

Burke County Friends For Animals offers a chance to meet the candidates

It's almost November. That time of the year when in the frenzied world of politics the incumbents and their opponents flood the airwaves, working feverishly to catch



Generations

Peg DeMarco

our attention on television screens across the nation squeezed in between dozens of 30-second, product hawking commercials.

And let's face it, it's mighty difficult to state your platform in 30 seconds on important national issues

such as rising unemployment, the lack of health insurance for the 47 million people in the U.S. who live day-to-day without it, the war that has divided the country once again in our history and the escalating cost of living due to soaring gasoline prices that trickle down to our local gas pumps.

In prime time television land, given that most people get up from their sofas for a snack during commercial breaks, and given the extra insult that campaign messages will be sandwiched in between a mouth watering pizza commercial or a car salesman screaming in high definition surround sound, candidates

have a pretty tough time trying to make people remember them and their messages. So, it makes sense that candidates get out into the community as much as possible so that they can meet as many of their constituents as they can. That's where the "meet and greet" programs come in. Up north, we called them Koffee Klatches and for years, I was the one pouring the coffee for the people who showed up while the candidate made his or her way to the podium in Suffolk County, Long Island, N.Y.

I started my "political career" when I began babysitting for our local committeeman and it ended when my

boss, by then a powerful county executive seeking a second four-year term, lost the election. Over a span from age 18 to 40-something, I donned a straw hat and red and white paper dress as a "Nixonette" in a conga line, worked at my first job as stenographer for a town mayor, heeded the words of JFK and joined the Peace Corps, returned from the Peace Corps and worked for the legislature's presiding officer, then the county executive and finished off working for the county health commissioner.

Over the years, there were signatures to collect, streets to walk, hands to shake, events to plan. There were the

nights at election headquarters when the results came in — most ending with streamers and confetti flying everywhere, but the last, of course, ending with tears and frustration.

But that's politics, the good and the bad, and every November someone else faces the fear of the ballot and questions whether he or she has successfully conveyed his or her message to the voting public.

All of the aforementioned national concerns are so vital to our future and there isn't an easy answer to any of them. There is one more is-

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sue, however, that tends to be forgotten at the podiums when speeches and promises are made.

As you know, issues of animal cruelty are particularly important to me and to so many others in our community. During recent months, there's been an outpouring of support from many, many people who want stronger legislation against dog fighting and new legislation drawn up on all issues of animal cruelty. Sometimes we forget that we are in the majority and the perpetrators of animal atrocities are in the minority. We shouldn't forget; we should continue to band together. Many of you who watched the National Geographic special on what happened to the dogs that were confiscated when Michael Vick's dog fighting operation was shut down wrote and told me that you got so angry watching it — or so moved — that you had to turn it off. I beg you to watch it again ... and again. It's important and vital that you get angry because that is the only way we can stop these things from happening.

Many of us, in fact I'll wager the majority of everyone reading this column, considers our pets as members of our families. We feed them the best food, take time out from our busy lives to walk them in the park or play catch with them, share our sofas and beds with them, make sure they take their preventive medicine, and, in fact, take them to those much needed visits to the veterinarian — often, neglecting our own once-a-year personal checkup.

They're the lucky ones because they have you.

It's the animals that don't have you that need help. They're the ones that have been abandoned, abused or neglected and the only way that we, as a whole, can help them is to appeal to our legislative bodies to adopt new legislation that will make a simple tap on the wrist or indifference a thing of the past.

Friends for Animals is holding a "Meet and Greet the Candidates" on Sept. 27, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the shelter located at 417 Kirksey Drive, Morganton. Many candidates will be present from the county, state and federal levels. Some will be sending representatives who can take back

to the candidates your concerns or convey what the candidates' stands are on these issues. This is your opportunity to be heard, so please try and drop by and hear what the candidates have to say.

Most important, please get out and vote this November. And remember the words of John Quincy Adams when you enter the polling place: "Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost."

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