

HOMELESS ANIMALS RESCUE TEAM

2009 Annual Report

OVERVIEW

The Homeless Animals Rescue Team (HART), a no-kill animal rescue group incorporated in 1990, was founded to give animal rescuers a precious resource, responsible pet owners a viable option, and animals almost certain to be put to death, another chance. **HART** works with local veterinarians, foster homes, kennels, and trainers to temporarily care for animals pending their placement in loving, carefully screened new homes. We have assisted the unwanted, the lost, the sick, the abused, and the dying.

In carrying out our work, **HART** routinely renders assistance to the community. We help people who, due to failing health, financial distress, or other personal circumstances, require assistance with their pets. To the extent possible, **HART** provides resources to help senior citizens and indigent owners keep their companion animals. **HART** also helps those whose circumstances force them to give up a beloved pet, such as those deployed by the military, by placing their pets in foster or permanent homes where they receive loving care for the remainder of their lives. **HART** helps people who themselves rescue an animal in distress but are unable to provide long-term care. By taking these animals into our system for boarding or fostering and eventual adoption, we relieve the rescuers of the emotional burden of placing the animals in a public shelter where they may very likely be put to death. Finally, **HART** helps the community by carefully screening adoption applicants and setting them up for success by adopting the right pets to the right homes.

We continue to play an ever vital role in assisting shelters in and surrounding the DC Metro area by taking dogs and cats from the shelters for re-homing through **HART**. These shelters face a steady stream of unwanted animals and, in the case of many rural shelters, have almost no one who wants to adopt. They are forced to destroy an unacceptable number of healthy, readily adoptable animals each day. Our deepening relationship with shelters throughout Virginia has led to many success stories like this one described in an email we received recently: "... last night we spent much of the trip commenting on the wonders of **HART**. I try so hard to come up with just the right words to let all of you know how much you're appreciated and how important you are to the lives of the Abingdon dogs and cats. Interviewers, fosters, contacts, handlers, those with kind words - all of you do great work and make us feel so welcome. I should also add the admiration I have for all the good you do for so many "non-Abingdon" animals too."

And from some pet-lovers who just got back into dog rescue: "We would not have reentered the rescue world if it had not been for **HART**. A year ago this month we became volunteers with **HART** after Chase stepped out in front of Cheryle at PetCo and said "Take me home". I think he knew what he was doing. He was an ambassador for **HART**."

In addition to young, easily adoptable dogs and cats, **HART** re-homes older, less readily adoptable pets. We also find homes for animals destined for death because of medical or behavioral issues, giving them the medical attention or training they need to get them to their safe and loving forever homes.

Thanks to our strong volunteer base, **HART** operates with extremely modest overhead expenses, 1.8 during the present reporting period. We maintain a minimally-staffed local office, which has proven to be the optimal way of administering our organization by establishing a focal point for executing programs while providing the community convenient access.

This year marked some changes for **HART**. Our office manager moved on to other opportunities but we have hired a Director of Animal Programs and Community Outreach. In this role, the incumbent is working to increase our community and education activities; grow the number of qualified foster homes;

reduce costs for the organization while maintaining our very high standards of care for the animals; and to increase revenue through fund raising so we can save more lives and continue to help the community. The incumbent has dramatically grown the number of volunteer foster homes **HART** has, as well as introduced a number of other cost saving measures. For example, **HART** made great strides this year to control costs by buying our own vaccines, heartworm tests and basic medicines. For most dogs vaccinated or tested **HART** now saves between 15 and 20 dollars per vaccine, which for an adult dog can save \$45 per dog and for puppies can save \$60 per dog. Heartworm tests bought by **HART** save approximately \$30 per dog. With the implementation of **HART** given vaccines **HART** has also created formal vaccination records and implemented a system of scanning and housing vaccination records in a database online to make them accessible to authorized parties at all times. Also, **HART's** Treasurer stepped down this year but another long-time volunteer joined the **HART** Board of Directors and stepped up to take on this role. Medical and boarding expenses remain primary expenditures; training costs are also significant. While these expenses are necessary to operations, we are constantly seeking – and finding – fiscally responsible ways of helping more animals with the resources available through an ever-widening network of partners and relationships, many of whom are volunteer.

