domestic violence incident involving Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice and a child abuse case involving Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson, the Ravens on Feb. 2 terminated the contract of veteran nose tackle Terrence Cody, who has been indicted on 15 charges including two counts of aggravated animal cruelty, one count of illegal possession of an alligator, 10 misdemeanor animal abuse or neglect counts for the dog and alligator, and drug charges.

According to [The Baltimore Sun](#), the cruelty charges stem from the death of his dog, a bull mastiff. If convicted, Cody faces the possibility of three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine for each felony cruelty charge.

The Ravens announced on Jan. 23 plans to terminate Cody’s contract after the Super Bowl. The Ravens did not cite a reason explaining why Cody would be cut but it was believed that the Ravens, who had five players arrested last season, wanted to distance themselves from him. Cody, 26, was already scheduled to become an unrestricted free agent in March when his one-year, \$730,000 contract expires.

Cody’s agent told the newspaper that Cody had taken the dog, an \$8,000 bull mastiff from Spain, to a veterinarian for treatment and that the dog subsequently died. The agent said Cody was extremely upset about the dog’s death.

### *Permission to Reprint*

The news items and training opportunities contained in *The LINK-Letter* are intended to disseminate as widely and as freely as possible information about the connections between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. Permission is hereby granted to re-post these articles in other newsletters, websites, magazines, and electronic publications provided that appropriate credit is given to the National Link Coalition and with links to [www.nationallinkcoalition.org](http://www.nationallinkcoalition.org).

## *ANIMAL ABUSE AND... CHILD MALTREATMENT*

### **Newspaper Profiles Child Abuse Survivor who Turned to Zoophilia**



**Nicholas Coll**

An investigation into the homicide of a Keene, N.H. man took an unexpected turn when police found video clips of the victim's roommate having sex with dogs. The roommate, Nicholas A. Coll, 26, has not been charged in the homicide but pled guilty last summer to two felony charges of animal cruelty and was sentenced to one year in jail. New Hampshire is one of 11 states in which bestiality or animal sexual abuse is not a specific crime but can be prosecuted under anti-cruelty statutes. Coll was not required to register as a sex offender.

Coll was back in Cheshire County jail recently, accused of violating his probation by using the Internet to meet dog owners and their pets. In an extensive interview with Coll and two national authorities, the [Keene Sentinel](#) reported that Coll said he had been molested at age 13 which made him "distrust people more." "Animals never hurt me, where I've been emotionally and physically hurt many times by people growing up. I still am, actually," he said.

Coll said he discovered zoophilia videos online when he was 15 or 16. He was later convicted at age 18 of having sex with a golden retriever.

While Coll talked openly about his sexual behavior and said there should be nothing illegal if the animals are not hurt, national experts disagreed. Jenny Edwards, whose Washington State-based [Chandler-Edwards Group](#) studies animal sex abuse cases, noted that these individuals rarely operate alone but often have a network of others in the community with whom they share animals. 91% of people who sexually abuse animals are white men and 50% of all offenders are over age 30, although people as young as 9 and as old as 70 have been arrested in bestiality cases, she said.



**Jenny Edwards**



**Chris Risley-Curtiss**

[Chris Risley-Curtiss](#), of Arizona State University's Children and Animals Together childhood cruelty assessment and diversion program, said, "Abuse as a child is linked to animal abuse. If it starts young and there are multiple instances of trauma over a period of time, it has an impact on the brain, which means it's going to affect that person's thought processes and behaviors. Without some kind of help many of them are in real trouble."

### **Rhode Island Considers Cross-Reporting**

The [Rhode Island State Grange](#) is a primary force supporting a new bill in Rhode Island that would initiate full cross-reporting of suspected animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence between the state's child protection and domestic violence case workers and animal control and humane officers. H.R. 5194 was introduced on Jan. 21 and is currently in the House Judiciary Committee. Sponsors of the bill are State Reps. Patricia Morgan, Blake Filippi, Antonio Giarrusso, Justin Price, and Michael Chippendale. Currently, three states – Connecticut, Illinois and West Virginia – plus the District of Columbia have full, mandatory, two-way cross-reporting between child protection and animal protection personnel.

