

# Animal Tracks

Animal Humane Society | Summer 2021

## THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

*AHS is doing more  
to keep people and  
pets together*





## Our Services

Every year Animal Humane Society provides direct care and services to help more than 100,000 animals in need across Minnesota. Our programs may be modified due to COVID-19. Please visit our website for the most current information.

## Contact Us

**952-HELP-PET** (952-435-7738)

[info@animalhumanesociety.org](mailto:info@animalhumanesociety.org)  
[animalhumanesociety.org](http://animalhumanesociety.org)

## Leadership

Janelle Dixon, *President and CEO*

Eileen Lay, *Chief Operating and  
Financial Officer*

Lisa B. Bonds,  
*Chief Advancement Officer*

Kathy Mock, *Chief Government Affairs  
and Community Engagement Officer*

## Board of Directors

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Jennifer McNeal

Laura Molgaard, DVM

Kelly Palmer

Janelle Dixon, *President and CEO*

### Adoption

View cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, and critters available for adoption.

[animalhumanesociety.org/adoption](http://animalhumanesociety.org/adoption)

### Surrender

Companion animals may be surrendered by appointment.

**952-HELP-PET (952-435-7738)**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/surrender](http://animalhumanesociety.org/surrender)

### Humane investigations

Our humane agents work with law enforcement to investigate reports of animal neglect and cruelty.

[animalhumanesociety.org/investigations](http://animalhumanesociety.org/investigations)

### Outreach

We offer free pet food and affordable veterinary services to support pet owners and improve the lives of pets in underserved communities.

**651-788-4685**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/outreach](http://animalhumanesociety.org/outreach)

### Pet Helpline

Our free Pet Helpline provides caring, compassionate animal advice and resources.

**952-HELP-PET (952-435-7738)**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/pethelp](http://animalhumanesociety.org/pethelp)

### Pet training

Positive reinforcement focused training classes are offered in person and online.

**763-489-2217**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/training](http://animalhumanesociety.org/training)

### End-of-life care

Compassionate humane euthanasia and end-of-life services are available to the public. Your pet's remains may also be donated to the University of Minnesota's College of Veterinary Medicine through our willied body program to advance veterinary medicine.

[animalhumanesociety.org/lossofpet](http://animalhumanesociety.org/lossofpet)

### Veterinary care

We provide access to affordable veterinary care by offering high-quality services with sliding fees based on income.

**763-489-7729**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/vetcenters](http://animalhumanesociety.org/vetcenters)

### Youth programs

We offer fun, educational experiences for kids who love animals, including camps, scout programs, story hours, and more.

**763-489-2220**  
[animalhumanesociety.org/youth](http://animalhumanesociety.org/youth)

## Locations

**Coon Rapids** 763-862-4030  
1411 Main St NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55448

**Golden Valley** 952-435-7738  
845 Meadow Ln N  
Golden Valley, MN 55422

**Woodbury** 651-730-6008  
9785 Hudson Rd  
Woodbury, MN 55125

**St. Paul** 651-788-4630  
1159 University Ave W  
St. Paul, MN 55104

### 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.



# ANIMAL HUMANE SOCIETY JOINS 'SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS SHELTERING' MOVEMENT



For decades, Animal Humane Society has been recognized as a leader in animal welfare. From innovative medical and behavior programs to investments in outreach and advocacy, we've helped transform the way shelters across the country care for animals and engage their communities.

Now, we're leading by example, lending our support to a new movement known as 'Socially Conscious Sheltering,' and eight

core principles that lead to the best outcomes for animals — and animal lovers — in our community.

The Socially Conscious Sheltering movement began because shelter leaders recognized the need to create a common set of values to guide organizations — values that could be easily communicated and would highlight the shared responsibility for animal welfare among shelters, individuals, and communities. This emerging frame-

work maximizes the physical and emotional health and well-being of animals, while balancing the needs of communities and public safety.

While animal welfare organizations across the country are just beginning to embrace Socially Conscious Sheltering, the movement is based on principles AHS has modeled for years. We're proud to be the first shelter in Minnesota to formally join this movement.

