

HOMELESS ANIMALS RESCUE TEAM (HART)

2010 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 precious resource, responsible pet owners a viable option, and animals almost certain to be put to death, another chance. **HART** works with local veterinarians, foster homes, kennels, and trainers to temporarily care for animals pending their placement in loving, carefully screened new homes. We have assisted the unwanted, the lost, the sick, the abused, and the dying. In carrying out our work, **HART** routinely renders assistance to the community. We help people who, due to failing health, financial distress, or other personal circumstances require assistance with their pets. This spring **HART** was contacted by a man who found himself out of work and facing foreclosure. His little dog, a Maltese named Scooter, was critically ill. The gentleman had already spent \$1000 dollars, which he could not afford, to get inconclusive medical help. He was desperate for a solution to help his loving companion and could not bear the thought of Scooter's prolonged suffering or death. **HART** reacted immediately and got Scooter the help he needed. Thanks to **HART**'s quick response Scooter survived and is now happy and thriving. Due to the current economic conditions and increase in foreclosures this year, many people have been forced to give up their dogs and cats. **HART** has been inundated with please from these people and we have taken in many animals this year whose owners could no longer afford them or provide them a home. **HART** provided these owners, who were in such desperate circumstances, with the comfort of knowing their beloved dogs or cats would be well cared for and loved and would not face death at a shelter. To the extent possible, **HART** provides resources to help senior citizens and indigent owners keep their companion animals. **HART** also helps those whose circumstances force them to give up a beloved pet, such as those deployed by the military, by placing their pets in foster or permanent homes where they receive loving care for the remainder of their lives. **HART** helps people who themselves rescue an animal in distress but are unable to provide long-term care. By taking these animals into our system for boarding or fostering and eventual adoption, we relieve the rescuers or the owners of the emotional burden of placing the animals in a public shelter where they may very likely be put to death. Finally, **HART** helps the community by carefully screening adoption applicants and setting them up for success by adopting the right pets to the right homes.

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 re-homing through **HART**. These shelters face a steady stream of incoming unwanted animals and, in the case of many rural shelters, have almost no one available to adopt from them. They are forced to destroy an unacceptable number of healthy, wonderful, and readily adoptable animals each day. Our deepening relationship with shelters through out Virginia has led to many success stories. The shelter we support in Abingdon, Virginia, has a 12% adoption rate. That means, without **HART**'s intervention, about 88% of the animals in their shelter

would die. Thanks to **HART** and our rescue partners we have been able to save over 85% of the animals that land at the Abingdon shelter bringing their death rate to 15% versus 85%. And of those animals rescued, **HART** alone saved well over 50% of them.

Snoop is one of those dogs **HART** saved. He was born in deplorable conditions and at 5 weeks of age his mother, tethered to a chain and desperate to get water, hung herself as she tried to jump the fence. Shortly afterwards, Snoop's "caretakers" stepped on him and crushed his pelvis. As if this horrific life was not bad enough, Snoop quickly found himself, injured, unwanted, and in pain, dumped in the local shelter with his littermates. **HART** saved Snoop and his siblings and gave him the surgery he needed to stop his pain and allow him to live a normal life.

HART also does a lot of community outreach and has held events in local schools, community centers, nursing homes and other places where we have been able to talk to and educate the public about adoption, responsible pet ownership and various other important topics affecting the public.

In addition to young, easily adoptable dogs and cats, **HART** re-homes older, less readily adoptable pets. We also find homes for animals destined for death because of treatable medical or behavioral issues, giving them the medical attention or training they need to get them to their safe and loving forever homes. Thanks to our strong volunteer base, **HART** operates with extremely modest overhead expenses, 3.1 during the present reporting period. We maintain a minimally-staffed local office, which has proven to be the optimal way of administering our organization by establishing a focal point for executing programs while providing the community convenient access. Medical and boarding expenses remain primary expenditures; training costs are also significant. While these expenses are necessary to operations, we are constantly seeking -and finding- fiscally responsible ways of helping more animals with the resources available through an ever-widening network of partners and relationships, many of whom are volunteers.

