



Billerica and Tewksbury Animal Control Officer Ashley Chmiel Named “ACO of the Year”

Billerica, MA – The Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) are proud to announce that Billerica and Tewksbury Animal Control Officer (ACO) Ashley Chmiel has been named Animal Control Officer of the Year for 2022.

ARL and MSPCA established the ACO of the Year award to honor an animal control officer whose efforts in their local community throughout the year have promoted responsible pet ownership by:

- manifesting a dedicated, humane attitude toward the treatment and well-being of all animals
- effectively enforcing pet responsibility laws
- conducting public awareness and humane education programs
- maintaining cooperative working relationships with other agencies involved with animals, such as state and local government departments, other ACOs, and animal protection groups

The award was presented Friday, October 28, at the annual banquet held by the Animal Control Officers Association of Massachusetts.

Ashley’s nominations for ACO of the Year included a number of accolades, heralding her dedication to animals and community, professionalism, and compassion. Officer Chmiel was also noted for her excellent communication and organization skills.

One of her main goals is to educate pet owners of responsibility laws and help them make necessary changes, hoping to only enforce or charge if the sharing of information and resources doesn't solve issues. She often posts on the Billerica & Tewksbury ACO Facebook page with educational information, and the team has also been developing plans to attend schools to do dog bite prevention classes.

In February of 2022, Tewksbury made the news when 97 cats were removed from a home. Officer Chmiel was called to visit the home after Tewksbury Police and Fire observed the conditions of the home during the medical emergency. Given the limited kennel space at the ACO facility, Ashley knew she would need help from local shelters to take some of the cats. She coordinated this response by contacting non-profit organizations to assist in the collection of the 97 cats at the home, as well as splitting the intake so as not to over-burden one location.

On top of the amount of collaborative effort and planning, Ashley spent a lot of time communicating with the owner, who was going through one of the hardest moments of his life, having just lost his wife, who was the caretaker of the cats. Ashley knew that going from a home full of animals to a complete empty nest would be difficult for this owner, and advocated for his well-being by working with the shelters and veterinarians to identify two cats he could take back after being treated.

It takes a lot of compassion and understanding to realize how detrimental it would be to deprive him of pets altogether. Since the sanitary status of the home needed improvement before any cats moved back, she also worked with the Board of Health and professional cleaners.

ARL Quote

“We are excited to recognize Ashley as the ACO of the Year. She exemplifies the traits ARL and MSPCA look for each year in an ACO,” stated Kara Holmquist, director of advocacy for the MSPCA.

Photo attached:

ABOUT the ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF BOSTON:

The Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL) is an unwavering champion for animals in need, committed to keeping them safe and healthy in habitats and homes. Founded in 1899, ARL provides high-quality veterinary care, adoption, and rescue services; while also confronting the root causes of animal cruelty and neglect through innovative community programs, police investigations, and public advocacy. In 2021, ARL served over 23,000 animals throughout Massachusetts. ARL is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. The Animal Rescue League of Boston does not receive government grants or public funding and relies on the generosity of our supporters to help animals in need. For more information please visit us online at arlboston.org; and be sure to follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/arlboston), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/arlboston), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/arlboston).

ABOUT MSPCA-ANGELL:

The MSPCA-Angell is a national and international leader in animal protection and veterinary medicine and provides direct hands-on care for thousands of animals each year. Founded in 1868, it is the second-oldest humane society in the United States. Services include animal protection and adoption, advocacy, humane education, law enforcement, and world-class veterinary care. The MSPCA-Angell is a private, non-profit organization. It does not receive any government funding nor is it funded or operated by any national humane organization. The MSPCA-Angell relies solely on the support and contributions from individuals who care about animals. Please visit www.mspca.org and like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mspcaangell

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