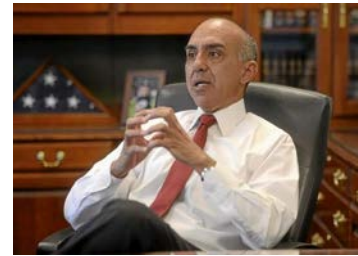


**Rep. Patricia Morgan**

## NEWS FROM LOCAL LINK COALITIONS

### San Bernardino Coalition to Get Boost

The San Bernardino County, Calif., Animal Cruelty Task Force got some good publicity and an organizational boost in a [Sun newspaper](#) feature on District Attorney Michael A. Ramos, a staunch supporter of anti-cruelty efforts and an announced candidate for the California Attorney General's office in 2018. Ramos described his goals for his last term in office before he enters the statewide campaign, expressing his intention to ramp up animal abuse prosecutions and expand victim services to provide two service dogs for abused children testifying in court. Though the Task Force has done an outstanding job, Ramos said he would like to see more prosecutions of cock- and dog-fighting and other



District Attorney Michael Ramos



abuse cases. He said he would be asking the County Board of Supervisors to hire an additional investigator to be assigned specifically to animal abuse cases as part of creating a "vertical prosecution unit" for animal cruelty cases. First elected D.A. in 2002, Ramos also announced plans to increase cybercrime, digital forensics, gang crimes and cold case units.

### Oklahoma Link Coalition Gets a Shout-Out

Our new Oklahoma Link Coalition got some impressive publicity in January with the publication of a full-page article in the Greater Oklahoma/Oklahoma City edition of [Natural Awakenings magazine](#). Written by Paulette Black, program officer for the Kirkpatrick Foundation, the article described how the National Link Coalition helped launch the statewide group. The NLC's Phil Arkow and Paul Needham, and representatives from the Oklahoma District Attorneys Council and Domestic Violence Intervention Services, were quoted extensively. Oklahoma is OK!

## THE LINK... IN THE LITERATURE

(If you're having trouble finding any of these articles, please let us know. We may be able to help you track them down.)

### Domestic Violence/Animal Abuse Links Recorded in Sydney, Australia

A new study has quantified the scope of the need for pet safekeeping programs for domestic violence survivors in New South Wales, Australia. [Lesca Sofyan](#), Lydia Tong and Peter Thomson of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney analyzed 70 situations in which survivors placed their pets in the NSW RSPCA's Safe Beds for Pets Program. They reported that:

- almost half of survivors with children reported their children had witnessed threats or actual abuse toward pets;
- 84% of women reported their pets had been threatened by the batterer;
- 56% reported their pets had been physically abused;
- 93% delayed leaving the violent relationship in fear for their pets' welfare;
- 36% of victims returned to the violent relationship if the pet was still residing with the batterer.

The study also noted that the cost of the program -- \$8.80/animal/day -- was a significant deterrent that prevented a substantial number of women from using the RSPCA's services.

--Sofyan, L., Tong, L., & Thomson, P. (2015). [The association between domestic violence and pet abuse in Sydney homes.](#) Unpublished honours project, University of Sydney.

## ***BUILDING A WARENESS ABOUT THE LINK***



On January 14, the *Symposium Crueldad Animal: Delito Grave a Nivel Federal (Animal Cruelty: Felony at the Federal Level)*, was held in Añasco, Puerto Rico. The activity was organized by Sonia Estévez of HumanEd 4 Animals, dedicated to educate about the Link. Animal cruelty investigators, animal control officers, psychologists, attorneys, voluntary animal rescuers and people interested in animal welfare and protection attended the event. Panelists included: Hon. Silvia Carreño-Coll, U.S. Magistrate Judge for Puerto Rico; Sara Saldaña, Chief Division Counsel, FBI; and Luke Cass, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. Attendees were educated about federal criminal laws that apply to animals, animal fighting, and their interface with Puerto Rico’s Law 154. A letter from National Link Coalition Coordinator Phil Arkow was read and translated into Spanish.

## ***THE LINK... IN THE LEGISLATURES***

### ***Bills We’re Watching:***

#### ***Domestic Violence/Pet Protection Orders***



**H.R. 5267 – the Pets And Women’s Safety (PAWS) Act** – was slated to be re-introduced with a new number and new sponsors in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. The bill would expand existing federal domestic violence protections to include pets of domestic violence victims. It would prohibit crossing state lines to harm a domestic partner’s pet, and establish a federal grant program to provide assistance and housing to victims’ pets in need of emergency shelter.



**Michigan SB 28** would make it a crime to knowingly kill, torture, mutilate, maim, disfigure, or poison an animal, or threaten to do so, with the intent of causing mental suffering or distress to a person or to exert control over a person. The bill passed the Judiciary Committee and is in the Committee of the Whole.



