

No Pet Should Ever Be Homeless

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Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, a nonprofit organization, is a leader in the movement to end the unnecessary euthanasia of pets in Connecticut. We are building a domestic animal sanctuary, providing low-cost training and educational services and creating a statewide partnership among animal welfare agencies to address the root causes of pet homelessness.

Quote of Compassion

Waste no more time talking about great souls and how they should be. Become one yourself!

- Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

Raising the Sanctuary

By Susan Linker, CEO, Our Companions

Three years ago, Our Companions was founded on the core belief that no pet should ever be homeless and that the senseless killing of healthy pets across our state must come to an end. With the donation of 43 acres in Ashford, we knew that our dream could take a physical, solid shape with the creation of an animal sanctuary and resource center.

Sanctuary is More than Bricks and Mortar. Although several years from opening its doors, the actual sanctuary has served as a unifying symbol of humanity and compassion for many of our volunteers and donors. But amazingly, the concept of sanctuary and its ideals are capable of existing without any physical structure. We've proved over the last three years that you don't need a location to change lives and change the way people think.

The sanctuary will be an incredible place, where homeless pets will receive love, care and the time they deserve to heal from their emotional and physical wounds. Once healed, many pets will be placed into new and loving homes. Those who cannot find homes will spend the rest of their days at the sanctuary as part of a community of other animals and loving human caretakers.

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But even if there were 100 animal sanctuaries in Connecticut, pet homelessness and euthanasia would still be issues because the underlying causes would still be present. Pets become homeless for a myriad of social, economic and attitudinal reasons. These issues must be addressed in conjunction with the building of the sanctuary through a myriad of programs - many of which Our Companions is already delivering, transforming the way people think of pets by providing lifesaving programs every day.

Building a Foundation To date, Our Companions has:

- Co-founded and leads the state's first coalition of non-profit animal organizations, the Animal Welfare Federation of Connecticut (AWFCT).
- Serviced over 300 clients with dog training and behavioral consultations.
- Helped control local pet populations and prevented animals from ending up in shelters through public outreach and spay/neuter services.
- Built a cadre of more than 2,000 dedicated and informed animal activists.
- Rescued over 250 animals through our rescue outreach program.

What's Going on in Ashford? In the last few years, much progress has been made in Ashford to make way for the actual building of the first animal sanctuary and resource center in Connecticut. Our Companions and its many volunteers have completed the following:

- Large waste removal from the Ashford property was completed. 27 tons of abandoned metal debris was removed and recycled, as was invasive shrubbery and trees and abandoned farm chemicals.



Herbie is one of the many awesome pets who have been featured in our rescue outreach e-mails. He's still looking for a place to call home.

For more about Herbie or to see others like him, visit www.ourcompanions.org and look for Rescue Outreach under News and Events. You can also sign up to receive updates via e-mail.

Raising the Sanctuary, (cont.)

- The hiking trails have been designed and cut.
- Met with local and state agencies including the Town of Ashford Zoning Committee and the Inland/Wetlands and Dam Safety divisions of the State of Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.
- Began a relationship with Trinity College whereby students are actively conducting research and will ultimately develop a plan to improve the health of the 7-acre Harakaly's Pond on the property.
- Worked in partnership with Kaestle-Boos Associates to create a strategic plan and concept renderings for the project (some of which are within this newsletter, with more available on-line at www.ourcompanions.org).
- Vegetation was cleared off of the dam of Harakaly's Pond which had been overgrown for nearly ten years.
- Obtained an in-kind pledge by a local company to demolish the current building on the property, an estimated value of more than \$250,000.

Raising the Sanctuary With so much ground work laid, Our Companions is pleased to officially announce that we are officially kicking off our \$15 Million, 10-year capital campaign, *Home for Good: A Place for Our Companions*. The enclosed pull-out details the plan, as well as the opportunities you have to support our work.



Emerald is one of the many gorgeous cats featured through Our Companions' rescue outreach e-mails. To find out more about Emerald, visit www.ourcompanions.org and look for Rescue Outreach under News and Events. You can also sign up to receive these updates via e-mail.

Does Connecticut Care for Cats?

Based on the turnout at the November 12th Connecticut Cares for Cats Conference, the answer is a resounding yes! Over 200 animal welfare professionals gathered to hear some of the nation's leading experts discuss humane solutions for reducing cat overpopulation in our state.



Ed Boks, Executive Director, NYC Animal Care & Control was one of our speakers.