## CORE VALUES OF SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS SHELTERING

- 1 Place every healthy and safe animal.
- 2 Ensure every unwanted or homeless pet has a safe place to go for shelter and care.
- 3 Assess the medical and behavioral needs of homeless animals and ensure these needs are thoughtfully addressed.
- 4 Align shelter policy with the needs of the community.
- 5 Alleviate suffering and make appropriate euthanasia decisions.
- 6 Enhance the human-animal bond through safe placements and post-adoption support.
- 7 Consider the health, wellness, and safety of animals for each community when transferring animals.
- 8 Foster a culture of transparency, ethical decision making, mutual respect, continual learning, and collaboration.

Practicing these shared principles has led to thousands of second chances for animals in our community. However, Socially Conscious Sheltering means we measure the success of our shelter not on one single statistic, but on our ability to increase the quality of life for pets and people in our community — because we all play a role in animal welfare. Together, we're making the world a more humane place for animals.

Learn more about your role in Socially Conscious Sheltering at [scsheltering.org](https://scsheltering.org).



## PREVENTING SEPARATION ANXIETY

Between heading back to the office, taking a long-overdue vacation, or simply gathering with family and friends, we'll be spending less time at home as parts of our pre-pandemic life resume. It may take some of us time to adjust — and the same goes for our pets.

### Five steps to prevent separation-related behavior issues before they begin:

- 1. Practice leaving.** Start by leaving your house in short stints. Before leaving, simulate your typical routine, such as putting on your shoes, grabbing your keys, and saying goodbye to your pet.
- 2. Maintain a routine.** Keep your pet's meals, exercise, play, and alone time scheduled at similar times of the day. Structure in their daily routines can reduce stress and frustration.
- 3. Create a sanctuary.** Find a safe space in your house that allows your pet to practice being alone. Provide a cozy bed, toys, and a sound barrier or white noise to drown out distractions and stressors.
- 4. Provide enrichment and exercise.** Finding the toys and rewards that work best for your pet will help them learn to self-soothe

when you're away. Exercise also helps dogs and cats release anxious energy in a positive way.

### 5. Schedule regular check-ups.

Underlying health issues are often a cause of behavior problems, so don't skip your pet's routine veterinary visits!

### Watch for changes in behavior

If you notice your pet acting differently, it could be time to take action. Increased lethargy, depression, or disinterest in once-beloved activities, changes in appetite, and destructive tendencies are all examples of separation-related behaviors. First, check with your vet to rule out medical issues, then contact a training expert.

Call our free Behavior Helpline at 763-489-2202 for help addressing separation-related behaviors or for a referral to a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer.

## BECOME A SUSTAINER AND HELP ANIMALS YEAR-ROUND

Homeless animals need our help every day, not just a few times a year. Animal Humane Society's monthly giving program is the easiest and most convenient way to make a difference for animals in need.

When you become a Sustainer, you'll be joining a community of more than 3,500 dedicated supporters who help ensure Minnesota's most vulnerable animals receive the love and care they deserve.

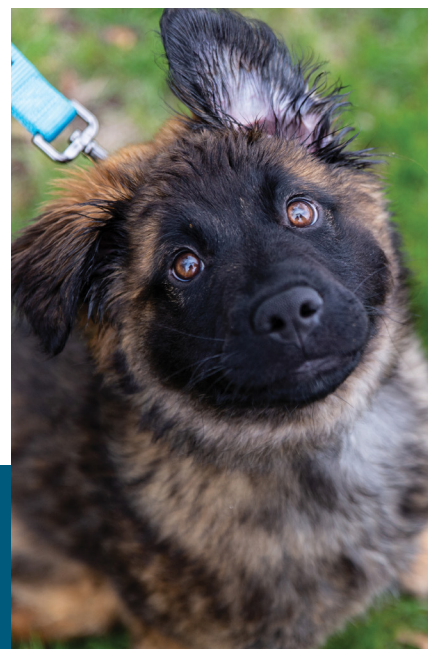
Becoming a Sustainer takes less than five minutes and provides a

dependable source of funding so AHS is always prepared to help every animal in need of a second chance.

Plus, Sustainers receive exclusive access to AHS through insider events and communications — and even a free window cling to show off their support!

### Enroll today

[animalhumanesociety.org/sustainer](https://animalhumanesociety.org/sustainer)  
or contact our Donor Services team at 763-489-2210.







## Learn more

Interested in learning about Animal Humane Society's transport program? Visit [animalhumane.org/transport](https://animalhumane.org/transport).

# THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF ANIMAL HUMANE SOCIETY'S TRANSPORT PROGRAM

Five years ago, Animal Humane Society embarked on its first journey south in a brand new truck uniquely designed for safely transporting animals across the country. Since then, thousands of dogs and cats have hitched a lifesaving ride to AHS.

Transporting animals isn't easy work — it requires expensive equipment, long hours on the road, and true teamwork from one organization to the next. But the impact is worth it. Every animal transported to Minnesota helps create space in an overcrowded shelter and frees up valuable resources, which means another animal is given a second chance — and twice as many families are made whole.

## A growing demand for adoptable dogs

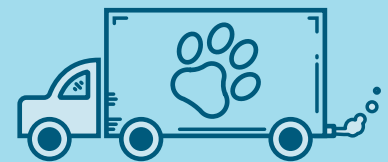
In 2020, most of the nation saw an unprecedented increase in demand for companion animals. Rescue

organizations all across Minnesota were inundated with requests — AHS alone was fielding up to 8,000 adoption inquiries each week. Our transport program not only allows us to meet the growing demand for adoptable dogs here in Minnesota, it reduces our community's reliance on commercial breeding operations.

## The future of transport

Our transport team is exploring ways to connect even more Minnesota families to animals in need — whether they're adopting from AHS or one of our local partners. We're planning the next evolution of our transport program with the hope of bringing even more animals to organizations right here in Minnesota.

With added capacity, we could transport up to 1,000 more dogs each year, increasing the number of animals who can find loving homes through both AHS and other



## TRANSPORT BY THE NUMBERS

- Out-of-state transport trips require **36-54 hours of travel time** and two AHS drivers.
- AHS relies on two vehicles for all out-of-state travel, clocking approximately **11,000 miles per month**.
- Transport vehicles need to be **replaced every 3-5 years**. The base cost for a transport vehicle is **\$45,000**.
- Each out-of-state transport brings up to **40 animals** back to Minnesota.

local rescues without centralized transport programs. This increase will help address overpopulation in other states, and ultimately move us closer to the goal of ending animal homelessness — for good.

# TOP 5 REASONS WE NEED A COMPANION ANIMAL BOARD

## 1. Companion animal issues deserve a “home” in our state government

When it comes to animal welfare, Minnesota state government’s current infrastructure is focused on livestock and wildlife. There’s no state agency or board devoted to companion animal issues. This structure, created more than a century ago, isn’t sufficient to address the issues companion animals face today and doesn’t reflect the important role animals play in the lives of Minnesotans.

A Companion Animal Board (CAB) will allow Minnesota to more effectively support the welfare, social well-being, and physical and mental health of companion animals.

## 2. Companion animal issues require unique expertise

Currently, no part of Minnesota’s state government has the expertise needed to provide oversight on companion animal issues. The

proposed CAB will have members with expertise and skills related to companion animal issues, including veterinary science, shelter management, public health issues, companion animal rescue, breeding regulations, animal control services, and community issues.

## 3. Companion animals play an important role in our lives

Pets are family. Animals improve our lives, adding joy, unconditional love, and purpose to each day. As more people recognize the significance of the human-animal bond, ensuring the needs of companion animals are met becomes more complex. That’s why we need a state board with the skills to lead and respond to issues pertaining to companion animals.

## 4. Growing need for a new state board

The Companion Animal Board would serve the broader community, including organizations dedicated to promoting the health

and welfare of companion animals. The proposed CAB would have three primary duties:

- Enforcing laws pertaining to companion animals
- Providing communication, education, and outreach for issues related to companion animals
- Overseeing a collaborative approach for delivering companion animal welfare services and resources.

## 5. Growing support for this legislation

Authored by Senator Carrie Ruud (R) and Representative Mike Freiberg (D), and championed by Animal Humane Society and Animal Folks, this legislation has bipartisan support and is backed by a growing list of local organizations, veterinarians, and Minnesotans who’ve signed the petition.

Join us in providing a voice for companion animals within state government. Visit [mncab.org](http://mncab.org) to sign the petition and learn more.



# 50 YEARS OF GRATITUDE

Fifty years ago, 100 animal lovers gathered on a rainy afternoon in Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis to participate in the first Walk for Animals event. Since then, the Walk has evolved from a humble gathering to become Animal Humane Society’s largest and most important fundraiser of the year.

