

CRITTER CHRONICLES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF



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Director's Message

GMHS has experienced its fair share of change during 1Q19, and inherent in change is opportunity. Recently, our GMHS Board of Directors invited me to step into the interim executive director role, and it was with great excitement I began serving our organization in this capacity on April 1.

As always, and especially during this time of transition, our life-saving work will continue to be guided by our core values and mission "to improve life for all animals by providing temporary shelter, compassionate care, community support, and education." Much like the homeless pets whose lives we save, we, too, are resilient. Our resiliency and commitment to our mission are strong and will see us through--and position us to thrive--amid change.

This month, we also bid a fond farewell to Community Programs Manager **Kristen Solada**. For the past four years, she has shared selflessly of her time and talents in the interest of furthering our mission. She has had an incredible positive effect on our organization and will be missed by all. Kristen's final day is April 13, and I invite you to join me in wishing her all the very best in her new adventure!

Throughout this transition, know my door remains open--transparency has become an elemental part of the GMHS brand, and that, for certain, will not change. I look forward to the growth of our collaboration, the lives we will continue to save and transform, and all the future holds for our organization!

Sincerely,
April Martinez
Interim Executive Director

Spay & Neuter Clinic News



Spay/Neuter Clinic staff includes (left to right) Licensed Veterinarian Technician **Angelia Scholz**; Technician **Julie Birdsall**; Communications Specialist **Caitlin Donnelly**; Veterinarian Assistant **Debbie Smith**; and Clinic Director **Candy Six**.

"WE ALTERED 2,777 ANIMALS IN 2018 AND WOULD LOVE TO SEE THE NUMBER HIT 3,000 FOR 2019!"

CANDY SIX
GMHS SPAY/NEUTER
CLINIC DIRECTOR

The GMHS Spay/Neuter Clinic is an invaluable part of the shelter's life-saving roadmap and offers access to affordable spay/neuter surgeries. Services offered at the clinic meet an important community need: In 2018, our clinic performed 2,777 surgeries--the highest number since 2013.

Spaying or neutering a single pair of unsterilized cats or dogs will save the lives of thousands of unwanted kittens and puppies. For example, one unaltered female cat could give birth to 512 new kittens in two years' time (Source: ASPCA). And, that is a conservative estimate! If you or someone you know needs their pet altered, call the clinic at (804) 694-0349 to schedule an appointment.

Compassionate Community

Throughout 1Q19, GMHS received a number of pet food and supply donations from individuals and groups. Below are two of the groups who collected donations on our behalf and delivered them to the shelter. GMHS thanks you and all supporters for your heart for homeless pets!



Kate and **Alexa** (left to right) delivered a late-January donation to GMHS shelter pets. For Alexa's seventh birthday, she requested pet food and supplies instead of traditional birthday presents.



A generous group of **Thomas Hunter Middle School** Business & Finance students collected pet food and supplies. They visited the shelter in February to present the donation and enjoy a tour.

Highway to Home Update

One of the challenges facing animal welfare organizations in rural communities like GMHS is the inconvenient reality that there are more animals in need of homes than potential adopters. To save the lives of these animals, this disequilibrium must be addressed and solved.

Myriad factors affect any solution. The affordable, accessible surgeries offered through the GMHS Spay/Neuter Clinic figure prominently in our life-saving roadmap and present a long-term solution. The short-term solution requires innovative thinking, planning, and execution. For us, a major factor is our Highway to Home program.

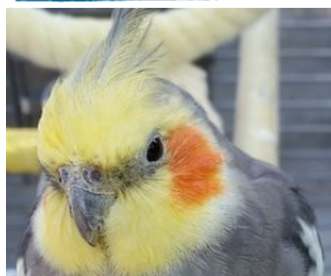
From time to time, there are communities that face a shortage of adoptable pets. Highway to Home meets this need. By developing relationships with adoption-guaranteed agency partners in such areas, it is often possible to transfer cats and dogs to these organizations when such a shortage arises.

GMHS currently networks with 39 other organizations locally, regionally, and along the Atlantic Coast, and during 1Q19, 118 homeless pets benefitted from Highway to Home. Their lives are saved as they are united with adoptive individuals and families. The formerly homeless pets live in loving environments, and the people experience the joy and fulfillment companion animals bring into a home.

"THE FORMERLY HOMELESS PETS LIVE IN LOVING ENVIRONMENTS, AND THE PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE JOY AND FULFILLMENT COMPANION ANIMALS BRING INTO A HOME."