The impressive roster of speakers included Becky Robinson, National Director, Alley Cat Allies; Ed Boks, Executive Director, NYC Animal Care & Control; Holly Sizemore, Feral Fix Program Director, Best Friends Animal Society and NMHP Utah; Esther Mechler, Director, SPAY/USA; Bryan Kortis, Executive Director, Neighborhood Cats; Debora M. Bresch, Esq., Legislative Liaison, ASPCA; Stacy LeBaron, President, Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society; and Peter Marsh, Esq., Founder of Solutions to Overpopulation of Pets.

Attendees represented over 70 shelters and rescue organizations, as well as veterinarians, animal control professionals, individual rescuers and concerned citizens. "We were delighted to have so many representatives from the animal welfare community come together for the common goal of helping cats. Sponsored by the Petco Foundation, this was Connecticut's first-ever statewide conference and the turnout proved that we all see the importance of working together to help end cat overpopulation." (Susan Linker, President, Animal Welfare Federation of Connecticut)

Here's what some of our attendees had to say: "This was a very informative seminar. I was impressed with the level of professionalism of not only the speakers but also the entire presentation of the meeting. It was an opportunity for our Animal Welfare Committee to meet people who will be great contacts for us in the future. We expect to maintain our communication lines with AWFCT and work toward common goals." (Dr. Larry Nieman, President-Elect of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association)

"This was a wonderful conference! I hope to see more like it." (Greg Simpson, Meriden Humane Society, Inc.)

"It was great to get the chance to meet with other groups so we can band together and accomplish what we can't do alone." (Virginia Van Norden, Forgotten Felines, Inc.)

For more information about the Connecticut Cares for Cats Conference, please contact us at info@awfct.org.

Event Honors Our Companions Volunteers

On December 3rd, Our Companions honored the work of over 50 volunteers by hosting our first annual Holiday Volunteer Appreciation Party. While we truly appreciate everyone's service, a few volunteers received a special award in recognition of their tremendous efforts over the year. We are pleased to have awarded the following people our Volunteer Excellence Award for outstanding service to Our Companions.

Terri Ayers, Special Events Director. Terry has been instrumental in organizing all of our events, including our Dogman Classic Golf Tournament, Connecticut Cares for Cats Conference and the media event in Bushnell Park in Hartford, where we "unleashed" our plans to build the resource center and sanctuary.



Anne Kutscher, Volunteer Coordinator: With a background in human resources, Anne is the perfect volunteer coordinator. Not only does Anne perfectly place our volunteers to maximize the scope and efficiency of our programs, but she also finds many creative ways to let our valued volunteers know how much we appreciate their many contributions.



Risa Davison, Lead Trainer. Risa is one of the talented and dedicated trainers in our Lead training program. Each Sunday, you will find Risa conducting classes and leading many of our training programs. When she's not teaching classes, she travels to people's homes evaluating and recommending behavioral regimens to help dogs who may not be ready for a class environment.

Jeannie, Office Administrator. Day or night, you're likely to find Jeannie at our office in Bloomfield. When Jeannie's not in the office, she's working on the next plan for a fundraiser or is serving on one of our committees. As if that's not enough, Jeanie is a master at procuring goods that are necessary for the organization's programs and events; and, she is one of our most generous in-kind donors.



Thank you to Terri, Anne, Risa and Jeannie for your outstanding service to Our Companions. We couldn't do it without you!

Love Your Pet - Pet Portrait Fundraiser

With Valentine's Day right around the corner, now is the time to show your love with a stunning pet portrait. Through the month of February, Studio 970 Photography of West Hartford will donate a portion of their sales proceeds on pet photography to Our Companions. Looking for a valentine's gift? Have a portrait taken of your beloved pet to give to your sweetheart or even give yourself this wonderful gift. If you don't have time to have a portrait taken in February, a gift certificate purchased at Studio 970 Photography by the end of the month can be used at any time.

Studio 970 Photography's work, as you can see below, is truly beautiful. The portraits, taken by owners/artists Lisa Asp and Paulette Mertes, are meant to capture the unique personality and character of each of their subjects. These are photographs that will last a lifetime and commemorate the love you have for your pets and the love they give you in return.



To find out more about this promotion or to see more samples of their work, visit www.studio970.com or call (860) 521-9701 for more information.

