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SAN ANTONIO CURRENT | 10/7/2009

THE QUEQUE

Connolly fights back, WAO cleans house

by the San Antonio Current news team

<SNIP>

Phone call of the wild

The lion queen is defunct; long live the lions. On October 1, the embattled **Wild Animal Orphanage** announced “the termination of **Ron and Carol Asvestas** as employees effective immediately,” as well as the removal of Carol Asvestas from the board of directors. Daughter **Nicole Asvestas-García**, who promptly dropped her maiden hyphenation, has been named the new CEO. Carol Asvestas could not be reached for comment, and former husband Ron didn’t respond to an email sent by the Current.

For years, WAO has been fighting allegations of poor animal care and worse money management, and both the USDA and the Texas Attorney General’s office are keeping a close eye on the sanctuary, which is located in northwest Bexar County. But it seems the Nicole broom is eager to clean up WAO’s act. The latest player to leave the WAO world is Eric “I’m not avoiding you” Turton, the former WAO attorney who was (is?) representing the Asvestases in a libel suit against the San Antonio Lightning. Turton promised to show the Current all of WAO’s animal-death reports, then canceled, and stopped returning our many phone calls.

“On Friday, I placed him on a stand-down,” new CEO García told the Current on Monday. “I didn’t want him to do anything in relation to WAO until I could speak to him. But on Sunday we received a letter of resignation from him.”

Not surprisingly, Turton didn’t reply to a phone call from the QueQue.

WAO’s website was updated on Monday at about 5 p.m., and it lists the executive board as Karen Maxfield (President), Sumner Matthes (Vice President), and Michelle Cryer (Treasurer/Co-Secretary), all survivors of the previous board. It also includes a list of 13 mostly full-time staffers led by García, Jamie Cryer as Chief Financial Officer, and William West, CPA, as Chief Advisor.

“There are no new staffers that weren’t there before, but everybody — including myself — is working on a voluntary and temporary basis,” said García. “Before anybody is chosen to work full-time on a permanent basis we’re going to do background checks and the **whole nine yards**. We’re not going to have a repeat of the history at all.” •