**New Jersey A 494** would provide specific statutory authority to allow courts to include animals in domestic violence restraining orders. The bill affects animals belonging to either party or a minor child in the household. The bill is in the Assembly Women & Children Committee.



**New Mexico S 178** would appropriate \$300,000 to the Children Youth & Families Department to pay for temporary care and housing of animals of domestic violence survivors. The bill is in the Senate Public Affairs Committee.

#### ***Animal Abuse in the Presence of a Child***




**New York A534** defines “aggravated” animal cruelty as causing extreme physical pain or done in an especially depraved or sadistic manner, a Class E felony. It would make the commission of aggravated cruelty in the presence of a child a Class D felony. The bill is in the Codes Committee.




**New York A944** and **S1795** would criminalize knowingly causing a minor to attend a place where exhibition of animal fighting is being conducted. The bills are in the Agriculture Committee.





### *Cross Reporting*

 **Colorado SB 42** would make it a Class 3 misdemeanor to fail to report suspected animal mistreatment, neglect or abandonment to the owner or law enforcement within 48 hours, or for knowingly making a false report. Affected professionals are: veterinarians, dog trainers, animal behaviorists, farriers, pet groomers, code enforcement and animal control officers, brand inspectors, pet animal care facilities, wildlife rehabilitators, social workers, mental health professionals, counselors, marriage and family therapists, facilities that care for animals, and any individual who has reasonable cause to know or suspect the maltreatment. The bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee.


 **Rhode Island H.R. 5194** would initiate a mandatory child abuse/domestic violence and animal abuse cross-reporting system. The bill is in the House Judiciary Committee.


### *Interventions for Animal Abuse Offenders*


 **New Jersey S2449**, “Shyanne’s Law,” would require convicted adult animal abusers to receive mental health evaluations. Currently, only juvenile offenders receive mental health screenings. The bill is in the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee.


 **New York A1445** and **S1174** would increase penalties for animal fighting and aggravated cruelty to animals and would require a psychiatric evaluation for defendants convicted of aggravated cruelty. **A1673** and **S814** would require that juvenile offenders convicted of animal cruelty undergo psychiatric evaluation and treatment where necessary. The bills are in the Agriculture Committee.

### *Animal Abuse and Other Crimes*


 **New Jersey SB 736** and a newer version, **AB 3596** would create a new crime of “leader of a dog fighting network” which would be added to the list of offenses considered “racketeering activities” under New Jersey’s anti-racketeering (RICO) law. The bills are in the Senate Judiciary and Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees.

 **New York A346** would create a statewide task force to study how to improve investigations of animal abuse and enforcement of anti-cruelty laws. The bill is in the Agriculture Committee.

 **New York A1596** and **S2936** would expand the definition of aggravated cruelty to animals to include harm to animals during the commission of a felony. The bills are in the Agriculture Committee.

 The **Oregon** Veterinary Medical Examination Board has proposed Rule No. [875-030-1101](#) which would provide for a screening of applicants and licensees to determine if they have a history of criminal behavior that would preclude their fitness to practice as a veterinarian or certified veterinary technician.

### *Animal Hoarding*

 **New York A1265** would create the crime of companion animal hoarding. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

## *Therapeutic Interventions for Child Abuse Victims*



**New Jersey A2155** would establish a three-year pilot program within DCF to provide animal-assisted therapy to victims of childhood violence, trauma, or children with behavioral healthcare needs. The bill is in the Assembly Women & Children Committee.

### **THE LINK... IN THE NEWS**

#### **Ex-Mayor Charged with Child Pornography and Torturing Cats**



Wilson Longanecker Jr., the former mayor of Sorrento, La. who was already charged with 40 counts of child pornography, was booked on Dec. 29 on seven additional charges of animal cruelty on allegations that he tortured cats on camera. State and Ascension Parish investigators told [news media](#) that seven videos uncovered during the child porn investigation depicted Longanecker using duct tape, shoelaces and his hands to bind, choke, blindfold and injure five different cats, who appeared to have blood coming from their eyes, ears, noses and mouths. Investigators believe one cat may have had a leg broken and others had fur ripped from their skin. The incidents

[Wilson Longanecker, Jr.](#) allegedly occurred between Oct. 8, 2013 and Jan. 9, 2014, during which time he served as mayor of the town 30 miles southeast of Baton Rouge. Court testimony last November revealed that 40 child pornography videos, involving children as young as 3 or 4, had been found on Longanecker's computers.