On May 1, thousands of animal lovers across the state celebrated the Walk’s 50th anniversary helping to raise more than \$610,000 and

making second chances possible for countless animals in our community.

Although the Walk was hosted virtually for the second year in a row, we could feel the love, dedication, and enthusiasm from our community every step of the way.

We’re so proud to have had the support of our community for the last five decades, and we know the future is even brighter thanks to people like you.



# BETTER TOGETHER

## LETTERS FROM GRATEFUL ADOPTERS

### Ruby & Mouse



My mom and I used to visit Animal Humane Society every Sunday. We were never looking for a pet — until we saw Mouse. The tiny Chihuahua was sprawled across his bed with his tongue hanging out, looking up at us with pleading eyes. We knew he'd be coming home with

us that day. That was our dog.

We learned Mouse had been rescued from a hoarding situation. I pictured him being neglected, abused, or bullied by other dogs, and my heart broke. In that moment I promised Mouse the rest of his days would be filled with happiness and love — and they were.

If Mouse wanted to sleep, I'd give him a heated blanket to lay on. If he wanted a snack, I brought him his favorite treats. He accompanied me on road trips, camping trips, and to restaurant patios in the summer. We were attached at the hip. I'd leave social gatherings early because I missed him, or because it was raining out and I was worried he was scared. When I would hold him — which was all the time — I could

feel my chest fill up with warmth.

I never thought I could love anything as much as I loved Mouse. Unfortunately, he passed away this year on the sixth anniversary of his adoption. He died in my arms, just like he lived.

Losing Mouse was one of the hardest things I've experienced. Some people have tried to tell me that he was "just a dog," but Mouse made me realize how much you can love someone who isn't human — someone who doesn't provide you with anything other than their company. Mouse's story may have started sad, but the conclusion was blissful. I'm so grateful to have had the amazing pleasure of being in his life.

*- Ruby*

### AJ & Bohda

This fall, I moved into an apartment and found myself alone for the first time in my life. The isolation from the pandemic intensified without my family around me, so I reached out to Animal Humane Society to find a friend.

I was adopted, and as a result, I felt like I could relate to the animals at AHS. It was finally my turn to adopt and give an animal the great life they deserved.

I set out to adopt a middle-aged cat because I worried adult animals were being overlooked in favor of

young kittens and puppies. I was so excited when AHS contacted me to set up an appointment to meet a 4-year-old kitty looking for a home, I didn't even realize I'd misheard the adoption specialist on the phone.

I arrived at AHS to meet my new potential best friend and was greeted by a 4-month-old kitten! Despite my surprise, I fell in love with him immediately. I brought him home that day and named him Bohda.

I don't remember what I did with my time before Bohda came into my life. I've never loved anything the way



I love him — with my whole heart.

Bohda makes me a better person. Less selfish. More caring. I feel like I've known him forever, and I can't imagine my life without him.

*- AJ*



# The humane side of euthanasia

The hardest words an animal lover will ever say — or hear — are the same.

**“It’s time to say goodbye.”**

**T**he dedicated staff at Animal Humane Society form a bond with every animal who comes through our doors. Sometimes these friendships are fun and short-lived — like when a bouncy puppy goes home mere hours after becoming available for adoption. Other times, our relationships with shelter animals can last weeks or even months, and we come to love them as if they were our own.

Regardless of how long they’re in our care, there’s something truly special about our connection with each animal. We’re their home — their family — until they find you.

We were Esperanza’s family for nine days, a short time in the course of the 7-year-old Chihuahua’s life. But for those nine days, we loved her fiercely, just as a family should.

Esperanza was abandoned in a stranger’s driveway on a freezing December day.

Thankfully, a kindhearted couple

noticed Esperanza right away and rushed her to AHS. During their surrender appointment, they recounted what had happened to our staff. “There was a car parked at the end of our driveway for a long time. When it pulled away, she was just standing there...alone.”

Before leaving the little tri-color dog with us, they made a request. “Can you name her Esperanza? It means ‘Hope’ in Spanish.”

## Hope for Esperanza

Esperanza’s teeth were rotten, her skin was inflamed, and her nails were untrimmed. But the most concerning medical issue hung from her abdomen like a grapefruit. Our vets suspected the large mass was a malignant mammary tumor. It would drag on the floor when she walked and her back arched painfully from the weight of it.

