

Fairfax County Animal Shelter 2017 Annual Report



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Director's Summary

What I love most about our shelter today is the internal cultural shift that has taken hold – the exhilarating, pervasive feeling among staff and volunteers that almost nothing is impossible. We have figured out how to expand our shelter and its resources beyond our walls and County-funded budget. And the answer to “you can’t do that” is a resounding “yes, we can!”

“Hip replacement?” We can do that. “Hyperthyroid cat?” We can help with that. “Horrible teeth, you say?” We’ve got a program for that! “Community cat issue?” Check out our community TNR program. “Jumpy, mouthy, under socialized dog?” A little harder, and it will take a little longer, but today, that is not a death sentence either.



We have a fantastic veterinary program; a compassionate, hard-working Friends group to fund the majority of our special medical and behavioral rehabilitation programs; over 300 active volunteers and fosters; dedicated, compassionate and talented staff; a developing behavior/rehabilitation program; a growing enrichment program; open adoptions; creative social media; rescue partners; proactive redemptions; and equally important, a hard-working leadership team, with the will and commitment to treat every animal as an individual and do all that we can for each of them.

Our animal shelter is very different from what it was when the West Ox facility was built in 1975 – still then the era of the “dog pound” and the “dog catcher.” There is no question that Fairfax County has arrived at the day of our strategic vision, when no adoptable, treatable or rehabilitatable companion animal “will be euthanized for lack of space or lack of other resources.” But we also recognize one of the greatest challenges for public shelters today: fulfilling our responsibility for the safety of people and pets in our communities while maintaining our focus on animal welfare.

People often ask, “Are you no-kill”? The answer is “YES, BUT” -- not by the literal definition of the term. National groups fully recognize the “no-kill” terminology is confusing: “no” is an absolute. In reality, “no-kill” does not actually mean that no animal is ever euthanized – even though that is what it sounds like. And so, we feel compelled to explain rather than claim a status which seems contradictory for a public facility. We have all the programs for success, but success for every animal is not always within our control.

We euthanize for end-of-life when citizens bring their pets to the shelter and it is clear that euthanasia is the humane option for the pet’s condition and quality of life; we euthanize when it is medically recommended by our veterinarian as the humane option for a very ill or medically untreatable pet; and we euthanize for behavior, for dogs who pose a risk to the safety of people or other pets.



For some animal advocates, this last category does not meet their standard of “no-kill” because there is a level of subjectivity with regard to tolerance for risk. To our critics, I can only say that the responsibility for the difficult decision of euthanasia for dogs we believe pose too great a risk for people, or for other pets, is one that we take very seriously. We go to great lengths to ensure it is the last available option. It is a process of weighing interventions and outcomes until we get to the point where we are comfortable with a clear decision, whatever that may be.

The goal is always to ensure that every dog has the opportunity for the best outcome. Private groups can say no to dogs not safe for adoption. But public shelters are mandated to accept all homeless, abandoned, or unwanted dogs, regardless of age or temperament. Age is easy – if the pet is not suffering, has a good quality of life and can be medically managed, we can do that through excellent veterinary care, fosters, “fospice,” and/or special adoptions.



Temperament and behavioral challenges are more difficult. The consequences of a wrong decision can be devastating for a person, for someone’s pet, for a family. Even in this task we take every possible step to ensure that every dog has the opportunity to demonstrate its potential as a predictable, manageable companion. The shelter environment is stressful for many animals and there is no scientific way to predict all future behaviors. Our evaluation,

rehabilitation, and placement process has many steps and utilizes a variety of resources. But for some dogs, the sad reality is that they cannot live safely in the community and that becomes our most difficult job – to identify those that pose a serious risk to people or other pets, to acknowledge that reality after all options have been explored, and to accept our responsibility not just to that dog, but to the community as a whole.

When I look back over 2017 it makes me think of putting the final pieces in a Rubik’s cube puzzle that you’ve worked long and hard to solve. Sometimes those final pieces are the most challenging and sometimes they even feel impossible. But if the key elements of the puzzle have been found and you are committed to the solution, it shouldn’t be long before you have all of it.



Personally, my resolve to champion solutions for our challenges has never been stronger, nor the vision more clear. I consider it a privilege to be here, to support the staff and leadership of this fantastic organization, and the wonderful work they do.

