

VOLUNTEERS: 'Kindness begets kindness'

From Page 15A

injured animals."

Marsh said the firm's effort ties in with its mission to protect the little guy and small businesses. It also helps counter the image many people hold of plaintiffs' lawyers.

"Lawyers in general, especially lawyers who do trial work, get all kinds of negative publicity," Marsh said. "The truth is we're just like everybody else. Our children are important to us. We go to our churches and synagogues. We're involved in our community."

Candi Williams, director of an organization that coordinates volunteer efforts by businesses and individuals called Hands On Birmingham, said Birmingham's legal community is known for a spirit of volunteerism.

"But this takes it up a notch," she said of Marsh Rickard & Bryan's kindness campaign. "It's such a fine idea. Everybody wins."

The firm's anniversary actually was in May, but its lawyers didn't solidify the not-so-random-acts plan until September. Most of the projects are continuing.

Each lawyer was asked to pick a cause that meant something to him or her personally. Marsh



NEWS STAFF/HAL YEAGER

David Steelman, a lawyer with the firm of Marsh, Rickard and Bryan, works with Yeller, a dog up for adoption through TEARS. The law firm decided to mark its 10th anniversary by doing what it calls 10 not-so-random acts of kindness. Steelman chose to work with the TEARS organization at Superpetz in Wildwood. Steelman holds Yeller for TEARS Executive Director Terra Cotromano.

decided to sponsor 10 children with cancer for a week at Camp-Smile-A-Mile, which he and his wife have supported in the past. Marsh said he has lost his mother and best friend to can-

cer.

"It's an organization I have admired," he said. "I feel it does a great job for the kids."

Marsh was reluctant to talk about his firm's project, saying members are not doing it for publicity or to drum up more business.

But he hopes other firms will be inspired to perform similar acts of kindness — or perhaps help establish a foundation to make the giving more permanent.

Williams, of Hands On Birmingham, said she normally sees departments within a corporation — such as a firm's audit division — decide to volunteer together for something like a Habitat for Humanity project. Some corporations offer a day off for individual employees to volunteer.

She said it was "such a fun idea" for a single company to choose an array of programs to support individually and collectively.

"We encourage that type of creativity," she said. "Anyone who wants to can call us, and we'll help them organize it from start to finish."

The lawyers at Marsh Rickard & Bryan would like to make their not-so-random-acts efforts an annual project, Marsh said. Steelman said he likes that idea.

"Any time you can get out and do something good for people, it's special," he said. "Kindness begets kindness."

E-MAIL: evelasco@bhamnews.com