



509 Centennial Blvd  
Voorhees, NJ 08043  
856-424-2288  
[www.awanj.org](http://www.awanj.org)

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact:

Maya Richmond, Executive Director

856-424-2288 ext. 109

[director@awanj.org](mailto:director@awanj.org)



**Animal Welfare Association (AWA) announces historic gift – the largest private donation ever given to the animal welfare organization – skyrocketing AWA’s fundraising campaign for a new animal shelter and adoption center.**

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### **Animal Welfare Association Receives \$250,000 Capital Campaign Gift**

Voorhees, NJ - Maya Richmond, Executive Director of the Animal Welfare Association (AWA), announced today that the organization’s *Building a Place Where Happiness Begins* capital campaign has taken a giant leap forward with the contribution of the largest single individual donation to AWA in its seventy-year history.

Animal lovers and dedicated AWA friends, Albert and Barbara Dragon, pledged \$250,000 to galvanize community support of AWA’s \$2.5M capital campaign to fund construction of a new, modern animal adoption center to be located at AWA’s current location on Centennial Blvd in Voorhees.

In recognition of the Dragon's generosity, the entrance lobby of the new shelter will be named the Al and Barbara Dragon Lobby.

The five million dollar, 15,000 sq. ft. center will house and care for more homeless animals, expand AWA's innovative community programs and be outfitted with specialty animal care space dedicated to the medical and behavioral rehabilitation of the many injured and abused animals AWA takes in each year. Richmond shared that in the last decade, the number of homeless senior, behaviorally, and medically needy dogs and cats has nearly doubled.

The Dragon's adopted their beloved Winston after nursing him back to health. Winston was rescued during a cruelty investigation and came to AWA severely underweight, suffering from pneumonia, and unfamiliar with any life other than that of living in a dirty wire cage. At that time Al and Barbara were looking for a dog to adopt. They responded to AWA's plea for foster volunteers to care for Winston since the abused animal needed time and love to recover.

From the moment Winston entered the Dragon's home he has been their loving loyal friend. "He is the best companion Al and I could have hoped for," Barbara shares. "He overcame his past and today he is a certified Pet Therapy dog. We appreciate what AWA does for the animals and are proud to be AWA adopters, volunteers, and donors for over thirty years."

Over its 70 years, AWA has offered diverse community programs designed to improve the lives of pets and people. AWA launched comprehensive and free humane education and pet therapy programming in the 1960s, opened the region's first public spay /neuter clinic in the 1970's, and in the last decades, AWA's progressive lifesaving programs have directly resulted in the reduction of stray animal impoundment to other area shelters and, therefore, lowered the euthanasia rates of pets in our community.

The new adoption center will:

- Be able to adopt more dogs and cats, train and rehabilitate additional behaviorally-needy dogs and cats, care for more injured and ill dogs and cats that other shelters ask AWA to transport in and aid each year, and add a neonatal intensive care room for kittens during "kitten season"
- Provide an enhanced visitor experience with new and better space for Humane Education as well as for AWA's community partnerships for senior citizens and individuals with learning or physical disabilities
- House a pet food pantry for those in our community struggling to feed their pets
- Expand care space for pets owned by individuals in crisis such as owners who lose their home in a fire, victims of domestic abuse fleeing for safety, and seniors unexpectedly hospitalized and unable to afford pet boarding.

"I am looking forward to 2020, walking into the new center's lobby and seeing the Dragon's name prominently displayed. Their gift will be a daily reminder to all of us of how important it is that AWA is the place where animals that are on death's doorstep can recover and go on to live the lives they deserve," states Richmond. "AWA's capital campaign is about ensuring tomorrow's animals receive all that they need while also ensuring that our community remains vigilant when it comes to caring for animals."

Since announcing their campaign in November 2018, AWA has raised over 50% - \$1,275,000 - of the campaign's \$2,500,000 goal.

"Al and Barbara's gift will inspire other AWA friends and animal lovers to join the *Building a Place Where Happiness Begins* campaign," AWA board member and Capital Campaign Co-Chair Lynn Fryckberg shares. "These are the kind of magnanimous gifts that generate excitement as well as participation from other equally loyal friends. Without a doubt the remaining funds will be raised in 2019."

AWA's anticipates beginning construction in twelve months with the new center opening in late 2020.

To take a tour of AWA, learn more about the AWA's capital project, or to make a capital campaign gift, please contact Gina Guida, Director of Development at 856-424-2288 ext. 101 or email [ginag@awanj.org](mailto:ginag@awanj.org).

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**Animal Welfare Association**, a private, non-profit, 501(c) 3 animal welfare organization, serves the people and animals of southern New Jersey. AWA is dedicated to eliminating animal suffering, promoting the importance of the human-animal bond, and improving the role of animals in the well-being of people. Through a variety of programs including adoptions, veterinary services, pet therapy, and humane education, in 2018 over 22,000 pets were served through AWA programming. AWA is South Jersey's leader in progressive companion animal care.