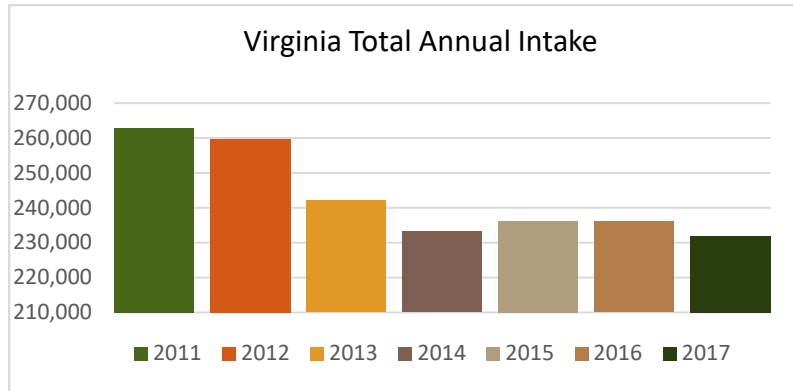
Karen Diviney

Director, Fairfax County Animal Shelter

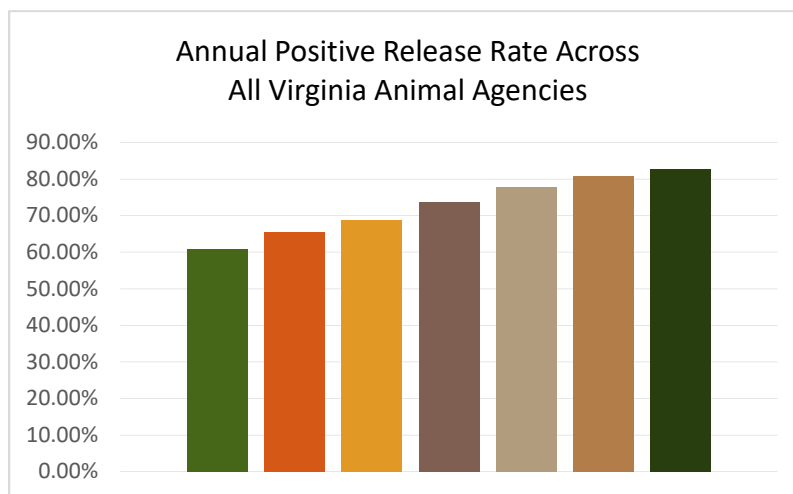


State of the Commonwealth

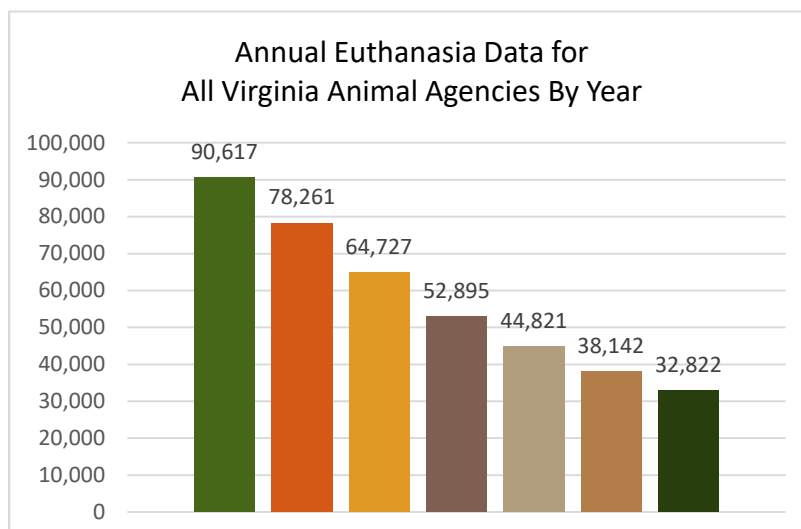
As part of the annual reporting requirements, all public and private shelters and home-based rescue organizations in Virginia are required to report their intake and outcome numbers for all animals who enter their care. When we analyzed the data for 2017, we were very pleased to see the whole of Virginia making excellent progress towards lower euthanasia rates and higher live release rates.



The number of animals entering Virginia animal agencies has decreased almost 12% in the last seven years.



The positive release rate across all Virginia animal agencies has increased 22% in the last seven years.



Annual euthanasia for animals entering Virginia animal agencies has decreased almost 64% from 2011 to 2017.