#### **Couple Charged with Child Abuse After Ferrets Eat Baby's Face**

A Darby Borough, Pa. couple were charged with five counts of endangering the welfare of a child after horrified police officers found three ferrets had escaped their flimsy cage and eaten 15% to 20% of their one-month-old infant's face. The ferrets had chewed off the tiny child's nose, top lip and cheek, and doctors at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia had to insert two stents in her nose so she could breathe. The parents, Burnie Fraime and Jessica Benales, were said to be upstairs at the time as the infant sat in a car seat on the living room floor, the [Philadelphia Daily News](#) reported. Delaware County Children and Youth Services removed four other children, ranging in age from 1 month to 5 years and believed to all have special needs. Police described the home as "a house in crisis" with an infestation of mites or fleas, six cats, two turtles, and cupboards filled with pet food but no food for the children. CYS had been involved with the family on previous incidents, prompting police to ask how the agency could not have been aware of the "unacceptable" living conditions in the house. "I'm a cop. I've been one for 45 years," said Police Chief Robert Smythe, "and this is the most horrific thing I've seen happen to a child."



[Billy Douglas Thorne](#)

#### **Man Trades Dog for Gun to Kill His Son, Gets 22 Years**

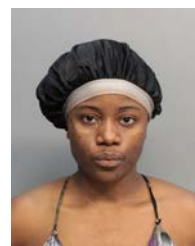
A Mason City, Iowa man was sentenced to 22 years in federal prison for trading his dog for a .22 caliber rifle that he planned to use to kill his son and his son's girlfriend. U.S. District Chief Judge Linda Reade handed down such a stiff sentence to Billy Douglas Thorne in part because of his six prior felony convictions for crimes including armed burglary, and [Des Moines Register](#) reported. "I sold the dog. I gave her away for a shootem up," Thorne had texted his son in one of several threatening messages.

## Murder, Poisoning Suspect May Have Tested Poisons on Hamsters

Japanese police in Nagoya are [investigating](#) an unnamed female 19-year-old university student in connection with the strangulation of a 77-year-old woman and the suspected poisoning of the student's former high school classmate. The classmate began missing classes in June, 2012, saying he felt weak. Doctors suspected chemical poisoning at the time. He was subsequently hospitalized with eyesight problems and has been left with some disabilities. [Other reports](#) said the suspect had a fascination with toxic chemicals in the school's lab and allegedly tried out her chemicals on hamsters.

## Mother Charged with Beating Son and Killing Puppy

Police in Miami, Fla. arrested Charlotte Wonjah, 26, who has admitted to having anger management issues, on charges of aggravated child abuse and cruelty to animals amid allegations she beat her 8-year-old son repeatedly with a rope and killed her family's 1-month-old puppy in front of her kids. Wonjah, who was four months pregnant at the time of her Dec. 30 arrest, was said to have slammed the dog against the floor while her kids watched because she didn't want to clean up after it, the [Miami Herald](#) reported. Wonjah had recently completed probation for misdemeanor battery against her ex-boyfriend.



Charlotte Wonjah

## Dog Wounded with Sword while Protecting Woman from Husband

Bruce E. Bennett, 33, of St. Albans, Maine, was arrested on felony charges of domestic violence assault and aggravated cruelty to animals for allegedly attacking his wife and the family dog that was trying to protect her. Somerset County sheriff's deputies told the *Kennebec Journal* that after Bennett allegedly hit his wife, the family bulldog named "Malakai" tried to defend her. When the woman left the residence, Bennett allegedly attacked the dog with a 2-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-foot-long sword. The dog was reportedly recovering from head wounds at a local veterinary hospital.



Bruce E. Bennett

## Angry at His Girlfriend, Man Kicks and Kills Chihuahua

A Tacoma, Wash. man was charged with animal cruelty on Jan. 23 for allegedly kicking his roommate's Chihuahua to death after arguing with his girlfriend on the telephone. Nicholas Tresness, 32, apparently was so angry that he kicked over a highchair and broke a coffee cup. The [Tacoma News-Tribune](#) reported he then stormed into his room. When the dog, named "Duke," followed him, police said Tresness kicked the pet, killing it. "I have an anger problem. It just takes over. There's nothing I can do," Tresness reportedly told police officers.

