More than 6,000 Animals Helped in FY 2016

Measuring the AWLA’s Impact beyond the Shelter

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) touched the lives of more than 6,000 animals in fiscal year 2016. Calculating the number of animals impacted by AWLA must include more than those who have physically entered the shelter, as there are many other animals reached by our field service, education and support programs for pet owners.

Animals Sheltered

In FY16, AWLA provided shelter and care for 2,159 abandoned, lost, sick, injured, abused and neglected animals. These included 859 cats, 773 dogs, 282 small animals, 207 wild animals and 38 birds. Many arrived in need of comprehensive care. Animal Care represents the AWLA’s largest program expense, and a large percentage of this is for veterinary care. This year we had more than 150 animals with extremely serious medical needs such as heartworm, cancer and traumatic injuries.

Working closely with our veterinary partners in the community for discounts and raising funds for advanced veterinary care through AWLA’s Sarah’s fund, we were able to provide care to many animals requiring drastic medical attention.

Not only did we address medical needs but also behavioral challenges that in the past could have deemed an animal unadoptable. Our volunteers supplemented the advanced behavioral enrichment provided to shy and frightened animals by our experienced behavioral staff. Valuable understanding was gained in working with several dogs who had been rescued from South Korean meat farms and arrived experiencing extreme discomfort around people (continued on page 3).
In this newsletter we review AWLA's accomplishments for FY 2016 (July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016). After I was appointed to the job of Executive Director in March 2013, I spent six months with Vola Lawson, for whom our shelter is named, to understand her long-term goals for the organization. I believe that Vola would be very pleased with our progress.

Almost 20 years of experience in animal sheltering/services has taught me to work by two important principles. The first, “question everything we think we know,” can be easy to forget. An animal shelter can be chaotic and in those moments it is easy to become complacent, relying on old ideas and practices that have become comfortable. Animal sheltering procedures are regularly evolving, and the amount of change that has happened in just the last ten years is astounding; the AWLA strives to regularly review our practices.

When reviewing our operations, I often ask “why is it done this way?” Connecting with experts in our field to review our procedures allows us to provide the highest quality of care. AWLA facilitates a collaborative of all shelters in the region to share information; learning from others has been essential for our growth. We also assist in-state shelters that do not have this resource. Our goal is to continue to expand our circle of relationships in order to provide aid to shelters in Virginia that, even with good intention, are still employing outdated methods.

The second principle I return to is “trust and involve the community.” It could be easy to transfer anger and mistrust to the general public in a shelter like ours with field services that regularly rescue animals from abuse and neglect, but we have worked hard to open our doors and hearts. Opening of the shelter to the public has yielded many opportunities and ideas for helping animals that we would not have considered if we had only been looking inward. Efforts have paid off: Since 2011, the AWLA volunteer program has more than tripled in size, and the foster program more than doubled. AWLA volunteers donated more than 13,000 hours of time in FY16, up from 4,322 in FY11. In FY16, 493 animals were cared for in foster homes, compared with only 200 in FY13. The AWLA has gratefully maintained positive relationships with businesses in the community, resulting in discounts on supplies required to operate and in-kind services adding up to a total value exceeding $400,000. This increase in volunteer, foster, and community involvement has happened at the same time our euthanasia rate has gone from 33 percent in 2011 to under 6 percent in 2016.

I want to thank the collective members of the Board of Directors for all of their support during the last three years; I’m pleased to work with our 2017 Board of Directors. Board Chair Jeff Lutton, owner of Dogtopia and long-time supporter of the shelter, is leading a panel of members with a wide range of pertinent expertise and skills to include two veterinarians, three CPAs, a human resource professional, an estate attorney and an insurance expert.

Board of Directors Chair Jeff Lutton celebrated a recent birthday with an online fundraising page that allows friends to donate to the AWLA in lieu of a gift. To find out how to set up your own fundraising page—for any occasion ranging from birthday to wedding or retirement—contact connect@alexandriaanimals.org.
Foster homes were found for 493 animals in FY16, compared with 200 in FY13. These animals needed focused attention in a quiet home setting to recover from medical conditions or to show their true personality.

