By **Amanda Moore** Grimsby Lincoln News-Monday, June 8, 2015

BEAMSVILLE — Pam Huson doesn't consider her extensive animal rescue work to be anything special. It's just something she has always done.

When she was asked why she does what she does by the folks running the Shreddies Search for Goodness Contest, in which she is a top 10 finalist, she was stumped.

"Why do you breathe? You see a hurt animal, and you just can't pass. It's in your blood," says Huson, founder of Beamsville 4 Paw Rescue. "It's in your blood."

Huson has been rescuing animals for as long as she can remember. She remembers seeing a dog run out into the road when she was walking with her mom as an eight-year-old girl. She let go of her mom's hand and ran out to the dog. When her mom asked her why, her answer was "The car wouldn't stop for the dog, but it would for me."

Huson has been offering a helping hands to animals in need ever since.

"When you do something that's so natural to you, you don't think of it as special," said Huson, who was blown away when one of her volunteers nominated her for the contest and is even more shocked to be a finalist. "When you are recognized and see the votes, it's amazing."

But Huson still doesn't consider herself as special. She says she wouldn't be able to do what she does without the network o f support from her volunteers and animal foster parents.

"It's not about me, it's about my volunteers, the whole organization," says Huson, who shies away from the spotlight. "It's about the animals."

Beamsville 4 Paw Rescue takes in between 200 and 300 animals a year, most of them cats. Huson started rescuing cats in the area when she moved to Beamsville in 1997. Back then she was known as the "crazy cat lady from Beamsville". In 2005, when newer homes were constructed near her residence, she started to see an influx of homeless cats who were displaced when the barns and trees were felled.

"We just started rescuing cats," she said. "And it just became Beamsville 4 Paw Rescue."

All of the animals taken in the rescue's care are local.

"You won't see any dogs shipped in from overseas," she says. "Every time you bring an animal in from overseas, one of our dogs has to be put down."

Many of the animals that come into Beamsville 4 Paw's care are from owners who have passed away. Huson also runs Professional Placements, which places nurses in homes within Niagara where people are dying from cancer. She promises many of her clients that s he will take in their pets when the time comes.

She said many people question why the word paw isn't pluralized in the rescue's name. The name is truly representative of what the rescue does, it takes in all animals in need of a home, regardless of the number of paws it has.

"We take in the undesirable animals," she says. "Those that are blind or missing a leg. We take in anything that breathes."

And that includes not-so-standard pets like lizards, rabbits and even goats.

It's a lot of work for a small organization, but when it comes to an animal in need there is always a helping hand available – even if it's 10 o'clock at night.

"I wouldn't be where I am without my volunteers and fosters," says Huson. "One person cannot do it.

"It's not about the people, it's about the animals. In order to save an animal, you need a good bunch of people, and my volunteers are the best."

Beamsville 4 Paw is always in need of volunteers and fosters. Volunteering with the rescue doesn't necessarily mean caring for cats and dogs. It can be as simple as collecting items for the monthly garage sales or delivering food to a foster home.

The rescue currently has nine foster homes and is always seeking more. There is a strong need for fosters who can take in mother cats and their litters, which frees up space for potential adoptees to socialize with available felines.

Animals available for adoption are listed on the rescue's website, www.beamsville4pawrescue.com. Cat adoption fees are $125, which includes spay/neuter, deworming, de-fleaing and dental work for older cats. The adoption fee for dogs ranges from $225 to $325 and includes the same coverages as cats.

Huson is not the only Niagaran to qualify as a finalist in the Search for Goodness contest. Mike Strange of Niagara Falls, a former boxer who founded the BoxRun Foundation to fight and knock out childhood cancer, is also a contender.

More than 160 Canadians were nominated for the contest and 42,687 people cast their votes to come up with the top 10 finalists. A winner will be selected by a panel of judges and will be announced in July. The winner's story will be featured in a future Shreddies advertising campaign.