Compassionate Care is the Standard

We are Fairfax County's only open-access animal shelter, serving a community of 1.1 million people spread over 400 square miles. We take in owner surrendered companion animals, stray animals in need, and animals who have been seized or taken into custody by Animal Protection Police. We accept all companion animals from Fairfax County who are in need of our help, regardless of health, age, temperament, or history, and we do not euthanize for lack of space or length of time. Our staff is comprised of three teams: Customer Care, Outreach, and Animal Care. In addition, we have a very vibrant volunteer and foster program which allows us to extend our capacity for care beyond the shelter's walls!



By the Numbers

Each and every animal welfare organization in the State of Virginia, whether a shelter or a rescue, is required to report intake and outcome data annually to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in the format the State Veterinarian prescribes. Our 2017 information can be found at: <https://arr.va-vdacs.com/Home/SelectReportNew>



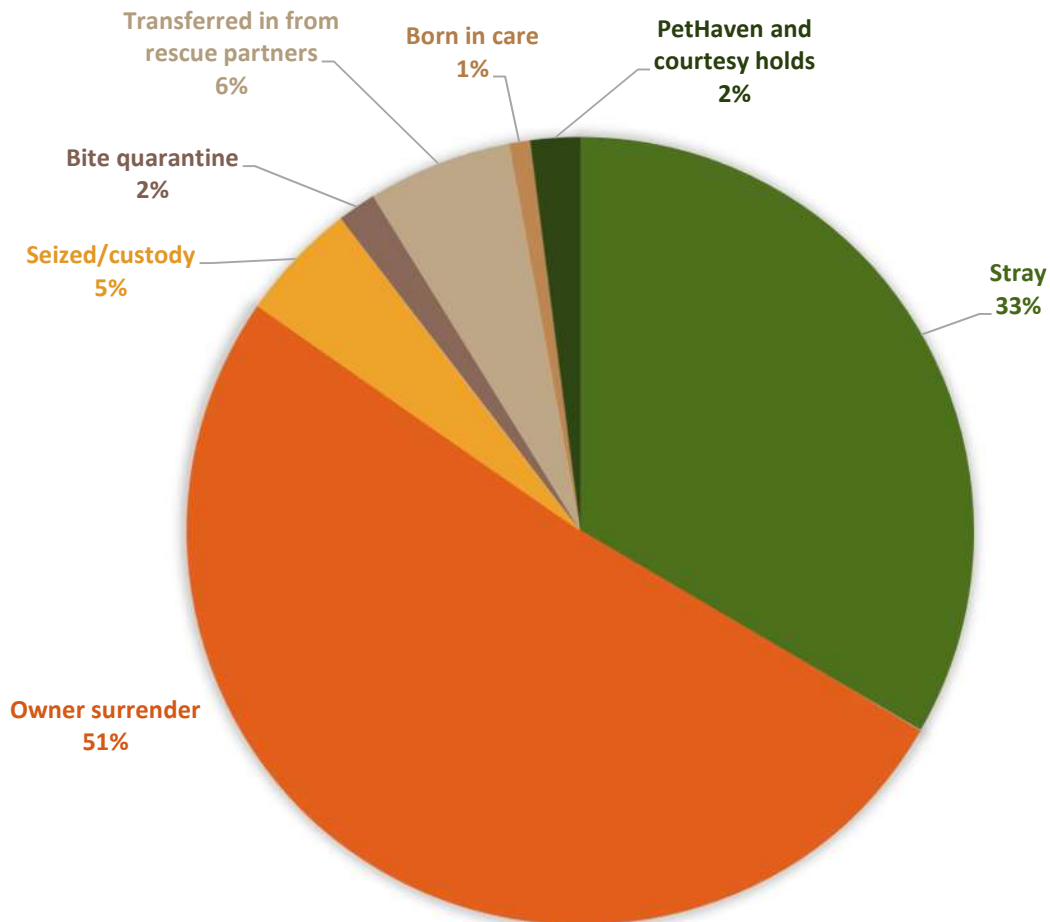
To obtain the raw data live release rate: (Returned-to-owner + adopted + transferred in-state + transferred out-of-state) / (annual total – number on hand at year's end). **Our 2017 live release rate using raw data is 91.3%.**

The Asilomar Accord is a standardized format that many animal welfare organizations prefer to use. This method of calculation allows shelters to reduce their overall numbers by the total number of owner-requested euthanasia (typically, end-of-life) they performed. In 2017, the Fairfax County Animal Shelter provided 103 owner-requested euthanasias.

When this number of owner-requested end-of-life euthanasia is subtracted from our total, the 2017 live release rate becomes 94.0%.