We continued to expand our public outreach through social media and our website and to make the adoption experience more welcoming and enjoyable; this resulted in 1,265 animals being adopted in FY16.

New Policies

AWLA also impacted the many animals that police officers come across on a daily basis. In FY16, the AWLA worked with both the Alexandria Police Department and Emergency Dispatch to improve the way animals in the field are addressed. We were pleased to aid the City of Alexandria Police Department in developing general orders for approaching animal issues. For example, the Police Department now accompanies AWLA in responding to all potential misdemeanor and felony animal-related crimes. There are 320 sworn officers in the City, so having clear, appropriate and humane guidelines for them on animal issues will impact hundreds of animals each year.

AWLA collaborated with Emergency Dispatch to prioritize calls according to type and severity; for example, a dog who was hit by a car is assisted before a dog-barking call. AWLA staff has trained the City of Alexandria dispatchers on all of these changes.

In addition, AWLA requested a change in the City of Alexandria’s municipal code to remove the requirement that dogs (even if they were up to date on their rabies vaccines) be quarantined for 10 days if they bit another dog. This was an out-of-date law that was not in step with new ideas about rabies control. The City Council agreed, and now many dogs will no longer have to be isolated for nearly two weeks after a dog altercation.

Animals Helped in the Field

The AWLA rescues animals in the community through its field services program, answering calls from City of Alexandria citizens. Due to improvements that were implemented in 2016, with AWLA assistance, by the City of Alexandria Dispatch in tracking animal-related calls, much more specific data became available starting in March: AWLA’s officers responded to 2711 calls for assistance with animals in the 265 days between March 1 and November 22. These included 499 calls for sick/injured animals, 259 strays, and 151 potential cases of animal abuse/neglect—19 of which were brought to court on criminal charges. We estimate that AWLA Animal Services handled more than 3,000 calls to help animals in FY16.

Animals Staying with Families

Alexandria’s unique community reflects a high rate of animal surrender: 37 percent of intakes are surrenders compared with 26 percent strays. A reverse trend can be seen across the nation, as on average open-door animal shelters take in twice as many stray animals as those relinquished by their owners. In Alexandria, people have to give up their pets when they lose their place to live, can’t afford veterinary care or become very sick or die. In re-
A Plan for Pets

Have you considered what would happen to your pet(s) if something happened to you? Even if someone has given the possibility some thought, it is difficult to know who can help make the necessary arrangements. The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) regularly takes in pets after an owner has died or become incapacitated, but with little to no information about the pet to go on, decisions can be made that don’t coincide with the owner’s wishes. Sadly, these pets often wait at the shelter in legal limbo while AWLA works with next of kin to determine who should have custody of the animal. We don’t place these pets into foster care during this time unless we have been given specific directions to do so.

Our program “A Plan for Pets” is designed to help owners prepare for the care of their pet in case something unexpected happens to them.

City of Alexandria residents can make an appointment to visit the AWLA to discuss the veterinary history, (continued on page 8)

ELLIE posing with Santa (who bears a striking resemblance to volunteer Mike Oliver). Ellie’s owner, Legacy Donor Randi Forster, states that the “A Plan for Pets” program has given her peace of mind: With all of Ellie’s information, and clear instructions about her care as described by Ms. Forster, AWLA will be prepared to oversee Ellie’s welfare at any moment, for any length of time.
‘Compassion Fatigue’
a Daily Challenge in Shelter Work

For Joanna Fortin, who manages adoptions at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA), some of the toughest moments of her work day occur when a citizen comes to the shelter to surrender a pet. “Many of the people coming to us are in crisis, they’ve run out of resources and they’re just trying to do the right thing for their pet, but it can still be heartbreaking,” she said. “I just try to listen to what they tell me and thank them for putting their pet first.”

Fortin and the AWLA staff face such sadness on a daily basis. An abused animal suffering from severe injuries is brought to the shelter; a very sick one has to be euthanized. It can even be gut-wrenching when a pet who has become a fixture at the shelter gets adopted. Although it’s a mission-accomplished moment, it still can feel like a loss to all of those who were an intimate part of the animal’s journey.