## N.Y. Man Sentenced to Year in Jail for Killing Cat in Domestic Dispute

A man who killed the family cat after a domestic dispute and stuffed the cat's body in a plastic bag under his son's bed was convicted of animal cruelty on Jan. 22 and will spend one year in jail. Christopher Cruz, 24, of Long Beach, L.I., N.Y. had argued with his girlfriend and threw the cat named "Mo" up in the air. The cat landed on its head and was seriously injured. Cruz told the family that the cat had run away, but [WALK radio](#) reported that the girlfriend later found the cat in a white plastic bag under her son's bed while investigating a foul odor. The girlfriend told police that Cruz had threatened her cats on several occasions during the previous months.

## ***LINK TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES***

**Feb. 18 – (Online).** Allie Phillips will present a webinar on “Understanding the Importance of Animal Abuse as a Predictor and Indicator Crime” for the [Canadian Federation of Humane Societies](#) as part of an animal abuse prosecution webinar series.

**Feb. 19 – Oklahoma City, Okla.:** The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will meet at Chesapeake Community Plaza.

**Feb. 19-22 – Columbus, Ohio:** Martha Smith-Blackmore, DVM, will present on animal sexual abuse and case reports of non-accidental injury and animal hoarding at the [Midwest Veterinary Conference](#).

**Feb. 24 – Staunton, Va.:** Allie Phillips will present on “The Co-Occurrence of Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Strategies and Policies for Keeping Families Safe” and “Effectively Incorporating Therapy Animals with Maltreated Children” at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual [Shenandoah Valley Multidisciplinary Conference](#).

**Feb. 26 – (Online):** Jessica Milligan will discuss “Is there HOPE? How and Why a Prosecutor should be Proactive in Combating Animal Cruelty” in a [webinar series](#) presented by the National District Attorneys Association’s National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse.

**Feb. 27-28 – Tulsa, Okla.:** Maya Gupta will present a two-day training on “Assessment and Treatment of Children and Adults Who Have Engaged In or Witnessed Animal Abuse” for the [Oklahoma Alliance for Animals](#).

**March 3-5 – Columbia, S.C.:** Chris Risley-Curtiss will present on Intervening with Children who Abuse Animals at the National Association of Social Workers/South Carolina Chapter [Spring Symposium](#).

**March 4 – (Online):** Allie Phillips will present “Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)<sup>™</sup>: An Innovative Solution for Families and Pets in Crisis” for the [Humane Society Academy](#) First Strike: Ending Violence 2015 series.

**March 6 – Blacksburg, Va.:** Phil Arkow speak on “Animal Abuse as the ‘Dark Side’ of the Human-Animal Bond” at the VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine’s Center for Animal Human Relationships [Symposium](#).

**March 30 – Oklahoma City, Okla.:** Phil Arkow will discuss “The Link Across the Lifespan: Animal Abuse as an Indicator and Predictor of Human Violence” at the Kirkpatrick Foundation’s [Animal Conference](#).

**April 15 – June 10 – (Online):** A 40-hour, 9-week distance-learning Victim Assistance Academy, which will include Link programming, is being offered by the [National Organization for Victim Assistance](#). Sessions are held on Wednesdays.

**Apr. 16 – Oklahoma City, Okla.:** The [Oklahoma Link Coalition](#) will meet at Chesapeake Community Plaza.

**Apr. 16 – (Online):** Phil Arkow will discuss “How to Create a Community LINK Coalition” in a [webinar series](#) presented by the National District Attorneys Association’s National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse.



**Apr. 17 – Ashland, Ohio:** Barbara Boat will discuss “The Links between Toxic Stress and the Toxic Triad” at the [Ashland Mental Health and Recovery Board](#).

**Apr. 23 – Phoenix, Ariz.:** Phil Arkow will be the keynote speaker at the [Association of Professional Humane Educators](#) conference, speaking about how focusing on The Link can advance humane education efforts.

**April 23-24 – Portland, Ore.:** Allie Phillips will present on “The Co-Occurrence of Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Strategies and Policies for Keeping Children Safe” at the 2015 Clackamas County [Child Abuse and Family Violence Summit](#).

**Apr. 30 – Clovis, Calif.:** Phil Arkow will present an all-day multidisciplinary training on The Link on behalf of the [Central California Animal Disaster Team](#).

**May 1 – Merced, Calif.:** Phil Arkow will present a training on The Link on behalf of the [Central California Animal Disaster Team](#).

