



2013 STATE OF THE ANIMALS





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By Lisa LaFontaine, President and CEO

INTRODUCTION

The Washington Humane Society (WHS) remains *the* open access shelter for animals in our nation's capital, as it has since we were chartered by the United States Congress in 1870. For 143 years, it has been our proud duty to protect all animals in the District from cruelty and harm. Over the past year, WHS has made significant strides in fulfilling and expanding this mission.

THE ANIMALS WE SERVE AND PROTECT

The animals we care for come to us from a variety of sources. Some are surrendered to us by owners who are no longer able or willing to care for them. Many are dogs and cats picked up by good Samaritans who see them running loose, or in distress, and bring them to one of our shelters. And in thousands of cases, our animal control officers respond to calls where animals of almost any species imaginable are in a place where they shouldn't be – running loose on a city street; trapped in a Metro tunnel or a tree; having gotten into someone's home; or having been injured in an accident. These officers rescue domestic animals as well as the many varieties of urban wildlife who share our living environment. Working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, this division responded to nearly 13,000 calls over the past year, averaging 35 calls each day.

With approximately 20% of all call volume relating to wildlife issues, WHS added the critical staff position of Wildlife Specialist this year. She has been exceptionally productive in responding to a variety of scenarios involving misplaced deer, squirrels, raccoons, and birds, among others. We were there to respond when a deer was frightened and trapped in a parking garage downtown, and we are there when residents call to have a squirrel or bird removed safely from their residence.

Our humane law enforcement officers rescue animals from a situation where they are being neglected or treated cruelty. This team responded to nearly 1,400 calls in the past year. In many cases we are able to provide resources or education to allow the owner to more appropriately care for their animal. Yet there are a number of cases where we have to seize animals when we suspect abuse. In those situations we work to build a strong case to bring justice to animals by arresting and prosecuting their abusers. Through our work and advocacy we are seeing an increased level of attention to animal cruelty– and stricter sentences in cases where cruelty is proven. Last year, Sean Delontay Branch was sentenced to 180 days in jail, a \$450 fine, and mandatory mental health and anger management treatment after we collaborated with the Metropolitan Police Department to arrest Branch for the murder of six-month-old puppy, King Tut. While at first glance this sentence may seem “light,” we celebrate this conviction as a

sign of progress in our courts' prosecution of animal cruelty cases. In this particular instance, the presiding Judge sentenced Branch to 30 days beyond the recommended sentence for his heinous crime.

PREPARING OUR ANIMALS FOR NEW HOMES

Of utmost importance to our mission is reuniting lost animals with their families, and rehabilitating stray animals to the highest health and behavior standards as they prepare for new homes. Every interaction with an animal in our adoption center is designed to help them become more prepared for a healthy, happy life in a new home.

Under the guidance of our Medical Director, WHS performs routine vaccinations, sterilization surgeries, microchipping, and emergency care for all animals before they are made available for adoption. We treat many medical conditions and perform minor surgery in house, but also rely on a dedicated community of veterinarians to help with more complex interventions. Our dedicated Sophie's Fund exists to help pay for the cost of extraordinary medical care for animals who are sick, injured or suffering from a congenital condition.

Our behavior and shelter teams assess the behavior and temperaments of our animals. Some are made immediately available for adoption. Others require some sort of rehabilitation to help them transition more successfully into a new home, and many of our staff members and volunteers play a role in behavior enrichment. At WHS we do not put time limits on any animal's stay, and our longer residing pets receive on-going attention from staff and volunteers as they work to refine basic skills and take on more advanced training.

Additional socialization time for cats takes place in Kitty City, where cats live and play communally, and in individual cat cages where we place toys, hammocks, scratching pads and other enrichment toys. Our dogs go on walks, decompress in office space with our caring staff members, and attend training classes. A majority of our dogs get to stretch their legs and burn off energy in active play groups, where 8-10 dogs will run loose in our multiple fenced in yards, exercising and socializing. Many of our dogs are invited to run with the volunteer-driven People and Animal Cardio Klub (PACK) each weekend. The PACK is a dynamic running group made up of 200+ District residents who regularly run with our adoption dogs through Rock Creek Park, Hains Point and around the National Mall.

While many pets wait for their forever families at one of our two adoption centers, WHS relies on the support of our community members who open their hearts and homes to foster animals. Foster volunteers are vital members of the WHS community, as they help alleviate overcrowding in our adoption centers and provide a calmer environment for pets that may not do as well in the shelter environment. In particular, animals who are orphaned or nursing; those who have had medical procedures or have other specialized conditions; and those who are especially stressed in the shelter environment go to foster homes. Our foster network is growing and often times this network – a virtual WHS shelter – is caring for up to 400 animals at a time.

Above all, we treat each animal as an individual and assess their particular needs so that we can work to make them attractive to potential adopters, and ensure that each one of our pets is ready for their new home environment.

ADOPTION ACTIVITIES

The Washington Humane Society has continually evolved to set the highest standards and meet the expanding needs of our community. Our goal is to find homes for 100% of the temperamentally sound animals, and we won't rest until we achieve this goal. In the past year, we increased our adoption rate by over 12.5%. We accept all animals, and never turn an animal away because of breed, age, or any other reason. We are proud that each year we expand our view of what is possible.

In the past year, a pair of elderly Chihuahuas – Porgy and Bess – came to us after they were found running loose, following a runner at the National Arboretum. At 12 years old, Porgy was suffering from Glaucoma. Her age and condition would have resulted in the doors being closed to her at many animal welfare agencies. At WHS, however, we gave both dogs a full medical examination, developed a protocol to improve their health, and then started to promote the pair for adoption. After they were featured as our “Pets of the Week” and made a joint appearance on television, they found their forever home, together, with a loving couple who embraces their quirks.