2017 Fairfax County Animal Shelter Intakes

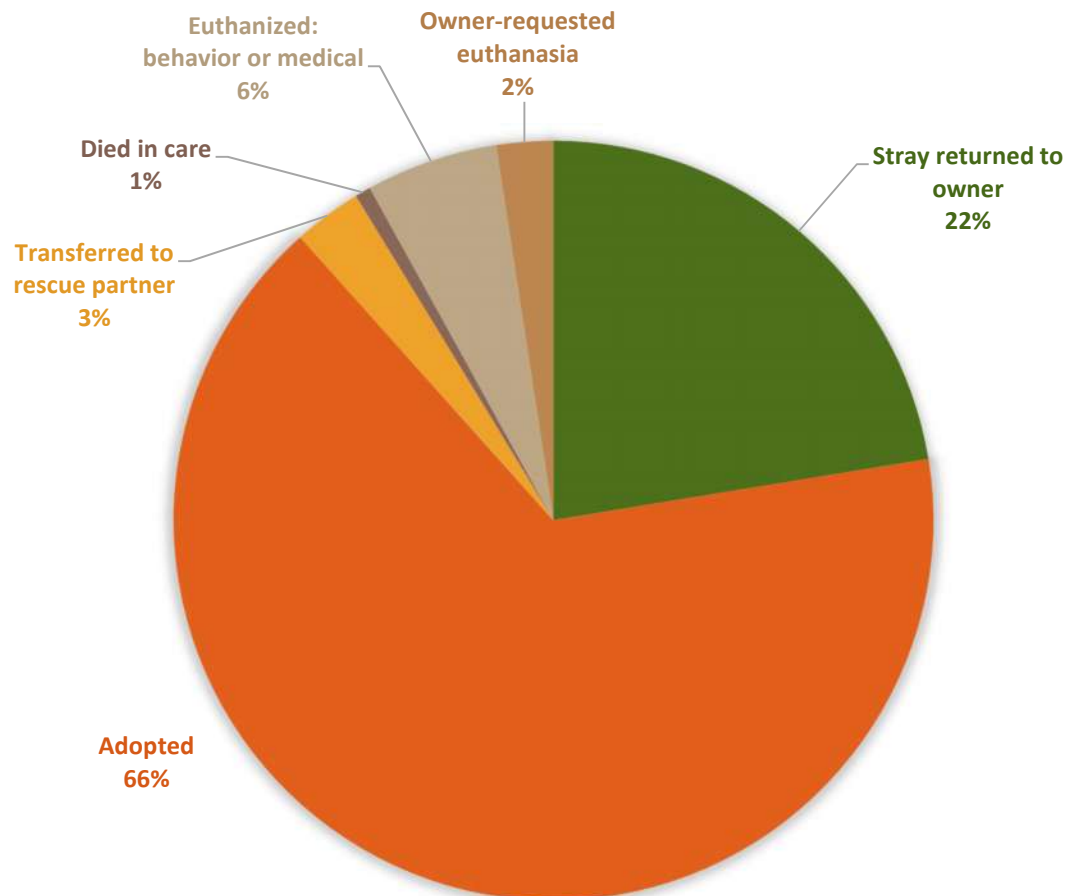
- 178 animals were on hand on January 1, 2017.
- We received a total of just over 4,000 dogs, cats, small animals, and poultry.
- 2,185 were surrendered by owners who could no longer care for them:
 - 832 dogs
 - 729 cats
 - 624 small animals and poultry
- 1,425 were picked up as stray or abandoned.
- 296 arrived as custody/courtesy holds (i.e. PetHaven) or were seized by Animal Protection Police.
- 68 were held on bite quarantines.
- 252 were transferred in from other shelter facilities or rescue partners.
- 37 were born in our care.



2017 ANIMAL INTAKE TYPES

2017 Fairfax County Animal Shelter Outcomes

- 2831 animals were adopted:
 - 988 dogs
 - 1,098 cats
 - 745 small animals and poultry
- 962 stray animals were returned to their owners.
- 125 animals were transferred to rescue partners:
 - 44 dogs
 - 45 cats
 - 36 small animals and poultry
- 29 animals died in our care.
- 241 animals were euthanized for medical or behavioral reasons.
- 103 animals were end-of-life euthanasia, at the request of their owners.



