

HOMELESS ANIMALS RESCUE TEAM

2008 Annual Report

OVERVIEW

The Homeless Animals Rescue Team (HART), a no-kill animal rescue group incorporated in 1990, was founded to give animal rescuers a resource, responsible pet owners an option, and animals on death row a chance. We've assisted the unwanted, the lost, the sick, the abused, and the dying. **HART** works with local veterinarians, foster homes, kennels, and trainers in temporarily caring for an animal pending its placement in a loving, carefully screened new home.

In carrying out our work, **HART** routinely renders assistance to people who, due to failing health, financial distress, or other personal circumstances, require assistance relating to their pets. To the extent possible, **HART** provides resources to help senior and indigent owners keep their companion animals. **HART** also helps those whose circumstances force them to give up a beloved pet by placing the animal in a foster or permanent home where it will receive loving care for the remainder of its life. Finally, **HART** helps people who themselves rescue an animal in distress, but are unable to provide long-term care for the animal, by relieving the rescuer of the emotional burden of placing the animal in a public shelter where it may well be put to death.

We continue to play an ever vital role in assisting shelters in and surrounding the DC Metro area by taking dogs and cats from the shelters for rehoming through **HART**. These shelters face a steady stream of unwanted animals and, in the case of rural shelters, see virtually no traffic in potential adopters. They are forced to destroy an unacceptable number of healthy, adoptable animals each day. Our deepening relationship with shelters throughout Virginia has led to many success stories. In addition to the young, readily adoptable dogs and cats, we also make room for animals destined for euthanasia because of medical or other issues, giving them the medical attention or training they need to get them to their forever homes.

Thanks to our strong volunteer base, **HART** operates with extremely modest overhead expenses -- a **record low of 1.9%** during the present reporting period. We maintain a minimally-staffed local office, which has proved to be the optimal way of housing our organization, establishing a focal point for executing our programs, while providing the community convenient access to **HART**. Medical and boarding expenses remain our primary expenditures, with training costs also significant. While these expenses are necessary in our operations, we are constantly seeking -- and finding -- new ways of helping more animals with the resources available through an ever-widening network of partners and relationships.

THE ANIMALS

HART is one of the few organizations that assists sick, older, and injured animals. We help both purebred and mixed breed pets. We rescue litters of puppies and kittens AND their mothers who are all too often left behind by other organizations. They come to us from wealthy homes where the owners no longer have time for them and they come from incredible poverty where they often have not been fed for days on end. Many times they come to us from no home at all. We have assisted over 2,000 animals this year thanks to our supporters and their stories are as unique as the vast number of people that comprise **HART**.

This year in particular has presented new challenges. Due to the high home foreclosure rate, coupled with increasing unemployment statistics, a record number of pets are being surrendered to local shelters. Even more horrific are the stories of those pets who are simply left to fend for themselves in abandoned houses. Animals like little Marley, left alone in a closet with a tiny bowl of food and water. What were his owners thinking? Apparently it was quite some time before agents from the foreclosing bank discovered the now pitifully thin, absolutely terrified Marley. He would have starved to death in a day, maybe two, if not for the network that is **HART**.

HART is frequently contacted by area shelters and wardens when animals are confiscated from breeders and hoarders. Nothing, however, could have prepared us, or the animal rescue community, for the call that went out on August 23rd. A notorious puppy mill had been raided and over 1,000 animals were in need of homes and a great deal of medical care.

HART volunteers frantically manned the phones, lining up foster home after foster home, a total of 36. We ended up leaving the facility with 46 dogs and pups (math is never a rescuer's strong point) and the hope and resolve that somehow we would find the additional fosters. We did, thanks to the kind-hearted folks who make up our foster network.

Divorce is another issue that impacts the work we do. It tears families apart and the pets are often the first to suffer. Daisy, a lovely Persian was limping badly when her owner finally called us. A visit to one of **HART**'s veterinary partners soon diagnosed a fractured pelvis, but Daisy's mother was having difficulty meeting her family's basic needs, let alone finding the money for expensive surgery and the time to help Daisy recuperate. Our supporters made certain that Daisy had the second chance at happiness that she deserves.

HOW WE DID IT

As we reported in 2007, we were challenged with once again locating a reputable boarding facility after Pleasant Valley closed its doors. We are currently housing our animals in foster homes and in three facilities, Country Club Kennels in Catlett, Pet Tailor in Castleton and a private boarding kennel in Nokesville. While all are far from our usual adoption venues, our tireless volunteers make the long trek out to bring our dogs to adoption events. The facilities provide loving environments for our pets, one even going to the extra step of bathing dogs about to board the van to an adoption day.

Every weekend, **HART** brings an average of 60 dogs to area Petcos, sometimes showing dogs at as many as three locations. Our weekly adoption events, coupled with the ongoing permanent cage space made available for our cats by PetsMart, allows **HART** to adopt as many as 20-30 animals in one weekend!

After a concentrated effort to recruit new fosters, our Cat Program experienced its greatest number ever of those participating in the cat foster program. Cat fosters are particularly difficult to locate in that few cat lovers have just one cat. They frequently have two or three cats already, making it difficult to find those with room to spare.

