

Blessing of the cats as new sanctuary opens doors

By Leo Leonidou

THE INAUGURATION of an animal sanctuary in Ormidia village is taking place on Thursday, ahead of World Animal Day.

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e President of the Argos Animal Rescue and Protection Association yesterday told the Mail that, "the first phase will be the launching of the cat sanctuary, which is part of the overall project, which will see us provide refuge for any animal that is unwanted."

Stella Stylianou explained that a local priest "will bless the cats in front of 100 schoolchildren from the Dhekelia and Sotira primary schools.

"There will also be a symbolic planting of a tree to commemorate the suffering of the world's farm animals."

The land on which the sanctuary is located was provided by the British Bases in co-operation with the Republic of Cyprus. It is located behind the Ormidia football stadium.

"We currently have 130 cats and kittens which have all come to us through special circumstances," said Stylianou. "They have either been sick, abandoned, poisoned, involved in an accident or simply no longer wanted."

She said the aim of the sanctuary was, "to provide awareness for the local community to understand the needs of the animals. People must be informed that in their community, a shelter exists which can provide refuge."

According to Stylianou, various fundraising events are due to take place in the coming months.

"I'd like to stress that we need sponsors who must believe that this project, as well as helping animals, will also serve the community as a haven for community development."

World Animal Day

This is celebrated each year on October 4. On this day, animal life in all its forms is celebrated and special events are planned in locations all over the globe.

October 4 was originally chosen for World Animal Day because it is the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, a nature lover and patron saint of animals and the environment. Numerous churches throughout the world observe the Sunday closest to October 4, with an animal blessing.

However, World Animal Day has now gone beyond being the celebration of a Christian saint and is today observed by animal lovers of all beliefs, nationalities and backgrounds. Animal blessings are held in churches, synagogues, and by independent animal chaplains in parks and fields.

Animal rescue shelters hold fundraising events and open days, wildlife groups organise information displays, schools undertake animal-related project work and individuals and groups of friends or co-workers donate to animal charities or pledge to sponsor a shelter animal.

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