

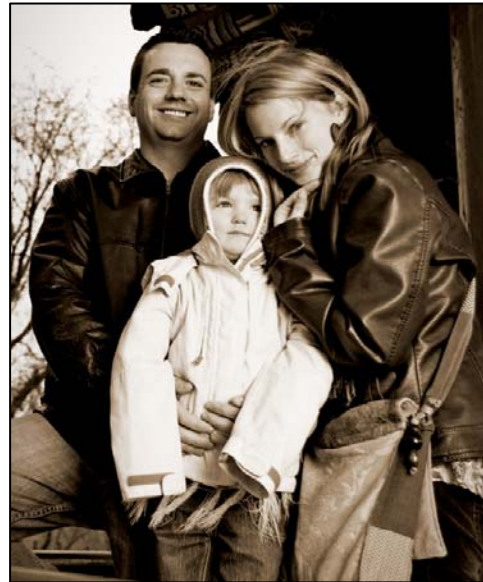
# *Volunteer profile*

## Meet Paula Bissell

*By Lynsey Franks*

As the mother of two (one being a new-born boy Mason), and wife to an equally dedicated husband, Shawn Molloy, Paula Bissell has her hands happily full. Bissell works as a nurse in her hometown of Wabasca, and she and her husband own the local NAPA Auto Parts. The entire family is 'hooked' on helping. Their four-year-old daughter, Georgia, is quickly following in her parent's footsteps.

"Georgia comes with me to the pound, she's learning at an early age about dogs." The family also has two yellow labs, Bailey and Charlie, which 31-year-old Bissell describes as "fat and happy."



Shawn, Georgia and Paula

Bissell is an active dog advocate in her community. She started making changes by working with the local governments. "Wabasca is a town surrounded by the Bigstone Cree Nation reserve. There are two governments to work with," says Paula. She has been working with the two governments to improve dog population control methods. "I helped the Municipal District in rewriting their policies for pound operations and encouraged a relationship with SCARS." Bissell is at the pound nearly three times a week be it to help deliver a litter of puppies, to check in and assess the dogs, or to transfer dogs to SCARS.

As a result of the working relationship with SCARS and the local governments, Bissell says that things have improved greatly. "They have been working with SCARS to improve conditions for the dogs." We have been working collaboratively to bring a spay and neuter clinic to the community. "It's the only way that we are going to control the population here," she says. Local issues include packing problems, neglect, and abuse and overpopulation problems.

There is lack of education and resources for proper animal care; something that Bissell feels is a key factor to overcome in how people treat their animals. "We are 120 km away from the nearest veterinarian. Many people don't have a car to transfer their animals for care; some just don't know that a dog requires vaccinations, etc. There isn't the basic dog care education that is required in a place where a person can get a puppy at any time. "It takes a long time to educate, but I'm starting to see a change, especially in the last few years," she says.

The SCARS organization is making a difference one step at a time. "I think SCARS has made a huge impact on the population of unwanted dogs in the community," she says, estimating that over 1,000 dogs in the area have been rescued by SCARS. "I think that SCARS has done an amazing amount of work in the short period of time. It's a large organization with very skilled people."

After five years of working with SCARS, her dedication to the cause remains. "It feels good to do something good," says Paula. "Honestly, there is usually a handful of people that you get to meet in your lifetime that are truly good people," she says of her fellow volunteers. "They all have such great intentions; they are all just in it to help animals." She has high hopes for the future of SCARS. "You can't save them all, but I think SCARS has the power to make a big difference for so many." Paula loves to see the dogs get adopted.