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Lining up to eat ice cream for a cause

By Alysa Obert

SALEM — Ice cream lovers shivered from taste buds to tush one evening last week to get free cones and help a good cause.

They lined up at Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop for Free Cone Day on March 23, an annual and nationwide event that, in Salem, raises money for Northeast Animal Shelter.

"About 2,000 people show up each year," said Linda Danyluk, who bought the shop with her husband, Jeff, four years ago. They had always been interested in owning a franchise, and when Ben & Jerry's was looking for a new owner, "It looked like the perfect opportunity."

Coats, hats and umbrellas dripped with rain while customers stood in line for such icy favorites as Imagine Whirled Peace and Milk and Cookies.

When the Danyluks took over the shop in 2006, they partnered with the animal shelter.

"My husband and I are big animal lovers, and it's the only one of its kind in New England," Linda Danyluk said. "It's a no-kill facility, and that's important to us."

Information about 22 of the shelter tenants, including Captain Jack, a 4-year-old Spaniel mix, was displayed on a billboard so customers could read it while waiting in line. Customers contributed to the cause by throwing money into a jar on the counter.

"We're looking to give \$1,000 to the Northeastern Animal Shelter," Jeff Danyluk said.

While no adoptions have been traced to Ben & Jerry's specifically, raising awareness has made an impact.

"I adopted two kittens, Tux and Boots, from the shelter," employee Katie Turner said. "Tux has a tuxedo in his fur."

"Each franchise is pushed to sponsor a particular charity or various ones," shift manager Greg Kurkjian said.

The store gives half of the proceeds, or about \$1,200 a year, from its Peace Love and Ice Cream bracelets to the shelter.

Kurkjian said Free Cone Day was a way to say thank you to the community and to the regulars for their support.

"But at the same time, there's nothing wrong with coming in for that free scoop," he said.