2017 ANIMAL OUTCOME TYPES

Continuing Life-Saving Care

Spay & Neuter

We are committed to ensuring that all dogs, cats, and rabbits are spayed/neutered prior to adoption; this is essential for reducing shelter intake, and providing a better quality of life to each individual pet. 436 dogs, 635 cats, and 82 rabbits were spayed/neutered at our shelter in 2017!



Dental Care

Our dental care program continues to be very important, and we were able to provide 28 dogs and cats with grade 3 or higher dental disease with cleanings, to improve their quality of life and their overall health!



Parasite Prevention

Continuing on the results and success of our parasite prevention program launch in 2016, every dog, cat, and rabbit who enters the shelter receives parasite control and prevention medication as soon as they arrive.



Specialized Surgeries

Thanks to the generous support of our Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, we've been able to continue providing often expensive, but very necessary, specialized surgeries – such as TPLO, amputations, removal of bladder stones and foreign bodies, and more – to the shelter pets who need them, allowing those pets to live a happier, healthier, more mobile life with their new families. Thanks you FFCAS!



In-Shelter Programs

Our goal is to get shelter pets adopted into great homes as quickly as possible, but they do still spend some time in our care! We like to think of our shelter as a summer camp, where pets have fun and get to meet lots of new friends and learn some new skills while they wait for their forever family to adopt them. Our staff and volunteers implement creative ideas to keep shelter pets happy, healthy, and engaged during their time with us.

Training Program

Thanks to the generous funding of the Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, some of our more behaviorally-challenging dogs are nominated by staff for either pre- or post-adoption training. Some dogs go to a week-long “boot camp” at Deepwood Canine Consultants prior to adoption. This helps give them the foundation of behavior and skills they need to be ready for adoption. Sometimes that means a dog is extra energetic, jumpy and mouthy, and not great on a leash; sometimes it means that a dog is very undersocialized and shy with new people, experiences, and/or places. After a week at “boot camp” we know a lot more about each dog and what they need to continue their good progress. We are thankful that the FFCAS funds these critical programs that allow us to set our shelter dogs – and their new adoptive families – up for success!



Enrichment Program

Our shelter pets get lots of time to stretch their legs outside their kennel, but we also give them plenty to do when they're hanging out inside their kennels, too! The shelter's enrichment program, spearheaded by our Caretaking Team, includes anything that physically or mentally stimulates our animals. (It's pretty fun for our staff, too!) These include:

- Kong toys and Nylabones: staff and volunteers smear peanut butter on these popular dog enrichment items, to give the dogs an afternoon snack.
- Audio books: a soothing voice streaming through the kennels on a lazy day helps our shelter pets relax.
- Bubbles and laser pointers: cats (and dogs) like to chase these fun items around!
- Scent-based enrichment: sprays in the kennel areas give dogs new and exciting smells.
- Puzzle feeders: these make getting treats a real challenge, which exercises our shelter pets' minds as they try to figure them out! That includes edible puzzle treat salads for small animals, too!
- Habitat enrichment for small animals: whether it's a box to chew on or hide in, or extra bedding materials that our small animals have to collect from around their cage, we try to make our small animals' cages exciting and interesting.
- Frozen treats: the caretaking team make all kind of frozen goodies, such as chicken-and-pumpkin or oatmeal-and-banana popsicles, in a variety of sizes for our dogs.
- Play groups! What better exercise and mental stimulation than running around with a dog pal or two!



Expanding Our Reach

Fairfax County is very fortunate to have the resources to help homeless pets, and to be in an area with such an engaged, animal-loving community. Sometimes we find ourselves in the unusual but amazing predicament of having too *few* pets in our shelter! We recognize that there are still many areas right here in Virginia and other nearby states where pets lose their lives due to lack of space or resources, and we are committed to helping those shelters save more lives

and get sustainable programs in place to help increase their live release rates in the long run. We've also found that visitors and adopters like having more pets to meet and choose from when they consider adoption!



Rescue Partner Transfer Program

With a clear set of transfer in guidelines in place, we have partnered with other shelters to transfer in dogs, cats, rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, and even goats who are in need of a new venue to find their forever family. In 2017, we transferred in a total of 248 pets, which gave our rescue partners a little more space to help their community's pets, and gave our community more great pets to choose from when adopting!



Hurricane Dogs and Kittens

2017 was quite the year for catastrophic weather events, and many pets as well as people were affected. In partnership with other local shelters and rescues, we were proud to be part of a regional effort to assist dogs and cats from shelters from the southern states that were affected by the slew of hurricanes. By transferring them in to our shelter to get them out of the path of danger, we were able to find them forever homes. We even had the 'purricane' kittens create some one-of-a-kind artwork when they arrived, to memorialize their stay with us before they were adopted!



