

animal tracks



Doing **More**
for Animals

Also Inside:

AHS's new Trap-Neuter-Return program humanely reduces the feral cat population



May 2nd



a message from Janelle Dixon

Animal Humane Society is the leading animal welfare organization in the Upper Midwest, dedicated to engaging and serving local and regional communities of people and animals. Our mission is to engage the hearts, hands and minds of the community to help animals.

Through comprehensive programs and services, Animal Humane Society provides resources that compassionately serve all the stages of an animal's life.

As a private non-profit organization, we receive no federal, state or government funding and rely totally on private donations, merchandise sales and adoption fees.

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Animal Humane Society is a member of the National Federation of Humane Societies, a consortium of humane organizations throughout the country that sets best practices for shelter operation.

Animal Humane Society is a founding member of Minnesota Partnership for Animal Welfare (MnPAW) and the Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition.

With the introduction of Bound for Home in 2011 we began a journey of transformation, looking critically at everything we do to ensure that we are saving as many animal lives as possible.

When we embarked on this journey, our animal placement rate was 67%. We quickly reached 80% and set out to reach an ambitious, aspirational goal of 90% placement. Over the last few years we've inched toward that goal, week by week and month by month. As we moved closer it became more difficult and more costly. But our success in other areas freed up resources to be reallocated, and your generosity continued to support our forward momentum.

During the last 18 months we've continued to transform. As we have reduced intake and found more proactive means to assist people and animals, we've been able to shift away from medical and behavioral strategies that were driven by the volume of animals in our care. We can now devote more resources to the needs of individual animals in our shelters while still providing exceptional care for the population as a whole. We're no longer limited to what we can do for an animal *right now*. Instead, we can invest in the long-term care required to give even the most challenged animals a second chance.

Doing More for Animals is the foundation of this exciting transformation. We're looking differently not only at each animal's case, but also at the capacity our community has to adopt animals with special needs and conditions.

Thanks to Doing More for Animals, we reached a placement rate of 95% in January and February 2015. Our placement rate for the year to date (July-February) is 91%. This is an amazing outcome for animals!

We couldn't have reached this incredible milestone without your support. As we continue this journey together, just imagine where we will go next.

Thank you,

Janelle Dixon, President & CEO



Mission

To engage the hearts, hands and minds of the community to help animals.

Vision

To compassionately and responsibly create a more humane world for animals.

Core Values

Be good to animals. Partner with people. Lead responsibly with compassion.

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On the cover

AHS Veterinary Technician Carole Ann Refshaw with Chyra, a German Shepherd who received a life-changing surgery and extended care thanks to our new Doing More for Animals initiative.



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locations

Buffalo

4375 Hwy. 55 S.E. • Buffalo, MN 55313
(763) 390-3647

Coon Rapids

1411 Main St. N.W. • Coon Rapids, MN 55448
(763) 862-4030

Golden Valley

845 Meadow Lane N. • Golden Valley, MN 55422
(763) 522-4325

St. Paul

1115 Beulah Lane • St. Paul, MN 55108
(651) 645-7387

Woodbury

9785 Hudson Road • Woodbury, MN 55125
(651) 730-6008

Now Boarding

6002 28th Ave. S. • Minneapolis, MN 55450
(612) 454-4850
www.nowboardingpets.com

hours

Adoption Centers

Monday through Friday Noon – 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Animal Humane Society is closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

Incoming Animals

Please call our Animal Admissions Center at (763) 412-4969 for an appointment to surrender an animal.

Appointments are available
Monday through Friday 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.



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facebook.com/animalhumanesociety



Follow us on Twitter:
twitter.com/animal_humanemn



Follow us on Instagram:
instagram.com/animalhumanemn



Subscribe to us on YouTube:
youtube.com/animalhumanesociety



Follow us on Tumblr:
animalhumanemn.tumblr.com



our services

Adoption

Let an animal choose you! Cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, ferrets, guinea pigs and small critters are available for adoption at our five locations. View the animals available today at www.animalhumanesociety.org.

Surrender

Companion animals may be surrendered at any of our five open admission locations where we provide safe refuge for thousands of animals each year. Appointments are required to surrender an animal. Call (763) 412-4969 or visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/surrender.

Pet training

We speak fluent animal! More than 50 classes are offered weekly at our Coon Rapids, Golden Valley, Woodbury and Now Boarding locations. Classes include Introduction to Dog Training, Reactive Rovers, Puppy Kindergarten, Therapy Animal classes and the Canine Good Citizen certification, as well as dog playgroups. Programs for rabbits including Hoppy Hour and Rabbit Agility are offered at AHS through Minnesota Companion Rabbit Society. To learn more about all animal training opportunities, visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/training or call (763) 489-2217.

Pet food and supplies

Purina One dog and cat food and treats, Tidy Cat litter, as well as collars, leashes, toys and grooming supplies are available for purchase at our five locations.

Youth programs

There is a lot for kids to do at AHS! Opportunities include Unleashed Camps, projects for Scouts, PetSet Youth Club, birthday parties, preschool story times and classroom programs for students in grades K-12. For information on all AHS has to offer kids, visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/youth or call (763) 489-2220.

