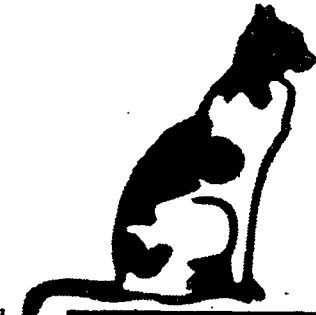
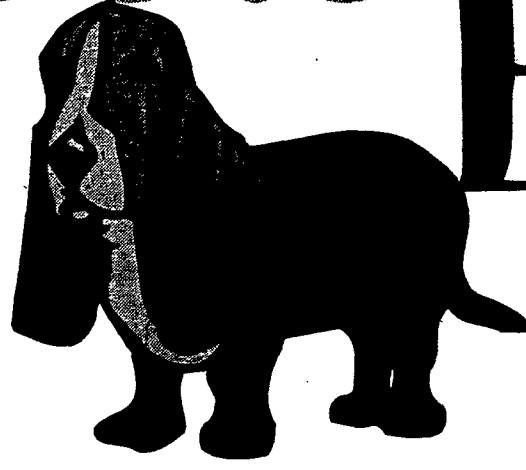


# MOVE on the



# Pets: EXTENT



Story by /  
Photographs

Jonathan Schwartzmeyer refers to his dog as his little brother. Alison Buttarazzi's dog is included in her family portrait.

Karen Sheehan says hi to her fish and asks how they're doing.

Laura Anderson and her family send greeting cards that are also "signed" by her four cats and two dogs.

So who says pets aren't human?

Well, maybe they aren't *exactly* people, but they sure do seem to know how to communicate with us human types. Take Megan Beck's 2-year-old cat, Spirit, who clearly conveyed to Megan's family the message that she needed a good home.

The Becks first met Spirit one Sunday when they went to Mass at Holy Ghost Church in Gates. Megan discovered Spirit in the parking lot, and the cat later intercepted her family as they headed for a post-Mass coffee hour in an adjoining building.

"It rolled onto its back, right in front of the door so you couldn't open it," Megan, 15, said.

Megan's mother leaned over to pet the cat, and that's all it took for Spirit to earn a trip home with the Becks that day. Megan's family ran lost-and-found ads but failed to locate the owner — so Spirit joined Megan's dog, Rascal, and cat, Midnight, as the household's third pet.

"We named her 'Spirit' because it was on Pentecost Sunday and we found her at church," Megan said. (Pentecost Sunday celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, and the start of the church's mission on earth.)

Had the cat been a



Laura Anderson, a member of the Catholic Community of St. Francis, relaxes at home with five of her six family pets.

male — or been discovered around this time of year — "Francis" would also have been a good name with a religious theme. Oct. 4 marks the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of the environment. His great appreciation of nature is reflected in paintings that often show him surrounded by birds and other animals. Many parishes in the diocese, in fact, are hosting "pet blessings" this week in honor of St. Francis.

St. Francis would feel right at home with Laura, 14, and her six-pet household. Laura said her cats and dogs all get along fairly well, although "for awhile, the cats would hiss at the dogs when they were puppies."

Of her six furry friends, Laura said she's especially close to her 9-year-old cat, Robert Rascal. He has belonged to the Andersons since he was a kitten.

"I love them all, but that one's

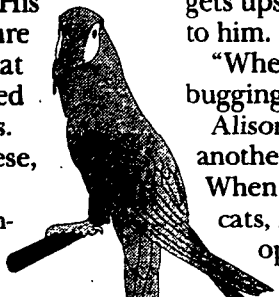
special to guess," she says. She says she sleeps or gets up to him.

"When bugging Alison another When cats, op

cats. H 14, from Auburn.

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