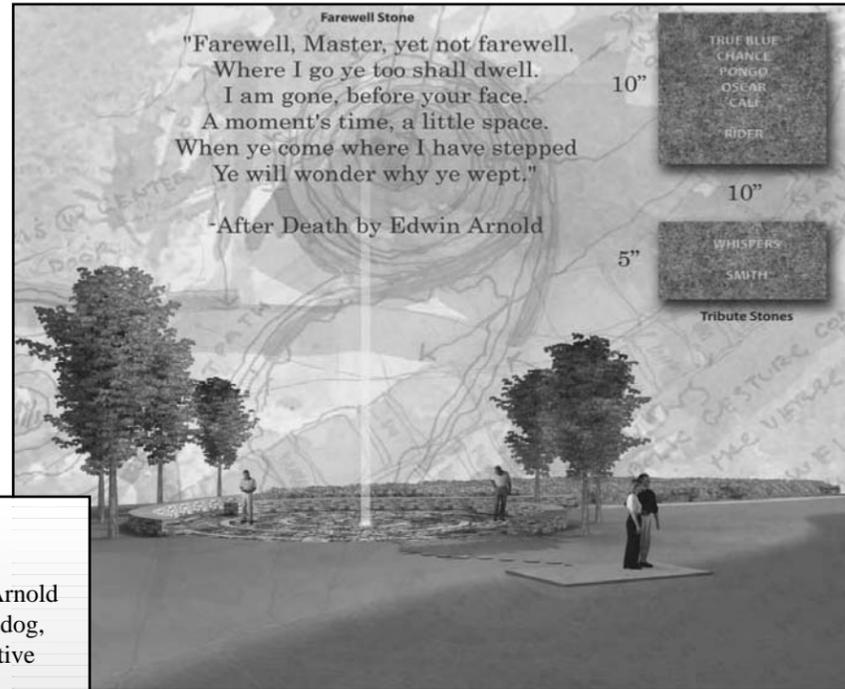
Phase 1

Reflection Garden and Nature Preserve (\$500,000)

Imagine strolling along a stone path that meanders through a natural landscape, ending at a bench perfect for quiet, pondside reflection. Each stone in the path is etched with the names of our beloved pets who can no longer take the walk with us, but who exist here in perpetuity as a tribute to their many years of devotion. Within the sanctuary itself, native plants flourish, attracting wildlife and birdwatchers to admire such beauty. Interpretive nature trails extend throughout the property, perfect for hikes with our canine friends or as an outdoor classroom for local schoolchildren. An outdoor pavilion will provide the ideal location for family get-togethers or that special wedding for couples wishing to share their big day with animal friends.

Component Opportunities:

- Off-Leash Managed Dog Park (\$100,000)
- Reflection Garden (\$50,000)
- Pavilion (\$50,000)
- Hiking Trail #1 (\$50,000)
- Hiking Trail #2 (\$50,000)
- Hiking Trail #3 (\$50,000)
- Bird Refuge (\$25,000)
- Rainbow Bridge (\$25,000)
- Bench (numerous @ \$1,000 each)
- Tree (numerous @ \$500 each)
- Tribute Stone (numerous @ \$250 each small; \$500 each large)



Tribute Stone

Inspired by the quote above from Edwin Arnold shortly after the death of his own beloved dog, Maggie, the artist who designed the reflective garden wanted to build a special place to memorialize the special relationships between people and their animals.

Home for Good:

A Place for Our Companions Capital Campaign

The 10-year, \$15 million Home for Good Capital Campaign will result in the creation of New England's first and only resource center and animal sanctuary. The resource center will provide low-cost, lifesaving programs to animals and will be a destination for pet lovers across New England to enjoy. The sanctuary will give animals what they intrinsically need - mercy, love, healing, time, and most importantly, a place to call home. The building of this sanctuary and the programs housed here will revolutionize animal rescue and welfare in Connecticut.

The Plan



Over the 10-year period, Our Companions has identified three phases of the Home for Good Capital Campaign. The phase approach will allow us to begin using the land as soon as possible to begin delivering our services to the community from Ashford.

Phase 1 (\$2 million) Comprehensive Resource Center, Dog Park and Nature Preserve

The first phase of the Home for Good campaign is the most critical as it establishes the lifesaving preventive services that are inherent to our mission and will provide the foundation for the future sanctuary.

Phase 2 (\$5 million) Dog and Cat Housing, Bistro and Grooming

The second phase of the campaign will construct the sanctuary village of specially-designed cat "condos" and dog housing and will include a bistro where visitors can gather for a light meal.