Kindest Cut low cost spay/neuter

Through our partnership with Kindest Cut, we offer high quality, low cost spay/neuter services to the pets of people in need through a mobile clinic and at Melrose Animal Clinic. Visit www.kindestcutmn.com or call (763) 489-7729 for more information.

Pet boarding

We offer two options for pet boarding – Animal House at AHS in Golden Valley (763) 489-2222 and Now Boarding near the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport (612) 454-4850. Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/boarding.

Humane investigations

Our humane agents work with law enforcement and respond to thousands of reports of animal neglect and cruelty each year. Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/prevention for more information.

Microchip and nail clinics

Microchip and nail trim clinics are offered monthly at our five locations. For specific times and locations visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/microchip.

save the date!

nov
06
2015

Wine Dinner

Friday November 6, 2015 • The Saint Paul Hotel, St. Paul – 6:30 p.m.

Wine and dine at this unique event that supports the programs and services of Animal Humane Society. For just one night, top chefs in the Twin Cities prepare courses paired with fine wine, creating a one-of-a-kind dining experience in the intimate setting of The Saint Paul Hotel ballroom. You'll also have the opportunity to bid on exclusive auction items while hearing more about Animal Humane Society.

Seating is limited. Please make your reservations early to guarantee your seat at this premiere Twin Cities dining event. For reservations, call (763) 432-4842 or email winedinner@animalhumanesociety.org. Supported by Ray Zemke of The Cellars Wines & Spirits and The Saint Paul Hotel.

Wildlife rehabilitation

Injured and orphaned wildlife are accepted at our Golden Valley location. For information call (763) 489-2223 or visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/wildlife.

Lost and found pets

We offer a Lost and Found Online Bulletin Board for you to post missing or found pets. You can also review stray animals in our care. Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/lostandfound.

Tours

Tours of our facilities are available to students or other groups by appointment. Maximum group size is determined by location. To schedule a tour at any of our locations call (763) 489-2220.

Pet behavior help

Need some advice regarding your pet? We're here to help. Call our free Behavior Helpline at (763) 489-2202. Or visit our online library for help with pet training and behavior at www.animalhumanesociety.org/library.

Pet loss

Humane euthanasia and cremation services are available to the public and a pet loss support group is offered on Mondays at 7 p.m. in Golden Valley. Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/lossofpet or call (763) 412-4969.

Ways to help

Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org to find out about the ways in which you can help AHS including volunteering in our shelters or as a foster, donating, or contributing to our wish list.

contact us

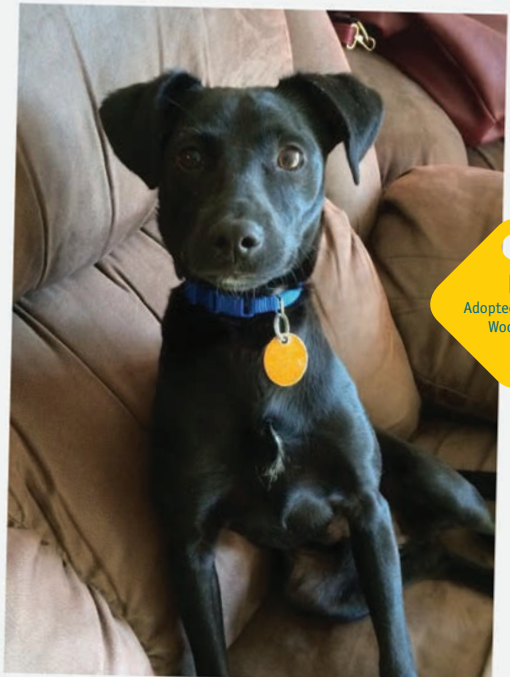
(763) 522-4325

www.animalhumanesociety.org

Kitty Smallz
Adopted 5/26/13
Golden Valley



PJ
Adopted 9/11/14
Woodbury





Get your wag on!

The 41st annual Walk for Animals is May 2

Join us May 2 for Animal Humane Society's largest annual fundraiser, the Walk for Animals. This popular event brings together more than 8,000 people and 3,000 animals to wag, walk, and raise funds for homeless and neglected pets across Minnesota.

Every dollar raised for the Walk helps provide medical treatment,

behavior programs, and nurturing care to the nearly 24,000 animals who come into our five Minnesota shelters each year. With your support, thousands of animals will get the care they need to find new homes and new beginnings.

Sign up and start raising funds today. You're just a walk away from making a big difference!



wagomania2015.org



55 cats released to AHS

Humane Investigations team coordinates large single-home surrender

In January, Animal Humane Society worked with a Minneapolis resident to remove dozens of unsterilized cats from a single family home. Our Humane Investigations team, referred by Minneapolis police, discovered the cats in distress. Although well fed, many of the cats were showing signs of age-related illness, lack of consistent medical care, and other problems related to poor socialization and uncontrolled breeding.

The homeowner couldn't adequately care for the growing population of cats and agreed to release the animals into our care. Over the next few weeks, a total of 55 cats were surrendered to the shelter, examined, and spayed or neutered. Many required extensive medical treatment, dental work, and behavior modification to prepare them for adoption.

To date, 41 cats from this case have been adopted into new homes.



The AHS Humane Investigations team found groups of cats living in multiple rooms throughout the Minneapolis home. Once the felines arrived at AHS, staff worked to prepare them for adoption.