The Animals

HART is one of the few organizations rescuing not only highly adoptable pets, but sick, older, and injured animals. We help both purebred and mixed breed pets. When we rescue litters of puppies and kittens we also rescue their mothers, who, sad to say, are all too often left behind by other groups and so are killed. The pets in our charge also come from wealthy homes where the owners no longer have time for them. They come from homes of incredible poverty where they often live outdoors and have not been fed for days on end. Often, they come to us as strays from no home at all. We have assisted about 2000 animals this year thanks to our staff, volunteers, and supporters. The stories of these pets are as unique and as vast as the number of people who comprise the wonderful organization that is **HART**. Each year presents new challenges and new opportunities. In spite of the challenging economy, **HART** continues to thrive. Due to deployment, high home foreclosure rates, high unemployment rates and various other circumstances, large numbers of pets continue to be surrendered to local shelters or directly to **HART**. Yet there is much success. Skipper and Biff were two tiny Chihuahuas surrendered to a local shelter two days before Christmas. Their family lost

their home and had to give up their beloved pets. Their final words on the surrender documents were “please find them a good home where they will be loved as we loved them.” Atlas was a gentle giant left to starve and freeze outside in the terrible blizzards of early 2010. He was skinny and sick when seized from his neglectful owners. Thank goodness **HART** had the heart to save them. All of these dogs are now happy in loving forever or foster homes. The **HART** team thrives on these kinds of success stories and, we are happy to say, there are, indeed, many. **HART** is frequently contacted by areas shelters and wardens when animals are confiscated from breeders and hoarders and we are often able to help in these horrific situations, too.

How We Did It

We are currently housing our animals in foster homes and in various boarding facilities. Every weekend **HART** brings an average of 60 dogs to area adoptions events, usually held at PetCo or PetSmart, sometimes showing dogs in two locations. Our weekly dog adoption events, coupled with periodic cat adoptions and permanent cage space made available for our cats at PetSmart, sometimes allows **HART** to adopt out as many as 20 – 30 animals in one weekend while still very carefully screening the new homes where these pets will become part of the family! The **HART** Owner Assistance Program (HOAP), introduced in 2006, assists families who decide they can no longer keep their pets. Current owners bring their animals to weekly adoption events while **HART** searches for new homes for these unwanted pets. These animals are posted on our website and we follow the same rigorous adoption process to find them carefully screened new homes. This is a win/win situation as **HART** eliminates the cost it would have incurred for housing these animals and reduces the stress to the pets by relocating them directly into their new forever homes. The owners are spared the pain of having to give their pets to a shelter where the pets would likely perish. We also have a network of community supporters at the “grass roots” of rescue via our partners in local and rural shelter employees. **HART** is one of the few rescue groups known to take senior pets or those with medical conditions. While we cannot save them all, we help as many as we possibly can, often scrambling for resources (money and space). We gravitate toward those who need our help the most, not only the most readily adoptable. We work closely with other rescue groups, too, as combined, we exponentially increase the good that can be done for the community.

Each week **HART** champions a rescue run to Charlottesville, Virginia, to pick up and transport dogs from Abingdon, Virginia. Early in this endeavor, **HART** decided to offer this transport service to any other rescue in the area. Since January **HART** has transported dogs for many other rescues including Lab Rescue, Oldies But Goodies Cocker Spaniel Rescue, Friends of Homeless Animals, Lost Dog and Cat Rescue, Pet Connect K9 Lifesavers, Fancy Cats, GREAT Golden Retriever Rescue and more. In total for 2010, **HART** transported more than 300 dogs and cats, with our resources and at our cost, to other rescue groups. Each of those animals would otherwise have perished at the shelter. This has led to very strong bonds between **HART** and the above mentioned groups and ultimately resulted in partnerships in other critical rescue situations, such as partnering with other Northern Virginia rescues and with the national group Pilots ‘N Paws to rescue 30 dogs from the Gulf region that were given up because their families

faced economic hardship caused by the Gulf oil spill. In connection with the Gulf rescue, **HART** released its first-ever video on YouTube, thanks to the donated services of a professional, award-winning videographer. And to expand our ability to rescue dogs and cats from shelters, and increase the public's awareness of the wonderful companions at these facilities awaiting rescue, **HART** launched a new program called Sponsor Hope. Each week, donors to Sponsor Hope can see which dogs and cats were rescued from shelters, thanks to their donations.