That is why AWLA staffers recently sat down for a workshop on “compassion fatigue.” Taught by Hilary Anne Hager of the Humane Society of the United States, the session introduced the group to the term, which refers to the “emotional, physical, social, and spiritual exhaustion that overtakes a person and causes a pervasive decline in his/her desire, ability and energy to feel and care for others.” Originally applied to those in other fields whose work requires daily compassion—police officers, paramedics, nurses—shelter workers have been added to the list. Their workplaces, like those of others with high levels of compassion fatigue, can be prone to high staff turnover rates, among other problems.

“We’re called to do this work because we care so deeply about animals,” Hager told the AWLA employees. “We want to serve as the voice for the voiceless, but often we aren’t finished processing the loss of one animal when another loss comes along.”

Hager, who once managed a foster program for a shelter in Washington state, placing special-needs animals in homes to prepare them for adoption, said she has had her own taste of compassion fatigue. “I got to the point where I couldn’t stand to see another box of kittens come in,” she recalled. “All I saw was their great needs—what was I going to do with them? Fortunately, I’ve been away from that type of work long enough to think kittens are cute again.”

Hager shared the signs—in the form of a quiz—that can tip shelter employees off that they might be transforming from zealot to zombie, including: drop in work productivity, increased anxiety or anger at coworkers, escaping through excessive drinking or eating and withdrawal from human contact. The quiz included a “self-care assessment” for staffers to reflect on how well they were treating themselves—such basics as making sure they are getting enough sleep and following a healthy diet, carving out time to relax, and connecting with nature. She advised some simple techniques, such as deep breathing and meditation, for use on the job when an employee feels overwhelmed with compassion fatigue.

Adoptions manager Fortin, (continued on page 8)
By the Numbers

122 treat-filled toys

Dedicated staff and volunteers gathered with families at the shelter during closed holiday hours on November 24 for the shelter’s annual KongsGiving event. Animal toys were stuffed by attendees and distributed to every animal in the shelter. Other community members, not able to attend, filled toys at home and delivered them to the shelter in an effort to #FilltheFreezer.

4 honorable mentions

The AWLA has been chosen one of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s 2016 Veteran Businesses of the Year, selected in recognition of leadership in finding, hiring and empowering military veterans and transitioning military service members into the private sector. Three AWLA staff members and one member of the Board of Directors are veterans. Some 15 of AWLA volunteers are also veterans.

AWLA Animal Services Chief Brian Rees was voted to the Virginia Animal Control Association (VACA) Board by his peers at the VACA conference in Virginia Beach. Rees is honored to serve a two-year term, assisting in Animal Control legislation, training, and preparing for a conjoined training event with the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA) in October 2017.

The City of Alexandria has issued an award for Corporate Responsibility for hosting two interns from City of Alexandria Teenswork! vocational program in their outreach and animal care departments. Teenswork! offers employment opportunities, vocational exploration, and job preparation workshops for Alexandria’s economically disadvantaged, at-risk, and disabled youth.

Thanks to a stellar collection of reviews, Great Non-Profits has awarded AWLA with a 5-star rating; visit www.greatnonprofits.org to leave a message and rate your own experience!
ALEXANDRIA’S ANIMAL LEADERS

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria is pleased to thank everyone who donated to the shelter in 2016. Alexandria’s Animal Leaders are recognized individuals and businesses who donate time and/or financial support (donated or raised) at the highest levels. The program includes several levels of recognition for monetary donations made in the previous calendar year and in-kind donations made fiscally. Animal Guardian—$25,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 5,000 volunteer hours; Animal Champion—$10,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 1,000 volunteer hours; Animal Friend—$5,000 or more financial or in-kind support or 500 volunteer hours; Animal Companion—$2,500 or more financial or in-kind support or 250 volunteer hours; and Vola Lawson Leader—$1,000 or more or 100 volunteer hours. Legacy Donors have made provisions for Alexandria’s Animals through planned giving.

For more information about becoming one of Alexandria’s Animal Leaders, contact development@alexandrianimals.org.