Although Esperanza had only recently arrived, staff were already

enamored with the brown-eyed Chihuahua. “Esperanza was so shy and unsure,” recalls AHS Veterinary Technician Jessica Speer. “Every time I saw her, she’d warm up a little more. I knew she wanted to be sweet so badly, she was just scared.”

Our staff didn’t just love Esperanza, they loved the idea of giving her a second chance — of taking away her pain and giving her a new beginning. Esperanza was scheduled for surgery.

In the days leading up to her operation, staff visited with Esperanza often. They sat on the floor of her kennel and scratched her tiny head. They spoke softly to her, providing words of comfort and encouragement. Somehow, Esperanza seemed to understand. Her ears would perk up as if she wanted to hear more and she’d place her chin gently in the palm of their hands.



## Time for surgery

On a cold Tuesday morning, Esperanza was carried to our surgical suite wrapped in her favorite fleece blanket. She was carefully sedated and prepped for her operation. When she woke up she'd be one step closer to her second chance at a new life — or so we thought.

AHS employs more than 20 expert vets, including Dr. Josh Dwuznik who performed Esperanza's surgery. He was the one who discovered Esperanza's tumor wasn't a tumor at all. It was a giant hernia — a hole in her abdominal wall that had allowed her spleen, intestine, bladder, and reproductive organs to spill outside of her body cavity.

*"I remember being so happy we were going to be able to take away her pain. The truth is, we did accomplish that goal, just not in the way we'd hoped."*

"Surgery would have been incredibly difficult with a high chance Esperanza wouldn't make it through," explained Dr. Josh. "The hernia had been present for so long, and her abdominal muscles had become so tight as a result — there was no longer room for her internal organs." That's when Dr. Josh had to say the hardest words we say in animal welfare, "There's nothing more we can do."

Esperanza was humanely euthanized on the operation table, surrounded by staff — her family — who'd fallen in love with her quirky attitude and sweet disposition. She passed with dignity after years of pain and nine days of immense love.

"As I prepped Esperanza for surgery I remember being so happy we were going to be able to take

away her pain," said Jessica. "The truth is, we did accomplish that goal, just not in the way we'd hoped."

## We never take euthanasia lightly

Deciding to say goodbye to a beloved pet is one of the most heart-wrenching experiences a pet parent will endure. It's a decision that usually comes after weeks or months of careful consideration about an animal's quality of life. It's a decision often made with teary eyes and a twisted stomach. But above all, it's a decision made with love.

The animals in our care don't have a family to speak for them. They have us. It's a responsibility we don't take lightly.

"We want every single animal who comes through our doors to be adopted and live happy, fulfilling lives. Unfortunately, that's not always possible," says Dr. Josh. When making a decision about euthanasia, our vets carefully consider every aspect of an animals' health and well-being:

- Are they suffering from physical or emotional pain?
- Could their suffering be managed or treated?
- Would they survive the treatment, surgeries, and post-operative care needed to manage their suffering?
- Have we done everything we can?

## Redefining a second chance

Humane euthanasia is more than just a taboo subject. It's been villainized in some communities to such an extent that euthanizing an animal can be seen as a failure, a lack of compassion, and even an act of cruelty. Even the most understanding animal lovers can rush to judgment when they hear an animal has been euthanized.

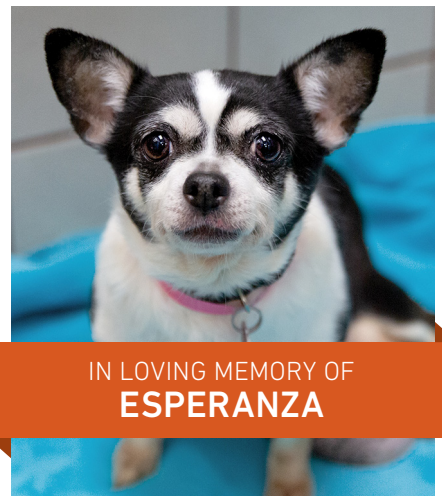
As a result, many shelters don't

share cases that end in euthanasia — even though they're often the cases that best demonstrate the incredible lengths staff will go to for animals in need. As a result, stories like Esperanza's go untold.