The HOAP program, **HART** Owner Assistance Program, introduced in 2006, keeps pets being given up by their owners in their own homes while we search for a new one. These animals attend adoption days and are available on our website and we follow the same rigorous approval process -- we merely eliminate the cost, fiscal to **HART** and emotional to the pet, of boarding.

We also have a tight knit group of supporters at what is truly the "grass roots" of rescue, local and rural shelter employees. **HART** is known as the organization that will take pets without regard to age or medical condition. Other organizations have long lists of who they feel are suitable. We have no list, only an endless capacity to love, coupled with a not-so-endless budget. While we can't save them all, we help as many as we possibly can, often scrambling for resources (money and space), and gravitate toward those who need help the most, not only the most readily adoptable.

HART had a nice boost in exposure this year thanks to the participation of four of our pups in Animal Planet's filming of the "Puppy Olympics." These dog-oriented games were filmed and shown prior to the opening of the Olympic games in China. Copies of the tape are available from the Animal Plant website.

FUNDING

United Way and CFC as always played a critical role in our operations in that campaign income is the only source of funding that comes in timed increments. The summer months, when adoption rates tend to decrease, would be lean indeed without United Way/CFC support. In recognition of our reliance on these funds, we direct a mailing every fall specifically asking supporters to designate **HART** as their United Way/CFC Campaign beneficiary. Along with targeted print media advertising, the mailing has proven most effective in increasing participation in these campaigns.

Our 18th Annual Art and Silent Auction this Spring broke all previous records, netting over \$35,000, thanks to our loyal supporters and to a change in venue to the Westfields Marriott. The Marriott's generosity in donating so many event "extras" certainly contributed to the evening's success. Our other two major fund-raising events were also tremendously successful. **HART**'s third annual Homecoming/Dog Walk, held in October, added an additional \$21,000 in desperately needed funds to our coffers. As always, it was wonderful to see so many of the dogs we've helped to new homes over the years as we strengthened life-long ties to our organization as well as generated fresh interest in volunteering to help the cause. Our annual Holiday Party, held this year at the home of two long-time volunteers, brought in more than \$17,000 as attendees stepped forward even in this "down economy" to support our work. The event provides another example of

HART's partnership with the community as McCormick and Schmick's Seaford Restaurants donated much of the food for the party. **HART's** Donate a Car Program and several other fundraisers held in conjunction with area businesses throughout the year continue to support our efforts.

HART is fortunate to be the recipient of annual grants from constant friends such as the Elsie and Marvin Dekelboun Family Foundation, the H. Alexander Henry Foundation, the Bob Wiser Charitable Trust Foundation, the Northern Virginia Community Foundation, the Petco Foundation, and the Ochsman Foundation. Additionally, we reap the benefits from the matching gift programs at companies such as ExxonMobil, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Wachovia, Gannett, and American Express.

OUR FUTURE

As our pool of volunteers continues to grow, thanks to our ever-increasing visibility in the community (including on-air presence on Fox Channel 5 news), our website, and our presence on sites such as www.volunteermatch.com, we look for a continued increase in programs we offer our community. As always, we benefit from the pro bono services of professional publication designers, event planners, accounting services, attorneys, computer systems analysts, and so many others.

Our fabulous informative and user-friendly website continues to draw well-deserved kudos from the community. **HART's** webmasters are true treasures who are constantly finding ways to make our website an ever more invaluable tool in our work. This year they leveraged free online services such as Google Maps and Wordpress blogs to effectively support our search for the occasional animal who gets away from his/her foster or new adoptive home. Our webmasters also brought onboard this year some fresh new talent to handle photographs and revamp our pages. The influence of these design-savvy and innovative new volunteers may already be seen on our redesigned Alumni Stories pages. In addition to our website, **HART** is increasingly making use of other online media such as Facebook and blogging.

This past year saw **HART** win 4th place *nationwide* in Care2's America's Favorite Animal Shelter Contest, bringing **HART** a \$500 prize. In round two of the contest, ongoing now and ending on January 31, 2009, **HART** is hoping to capture 1st place with its \$10,000 award for our dogs and cats.

HART continues to sound the clarion call of the importance of spay/neuter. The number of animals euthanized due to overpopulation, as we see daily in our work with rural and local shelters, is such an avoidable tragedy, one that can be entirely eradicated in one short generation. To that end, all print and ad media clearly state a pro-spay/neuter message as does our ever popular line of **HART** Hot Sauces, available for sale.

With our solid core of volunteers, our active presence in our community, our increasing awareness of the power of online media and, especially, our fervent desire to prevent or alleviate suffering wherever we find it, **HART** looks forward to continued success in 2009.

HART Board and Staff

Charlene Bofinger, Board Member
Maggie Colucci, Board Member
Charlie Dietz, Board Member
Carol Klingler, Board Member
Pat Phelps, Board Member
Joan Urban, Board Member
Tammy Burton, Office Manager

HART
PO BOX 7261
FAIRFAX STATION, VA 22039-7261

703-691-4278 (HART)

www.hartgo.org

**HART is a United Way/Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) charitable organization.
United Way #8363, CFC #75875, CVC #8183**