Animal Guardians $25,000+
(*$50,000+)
Estate of
Daniel T. & Barbara Chapman *
Estate of Gloria Peterson *
Estate of Winifred Williams Rabbit *
Estate of Michael & Ginny Royal *
Estate of William S. Tonnick *
Hayfield Animal Hospital
Mount Vernon Voice
Saul Ewing LLP *
Shelley Castle Photography
United Way of the National Capital Area
WOOF’S Dog Training Center *
The Zebra

Animal Companions $2,500+
Caring Hands Animal Hospital
Linda Coleman
Donna Dawe
Estate of Constance Virginia Doberenz
Kirk Fedder
Susanne Fedder
Fort Hunt Animal Hospital
Gena Roma Photography
Hoffman Town Center
H.N. (Jay) Hoffman, Ill & Arline M. Hoffman
Jodi Horton
Ty & Linda Hosler
Latham & Watkins LLP
New Earth Landscaping
Paws Purr & Exotics Animal Hospital
Regional Veterinary Referral Center
Restaurant Eve
VCA Alexandria Animal Hospital
VCA Old Town Animal Hospital
Tara Zurawski

Animal Friends $5,000+
Decker Anstrom
Jean Brooks
Calvin Kelly Home Improvement
Jim Carlson & Daun Hicks Carlson
DeSilva Studios
Dotty/Maul Photography
Dogtopia of Alexandria
Estate of Betty Spiker Murphy
Estate of Burton H. Grodnitzky
Friedman French Foundation, Inc.
Abbie Hubbard
Laura Johnson
Judy Joyce
Kazumao Kubota
Anna Mailoux
Alice Mathews
Colleen Mullally
Mussen Family Fund
Oldetty Paw Photography
Old Town Crier

Lee Anne Pelzer
Will & Marti Roger
Rosenthal Automotive Group
Mike Shea
Christine Stillwagoner
Beverly Thurston
Katherine Ward
Alan & Sandy Yamamoto

Animal Companions $2,500+
CubeSmart Self Storage
Dan Bernstein
Karen Leigh Blunk
John & Elizabeth Bridgen
Michael & Janelle Day
Holy Cow
Cliff DeGray
Jan Delaval
George Mason Elementary School
Mary S. Hall
Jerry Hinn
Steven & Nancy Howard
Rebecca Michele Huppert
Annie Jones
Law Office of Heidi Meinerz PLLC
Jules Crouch Animal Crusaders
Joanna McIntosh
Philipp Mullford & Priscilla Zink Mullford
Alyssa Murray
Lindly Paul
Jennifer Rand
James Remers & Rachel Prager
Sherry Schiller
Deborah Seymour & Jake McNemey
Spectra Caudron Investment Group of Wells
Fargo Advisors
Sharon Vannucci
Linda Windsor

Vola Lawson Leaders $1,000+
(† Legacy Donor)
Jeanette Acosta
ACT for Alexandria
James Adams
Jessica Almond
America’s Charities
Rachel Anderson
Phyllis Andes
Kaci Angelone
Jean Marie Antone †
Eileen Coates
Allen Angellinis †
Tracy Arevert
Karen Avery
Frederic & Barbara Barnes
Hope Barwing & Heather Milton
Benevolence Community Impact Fund
Glen & Ronda Bernstein