THE ANIMALS

HART is one of the few organizations rescuing not only highly adoptable pets, but sick, older, and injured animals. We help both purebred and mixed breed pets. When we rescue litters of puppies and kittens we also help their mothers who, sad to say, are all too often left behind by other organizations and so, are put down. The pets in our charge come to us from wealthy homes where the owners no longer have time for them. They come from incredible poverty where they often have not been fed for days on end. Often, they come to us as strays from no home at all. We have assisted over 3,000 animals this year thanks to our staff, volunteers, and supporters. The stories of these pets are as unique and as vast as the number of people who comprise the wonderful organization that is **HART**.

Each year presents new challenges and new opportunities. In spite of the challenging economy, **HART** continues to thrive. Due to deployment, high home foreclosure rates, high unemployment rates and various other circumstances, large numbers of pets continue to be surrendered to local shelters or directly to **HART**. Yet there is much success. **HART** received this email from a family who adopted a dog from us recently: “. . . We even had his DNA analyzed and apparently he's an AmStaff/German Shorthair Pointer/Australian Shepherd mix...talk about a mutt :) Each day brings more love than the day before, and we wonder how we ever managed without him. Thank you for giving us the best gift in the world. We love you guys and wish you a Merry Christmas!”

And about a cat **HART** relocated this year: “. . . just the sweetest girl, and it's hard to believe that she's been through so many owners and yet retained her excellent disposition. She is full of fun and loves to play with her toys, and she loves her down time too. I call it "lap time", which we have every evening. Suze makes a point of reminding me of her lap time if I tend to get distracted! . . . is the best cat I have ever had. I am ever so grateful to you and to **HART** for allowing us to meet, and for bringing her into my life.” The **HART** team thrives on these kinds of success stories and, we are happy to say, there are indeed many.

HART is frequently contacted by area shelters and wardens when animals are confiscated from breeders and hoarders. On Sunday November 8th, **HART** took in 37 dogs from 5 Missouri puppy mills. This epic cross country dog rescue was coordinated by National Mill Dog Rescue, <http://www.milldogrescue.org/>, who has established an unconventional partnership with these horrible puppy mills to save dogs when their worth to the puppy mill has expired. Of the dogs **HART** saved, many had long standing health problems including a bulldog with life threatening pyometra and a painful hernia and a Wheaton Terrier who had been blinded most likely from urine fumes. As of December, 2009, 29 of the 37 have been adopted.

HOW WE DID IT

We are currently housing our animals in foster homes and in various facilities. Every weekend, **HART** brings an average of 80 dogs to area adoption events, sometimes showing dogs at as many as three locations. Our weekly dog adoption events, coupled with periodic cat adoptions and permanent cage space made available for our cats at PETSMART, allows **HART** to adopt out as many as 20-30 animals in one weekend!

The **HART** Owner Assistance Program (HOAP), introduced in 2006, assists families who decide they can no longer keep their pets. Current owners bring their pets to weekly adoption events while **HART** searches for new homes for these unwanted pets. These animals are posted on our website and we follow the same rigorous adoption process to find them carefully screened new homes. Win/Win. **HART** eliminates the cost it would have incurred for housing these animals and reduces the stress to the pets by relocating them directly into their new forever homes and the owners are spared the pain of having to give their pets to a shelter where the pets likely would be euthanized.

We also have a network of community supporters at the “grass roots” of rescue, local and rural shelter employees. **HART** is one of the few rescue groups known to take senior pets or those with medical conditions. While we cannot save them all, we help as many as we possibly can, often scrambling for resources (money and space). We gravitate toward those who need our help the most, not only the most readily adoptable.

We work closely with other rescue groups, too. Combined, we exponentially increase the good that can be done for the community. In January of this year, **HART** began making a weekly trek to Charlottesville, VA to pick up and transport dogs from Abingdon, VA. Early on in this endeavor, **HART** decided to offer this transport service to any other rescue in the area. Since January **HART** has transported dogs for many other rescues including Lab Rescue, Oldies But Goodies, Friends of Homeless Animals, Lost Dog Rescue, Pet Connect, K9 Lifesavers and more. This has resulted in many more lives saved (probably twice as many) and strong bonds between **HART** and the above mentioned groups.