HART had some great exposure this year! We worked with Holden Kushner of Radio 106.7, "The Fan," <http://www.cbssports.com/local/dc/radio/schedules/Kushner-show>, on a food drive surrounding a Redskins/Philadelphia game. Holden collected about 25 bags of premium food and talked about **HART** on the radio for the 7 days leading up to the food drive. In addition, Fox news and NBC morning news acknowledged **HART**'s efforts with spots on their network. Our puppy mill rescue effort is documented by Fox News at <http://www.myfoxdc.com/dpp/news/local/dogs-saved-from-missouri-puppy-mills-110909>.

Funding

United Way (UW) and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) have always played a critical role in our operations because campaign income is the only incremental, dependably timed, source of funding. The summer months, when adoptions by the public tend to decrease, would be lean, indeed, without UW/CFC support. In recognition of our reliance on these funds, each fall we avidly encourage our supporters to designate **HART** as their US/CFC beneficiary. Via our in-house UW campaign, we encourage our small number of paid staff to give back to **HART** via UW. Our 20th Annual Art and Silent Auction netted much needed funds for the **HART** dogs and cats, thanks to our loyal supporters and our use of the beautiful venue at the Westfield's Marriott for the third year. The Marriott's generosity in donating so many event "extras" certainly contributed to the evening's success. We had two other tremendously successful fund-raising events this year, **HART**'s fifth Annual Dogwalk and Homecoming in October brought in money to help the **HART** pets. This event just keeps growing and adds to the desperately needed funds that are always stretched before the holidays. As always, it was wonderful to see supporters bring back so many of the dogs **HART** has helped find new homes over the years by adopting to them. This event has also proven invaluable for strengthening life-long ties between adopters and our organization as well as generating fresh interest in volunteering to help the cause. Our annual Holiday Party, held this year at the home of one of our newer volunteers, brought in more needed funds as attendees stepped forward, even in the down economy, to support **HART**'s work. The Car Donation Program and several other fundraisers held in conjunction with area businesses throughout the year continue to help support our efforts, too. **HART** is fortunate to be the recipient of periodic grants from constant friends such as 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 receive some benefits from matching gift programs at companies such as ExxonMobil, Fannie Mae, Wachovia, Gannett, and American Express.

Our Future

As our pool of volunteers continues to grow, thanks to our ever-increasing visibility in the community, our website, and our presence on sites such as www.facebook.com, www.volunteermatch.org, and www.volunteerfairfax.org, we look forward to a continued increase in the public services we offer our community. **HART**'s webmasters are true treasures who are constantly finding ways to make our website an ever more invaluable tool in our work. Again this year they leveraged free online services such as Google Maps and Wordpress blogs to effectively support our search for the occasional animal getting away from his/her foster or new adoptive home. We are very proud of our website: www.HART90.org. In addition to our website, **HART** is increasingly making use of other online media such as Facebook and blogging. **HART** continues to vehemently advocate for the necessity of spay/neuter. The number of animals killed 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 by mandated spay/neuter. To that end, all of **HART**'s print and ad media clearly state a pro-spay/neuter message. With our very small but fantastic staff, our solid core of volunteers, an active presence in the community, and increasing online media presence, and especially, our fervent desire to prevent or alleviate suffering of cats and dogs wherever we find it, **HART** looks forward to thriving, growing, and continued success in 2011. We know, with the help of our volunteers, supporters, and staff, we can make a huge difference – one life at a time!

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HART is a UW/CFC charitable organization.

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