In the past fiscal year we worked to increase adoptions by an astonishing 12.5%, sending over 2,500 animals happily home with their new families. Cats and kittens remain the most populous residents at our two adoption facilities (New York Avenue, NE and Georgia Avenue, NW), contributing to more than 50% of all animals adopted. For adopters looking to double their love, we will always offer the opportunity to adopt two cats out to the same home for one adoption fee. At our New York Avenue Adoption Center, many cats reside in our newly renovated “Kitty City” where they live and play communally, thanks to the generosity of volunteers who undertook this project and completed it on Christmas Day. WHS continues to honor our active and veteran military families by offering these heroes 50% off of all adoption fees, for all animals, at all times.

In addition to our Adoption Centers, WHS animals are routinely featured on our blog, social media pages, regularly scheduled television appearances, and at a variety of adoption events throughout the area, both on and off our *Adopt Force One* mobile adoption vehicle. We know that *DC loves DC animals* and are proud to have relationships with our local professional sports teams. We are continuing the tradition of *Pups in the Park* with the Washington Nationals, and look forward to the fall to continue our new partnership with the Washington Redskins who hosted *Adopt Force One* at five Redskins home games last season. These partnerships allow us to show off our hometown pride and the wonderful animals we have available for adoption at the same time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To solve overpopulation for the long-term, we have to focus on dramatically slowing the influx of animals into the shelter system. Our Spay and Neuter Clinic was established to enable us to partner more effectively with the community to sterilize pets as well as outdoor cats who thrive in the mid-Atlantic climate and contribute dramatically to feline overpopulation. Because we do such a large number of surgeries we are able to keep the quality high and the cost of the services low – and therefore, more available. We routinely perform no cost sterilization surgeries for DC community cats through our successful CatNiPP program, following the trap-neuter-return model. DC residents also rely on our low cost services for spay/neuter procedures and vaccinations for their pets. We are proud to

offer these services at our National Capital Area Spay and Neuter Center for just a fraction of the cost a private veterinarian practice might charge.

WHS offers a variety of avenues for community engagement, because we know there are thousands of good hearted citizens who want to contribute to our mission of bringing people and animals together. Established in 1987, our humane education program encourages students to speak up for animals rather than accept the role of passive observers. Students participating in the program learn the importance of contacting WHS when an animal – any animal – needs help, and they become aware of the numerous responsibilities associated with caring for a companion animal. In just the last fiscal year, we reached over 2,600 students through free-of-charge humane education and outreach efforts. The students we serve often develop an interest in a career serving animals, and many choose to volunteer at our locations. Some have become outstanding members of our team.

We are particularly proud of our volunteer presence. With 300+ volunteers at any given time, our community members routinely open their homes and hearts to foster animals who are struggling in the shelter system and need a home environment in which to recover. Volunteers also help us with our important work, whether it is training the animals in our care as they prepare for life with their new families, cleaning kennels, cuddling cats, walking dogs, stuffing envelopes, and much, much, more. Our dedicated volunteers are the heart and soul of this organization. Without their passion for animals and their willingness to help at a moment's notice, we could not begin to achieve all that we do. When one of our animals went missing this year, our volunteers came together to quickly post flyers, share information on their social media pages, and hit the streets searching throughout the night until they ultimately helped us find her.

Additional volunteers are ready to chip in for special events as organizers and charitable donors, joining the thousands of generous supporters who enable us to fulfill our critical mission. Nearly 50% of our annual budget depends upon individual contributions and participation in fundraising events. The annual *Sugar & Champagne Affair*, *Bark Ball*, *Fashion for Paws*, and the *Walk for the Animals* have become DC institutions, garnering new attendees each year to celebrate and support District animals.

Furthermore, WHS maintains positive relationships with partner animal welfare agencies, both in and out of the national capital area. As *the* open access animal shelter in the region, we often look to outside rescue groups, including breed specific rescue groups, for assistance in finding the numerous animals who come through our doors their loving, permanent homes. WHS has partnered with various groups over the years, including Animal Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen, New York, where 106 baby chicks now reside after they were accidentally shipped to Washington, DC this past January. In addition, we have a new relationship with the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society in Massachusetts. After hearing that this organization had capacity to take in adoptable cats, WHS was soon heading north with 18 cats ready for their forever homes.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

The State of the Animals in the District of Columbia is promising. But there is much left for us to accomplish. We will never stop providing care and comfort for the animals who need it, and for the

residents who rely on us. But we cannot complete our mission without the support of our community. In order to continue to provide our two-legged and four-legged residents with the same high quality services they expect of us, I call on our supporters to consider what more we can each do for the animals.

As WHS prepares for the largest campaign in our modern history, a campaign that will transform our offerings in new and innovative ways, our animals need you now more than ever. In the not too distant future, WHS will build a beautiful facility in which to centralize all of our activities into a Community Animal Care, Education and Adoption Center.

For today, however, our adoption centers remain filled beyond capacity with loving pets in need of great homes. Our medical services team remains in need of critical funds to cover the costs for often expensive emergency procedures. Our behavior and training staff still need additional volunteers willing to spare a few hours of their time to take dogs for walks and practice basic commands. Our neighbors and neighborhoods remain in need of education on how to care for pets responsibly, and our adoption centers remain in need of helpers to keep everything clean and comfortable. There are countless ways to help the animals, and we hope that everyone in the region who cares about animals, their future and the work we do will get involved and reach deeply to do the most you can to help us in the years ahead.

GET INVOLVED

Visit www.washhumane.org to give online, apply to volunteer or foster, view adoptable animals, learn more about our programs and services, and much, much, more.



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