Outreach Programs

Our in-house volunteer program and our foster program continue to be exceptionally robust and help us serve the pets in our care and the visitors to our shelter even better, and the Humane Education program has blossomed in 2017 into an incredibly vibrant program, as well!



In-House Volunteer Program

Our volunteers come to our shelter every day to perform a variety of essential tasks, including: helping get shelter dogs outside and cleaning kennels; allowing shelter cats time outside their condos and making good matches with adopters; ensuring small animals get fresh greens and time to stretch their legs and be cuddled; assisting with processing adoptions and answering questions; taking professional photos of available and soon-to-be available shelter pets; helping create amazing decorations for adoption events; and the ever-present and super-necessary job of making sure we have enough clean dishes and laundry! In 2017, a wonderful 301 volunteers contributed a whopping 33,750 hours to the shelter!!



Foster Program

The foster program is truly critical as we work to expand the shelter beyond the walls of our physical building. Fosters take the most needy shelter pets into their homes, to allow them the time and space to decompress from stress, heal and recover from surgery or illness, be fed around the clock if they're a neonatal kitten, or just get a break from being at the shelter. In 2017, we asked for fosters 1,406 times, and our foster volunteers responded "yes!" A total of 266 fosters gave 28,523 hours to caring for the shelter's pets in their own homes!



Humane Education

In early 2017, a new Humane Educator took over this much-needed outreach program and went from 0 to 60 in no time flat! The shelter is proud to offer educational programs for the youth of Fairfax County, including: "What is an Animal Shelter?," "Animal Cruelty Prevention," "Wildlife in the Community," "Pet Overpopulation: Spay and Neuter," and others. Over 20 volunteers have now been trained to assist with Humane Education presentations, and 2017 was an incredibly busy year! A whopping 77 offsite presentations were given at local schools, summer camps, and the juvenile detention center. We also offer onsite programs, including seasonal and specialty programs such as "The Benefits of Bats" and "Arctic Animals," and 17 such programs were given in 2017, right here in our shelter. And if you attended an event around Fairfax County, you may have seen our bright blue table! We were at thirteen events, including Wag

Fest, Pet Fiesta, KidFest, and Celebrate Fairfax, often with adoptable shelter dogs. We're looking forward to continuing this amazing outreach program in 2018!



Staff Development

We like to stay on the forefront of the best practices of animal sheltering, and one way we do that is by having our staff attend various local and national conferences. In 2017, staff from all levels and areas of the organization attended a total of five conferences – including one hosted locally by HSUS that our entire staff attended. We learned lots of great information and ideas to bring back to our shelter!

We also take the opportunity to recognize the excellent contributions of our staff:

- Julie Schwartz was selected to receive an Outstanding Performance Award from Fairfax County. This award recognizes employees “who perform the duties and responsibilities of their position in an outstanding manner and whose work generally is well above expectations.” Julie is known for her detailed work, best illustrated by examples of some of her exhaustive research to reunite lost pets with their families. Her efforts have successfully and joyfully reunited many pets, including one little dog who had been missing for seven months and another dog who had somehow traveled 900 miles to end up in our shelter! Julie’s consistent quality of work and her willingness to go above and beyond for the people and pets of Fairfax County, as well as her patient, kind, and thorough nature make her a very valued and appreciated member of our team!
- At the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies conference, the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, Fairfax County Animal Protection Police, Fairfax County Police Department, Dr. Broadhurst, and the Commonwealth Attorney Ryan Bredemeier were presented with the VFHS Advocacy Award for their combined work on the Dreamy Puppy Case. As part of this case, 46 puppies were seized from a pet shop, and remained in the shelter’s care and received needed medical treatment in foster homes for months while the case was heard in court. The puppies were eventually awarded to the county and all adopted into wonderful homes, and the pet shop closed down.



Engaging Our Community

Trap, Neuter, Return Program Continues!

Since the Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) program was started in 2008, the shelter has seen a steady decrease in the number of cats and kittens entering our shelter. TNR is the humane, effective, and proactive approach to free-roaming community cats, and it benefits the community and the shelter... and of course, the cats who go through TNR programs! In 2017, 889 cats came through the Fairfax County TNR program, and were spayed/neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned by their caregivers to their outdoor homes where they were trapped. Kittens who are found outdoors and are young enough to be socialized are taken into the shelter to find great homes!