"Even when I know humane euthanasia is the right outcome, the weight of making that final decision is palpable," says Dr. Josh. "I knew letting Esperanza go was the right decision, but I still wrestled with it ... I'm thankful her last days were filled with kindness, treats, and love from our staff."

Some euthanasia decisions happen quickly, like Esperanza's, and help to end an animal's suffering as swiftly as possible. Others occur after weeks of behavioral and medical care, hours of heart-wrenching conversations, and emotional labor. Each decision upholds our commitment to provide every animal with the unique and individualized care they deserve.

The memories of the animals we've helped stay with us and propel our work forward day after day — even when that work is difficult or heartbreaking. We weren't able to give Esperanza the life we'd hoped, but we did what was right for the tiny, tri-color Chihuahua. And her memory will move us forward.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
**ESPERANZA**





there's no place like  
**HOME**

How Animal Humane Society is  
doing more than ever before to  
keep people and pets together



We share so much more with our pets than just our homes. We share our lives with them — the good and the bad. We give them a corner of the bed, space on our laps, but most importantly, we give them a piece of our hearts. The bond we share with our

pets has fueled Animal Humane Society for more than 140 years. It's why we work tirelessly to find animals the loving homes they deserve. And it's why we're embarking on some of our most important work yet to **keep pets and their families together.**

### MORE THAN ADOPTION

Over the last 13 years, AHS has expanded its work beyond adoption and surrender, creating programs and services that help animals and people live their happiest and healthiest lives together. From Community Outreach programs and our free Pet Helpline, to expert training and youth education, we're providing the resources our community

members need to care for their pets — but we can do more.

Today, more than 2/3 of American homes include a beloved pet. As leaders in animal welfare we have a responsibility to innovate and evolve in order to do the best we can for animals and animal lovers alike. That's why we're doing more to keep people and pets together than ever before.

We're in the midst of identifying, piloting, and evaluating how AHS can better support pet parents in three priority areas:

- **Access to low-cost veterinary care**
- **Pet food assistance**
- **Temporary pet housing**

### INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE VETERINARY CARE

Access to affordable veterinary care is a struggle for many families. A 2018 study by the University of Tennessee found that one in four U.S. households experienced barriers to veterinary care in the prior two years — and those obstacles were overwhelmingly financial. We're uniquely qualified to help families in our community overcome this barrier.

"We began offering low-cost spay/neuter and wellness services in 2011 in Golden Valley," explains Animal Humane Society President and CEO, Janelle Dixon. "This fall, we opened the doors to a new veterinary clinic and

community space on University Avenue in St. Paul, equipped with on-site ultrasound, X-ray, and laboratory capabilities. Through these two clinic spaces and the support of our community, we're now able to provide comprehensive veterinary care to the public on a sliding fee scale."

This expansion of our services and locations provides pet parents in the east metro and beyond access to the affordable, high-quality care their pets deserve. And that has real-life impacts on animals and animal lovers in our community.



## SCOOBY'S SECOND CHANCE

This spring, Scooby, a tiny Chihuahua, was attacked by a dog much larger than himself. Little Scooby and his caregiver hardly had a chance to react. There was a flurry of panic, racing heartbeats, a tug on the leash, and a cry of pain. When it was over, Scooby's mom, Maribel, looked down at him in horror. He was shaking and flustered, but still standing. She felt a quick sigh of relief until Scooby turned to look at her. His eye was filled with blood.

Maribel rushed Scooby to the nearest emergency vet. They examined the severe injuries he'd sustained and delivered the news to Maribel — both good and bad. Scooby would recover, but the damage to his eye was irreparable. It would need to be removed as soon as possible through an expensive, specialty surgery.

Scooby's mom was distraught. She didn't know how she could possibly afford the care her beloved Chihua-

hua desperately needed. That's when the emergency clinic told her that AHS might be able to help.

The next morning, Maribel brought Scooby to our veterinary center. He was wrapped in blankets, cuddled up in her arms. "We took one look at Scooby and knew he needed our help immediately. We made room in the schedule and prepped the little guy for surgery," recalls Veterinary Technician Kayla Johnson.

Maribel was relieved to get her best friend into the compassionate hands of our expert veterinary team for the care he needed. When he came out of surgery, tired, and now with a permanent wink, she held him close. "He's my baby," she said as she left.