Did someone say hedgehog?

The list of species available for adoption at AHS just got longer — and cuter!

Hedgehog fans, rejoice! On February 1, the prickly little critters were added to the list of species available for adoption at Animal Humane Society. Days later we had our very first hedgehog adoption: 2-year-old Zeke, who was surrendered to AHS because his family didn't have time to care for him. The adorable little guy had barely gotten settled at the shelter before he was out the door with a new name, Elliot, and a caring owner.

Hedgehog sightings may not be an everyday occurrence at AHS, so keep an eye on our website if you are interested in adopting. As with any animal, we encourage you to research hedgehog needs before you commit to caring for one.

New opportunities for our youngest animal lovers

Cub Scout program and toddler story time now available

Calling all Tiger, Cub, and Webelos Scouts! Join us for our new "Prepared for Pets" program. This fun, educational, and interactive program will focus on caring for pets by recognizing basic pet needs.

Through hands-on activities, Scouts will learn how to clean up after pets, evaluate which foods are appropriate for them, and spot signs that a pet may be in need of extra care. Scouts will develop greater respect for animals and earn a pet guardianship pin symbolizing their readiness to become a responsible and caring guardian.

The program includes a tour of the adoption center and the opportunity to meet animals awaiting new homes. Cost is \$5 per Scout with a \$60 group minimum. For information on this and other available Scout programs, visit animalhumanesociety.org/scouts.

For our littlest learners, the new Furry Tails program is a home run! Furry Tails is a story time series



After story time and a craft activity, kids participating in Furry Tails receive a special visit from an animal guest.

ideal for children ages 2-4, along with their parents, hosted at our Golden Valley location. Each month features a picture storybook read aloud by one of our humane educators, followed by a craft and special time with an animal.

Furry Tails is held on the second Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. and there is no cost to participate. Call (763) 489-2221 to reserve your spot today!

Sharing the love with Tumblr

New photo blog features AHS adoption updates

There is nothing we love more than reading the stories you send us about animals adopted from Animal Humane Society. We are thrilled to hear about their new lives and see how happy (and spoiled) they are in their new homes.

We couldn't keep all of that joy to ourselves, so we created a new "Happy Tails" blog on Tumblr to share these

amazing stories and photos with you. Visit animalhumanesociety.org/happytails and prepare to have your heart warmed!

Have a happy tale of your own? Submit your adoption story and photos at animalhumanesociety.org/stories. We'd love to hear from you!





New hope for battling parvovirus

Foster volunteers come to the aide of infected puppies

Canine parvovirus — commonly known as parvo — is an aggressive and often fatal disease that affects unvaccinated dogs and puppies. Virulent and highly contagious, parvo can live in the environment for months. Dogs with the illness experience diarrhea and vomiting that can quickly lead to dehydration and death.

Many of the dogs and puppies that arrive at AHS infected with parvo can be saved, but treating the disease in a shelter environment presents risks and challenges.

Until recently, our only option was to partner with local veterinary

clinics where dogs with parvo can receive medical treatment under strict quarantine. But a new foster program will provide an additional treatment option for dogs and puppies when local veterinary clinics are not available.

AHS has trained more than a dozen foster volunteers to properly care for and treat dogs with parvo. There is no specific drug that will kill the virus, so treatment consists primarily of supportive care efforts to combat dehydration and prevent secondary infections until the dog's immune system is able to fight the virus.

The volunteers will care for the puppies in their homes for 3 to 7 days and follow an intense cleaning regimen to prevent further spread of the disease. This lifesaving treatment option will help us save as many as 30 additional dogs and puppies with parvo this year.

**AHS has trained
more than a dozen
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treat dogs with parvo.**



Coon Rapids adoption center gets a new look

Updates at all five AHS locations provide a better adoption experience

Last summer, Animal Humane Society's Golden Valley location received a makeover. This fall, we turned our attention to our Coon Rapids location, and the results are breathtaking!

The new look is open and colorful, with glass doors and bright colony rooms that encourage visitors to engage with animals. A new checkout desk, retail fixtures, and comfortable seating areas provide an inviting space for customers to complete adoptions.

The adoption process has also been overhauled to provide a more pleasant, personalized, and informative experience. A similar update is now underway at our Woodbury location and updates at our St. Paul and Buffalo sites will follow.



Sustaining gifts provide peace of mind

Monthly donations let more of your gift go directly to animal care

Jessica Kingston's cats, Jake and Winston, run to the door to greet her every time she comes home. They were even by her side when she was recovering from cancer.

Kingston's love of animals developed at a young age, and she first became involved with Animal Humane Society more than 20 years ago when she adopted her first cat. Six years ago she was introduced to the Walk for Animals and since then has attended Wine Dinner and Whisker Whirl, as well as helped out during a Chihuahua transport that arrived at AHS from California.

Kingston's giving is inspired by animals who face medical complications, like her cat Winston, who had a brief scare with feline leukemia shortly after joining her family. "AHS does a wonderful job

helping animals. The commitment and passion is evident in the services they provide to animals and people. The collective positive energy you feel when you walk through the door is all about the health and well-being of animals."

