

HOMELESS ANIMALS RESCUE TEAM

2007 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, trainers, foster homes, and kennels in temporarily caring for an animal pending his/her placement in a loving, carefully screened, new home.

In carrying out our work, **HART** also 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 senior and indigent persons the necessary resources to enable these owners to 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 s/he will receive loving care for the remainder of his/her 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 rural shelters 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 see virtually no traffic in potential adopters. They are often forced to destroy as many as 35 healthy, adoptable animals in a given day. Some of these shelters also employ a particularly gruesome method of euthanasia, a gas box. We are playing an increasingly important role in assisting local shelters as well. This deepening relationship has led to many success stories of animals destined for euthanasia being given the time they need to find their adoptive families, even if it means giving them the time it takes to heal from necessary surgical procedures or to work with a trainer to learn how to become part of a family after being unwanted for so long.

HART historically operates with modest overhead expenses, including a **record low of 2.5%** during the present reporting period. Thanks to our strong volunteer base, we are able to 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**. Boarding and veterinary costs remain our primary expenditures, with training also a significant expense. While these expenses are necessary in our operations, we are constantly seeking – and finding – new ways of helping more animals with the resources available.

The Animals

HART is one of the few organizations that assist sick, older, and injured animals. We help both purebred and mixed breed pets. We rescue litters of puppies AND their mothers who are all too often left behind by other groups. They come to us from wealthy homes where the owners no longer have time for them and they come from incredible poverty where they sometimes have not been fed for days on end.

Almost 2,000 animals this year alone were assisted through the auspices of **HART**. Hundreds were placed into loving homes through our adoption program and hundreds more were able to remain in their current homes thanks to assistance from our own staff and referrals to area trainers, veterinarians, and other pet specialists. Quite often, what appears to be an untenable situation requires little more than some basic obedience training or the treatment of a previously undiagnosed ailment.

A vast number of our animals are rescued from the death rows of area shelters and still others from horrific conditions. Animals like little Trinket, a tiny kitten found dangling by her leg from a chain link fence. She must have been that way for days because the leg was cold and black and unsalvageable when rescuers finally heard her desperate mews. Trinket's indomitable spirit still showed through when her foster parents found her climbing the walls of her crate while she was supposed to be recovering from her amputation!

Poor Brenda Jane almost never made it to her 2-month birthday! Her owner at the time was observed stuffing her into a plastic bag and throwing her into the river. Fortunately, a young woman on the scene saw what had happened and dragged Brenda Jane to safety. She found Brenda Jane a wonderful home where she lived happily for almost two years until her owner became paralyzed in an accident. While relatives could take care of her owner, no one wanted Brenda Jane and she remained alone in the backyard of her former home. A friend of her owner took pity on her and would bring her food, water and a few precious minutes of companionship every day, but winter was coming and he was worried about her alone in the bitter cold. Thanks to our supporters, Brenda Jane is now safe and waiting for her forever home.

How We Did It

As anticipated in our 2006 report, we were challenged this year with once again locating a reputable boarding facility after Pleasant Valley closed its doors. We are currently housing dogs not in foster homes in two facilities. While both are far from our usual adoption venues, our tireless volunteers make the long trek out and back to bring our dogs to our Saturday events to be seen by potential adopters. Both facilities provide loving environments for out pets, one even going the extra step of bathing dogs about to board the van to an adoption day.

Every weekend, **HART** has an average of 60 animals in area pet stores, sometimes showing animals 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 animals in one weekend!

Under HOAP, the **HART Owner Assistance Program**, pets being given up by their owners are kept in their own homes while we search for a new one. These animals attend adoption days, are posted on our website and are adopted under the same rigorous approval process as our other dogs and cats -- we merely eliminate the cost, fiscal to **HART** and emotional to the pet, of boarding.

Our volunteer base has changed significantly over the past two years, yet remains an integral part of **HART**. Due to changes in age requirements at local adoption venues, we lost the invaluable help of some of our most reliable, loyal and enthusiastic volunteers, students under age 18. While these friends are irreplaceable as individuals, we have filled the gap with adult volunteers, many from groups such as Volunteer Fairfax and SVDC. This shift in demographics has changed the face of **HART**, but not the heart!

Our webmasters constantly seek out new and effective uses of the internet. In February 2007, after experiencing intermittent periods of poor response time, **HART** switched to a new web host. Since switching, we have experienced better response time, less downtime and better customer support for our website at a reduced cost to **HART**. Our webmasters very recently played a pivotal role in securing the safe return of a lost, newly-adopted **HART** dog, who had been missing for almost two months, by coordinating communications which enabled searchers to keep immediately abreast of plans and developments. Augmenting our own website is our presence on other sites within the local and regional rescue community.

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 and visits by **HART** volunteers to employer-sponsored United Way/CFC fairs, the mailing has proven most effective in increasing participation in these campaigns.

Our 17th Annual Art and Silent Auction was again an overwhelming success, increasing our coffers by over \$26,500. Cocktails for a Cause made its third appearance this year, adding a quite welcomed addition of \$13,500 over the lean summer months! Our annual Holiday Party, hosted by one of **HART**'s Directors, brought in more than \$22,000! **HART**'s Donate a Car Program, along with several other fundraising initiatives in conjunction with area businesses, provided needed support throughout the year for our efforts. We are turning increasingly to the internet and regularly receive funds from supporters' contributions through PayPal and JustGive.org and through participation in programs such as www.goodsearch.com and www.magfundraising.com. Our new line of **HART** hot sauces and our ever-changing tee and sweatshirt designs enjoy brisk sales and bring our "adopt a homeless animal/spay-neuter your pet" messages before the public.

This past September, **HART** hosted our second annual Homecoming/Dog Walk. It was wonderful to reunite with the many dogs we've helped to new homes over the years as we strengthened life-long ties between our organization and our adopters and generated new interest in volunteering to help the cause. Despite the less-than-seasonable weather (100+ degrees), we had over 120 dogs registered and raised \$13,500.

HART is fortunate to be the recipient of annual grants from constant friends such as the H. Alexander Henry Foundation. Additionally, we reap the benefits from the matching gift and employer-sponsored donation programs at firms such as Freddie Mac, Wachovia, Petco, 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 this past year), our information-packed, user-friendly 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 benefited from the pro bono services of professional publication designers, event planners, accounting services, attorneys, computer systems analysts, and others.

HART continues to tout 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, our correspondence and ads all clearly state a pro-spay/neuter message.

With our solid core of volunteers, our active presence in our community, and our desire to ease suffering wherever we see it, **HART** looks forward to continued success in 2008.

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

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