Just two weeks later, Scooby was back at AHS to have his sutures removed. The brave Chihuahua had recovered well. He had a spring in his step and seemed to be navigating the world just fine despite the loss of his eye. "I'm so happy AHS helped Scooby and me in that difficult moment," expressed Maribel.

Our veterinary centers provide high-quality services to 15,000 pets each year. For some families, it means they can stay within their budget and still afford exceptional care. For others, it's a much-appreciated safety net when times are tough. And for families like Maribel and Scooby, it's a lifesaving resource they will never forget.

This year, we expanded service qualifications at our clinics in St. Paul and Golden Valley to better serve even more members of our community. That means more families will have access to the wellness and specialty care their pets need to live happy and healthy lives.



"We took one look at Scooby and knew he needed our help immediately."





The goal of the Outreach team is to break down barriers and connect people with the resources they need to care for their pets.

## PET FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

Minnesota is home to more than 350 food shelves and food banks, which provide critical services for community members in need. However, few provide resources for their pets. We're working to change that.

Over the last two years alone, AHS has distributed more than 84,000 pounds of free pet food and has connected hundreds of families to local pet food resources through our Community Outreach program. During the pandemic we saw the need for these services rise to unprecedented levels. With more families experiencing financial hardship, we realized we could do more to support pet owners so they'd never be forced to choose between feeding themselves or their four-legged companions.

This spring, AHS began piloting a series of pet food pantry pop-up

events at our Golden Valley and St. Paul locations. Each bi-monthly pantry event provided up to 50 households with a one-month supply of pet food for every pet in their home. For some, access to this free resource made all the difference in keeping their family whole.

"I think it's more important than ever," says AHS Rescue Relations Manager Anne Gass. At the first pet food pantry event, Anne met a community member who'd depleted her savings after losing multiple jobs as a result of the pandemic. "She shared with me that the love and support of her pets was the only thing that had gotten her through the last year, and the food we supplied would help immensely."

While the pandemic has highlighted the immediate need in our community and beyond, the effects of financial strain on pet

ownership are not new. AHS has worked with countless families who felt forced to surrender their pets because they could no longer afford to care for them.

"Over the years, our Outreach team has heard dozens of anecdotes from over-extended community members who've prioritized their pets' hunger over their own. This is simply a trade-off no one should have to make," says Maggie Xiong, a Community Outreach Organizer at AHS. "The goal of the Outreach team is to break down barriers and connect people with the resources they need to care for their pets. Providing access to free pet food is an integral piece of this puzzle. It's just one way we can help alleviate the stress our community members are experiencing."



## TEMPORARY PET HOUSING FOR PET PARENTS IN TRANSITION

No loving pet parent should ever be forced to surrender their dog, cat, or critter due to a temporary setback. Unfortunately, life isn't always so straightforward. Every year, hundreds of animals are surrendered to AHS because families are facing unforeseen hardships, including evictions, job loss, and health crises.

Shelter staff everywhere can attest to the heartbreak they've witnessed as loving families are forced to give up their pets because they're temporarily unable to care for them. We've always consoled these grieving pet parents with the fact that their dog, cat, or critter would find a loving, new home.

But what if we could tell our community something different? What if we could reset the narrative of shelters everywhere? We're challenging the status quo of animal welfare, and looking for solutions that will allow us to say, "You don't have to surrender your pet today."

Last year, we introduced an innovative Surrender Prevention model to assist animal lovers surrendering their pets due to a treatable, one-time medical condition. AHS is able to provide treatment or surgery to help get that pet back on their feet at a price their guardian can afford. As a result, more families are able to stay together and fewer animals end up in shelters.

This spring, we added to our efforts to prevent unnecessary surrenders and began piloting a temporary housing program. This new initiative draws upon our existing relationships with community and social services organizations to refer families facing housing displacement to AHS. Instead of being surrendered, the pets of displaced families will be welcomed into the homes of AHS foster volunteers where they'll receive ample love and care until they're able to be reunited with their families.

## SHORT-TERM CARE HAS A LASTING IMPACT

In the spring of 2020, Janine found herself in a heartbreaking situation she never could have anticipated: she was diagnosed with cancer amid a global pandemic. She began chemotherapy but quickly realized her treatments left her groggy, sick, and even unable to drive. Suddenly things which had once been so simple seemed impossible — like caring for her four beloved dogs.