One of Kingston's most important contributions came when she decided to become a sustaining donor. Setting up automatic monthly donations through a checking account or credit card helps AHS devote more resources to animals by reducing fundraising costs. "Giving every month makes it easier for me to budget my contribution while allowing AHS the peace of mind of the consistent funding stream," says Kingston.

Please join Jessica and the growing community of donors who save lives through their ongoing support.



Sustaining donor Jessica Kingston with cats Jake and Winston.

Become a sustaining donor today at animalhumanesociety.org or call (763) 489-2210.

Unique ways to experience AHS

Insider opportunities await our most dedicated donors



Ian, son of donors Liz and Brian Illgen, holds a puppy as she gets her temporary collar fitted.

Animal Humane Society donors are familiar with the warm, fuzzy feeling that comes from helping animals in need. Now supporters who donate \$250 or more annually can experience the shelter in new and exciting ways.

• Insider's Tour:

Follow the journey animals take through our shelters and witness the love and care they receive in our innovative facilities.

• Cats & Cocoa:

Attend a cocoa party in our renovated cat adoption area. Play with cats and learn about all we are doing for cats in our shelter and the community.

• Become a Walk Star:

Walk dogs awaiting adoption and fill out comment cards to tell the world how special they are.

• Precious Cargo:

See what happens when a transport of dogs arrives at AHS. Help bathe puppies and get dogs settled for their first night in Minnesota.

To find out how you can get involved, contact Heather Vinge-Hanson at (763) 489-1582 or hvingehanson@animalhumanesociety.org.

Doing More for



Chyra and AHS
Veterinary
Technician Carole
Ann Refshaw

Not long ago, a cat like Samsonite would have had few options.

Abandoned in a suitcase with grave injuries and a severe infection, the plucky black feline required multiple surgeries and a long recovery in foster care before he could go to a new home. Just four years ago, Animal Humane Society was taking in so many animals that it wouldn't have been able to devote the extensive resources necessary to help get Samsonite ready for adoption.

Today, thanks to a new initiative called Doing More for Animals, Samsonite and other animals like him are getting the second chances they deserve.

Doing More for Animals focuses on helping even the most difficult-to-place animals by providing expanded behavior programs, advanced medical treatments, and greater access to long-term foster care. "It's the continuation of a transformation that started with the Bound for Home initiative and surrender by appointment," says AHS President & CEO Janelle Dixon.

Bound for Home changed the way animals come into AHS shelters, says Dixon, helping people keep their

In the months since this new initiative launched, more than 91% of the animals in our care found placement.



Animals

By Rose Miller, Carrie Libera,
and Paul Sorenson



pets in their homes and reducing the length of stay for animals in our care. Because of that work – and the generous support of AHS donors – most animals in our adoption programs find homes within seven to ten days. “That means we now have the resources to save more animals than ever before.”

“We no longer have to look at these animals as just one big population,” adds Dr. Graham Brayshaw, director of animal services at AHS. “We can look at animals as individuals, finding innovative solutions for animals that are harder to place. The question is no longer ‘Can we get this animal a home right now?’ but rather ‘What can we do to get this animal a home?’”

That meant rethinking assumptions about adoptability, says Brayshaw. “We know there are people out there who are willing to give these animals a chance if we give them a chance.”

To help them succeed, AHS has invested in post-adoption support programs like the Behavior Helpline and an expanded Behavior Modification and Rehabilitation team. Staff and volunteers in the

adoption center also have access to detailed information about each animal, ensuring that adopters get the resources they need for a successful transition from shelter to home.

Even animals that don’t become candidates for adoption benefit from this new individualized approach. For example, a new Community Cats program allows stray and feral cats that would not be appropriate or happy as pets to be sterilized and released in the same outdoor location where they were found.

Doing More for Animals has helped AHS reduce euthanasia even further. In the months since this new initiative launched, more than 91% of the animals in our care found placement. That live-release rate puts AHS among the most successful open admissions facilities in the country.

But it isn’t about statistics, says Brayshaw. “Doing More for Animals is not just this one amazing case that comes in once a week or once a month. It’s an every animal, every day thing. It takes the support of the community as a whole, from adopters who will give great homes to these animals to donors whose support makes it all possible. We can really look at each one and make the best decision for them.”

Vincent

The first thing you notice about Vincent is his appearance. But spend a few minutes with this sweet, lovable cat and it’s his personality that makes an impression. Vincent will snuggle up with whoever is available and likes lounging on



comfortable beds and nestling in cozy blankets. Although he's 10 years old, he's got a playful spirit brought out by shoe laces and string toys in particular.

"Vincent is the best," says foster mom Maggie Jacoby. "Despite all he has gone through, he is such a loving and patient cat."

And he's been through quite a bit. Vincent, who has a shiny white coat and gleaming green eyes, was surrendered the day after Christmas. His right ear was missing and his left ear was bleeding and severely hurt. He had other wounds as well, including an unhealed sore on his nose. The man who surrendered Vincent had noticed him roaming his property and built him an outdoor shelter, but when Vincent's injuries wouldn't seem to heal he decided to bring the cat in.

Dr. Jim Meiners, an AHS veterinarian, suspected that Vincent's ear injuries were related to skin cancer. Tests confirmed that he had aural squamous cell carcinoma, so Meiners removed both of Vincent's ears to clear the cancer.

While Vincent's ears slowly began to heal, his nose wasn't showing any signs of improvement.