Phase 3 (\$8 million) Adoption Center, Administrative Building and Guest Housing

The final phase of the campaign will include the construction of a central administration building, an adoption facility and overnight accommodations for visiting guests.

How You Can Help

The Home for Good: A Place for Our Companions Capital Campaign is a unique opportunity for animal lovers and pet owners to take part in history. With your help, we can together build the first domestic animal sanctuary and resource center in Connecticut. There are so many ways to participate in this exciting project, with opportunities for donors of all levels.

To find out more about our plans or how you can be a part of this amazing place, please contact Our Companions at (860) 242-9999.



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Phase 1 Comprehensive Resource Center

The Comprehensive Resource Center will be the heart of the future sanctuary. As a multi-purpose space, the Resource Center will give us the flexibility to do what we do best: offer creative programs that address the most urgent needs facing our companion animals.

Whether it's organizing high-volume feral cat "Spay Days," holding low-cost training classes for dogs with behavioral problems, or leading a humane education program for school children, the space will accommodate a variety of activities. In addition, the versatile 600-person capacity facility will also serve as a meeting space for community organizations, conferences, or that very special wedding.

Component Opportunity: Training Wing (\$500,000)

Behavioral problems are a principal reason why pets are given up for adoption and the number one reason why pets are returned and destroyed. In some shelters, up to 70% of dogs are deemed "unadoptable" based on their behavior. Our Companions' programs focus on treating the more complex behavior problems, thus saving thousands of animals from unnecessary euthanasia.

Many of our client referrals come from veterinarians and behavioral specialists at Tufts University who recognize the benefit of the unique services we provide. Our expert trainers serve as models for positive reinforcement methodology. The Training Center will come to be regarded as a leading learning institution for behavior modification therapy.

Physical Space

- Lobby/Reception Area (\$100,000)
- Exercise Equipment and Training Room (\$50,000)

Endowed Funds

- Jack's Fund (\$100,000)
- Behavior Rehabilitation Fund (\$50,000)