Janine reached out to friends and family with the hope of finding temporary care for her pets. Unfortunately, despite a dedicated support system, she was only able to find homes for three of her dogs. That left Monty, an energetic hound mix with caramel spots and sweet brown eyes. The thought of losing him was unbearable, but Janine had exhausted all of her options. So she reached out to AHS for help.



Janine belongs to our Legacy Circle, a committed group of animal lovers who've included AHS in their wills or estate plans. As part of this group, Janine had enrolled her pets in Loved for Life, a unique program which guarantees pets will be placed in new, loving homes in the event their guardians are no longer able to care for them.

"We use a specialized adoption process that ensures Loved for Life pets spend minimal time in the shelter and



are placed in the homes of an AHS staff or volunteer,” says Planned Giving Officer Ali Schneider. Normally, the pets who come to AHS through Loved for Life need permanent placement because their owner has passed away or has become unable to care for them. Janine’s request broke the mold — we’d never had a supporter reach out to us about temporary placement before.

“One of the things I love most about working at AHS is that when we’re faced with a new opportunity, we don’t fall back on what we’ve done in the past,” says Ali. “We search endlessly for a way to make it possible.”

Within just a few days, we were

able to pick up Monty and bring him to the home of an AHS foster volunteer. “Our foster volunteers have the amazing ability to love every animal as if it’s their own,” Ali beams. “They have the biggest hearts and Monty benefited from that.”

Spring turned into summer, and Janine’s health began to improve. She and Monty were reunited outside of our Golden Valley shelter. Monty ran to his mom and whined with excitement. As she knelt down to wrap her arms around her friend and bury her face in his soft fur, our staff heard her whisper five simple words to her beloved companion, “I love you so much.”

Janine’s story is unique — however, her situation is not uncommon. Our Outreach team and Pet Helpline representatives field frequent questions about temporary housing options.

Until now, we’ve only been able to accommodate a small number of requests from animal lovers experiencing exceptional circumstances. This new pilot broadens the scope of those we can help.

Our goal with this and other programs is to provide pet parents in crisis with an alternative to surrendering their beloved companion and create a support system within our community to keep animals and their families whole.

To learn more about Loved for Life visit [animalhumanesociety.org/plannedgiving](https://animalhumanesociety.org/plannedgiving).

## PETS ARE FAMILY

“More than 140 years ago AHS emerged as a voice for the voiceless. We vowed to fight for the underdog and give every animal a second chance. We believed that if our community came together, we could make an incredible difference,” says President and CEO, Janelle Dixon. “We were right.”

“Since that time, we’ve learned an incredibly valuable lesson — a piece of the puzzle we were missing in our earliest years. To do our best for animals means we must support the people who love them as well.”

By leveraging our expertise, reputation, and longstanding support from the community, we’re hopeful no animal lover will be faced with the impossible decision to give up their beloved companion due to a temporary setback or financial hardship. We’re hopeful that we can keep more families whole than ever before. **Because pets and people are better together.**





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By making an ongoing, monthly gift, you're providing a reliable source of funding that enables AHS to help animals all year long. Sustaining gifts are an easy and convenient way to change lives every month.

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[animalhumanesociety.org/donate](http://animalhumanesociety.org/donate)

### Leave a legacy

Make a lasting impact on animals by including AHS in your will or estate plan.

[animalhumanesociety.org/legacy](http://animalhumanesociety.org/legacy)

### Contribute to our wish list

With more than 23,000 animals to care for every year, AHS needs a substantial amount of supplies. You can donate needed items any time.

[animalhumanesociety.org/wishlist](http://animalhumanesociety.org/wishlist)

### Donate a vehicle

Donate your car to care for animals in need. Your vehicle will be towed free of charge and you'll be eligible for a tax deduction.

[animalhumanesociety.org/vehicle](http://animalhumanesociety.org/vehicle)



## We're going green

In an effort to reduce the amount of paper we generate, we're changing the format and frequency of our print publications, including *Animal Tracks*.

Use the envelope in the center of this magazine to update your email address and ensure you continue to receive news, updates, and stories from AHS, or visit [animalhumanesociety.org/emailme](http://animalhumanesociety.org/emailme)