Animals with squamous cell carcinoma on their ears will commonly develop it on their nasal surface as well. Since the cancer there had only started to grow recently, Meiners thought that the best course of action would be cryotherapy, or freezing tissue with liquid nitrogen. "There is little post-op pain, no infections, and it's very effective," he explains. But the equipment for cryotherapy is expensive and liquid nitrogen can only be stored for a day before it evaporates.

Meiners wanted Vincent to have the best chance possible so he contacted local veterinary

dermatologist Dr. Andrew Mills, who loaned AHS the equipment to perform the surgery and supplied liquid nitrogen from a gas company. Meiners was able to freeze the cancerous areas of Vincent's nose and the wound is now healing nicely, although Vincent doesn't like to leave it alone and has to wear a cone in the meantime.

Before Doing More for Animals, an older animal with cancer wouldn't have been a candidate for adoption. "A lot of work went into Vincent. Without this new initiative we wouldn't have been able to do all of this," says Meiners.

Although Vincent's doing well now, there is a 50% chance the cancer will return. But until then, Vincent will be an excellent companion for someone. "He deserves this extra time," says Meiners. "He's a good all-around companion."

Posey

Posey is a 1-year-old Shepherd mix with big, attentive ears who came to AHS from a shelter in New Orleans. She was a friendly puppy, but during her behavior evaluation she showed resource guarding behaviors, growling and attempting to bite when food was taken from her.

Our expanded Behavior Modification and Rehabilitation (BMR) department enrolled Posey in Chow Hounds, a program that helps dogs who exhibit this behavior. While she showed some progress in Chow Hounds, the program didn't resolve the issue entirely.

At one time, that might have prevented Posey from becoming a candidate for adoption. But Doing for Animals allows the BMR



Posey

team more flexibility to make individualized decisions on progress.

BMR Manager Paula Zukoff knew that Posey had potential. “Despite her limited improvement with resource guarding, she was such a great dog and extremely social,” Zukoff says. So Posey was made available for adoption with a few simple guidelines to help her adopters avoid issues: Feed her in her crate or in a separate room with the door shut and limit access to high-value treats like rawhide.

Because she required special treatment when eating, Posey was ultimately housed in a staff office rather than in the public adoption center. Two months after becoming available for adoption, Posey went home with Leslie Sales.

So far, Posey has adjusted well to her new home, says Sales. She’s even befriended the cat, Arnold. “She sleeps in bed with me and the cat, and she has to be touching you when you sleep.” Posey and Arnold have been getting to know each other slowly. “She loves playing with the cat, but sometimes the cat is not quite sure how he feels about it.”

Posey loves to go on walks, play with the Frisbee, and run around the yard and explore. “She’s a sniffer. She sniffs every inch of the yard every day,” Sales says. That’s earned her the nickname “nosey Posey.”

Sales has been able to minimize Posey’s resource guarding behaviors by following the guidelines from BMR. She has even been able to pet Posey while she is eating.

Doing More for Animals gave Posey a second chance, and for that Sales is grateful. “Sure, she does have this behavioral issue, but she’s a great dog. That’s just a small part of who she is.”



Chyra with her foster family

Chyra

Doing More for Animals often requires a substantial investment in long-term care to address medical and behavioral challenges. An older kitten may need socialization before being adoptable, a dog may need a long-term special diet to dissolve its bladder stones, or a cat may have a serious upper respiratory infection and need multiple courses of treatment.

Caring for these animals has required more foster volunteers and longer foster assignments, and volunteers have stepped up to meet this challenge. Since the program launched, foster volunteer

capacity has increased 69%, with foster volunteers now totaling 375 individuals. “It has been amazing to see how receptive volunteers have been with this shift in mindset,” says Foster Coordinator Kelly Anderson.

A beautiful German Shepherd named Chyra is one of the many animals who have benefited from rehabilitation in foster care.

Chyra suffered a stroke five years ago, paralyzing one of her back legs. She has struggled with mobility ever since, walking with a limp and tripping over her disabled leg. Her family brought her to AHS because they could no longer afford her medical care.

AHS veterinary staff set out to determine whether or not Chyra’s disabled leg could be saved – and how

Visit www.animalhumanesociety.org/doingmore to watch a video about Doing More for Animals, including Samsonite and Chyra’s stories.

There were no issues. It was like she had been that way the whole time. She was so happy!

—Carole Ann Refshaw,
AHS veterinary technician

well her healthy leg would function if amputation became necessary.

To make that determination, Chyra was sent to live with foster volunteer Rachel Kimbal and her two daughters. The family monitored her for ten days and determined that her other leg was perfectly healthy. “Thanks to the foster family, we were able to assess that she gets along well with her other leg and that it would be strong enough to support her,” says Meiners, the veterinarian who also oversaw Vincent’s care.

Chyra returned to AHS and her leg was successfully amputated at the end of January. “There were no issues. It was like she had been that way the whole time,” says Veterinary Technician Carole Ann Refshaw, who helped care for Chyra during her stay. “She was so happy!”

After her surgery, Chyra needed time to heal before heading to adoption, so she returned to Kimbal’s home. “It was nice that she could recover in the comfort of a home instead of here in the shelter where it’s a little more stressful of an environment,” says Meiners.

