

# APHE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

*Brenda Fiorini*



## How did you become involved with APHE?

I joined APHE to connect with others who are making a difference. I want to reach out to humane educators and teachers everywhere to share my materials. I know that there are many, many amazing children's books about humane education and lots of dedicated people have developed impactful lessons and programs for kids and communities. I believe that there can never be enough stories and resources to plant the seeds of kindness, compassion and responsibility toward animals. So, I open my doors to everyone at APHE to help build your resources and libraries. It is my contribution to helping animals, and my contribution to literacy.

## What is your hope for the future of Humane Education?

It is my hope that all schools will incorporate humane education under the big umbrella of character education. There aren't enough humane educators. We need school teachers to join the forces. It is my hope that by reading humane storybooks, a child, when faced with a choice to be kind or cruel, will choose kindness.

## Do you have any advice?

When one small thing like reading an article drops a ton of bricks on you, take it as a sign. Don't be a bystander. Be an upstander. We walk this earth for a short time, and animals even shorter. Find your niche in the world of humane education and make it count. The feeling you get is beyond rewarding!

## How did you get involved in Humane Education?

Early on in my teaching career, I happened to be reading my local newspaper one day and stumbled upon an article that hit me like a ton of bricks. A young boy had been arrested for animal cruelty as a means of seeking acceptance into a gang. Realizing how impressionable school age kids are, I took this as a sign that humane education must become part of my purpose as a school teacher. I was now working directly in the arena with such young vulnerable people; I knew I could be someone to help influence their choices and hopefully save them from making grave mistakes, like choosing to be in a gang or to hurt innocent animals. I hoped that my efforts would maybe save lives - humans and animals.

I began my journey by visiting my local animal shelter, Granny Rose Animal Shelter in Dixon, Illinois. I got involved with volunteering, helping with animal rescue efforts, fundraising, and I even sat on their board for a few years, but most of all, I began to incorporate humane activities into my classrooms. My computer students designed adoption flyers for shelter cats and dogs that we hung in local businesses; I organized a "Pennies for Pets" fundraising campaign in several elementary and high school buildings; we took field trips to the shelter; and the list goes on. I wanted my students to have real-world assignments, to engage in community service, and to learn how shelter staff and volunteers devote time to helping homeless, innocent, voiceless animals. I wanted kids to see that choices they make should be about helping others, not hurting others, especially animals. I was planting the seeds of kindness.