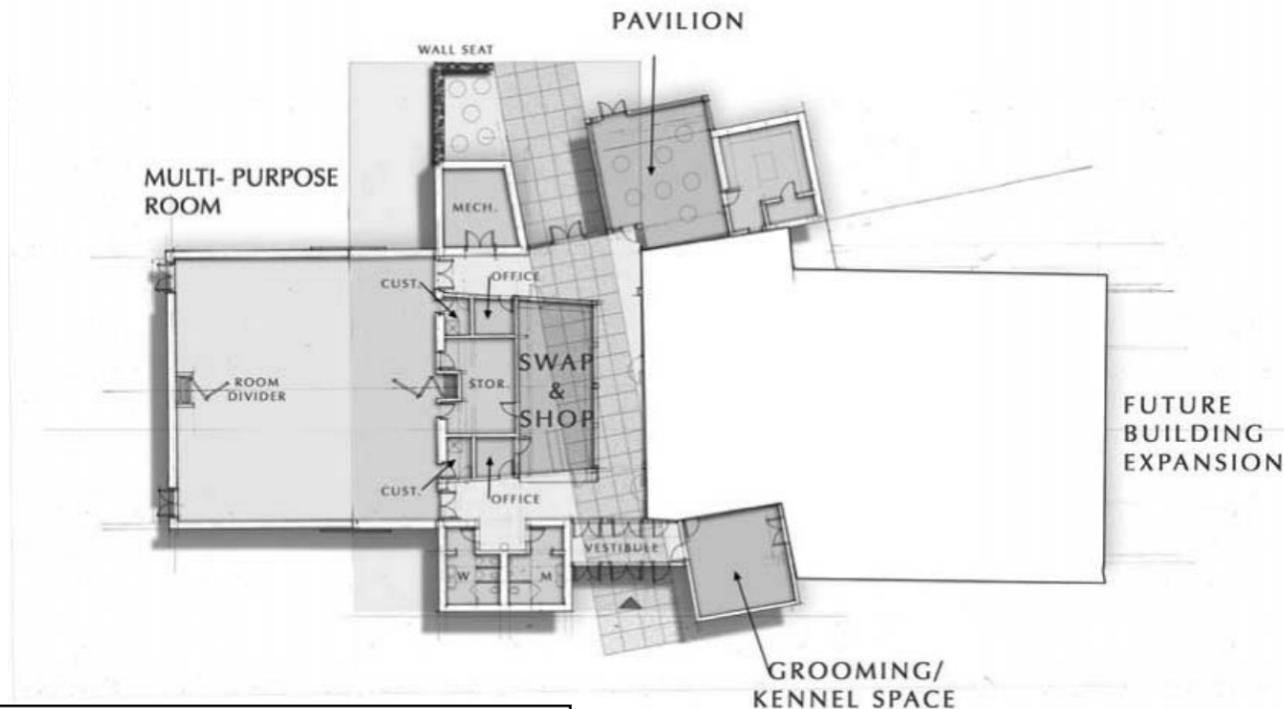
Fund Spotlight - Jack's Fund

Marie Joyner, co-founder of Our Companions and trainer extraordinaire, rescued Jack, a coon hound from a high kill shelter. Once home, Jack trapped Marie's husband in a corner, baying and snarling and snapping. Jack had learned at his previous home that his job was to protect his mom from an abusive husband. Unable to give either husband or Jack up, Marie knew there had to be another way.

Enter Mother Nature. A three-day snow storm kept Jack, Marie and her husband house-bound. The intense 24/7 experience showed Jack that he was now in a loving home. Over the next two years, Jack learned to behave appropriately around men. Marie and Jack formed an amazing relationship - one whose lessons Marie can apply to her many challenging training calls.

Many dogs like Jack suffer abuse, mistreatment and neglect early in life and cope by developing inappropriate or even aggressive behavior. Patience, understanding, caring and training can make these dogs wonderful pets.

But training programs for dogs like Jack didn't exist until 2003 when Our Companions founded the first behavioral training program for dogs with severe issues. To date, our training program has improved and even saved the lives of 300 dogs. Our Companions believes that inside every mistreated, misbehaving dog lives a loving pet waiting for a caring, trustworthy person to bring them out. Our training center and Jack's Fund will allow us to save even more dogs like Jack.



Component Opportunity: Spay/Neuter Wing (\$500,000)

The Resource Center will also function as a high-volume Spay/Neuter Clinic to provide a solution to one of the state's greatest animal welfare challenges: stray and feral cat overpopulation. In Connecticut there are few laws to protect cats, and a lack of affordable and accessible spay/neuter resources only exacerbates the problem. This results in nearly 1 million homeless cats struggling to survive on the streets, in abandoned buildings, and in town landfills. The only humane alternative is free sterilization services for stray and feral cats. This is why the Spay/Neuter Clinic is so urgently needed.

Physical Space

- "Neuter Commuter" Van (\$100,000)
- Pet Recovery Room (\$50,000)

Endowed Funds

- Susie's Fund (\$100,000)
- Emergency Care Fund (\$50,000)



Fund Spotlight - Susie's Fund

Susie is a beautiful cat who was abandoned by her owner after watching him kill her newborn kittens. Starving, traumatized, and mourning, Susie was eventually trapped and placed in a good home. But she ate very little, as if she wasn't sure if she wanted to live.

Afraid of nearly everything, she found refuge in a hole in a ceiling, refusing to budge. For months she was fed in the rafters. Slowly, through gentle human contact, patience, kindness, and care, Susie began to trust people again. Now, two years later, she loves her safe, comfortable world with Susan Linker, co-founder of Our Companions.

Cats are not meant to be abandoned outside. Eighty percent of feral cats die terrible deaths before they reach six months of age. Still, there remains an estimated 700,000 homeless cats in our state.

By controlling the cat population through spaying and neutering, we can prevent stories like Susie's. The high volume Spay/Neuter Clinic at Our Companions will provide free sterilization services for stray and feral cats, eliminating the all-too common practices of cruel extermination and abandonment.

Component Opportunity: Education and Outreach Center (\$500,000)

A third component of the Resource Center will be a hands-on classroom for visiting school children, animal welfare groups, and various civic organizations. One of the most effective means for eradicating pet homelessness and animal abuse is education. Funds and scholarships will provide the opportunity for hosting workshops, "adoption days," and other programming to teach Connecticut residents how they can make a difference in their community.

Physical Space

- Resource Library (\$50,000)
- Gift Shop (\$50,000)

Endowed Funds

- Humane Education Fund (\$50,000)
- Environmental Education Fund (\$25,000)
- Program Fund (\$25,000)
- Guest Lecture Fund (\$25,000)
- "Home for Good" Scholarship (\$25,000)