

News Release



AMERICAN HUMANE

Protecting Children & Animals Since 1877

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For Immediate Release

American Humane Awards Grant to the Women's Crisis Center to Help House Pets and Women's Shelters

October 19, 2009 – In an effort to help The Women's Crisis Center, a mission of Mid-Coast Family Services, start the **Pets and Women's Shelters** program, the American Humane Association has awarded them a one-time start up grant of \$2,500. American Humane, the leading organization raising awareness about The Link[®] between animal abuse and other forms of violence, created the first national initiative to promote on-site housing of pets at women's shelters and to acknowledge the human-animal bond in February.

The **Pets and Women's Shelters Program (PAWS)**[™] was created by Allie Phillips, director of public policy for American Humane, who frequently witnessed the pain victims go through when they are forced to stay in abusive situations because they fear for their pets' safety.

Phillips explained, "In the mid-1990s as an assistant prosecutor, my misdemeanor criminal trial docket included many domestic violence cases. Most of those cases never proceeded to trial or resulted in guilty pleas because the victims often failed to appear in court due to fear of retaliation by their batterers. One frequent concern I heard was 'If I testify or if I do not go back to him, he will kill my pet.' In nationally training on the Link for the past four years, and realizing the concerns that family violence shelters might have in housing pets on-site, I decided to do something about it. This has been my passion for years and I'm proud that American Humane supported my vision."

Between 71 and 85 percent of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that a partner had threatened, injured or killed the family pet, according to a study done in 1997. And more often than not, because of few options for safely housing pets from abusive homes, victims feel they have little choice but to stay and subject themselves, their children and their pets to further violence. To date, Texas has only two other PAWS programs. Victoria will now be home to this desperately needed project, as well.

This program will help eliminate what has become known in the pet-rescue world as the "Katrina Effect", referring to the many people who died or were injured because they were not able or allowed to take their pets along when called to evacuate for Hurricane Katrina. It's a heartbreaking fact that in years past, we have had victims of domestic violence refuse to seek shelter because we were not able to accommodate their pets. And many of those who have left pets behind have told horror stories of animal abuse and death. This is terribly traumatic for these victims and leaves horrible scars, especially on the children. The new location for the new shelter has *plenty* of space for us to create a place for beloved pets, so it would be irresponsible of us not to find a way to save these most helpless "family members." We are

thrilled to have the opportunity to rescue *all* victims from abusive homes, thereby also easing our clients' hearts and minds as they try to focus on healing and building a fresh start.

We will be working in partnership with Victoria's "no-kill" animal shelters, the Dorothy H. O'Connor Pet Adoption Center and Adopt-A-Pet, to implement and maintain this program. These MOUs are in-process now, so while all the details of their involvement have not yet been worked out, both directors are ecstatic that this new program will be put into place and are very enthusiastic about lending whatever help they can.

About American Humane Association

Founded in 1877, the American Humane Association is the only national organization dedicated to protecting both children and animals. Through a network of child and animal protection agencies and individuals, American Humane develops policies, legislation, curricula and training programs to protect children and animals from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The nonprofit membership organization, headquartered in Denver, raises awareness about The Link[®] between violence to people and violence to animals, as well as the benefits derived from the human-animal bond. American Humane's regional office in Los Angeles is the authority behind the "No Animals Were Harmed"[®] end-credit disclaimer on film and TV productions, and American Humane's office in Washington, D.C., is an advocate for child and animal protection at the federal and state levels. The American Humane Certified[™] farm animal program is the nation's original independent certification and labeling program for humanely raised food. American Humane meets the strong, comprehensive standards of the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, has been awarded the Independent Charities of America's "Best in America" Seal of Approval, and has met the stringent standards for financial efficiency and accountability required by the American Institute of Philanthropy to qualify as a Top-Rated Charity. Visit www.americanhumane.org to learn more.

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