Kimbal and her daughters worked to build up Chyra’s strength, doing physical therapy exercises with the dog and taking her on daily walks.

Thanks to their work, Chyra was given the okay to go to the adoption center in March. She was adopted just a few days later, and her foster family couldn’t be more excited. “She’s a great dog. She’s super super sweet,” says Kimbal. “I’m so glad we could help out.”



Community Cats

In October, Annie Flodin contacted Animal Humane Society about a litter of kittens that were huddled under a brush pile near the parking garage of her Minneapolis apartment. The kittens were difficult to reach, says Flodin, and wouldn’t be allowed inside her apartment even if she could get to them.

Fortunately AHS could help. Staff member Anne Lally provided Flodin with live traps and encouraged her to bring the kittens in as soon as possible. Flodin had estimated they were 5-6 weeks old, young enough to learn to be family pets. “There is a window of time when kittens respond best to socialization,” says Lally. “Based on Annie’s estimate, these kittens were still in that window so the sooner we could start working with them, the better.”

Using the live traps, Flodin was able to catch the mother cat and all five of the kittens within a few days, and bring them in to AHS. After spending a week or two with a foster

family to gain weight and become comfortable around people, all five kittens were adopted.

Their mother, however, couldn’t be safely handled by AHS veterinary staff. It was clear this cat was accustomed to living outdoors and would not accept human contact. Historically, when a stray or feral cat brought to AHS exhibited behavior unfit for adoption and didn’t respond to socialization, the only available outcome was euthanasia. This has long been a common practice in animal shelters all over the country.

But research has shown that euthanizing unadoptable cats has not reduced existing populations of breeding and roaming cats, and does not eliminate the nuisances they create. In fact, removing a feral cat from its colony actually encourages cat populations to steadily grow as other breeding cats move in to take advantage of the newly available shelter and food. We needed to think differently about how we were handling stray and feral cats and develop a new plan.

A new Community Cats program

launched alongside Doing More for Animals offers stray and feral cats a second chance. Community cats are defined as unowned cats that live outdoors in the community. They may be feral or friendly, may have been born into the wild, or may be lost or abandoned pets. Sometimes there is a known caretaker, sometimes not.

The Community Cats program aims to improve the lives of free-roaming and feral cats in our community and reduce the unnecessary euthanasia of healthy cats that are not suitable for adoption. This program has two components: Return to Field (RTF) and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). (To learn more about TNR, please turn to page 18.)

Under the RTF program, community cats are accepted by appointment at all five shelters just as they have been in the past. Stray or free-roaming cats that are friendly and would do well in a home are made available for adoption or placed in our adoption preparation programs, where AHS staff and volunteers help them adjust to life with human companionship.

“We are able to use our behavior modification programs to give as many cats and kittens as possible the opportunity to move to the adoption center,” says Kathie Johnson, senior director of operations at AHS. Indeed, most of the strays surrendered to AHS find homes through adoption.

But healthy stray and feral cats that would not be appropriate or happy as pets are no longer euthanized. Instead, they are sterilized, vaccinated for rabies, ear-tipped for identification purposes, and released in the same outdoor location where they were found.

Unowned cats that are deemed unadoptable due to behavior are only released if they are healthy and thriving, says Johnson. A healthy cat likely has a reliable source of food



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We are able to use our behavior modification programs to give as many cats and kittens as possible the opportunity to move to the adoption center.

**—Kathie Johnson,
senior director of operations at AHS**

and shelter in the community, just like other wild animals. Cats that come in sick, injured or suffering will not be returned.

While it may be hard to imagine living outdoors during our winters, we know cats have adapted and manage to survive because we continue to have stray and feral cats living in our communities and being surrendered year-round, says Johnson. Cats learn to adapt

to their environment, whether it's extreme heat and humidity or cold temperatures. Similar programs have been successfully implemented in all types of climates across the U.S. and Canada.

Prior to implementing the program, Johnson and a committee of AHS staff spoke with animal welfare experts who have successfully implemented programs for community cats elsewhere. In each scenario, the situation was the same: shelters did not want to continue euthanizing healthy cats, and community members did not want these cats euthanized either.

Organizations that implemented RTF programs saw dramatic reductions in their communities' free-roaming cat populations over time because the sterilized cats were continuing to consume their share of the resources in the area without reproducing and further adding to the population. Sterilization also helped reduce problematic behaviors like fighting and spraying.

In the first five months of the Community Cats RTF program, 246 cats have been sterilized, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and released in the location where they were found.

“Community cat programs call for a shift in thinking and a call to our community to do something different,” says Johnson. “So far the response has been very supportive.”

The mother cat Flodin trapped and brought to AHS was sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to the place she was previously living. “I saw her shortly after she was released and it was so nice to see her back in the environment she was used to and knowing that she can no longer reproduce,” says Flodin. “And I am so grateful that we were able to intervene and prevent her five kittens from living out their lives as strays.” 🐾



A Targeted Fix

By Carrie Libera

A new Trap-Neuter-Return program helps AHS humanely reduce the feral cat population

Like most animal lovers, Shelley is concerned about the outdoor cats in her neighborhood.

Every night she sets out food for the cats – four to six, by her estimate – that live around her Anoka property. The cats are feral – they have never been socialized and are not accustomed to being handled. “Some I recognize as regulars and some come and go,” says Shelley.