HART had some great exposure this year! We worked with Holden Kushner of 106.7 “The Fan”, <http://www.cbssports.com/local/dc/radio/schedules/kushner-show>, on a food drive surrounding the Redskins/Philadelphia game last month. Holden collected about 25 bags of premium food and talked about **HART** on the radio for the 7 days leading up to the food drive.

In addition, Fox news and NBC morning news acknowledged **HART**'s efforts with spots on their network. Visit <http://www.myfoxdc.com/dpp/news/local/dogs-saved-from-missouri-puppy-mills-110909> to see Fox News' coverage of the puppy mill dog rescue effort.

FUNDING

United Way and CFC have always played a critical role in our operations in that campaign income is the only source of funding that comes in dependably 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, each fall we avidly encourage our supporters to designate **HART** as their United Way/CFC Campaign beneficiary. Via our in-house United Way campaign, we encourage the small number of paid employees we have to give back to **HART** through the United Way.

Our 19th Annual Art and Silent Auction this Spring netted over \$32,000.00, thanks to our loyal supporters and to our use of the beautiful venue at the Westfields Marriott for the second year. The Marriott's generosity in donating so many event “extras” certainly contributed to the evening's success. We had two other tremendously successful fund-raising events this year, **HART**'s Fourth Annual Dogwalk and Homecoming in October raised over \$23,000.00. This event just keeps growing and adds to the desperately needed funds that are always stretched before the holidays. As always, it was wonderful to see so many of the dogs **HART** has helped into new homes over the years. This event has also proven invaluable for strengthening life-long ties between adopters and our organization as well as generating fresh interest in

volunteering to help the cause. Our annual Holiday Party, held this year at the home of two long-time volunteers, brought in more than \$22,000 as attendees stepped forward, even in the down economy and with the poor weather that evening, to support HART's work. The Donate a Car Program and several other fundraisers held in conjunction with area businesses throughout the year continue to help support our efforts, too.

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

OUR FUTURE

As our pool of volunteers continues to grow, thanks to our ever-increasing visibility in the community, our website, and our presence on sites such as www.facebook.com, www.volunteermatch.org, and www.volunteerfairfax.org; we look for a continued increase in the public services we offer our community. We continue to benefit from the pro bono services of professional publication designers, event planners, attorneys, computer systems analysts, and so many others. We appreciate the services of our current accountant who has worked with us at a substantially reduced rate. **HART** profusely thanks her. Because she will be leaving us in the coming year, we are looking for a new volunteer or inexpensive accountant to assist with our bookkeeping.

Our cutting edge website continues to draw well-deserved kudos from the community. **HART's** webmasters are true treasures who are constantly finding ways to make our website an ever more invaluable tool in our work. Again this year they leveraged free online services such as Google Maps and Wordpress blogs to effectively support our search for the occasional animal getting away from his/her foster or new adoptive home.

We are very proud of our redesigned web site: www.HART90.org. In addition to our website, **HART** is increasingly making use of other online media such as Facebook and blogging.

HART continues to vehemently advocate for the necessity of spay/neuter. The number of animals killed due to overpopulation, as we see daily in our work with rural and local shelters, is such an avoidable tragedy, one that can be entirely eradicated by mandated spay/neuter. To that end, all of **HART's** print and ad media clearly state a pro-spay/neuter message.

With our very small but fantastic staff, our solid core of volunteers, an active presence in the community, an increasing online media presence, and especially, our fervent desire to prevent or alleviate suffering of cats and dogs wherever we find it, **HART** looks forward to thriving, growing, and continued success in 2011. We know, with the help of our volunteers, supporters, and staff, we can make a huge difference -- one life at a time.

HART Board of Directors

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HART

PO Box 7261

FAIRFAX STATION, VA 22039-7261

703-691-4278 (HART)

www.hart90.org

HART is a United Way/Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) charitable organization.

United Way #8363, CFC #75875, CVC #8183