

Ottawa shows its heart for Sadie

\$5,000 floods in to save puppy in need of surgery

BY SARAH BOESVELD

Sadie the puppy will get her heart surgery late next week.

The Alta Vista Animal Hospital and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Western Quebec received “hundreds of calls” yesterday from Ottawa residents hoping to help the three-month-old puppy with the hole in her heart.

The \$4,200 needed for the surgery was raised by noon.

“I cannot believe this, I feel like it’s Christmas,” said Jennifer Montague, who works at the SPCA.

Ms. Montague even received a call from a Calgary man who donated \$250 after reading the story online.

“That was so touching,” she said. “We are truly grateful.”

The Gatineau shelter started turning away donors after collecting the operation money and an additional \$800 for Sadie’s follow-up appointment after surgery.

Sadie, a German shepherd-Rottweiler mix, has been living at the shelter since she was dropped off three and a half weeks ago by a family who couldn’t sell or give away all the dogs in the litter.

Only after Sadie was at the shelter

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was it discovered that she has a heart condition, called *patent ductus arteriosus* — a hole in the heart. The condition prevents blood from getting enough oxygen, causing extreme fatigue.

Sadie will receive a special valve to help her blood flow properly, said Ms. Montague.

The part will arrive in three or four

days. Then Sadie will prepare for a four-hour arthroscopic procedure during which a surgeon will enter through her leg and seal off the extra vein that is causing improper blood flow.

Ms. Montague said the shelter was overwhelmed by the support. Now the next step is to find some parents for Sadie.

“We would really like to start a screening process to find a home for her,” Ms. Montague said.

“If people have the interest, they’re welcome to fill out the (adoption) questionnaire,” she said, adding that potential parents cannot already have dogs at home, as Sadie cannot be overstimulated due to her condition.

Despite the outpouring of support, Ms. Montague said she received a dozen calls from people who read about Sadie in the *Citizen* and who disapproved of the shelter’s fundraising technique.

“We had people calling and saying ‘How dare you ask for (money for) a dog that nobody even owns when there are people who are starving, who are homeless,’” she said.

In response, Ms. Montague said the shelter and animals like Sadie are her passion and her cause of choice.

“If people are upset and they have their own causes, well I really hope they’re giving their time to that cause and not just coming down on us,” she said. “The alternative would be what? Let her suffer? Euthanize her? We don’t do that here.”