Although Shelley appreciates the cats, she didn’t

want the population to grow out of control. So when she learned about Animal Humane Society’s new Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program, she saw an opportunity to do the right thing.

“I don’t mind taking care of them, but I wanted to have them spayed or neutered — both for their own sake, and to prevent them from creating more homeless ferals.”

Jo Daney, an AHS staff member who





Left: TNR Specialist Jo Daney collaborates with outdoor cat caretakers in the targeted zip codes, traps and transports the cats to Animal Humane Society for spay/neuter surgeries, and then returns the cats to where they were living.

The program is free to cat colony caretakers in the targeted communities, but finding them is no small task.

manages the TNR program, worked with Shelley to trap the cats.

Daney set out six traps on Shelley's property and returned the next morning to find all of the traps full. But Shelley didn't recognize any of the trapped cats as the ones she had been feeding. So the next night they set out all six traps again, and again the next morning they were all full. Shelley was shocked. She had no idea she was caring for a colony of at least 12 cats on her property.

"A situation like that is not at all uncommon since feral cats are most active at night when they feel safest," says Daney. "When you have someone free-feeding cats, there is no way to tell just how many cats are actually living off that food source. They are very good at staying under the radar during the day when people would see them."

Limiting the growth of this particular colony is a very small part of a large-scale effort to reduce the

number of feral and stray cats in Minnesota through a targeted TNR program AHS is piloting in a small group of Twin Cities suburbs.

Community Cats

Chances are you have seen a stray or feral cat roaming around your neighborhood. These unowned cats are known as community cats – stray or feral cats living outdoors, able to roam and reproduce. Community cats have learned to survive in every

climate, are very resourceful at finding food and shelter, and can rapidly multiply. In fact, unsterilized female cats can become pregnant at five months of age and may have two to three litters per year.

For years, many communities sought to control outdoor cat populations through euthanasia. But research conducted in cities around the country has shown that TNR programs are a far more effective and humane approach.

Under a TNR program, all the feral cats in a colony are trapped, neutered or spayed, and then returned to their original location. Returning the sterilized cats stabilizes the colony, preventing it from expanding with new litters. If cats are simply removed from the area and euthanized, the population will actually expand as the remaining cats continue to reproduce and new cats are drawn to the area by available food and resources.

TNR is most effective when all of the cats living in an area can be sterilized, colony by colony. Targeting a specific area with an outdoor cat population large enough to make a substantial impact is crucial to achieving success.

Targeted TNR

In October 2014 AHS launched a targeted TNR program, part of a Community Cats initiative supported in part by a grant from PetSmart Charities. The grant covered the cost of setting up the TNR program and providing 1,600 spay/neuter surgeries over two years for feral cats in the 55303 and 55304 zip codes. Communities in those two zip codes – Anoka, Andover, Ramsey, Nowthen, Ham Lake and Oak Grove – were selected for the pilot program because they account for more stray cat surrenders than any other zip code in the entire metro area.



Community cats have learned to survive in every climate, are very resourceful at finding food and shelter, and can rapidly multiply.

“We estimate there are approximately 3,000 to 5,000 outdoor cats living in the targeted cities,” says Daney. “So my job is to seek out where those cats are living, reach out to the caretakers who are feeding them, and get them spayed and neutered so we can start making an impact one group at a time.”

Daney started by mapping the addresses of stray cat surrenderers to determine potential cat colony locations. She contacted residents who

surrendered cats in the past to identify cats still living in the area. She also focused on areas that have had no surrenders – places where cats were likely but residents might not be aware of AHS and the services it provides.

Because the grant covers the cost of surgeries, the program is free to cat colony caretakers in the targeted communities, but finding them is no small task.

“People are often leery about speaking to a stranger about the cats



Sterilizing
outdoor
cats can
dramatically
reduce
nuisance
behaviors.

Puff was spayed and returned to the colony she was living with. Cats sterilized through the TNR program receive surgeries from AHS, Kindest Cut, and U of M veterinary staff.

they may be feeding,” says Daney. “They also have a hard time believing that what we are offering is actually free – that there is no catch. So first I need to establish trust with the community. It’s all about outreach, education and relationship building.”

Because the program is so new, Daney spends a lot of time going door-to-door talking with people about cats that may be living in the area. “When people are reluctant to share information at that initial contact, I make sure to leave my business card and let them know they can call me anytime. Sometimes that means I get calls for things other than TNR, but I make sure to direct them to other AHS resources so they have the best experience possible with the organization. The hope is that they

will then reach out to me for TNR in the future.”

One such phone call came two and a half months after Daney reached out to a business owner in Ramsey, hoping to spread the word. She heard nothing for weeks after her initial contact, but then received a call from the woman, who needed help with a colony of seven cats, including one that had been covered in oil. That cat got immediate care, and the process of sterilizing all seven members of the colony began. “When I contacted her initially, she didn’t realize she needed help. Even though it took a few months, I’m so glad she eventually reached out, especially because those seven cats could quickly become 20 or 30 cats this spring.”

Better behavior

In addition to humanely and effectively reducing the outdoor cat population, TNR has many other advantages. Sterilizing outdoor cats can dramatically reduce nuisance behaviors including yowling and fighting during mating season, and eliminates the spraying that unneutered males do to mark their territory.

