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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Animal Welfare Association Rolling out SJ Pet Recovery Plan to help local animals. Help Local. Give Local. Save Local.

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Voorhees, NJ – Animal Welfare Association (AWA) for seventy years has provided extensive services in the community to help pets and their owners. Last month, AWA created the COVID-19 Lifesaving task force. They asked, “What programs will our pet-loving community need tomorrow, in a few weeks, and in the months ahead when unemployment benefits expire and housing issues arise?” The result was the SJ Pet Recovery Plan.

The SJ Pet Recovery plan is a set of specific solutions to combat the negative impact of COVID-19 on pets. “Our mission to help pets and people positions the charity to step-up during these uncertain times,” says Maya Richmond, Executive Director of Animal Welfare Association, “the SJ community has been recognized nationally as a leader in saving homeless animals’ lives and it is critically important that the progress our community has made in addressing pet abandonment, increasing pet adoptions, and decreasing pet overpopulation doesn’t slip backwards.”

AWA’s response during this current crisis includes the expansion of several existing programs in addition to creating unique plans to address specific issues that affect both pets and people in the community.

1. AWA’s pet food pantry programs were expanded. By working with donors and companies AWA is securing pet food donations to provide to people facing financial hardships. Weekly, onsite “curbside, grab & go pet meals” for our neighbors, monthly Chow Stops in partnership with South Jersey Foodbank and ongoing support of the Voorhees Police Department to deliver pet food to homebound seniors.
2. Temporary short-term boarding is being provided to pets whose owners have been impacted by COVID-19. This includes forging partnerships with other nonprofit and government agencies that directly serve populations of vulnerable people.
3. Doing direct transport ensures AWA’s partners are still able to save lives. These shelters continue to serve as animal control agencies and often lack enough adopters.

4. Adoption processes have been modified to safeguard adopters and AWA's staff. The "Fosters-find-families" process allows fosters to handle adoptions using technology, so no pet or person has to return to AWA. This also broadens the adoption network so more animals can be saved.
5. Providing subsidized basic veterinary care, access to affordable vaccine clinics, and spay/neuter services, keep pets healthy and safe. Vaccine clinics are important as joblessness makes accessing veterinary care even more challenging, which increases the likelihood of pets being surrendered to shelters. Additionally, being able to relocate or find a new living arrangement requires pets to be healthy and up-do-date on their vaccines.
6. An increase in cat spay/neuter events will be provided by AWA to reduce unwanted pregnancies and help keep the cat population under control.
7. AWA designed a foster match-making system to help people facing temporary housing issues during the economic downturn. This program will identify volunteers willing to provide care to a neighbor's pet so the pet can eventually return to his family. It is neighbor helping neighbor.

AWA is currently raising funds for the Pet Recovery Plan. "To execute each of the necessary solutions it will be over \$75,000," says Richmond, "and we are a charity so we are asking for donations." All gifts received to the Pet Recovery Fund will go back into the community to assist both pets and people in crisis. The upcoming summer months may prove hardest due to the fallout from COVID-19 with joblessness remaining high. Animals will be especially vulnerable during this time. AWA decided to act now instead of waiting to see what happens next. It is time to Help Local. Save Local.

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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 2019 over 16,000 pets were served through AWA programming. AWA is South Jersey's leader in progressive companion animal care.



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