

# Associated Humane Societies continues to provide the best possible care for our state's lost and forgotten: the animals

It's tough to run an animal shelter in New Jersey these days. Shelters all over the state have suffered harsh and often unwarranted criticism after providing decades of service. The Associated Humane Societies is no different in that regard, but we are different in a more significant aspect: We are going to use the adversity as a springboard to better assist the animals and the townships we support.

We first opened our doors nearly 100 years ago when there were no programs to care for abandoned and abused animals. A handful of dedicated people believing in the sanctity of all life labored tirelessly to save the sick and dying animals of New Jersey. They risked their own safety and health in the process, with little or no thanks, and not much has changed since then. Today, the people who do this hard work remain unappreciated but devoted to the idea that animals are God's creatures and deserve decent treatment.

The only real difference is that now the caregivers are being criticized too. Animal care has finally become an issue of public morality, and you might think that a good thing, but something very curious has happened. It has become the fashionable domain for society's elite and politically correct to dabble in, and that has attracted people to the cause with no previous experience or direct knowledge of animal issues. Suddenly animal shelters everywhere are being told that they've been doing it wrong all these years. Worse yet, some of these novices are using the issue to promote their own agendas, and that's where we draw the line.

Running animal shelters is a dirty business by nature. Animals come in desperately sick, sometimes wild, and often mistreated. Our job is to provide medical treatment, shelter and food in the hope they'll recover. Then we try to find them homes. We have a tremendous track record of success, but the fact is that the sheer number of animals is overwhelming every facility in the state. We have no plans to retreat from the problem, but neither are we about to turn over their fate to the inexperienced or untrained.

Here's what we are doing:

- Reorganizing the Board of Directors
- Accounting procedures have been revised.
- A financial planner has been hired to ensure we reach our goals to improve and expand services to the public.
- A renovation of the Tinton Falls facility is planned to increase space and personnel.
- Professional development activities for our employees are being implemented throughout the system.
- Actively promoting animal welfare legislation at all levels of government.
- New education programs for visitors to Popcorn Park Zoo.
- New tiger and bear compounds are being installed at Popcorn Park Zoo.
- A microchip-based tracking system will be expanded to follow the progress of each animal in all of our facilities.
- A revised computerized animal-sheltering system will be installed in all facilities

We will not shrink from the critics, but instead challenge them and ourselves to providing the best possible care for our state's lost and forgotten: the animals.

We will not dignify empty and false abuse from people of dubious credentials or experience. We merely ask that they show us what they have done that is superior to our efforts so we can match and surpass them in every regard. If one is to be in a spotlight, for good or ill, then it should be used for the maximum benefit of the situation at hand rather than petty politics or the advancement of personal ambition.

At the heart of all are two basic facts of life that we simply must deal with:

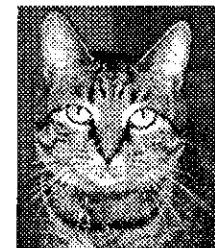
- There are too many animals that need service.
- There isn't enough available space for them.

How we deal with these is the only true solution to animal welfare, and anyone who attempts to distract attention from these issues is not improving the lot of animals. It's that simple.

The first matter can be addressed through education and neuter/spay operations. We have engaged in both since 1906, but we stand ready to enhance those efforts. Expanding facility space can mitigate the second problem, but that takes money, and the unfortunate consequence of the tempest brought on by outsiders has been a reduced capacity to raise funds. Our well-meaning but uninformed opponents have only managed to hurt the prospects for countless thousands of animals.

Let's put an end to that right now. Put aside the reckless fingerpointing in favor of a responsible dialogue about the cold, hard facts. Develop a vision of animal care standards all can agree on and implement in a practical and ethical manner. Above all, base everything on the truth and the best interests of the animals.

That's what we're going to do. We hope you join us.



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Executive Director

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1/2 pg. ad in Cassey Park Press