Educating the community about those advantages is another important part of Daney’s work. Earlier this year she persuaded a Nowthen homeowner not to euthanize a male cat who had been yowling, spraying, and terrorizing the sterilized females in her colony.

“I said, let me just try to neuter him and we’ll see what happens when



his testosterone levels are down. If you still want to surrender him after that, I will personally come and trap him and bring him to the shelter so we can look at other options for him,” says Daney. “So that’s what we did, and now, after being neutered, he is one of her favorite cats! He’s not spraying anymore and he is actually quite affectionate. He purrs when she comes near and will even sit on her lap.”

Joy, a homeowner in Ham Lake, saw better behavior in the cats she was caring for as well. She had 13 cats living in a shelter that she built for them in her garage. She loved them like they were her pets, but they were feral and she had never been able to touch a single one. Joy always had a litter box in the garage, but the cats never used it.

Daney trapped and sterilized all

13 cats and after they were returned, Joy entered the garage to find the litter box was overflowing. “I’ve seen improved habits and personality shifts in several of the cats that I have returned,” says Daney. “It’s not always an immediate change, but once the cats are sterilized the caretakers will often see the dynamics of the colony and individual temperaments change over time.”

Among Joy’s 13 cats were three kittens that Daney assumed were too feral to be socialized despite their young age. Two were sterilized and returned to the colony, but the third had an upper respiratory infection and needed medical care before she could be sterilized. While at AHS, the kitten was given constant socialization – and the name Puffzilla. By the time her treatment


was complete, Puffzilla’s behavior was suitable for adoption. With Joy’s permission, she was placed in the adoption center and went home almost immediately.

“Seeing some of these cats actually become adoptable is an added bonus,” says Daney. “We don’t force it, but many of the caretakers are receptive to the cats being adopted. They love these cats, and they want the best for them.”

A promising start

In the first five months, the targeted TNR program has sterilized 102 cats and kittens from approximately 15 caretakers. As Daney builds relationships in the community and word spreads about the resources AHS can offer, that number is expected to grow exponentially. Over time the outdoor cat population in this area – and the number of cats surrendered to AHS – will steadily decrease.

The program is already paying off, says Daney.

“I get a lot of hugs; I get a lot of ‘thank you, we love you so much, we really appreciate this,’” she says. “As more people learn how easy it is, and discover the benefits it provides both the cats and caretakers, more people will start reaching out. We’ve got a lot of work to do to meet our goal, but I’m confident we’ll get there.” 

Do you know of outdoor cats in the 55303 and 55304 area?



Call TNR Specialist Jo Daney at (763) 432-4848 to take advantage of the TNR program. If you are caring for stray or feral cats in other zip codes, call Community Cats Coordinator Samantha Thielen at (763) 432-4892 to learn about other resources for community cats in your area. For more information, visit animalhumanesociety.org/communitycats.

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memorials and tributes

July 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014

We are grateful for your generous support of the animals through memorial and tribute gifts. We are committed to providing quality content in this magazine with information about our programs and services and want to ensure that your donations are directly supporting the animals in our care.

We sincerely appreciate every gift made in honor or memory of a loved one or pet; however, due to the volume only pet memorials of \$100 or more will be listed in this issue of Animal Tracks. In future issues, we look forward to introducing you to a new format in which we will recognize these memorial gifts.

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Bailey & Tyler • Lynda Powell

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Bart • Richard Johnson

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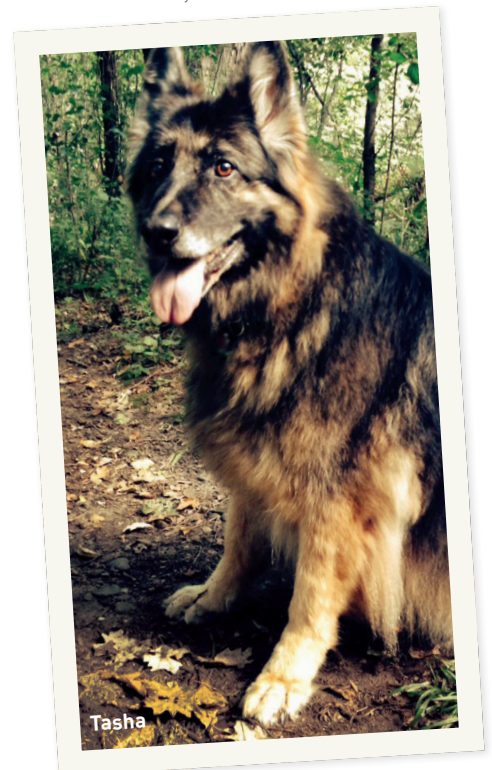
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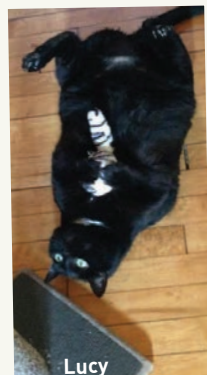
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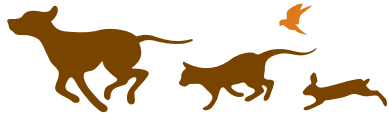
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