Sheri Berthrong
Olivia Bird
Robert & Sabine Bisson
Veronica Bonilla
Robert Borger
Anthony Boruso
Bryan Bosta
Michelle Bouma
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Doreen Bradford †
Hillery Y. & Joan Brand
Cindy Broome
Lynwood & Deborah Campbell
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Thomas & Linda Clark
Linda Clark
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Nora Cole
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Zoya Dicapiro
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Barbara Dixon
Xueni Du
Sabina Das
Brenda Edgerton
Heather Egbert
Jennifer E比特 & William Davis, Ill
Alan Eliot
Barbara Ellsworth
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Richard Fairchild & Alan Campbell
Kevin & Anne Farmakidis
Rose Ellen Farmer
Joan & Mary Ferrill
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Sandra Gardiner
Wendy Gateff
Barbara George
Michael & Anne Germain
Laura Giza & Harley Thornton
Cynthia Glazer
Joseph & Pat Gosh
Trey & Susan Golden
Grace & John T. Harrington Foundation
Christopher & Kathryn Grasso
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Linda Greenway & Pete Wilhem
Julie Greenwood
Michael & Tracy Gregg
Jade Gu
Alexandra Gulino
Kelly Harrisfeld
Bailey Hall
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Nancy Hindman
Margaret Hodges †
Kathy Kommowerson
Ethan Hubbard
Sally Hughes
Liz Hujak
Karen Johnson
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Rebecca Kinney
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Benjamin Klein
Deborah & Martin Knudsen
Karen Konar
Susan Koscis
Leslie Kostrich
Marcia Krause
Lon Kreger
Linda Langner
Anna Lemos
Edward & Anna Lenz
Tina Leone & Bruno Grinwis
Peggy Li
Arthur & Lois Ligkose
Kristine Lindley
Peter Lundgren
Jeff & Sandy Lutton
Janice Magnuson
Rafael Maldonado
Stefan Manning
Gene & Rachel Mark
Sharon McMahen
Shannon Meissner
Linda Michael
Maryann Miklavic
Arnold Miller
Marnie Moore
Walter McChlinda
Amanda Morris
Abhishek Mundra
Novo Dog Magazine & Pet Lovers Companion
Leonard & Marilyn Segall
Veronica Bonilla
Megan Webb
Peter Webb
April Weidert
Julie Weinert
Kelley Wells
Lynn Whittaker
Whole Dogz
Jeff & Denise Wilburn
Andrew Wise
Morgan Young
Your Dog’s Best Friends
Brian Joseph Zwit
A Plan for Pets  
(continued from page 4)

current medications, microchip information, special traits and needs of their pet. A welfare plan will be discussed with the owner, including the possibility of putting the pet into foster care temporarily while legal matters are settled so that the animal can continue to enjoy a comfortable, caring home environment. All of this information is (ideally) attached to the pet’s microchip number in our shelter database for retrieval.

We have started to pilot this program with great response. If you are a City of Alexandria resident interested in participating, email plannedgiving@AlexandriaAnimals.org. In the case of an overwhelming response, preference will be given to current Legacy Donors. ◆

Compassion Fatigue  
(continued from page 5)

who has been doing shelter work for 12 years and helps provide care to dozens of animals weekly, says that from time to time she has seen compassion fatigue in employees: They seem deflated and focused on the negative aspects of the job. To combat the problem, she encourages her staff to celebrate each successful adoption and to make sure they take breaks after experiencing a difficult case, even just a few minutes to snuggle with a cat or dog. “Even though our work can be tough, it is those experiences that reaffirm our purpose and commitment to the animal welfare field,” Fortin said. “Our shared successes and the positive outcomes for the animals we work with enable us to continue this work.” ◆

Legacy Donor Lilly Pierce with beloved chocolate pomeranian Kahlua, who passed away in December.

Tribute Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated in one’s honor or memory June 16–November 15, 2016. AWLA mails a special card to the recipient; donations of $250+ are recognized in the newsletter.

In Honor of . . .
Megan Webb
–Rafael Maldonado
Boris–Tanya Taylor

In Memory of . . .
My 3 cats–Barbara Erwin
Abandoned Yorkie Dog
Left in Crate in Alexandria
–Sherry Frazier
The Pup Left in the Crate
–Susan LaBombard
Claude, Muffin & Zach
–Deborah Lippay
Gracie–Wendy Schudmak
Christmas Cheer, Noel & Dreamer
–Randall & Theresa Walker
Maysie & Marco Polo
–Margaret Zeigler

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

4101 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22304
703-746-4774
EIN 54-0796610
CFC 92767 | United Way 8372
AlexandriaAnimals.org

ALEXANDRIA’S ANIMAL LEADERS

2016 Guardians* and Champions

Linda Coleman, Donna Dawe, Kirk Fedder, Suzanne Fedder, H.N. (Jay) Hoffman, Ill & Arline M. Hoffman, Jodi Horton, Ty & Linda Hosler, Tara Zurawski; the Estates of Daniel T. & Barbara Chapman, Constance Virginia Doberenz, Gloria Petersen, Winifred Williams Rabbitt, Michael & Ginny Royal, and William S. Torrick; and:

Pride of the National Capital Area

United Way of the National Capital Area

CFC

Concentration of Federal Campaign

WELLS FARGO

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Animal Hospitals

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Zebra

WOOFs!

Dog Training Center, LLC

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

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