Helping Lost Pets Find Their Families

One of the most amazing stories this year involved staff member Julie, or “Detective Julie” as we call her. No lost report is too old for her to check, and in the case of Sunflower the cat, her dedication paid off! When a ‘found’ report came in for a cat found in a very tight harness, Julie checked back over past months’ lost reports... and found one from one and a half years prior that matched!! Sunflower’s owners lived in another state, but after some coordination including a plane ticket for a cat, they were reunited. Sunflower’s owner said “I honestly will tell you it seems he was out visiting elsewhere for an

afternoon and returned home the same night. He does spend much time on me in between meals as to reassure he is not cat dreaming.” Thanks to Julie, Sunflower is back with his family and they’re all happy as can be.

Low-Cost Rabies Vaccination Clinics

A total of six low-cost rabies vaccination clinics were hosted by the Fairfax County Animal Shelter and Pender Veterinary Centre at various locations within Fairfax County, providing affordable rabies vaccinations to dogs, cats, and ferrets. A total of 503 vaccinations were given: 351 to dogs, 151 to cats, and one to a ferret.



The Impact and Reach of Social Media

Social media continues to be an integral piece of the puzzle as we work to spread the word about adoptable pets, daily happenings, shelter events, a peek behind-the-scenes with our staff and volunteers, and happy updates of shelter alumni. We rely on our volunteers, fosters,

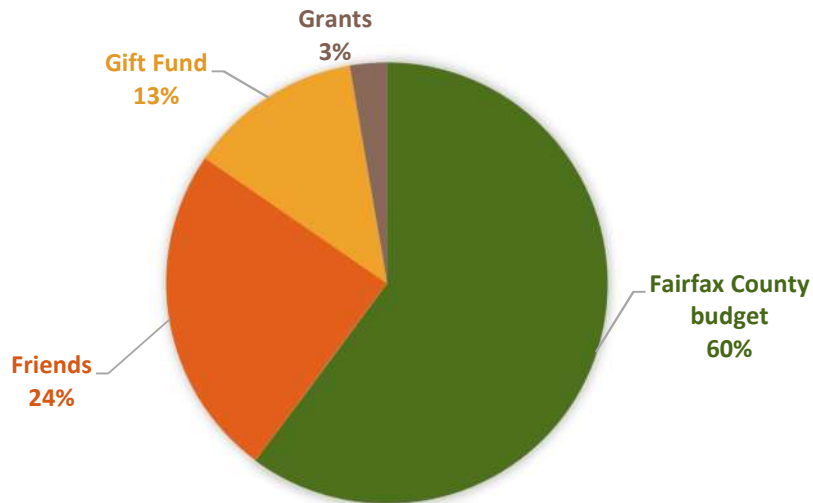
and staff for photos to showcase our shelter pets, and this includes the talented cadre of professional photographers who give their time and skills to help our pets find homes. Not a day goes by when we don't hear a visitor say "Oh I saw this cat on your Facebook page!" or "My friend showed me a photo of this dog!" Most often, those are said when the person is at our counter, working with one of our stellar adoption counselors to finish up the paperwork to take their new pet home! In 2017 we were quite active on Facebook, and the 941 posts featuring photos and stories of our shelter certainly helped their forever families see them – and adopt them!



Funding and Budget

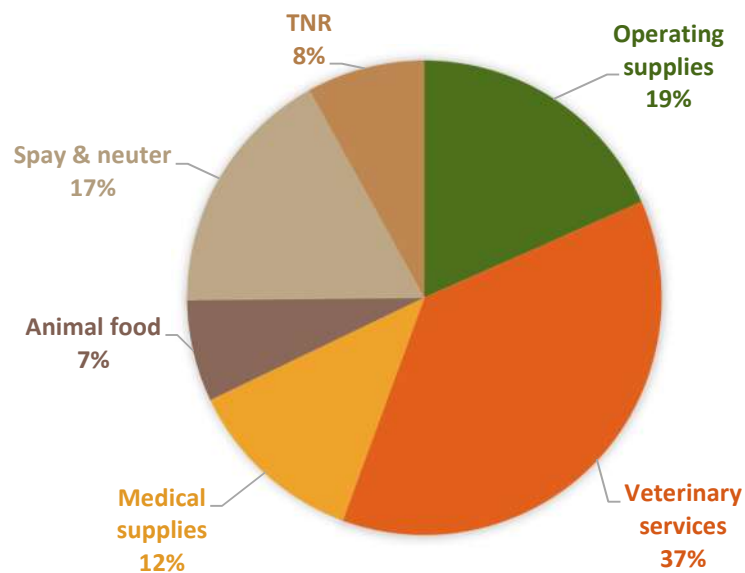
How Shelter Operations Were Funded:

- FY 2017 Fairfax Co budget: \$546,500
- FY 2017 Grants: \$24,500
- FY 2017 Gift Fund: \$115,500
- CY 2017 FFCAS: \$221,900
- **TOTAL: \$908,400**



How the Shelter Allocates Our Operational Budget and Funding:

- Operating supplies: \$166,900
- Veterinary services: \$338,000
- Medical supplies (incl. parasite prevention): \$111,900
- Animal food: \$63,000
- Spay and neuter: \$155,400
- TNR: \$73,200
- **TOTAL: \$908,400**



Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter

The Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter (FFCAS) is the 501(c)3 nonprofit fundraising partner of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. By funding medical and behavioral care for shelter pets, the Friends joins in the Shelter's effort to ensure every shelter pet is offered the best opportunity to find and remain in a loving forever home. In 2017, with the generous support of our animal-loving community, Friends provided \$221,900 in Shelter funding. Friends' 2017 accomplishments include:



- Providing nearly \$12,000 in leashes for dogs, and collars with personalized tags for dogs and cats.
- Support of the Shelter's enrichment program by providing more than \$2,000 toward the program.
- Funding medical treatment for more than 100 shelter pets, amounting to nearly \$50,000.
- Providing nearly \$40,000 to fund spay/neuter surgeries and vaccinations for more than 550 community cats as part of the Shelter's Trap, Neuter, Return program.
- Funding dental care for 28 shelter pets, totaling more than \$14,000, to reduce pain, improve overall health, and promote their adoption.
- Providing more than \$60,000 to fund the Shelter's comprehensive parasite prevention program to all dogs, cats, and rabbits upon intake. In 2017, 998 dogs, 1,198 cats, and 121 rabbits were treated.
- Providing more than \$3,300 in funding for pre- and post-adoption behavioral training for 13 dogs, to set adoptive families and their new dogs up for success.
- Supporting the well-being of senior pets through our 'PawFax Program' by funding medical exams to offer potential adopters a true health overview and supporting the Shelter's hospice foster program by providing more than \$7,000 in care.
- Sponsoring uniquely themed one- to four-day events throughout the year, and featuring donor-selected pets, Friends facilitated the free or half-price adoption of 315 pets.
- Purchasing medical equipment for the Shelter totaling more than \$6,000, most notably an ultrasound machine for the Shelter's vet suite which reduces cost, expedites diagnosis, and eliminates transport-related pet stress.

Keep up with the Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter:

www.ffcas.org www.facebook.com/ffcas
www.instagram.com/ffcas_friends



THANK YOU!!

We pride ourselves on the level of compassionate care we provide to every single animal who enters our shelter every single day. Whether it's a tiny neonatal kitten, a scared stray dog, a pet whose family just can't care for them any longer for whatever reason, a pregnant guinea pig transferred in from another shelter in Virginia, a large number of animals in poor shape from a hoarding case, or any of the other pets from other situations who end up walking or being carried through our doors – we know our shelter is a safe place for animals. And we couldn't do what we do and help the thousands of pets that we help every year without you. If you foster or volunteer with us, donate to the shelter or the Friends of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, share our pets' photos and stories on social media, tell others about us, or especially if you've adopted a pet from our shelter – thank you.



Burton, our cover kitten this year, is the perfect example of how our community and our shelter family comes together every day to save the most vulnerable, and work towards finding them happy endings. Burton was found behind a retaining wall when he was just a few days old, by a very kind person who was just taking his dog on a walk. The photo on the left is Burton when he first arrived to our care: tiny and underdeveloped for his age, weighing only a few ounces, barely the size of a pom pom, requiring around-the-clock care by his foster mom, but with a spunk and a tiny kitten fierceness that couldn't be matched. The photos below are Burton, now named Oliver, happy and healthy and very much loved in his forever family – that just happens to be with the same person (and dog!) who originally found him.

All of us here at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter love what we do for the pets and people of Fairfax County, and we're glad you're all with us on this journey. Thank you for supporting us, and the pets of Fairfax County. Here's to seeing what we can accomplish together in 2018.