**May 8 – Manchester, N.H. –** [Lindsay Hamrick](#) will lead a panel discussion on child and animal abuse at the Department of Children Youths & Families’ Conference.

**May 12 – Seattle, Wash.:** Barbara Boat will discuss “The Impact of Toxic Stress and Exposure to Animal Cruelty on the Developing Brain: What Every Professional Should Know” at the [Children’s Justice Conference](#).

**May 20 – (online):** Phil Arkow will lead two webinars on “Interpersonal Violence and Animal cruelty” for the [National Organization for Victim Assistance Academy](#).

**June 11-12 – Denver, Colo.:** Phil Arkow will introduce The Link as a species-spanning approach to animal shelter administration at the [Society of Animal Welfare Administrators’](#) Management Conference.

**July 7-9 – Saratoga Springs, N.Y.:** Phil Arkow will give the keynote address on “The Link Across the Lifespan” at the Special Session on Vulnerable Populations and their Pets at the 2015 [International Society of Anthrozoology](#) conference.

**Nov. 3-4 – Knoxville, Tenn.:** A post-conference workshop on The Link between Human and Animal Violence will be held following the [Veterinary Social Work/Veterinary Health and Wellness Summits](#) at the University of Tennessee.

To subscribe to The Link-Letter (*it’s free!*) – Just send an e-mail to Coordinator Phil Arkow ([arkowpets@snip.net](mailto:arkowpets@snip.net)) and tell us what organization(s) you’re with and where you’re located.



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION



The National Link Coalition is an informal, multi-disciplinary collaborative network of individuals and organizations in human services and animal welfare who address the intersections between animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse through research, public policy, programming and community awareness. We believe that human and animal well-being are inextricably intertwined and that the prevention of family and community violence can best be achieved through partnerships representing multi-species perspectives.

### Members of the National Link Coalition Steering Committee

#### Phil Arkow, Coordinator

Consultant, ASPCA  
Chair, Animal Abuse & Family Violence Prevention Project,  
The Latham Foundation  
Stratford, N.J.

#### Lesley Ashworth

Founder/President, American Veterinary Charitable Fund  
Consultant, Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Former Director, Domestic Violence/Stalking Program,  
Columbus City Attorney's Office/Prosecution Division  
Worthington, Ohio

#### Diane Balkin, J.D.

Contract Attorney, Animal Legal Defense Fund  
President, International Veterinary Forensic Sciences Assn.  
Denver, Colo.

#### Barbara W. Boat, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Univ. of Cincinnati College of Medicine  
Exec. Director, Childhood Trust, Cincinnati Children's Hospital  
Cincinnati, Ohio

#### Maya Gupta, Ph.D.

Executive Director,  
Animals and Society Institute  
Atlanta, Ga.

#### Jane A. Hunt

Coordinator, Community Health Improvement Plan  
Larimer County Department of Health  
Ft. Collins, Colo.

#### Mark Kumpf, CAWA

Past President, National Animal Control Association  
Director, Montgomery County Animal Resource Center  
Dayton, Ohio

#### Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.

Senior Vice Pres., Forensic Sciences & Anti-Cruelty Projects,  
ASPCA  
Falls Church, Va.

#### Anna Melbin, MSW, MPP

Dir. of Network Growth & Strategy, The Full Frame Initiative  
Founder, Catalyst Consultant & Training  
Yarmouth, Maine

#### Paul Needham

Programs Field Rep, Adult Protective Services, Oklahoma DHS  
Chair, Education Committee,  
National Adult Protective Services Association  
Norman, Okla.

#### Maria Luisa O'Neill

Director of Programs  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Denver, Colo.

#### Emily Patterson-Kane, Ph.D.

Animal Welfare Scientist, Animal Welfare Division  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
Schaumburg, Ill.

#### Allie Phillips, J.D.

Director, National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse  
Dep. Dir., National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse  
National District Attorneys Association  
Alexandria, Va.

#### Chris Risley-Curtiss, MSSW, Ph.D.

Associate Professor/Animal-Human Interactions Coordinator  
Arizona State University School of Social Work  
Phoenix, Ariz.

#### Michele Robinson

Program Manager, Family Violence & Domestic Relations  
National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges  
Reno, Nev.

#### Hugh Tebault III

President,  
The Latham Foundation  
Alameda, Calif.

#### John Thompson

Deputy Executive Director/Chief of Staff  
National Sheriffs Association  
Director, National Coalition on Violence Against Animals  
Alexandria, Va.