RICHARD CROWDER, M.D.
MEMBER
GMHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Homeless Animal Awareness Week 2019



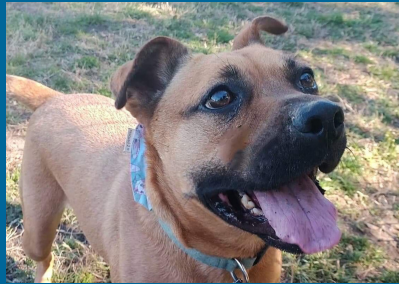
From February 11 to 17, GMHS was among 14 Hampton Roads animal shelters who joined forces to increase awareness of the plight of homeless pets during Homeless Animal Awareness Week. Animal lovers wore orange ribbons to show their support, and the stories of adoptable pets were shared on traditional and social media. GMHS Behavior Team Member **Amy Willoughby** and **Diesel** (who was adopted shortly thereafter) even made an [appearance](#) on WTKR's "Coast Live." Thanks to everyone for a successful 2019 HAAW!

Banjo's Beat

Change is in the air at GMHS! For creatures like me who find comfort in routine, change is a bit scary at first. But, if there is one thing I'm beginning to learn, it's that change is actually okay and can even be great!

If you've visited the shelter recently, you probably noticed that Kennel C (the one closest to Puppy Lobby) is accessible only by staff, a change. People can still meet those dogs, but they're pretty stressed out by strangers frequently walking past. So now, those dogs have a bit more privacy, and it's working! Listen the next time you're at the shelter and you'll hear how quiet it is. If you'd like to meet one of my buddies in Kennel C, just ask a GMHS team member. They'll be happy to introduce you.

Always evolving, I'm embracing change. Recently, I started running and hiking with GMHS Veterinary Technician **Alicia Estabrook**. And, I've found a new favorite hobby! Is it yours, too?



"I'M BEGINNING TO LEARN THAT CHANGE IS ACTUALLY OKAY AND CAN EVEN BE GREAT!"

BANJO
HOMELESS DOG



Photo by Alicia Estabrook

Banjo poses for a photo op while enjoying one of Beaverdam Park's many trails.

I really hope one of you with a similar interest will come meet me. (Just remember, I'm pretty shy at first, but my friends at GMHS can tell you all about me, including what I'm like when I come out of my shell.)

Were all of these changes scary for me? At first, yes. But, I'm so glad I had the courage to try something new. If I didn't, I would not have made a new friend and found a new hobby, which may help me find a forever home. Two and one-quarter years is a long time to wait! And, while I may lose old habits, I'll never lose hope.

Visit the GMHS website to learn more about adoptable dogs like Banjo.



Volunteer Spotlight

More than 150 volunteers help make GMHS' life-saving work possible. Our volunteers' diverse talents and commitment are a transformative force for good and ensure homeless pets know love, care, and compassion while awaiting adoption. We are always looking to add more volunteers to our program.

Currently, volunteers are sought for weekend 4 PM to 6 PM shifts in Cat Mall and to walk dogs at the Gloucester County Animal Control Shelter. The latter commitment requires walking dogs one or two days a week, from 4 PM to 5 PM. Visit our [Volunteer Program](#) webpage to learn more and view the Volunteer Open House Schedule.



An eight-year volunteer, **Joyce Emerson** walks dogs at the GCAC Shelter, welcomes visitors at the GMHS front desk, and supports transports of homeless pets to our adoption-guaranteed agency partners as part of our Highway to Home program. Anyone who knows Joyce knows she has an incredible heart for senior pets and those in need of hospice care. Often joking that she runs a "retirement home for senior dogs," Joyce encourages people to adopt senior pets.

"[SENIOR DOGS] STILL HAVE SO MUCH LOVE TO GIVE, AND GMHS WILL HELP MATCH THE RIGHT PET WITH THE RIGHT FAMILY, WHICH IS JUST AWESOME!"

JOYCE EMERSON
GCAC SHELTER AND
FRONT DESK VOLUNTEER

"JUST KNOWING I MADE A BUNCH OF CATS HAPPY MAKES MY DAY. IT IS ALSO A PLUS KNOWING I HELPED EASE THEIR BOREDOM IF ONLY FOR A LITTLE WHILE."

BRYCE WEIGERTZ
CAT MALL VOLUNTEER



For the past year, **Bryce Weigertz** has been a Wednesday mainstay in Cat Mall where he ensures all the cats have clean water, bedding, and litter boxes to tide them over until morning. Also, a major part of his role is spending time with the cats, getting to know their personalities and socializing them, which increases their adoptability. Ask Bryce about his favorite part of volunteering at GMHS, and he will tell you it is the satisfaction he gets from the experience.

Event Highlights



Photo by Ray Stubblebine

Auction Volunteer **Anne Payne** surveys the silent auction offerings.

On January 26, animal lovers from throughout the region took to The Abingdon Ruritan Club for GMHS' Mad Hatter's Gala & Auction, our premier fundraiser. Sponsored by **Chesapeake Bank** and **Chesapeake Wealth Management**, the event offered attendees silent and live auction fun, fantastic food and drinks, and music from **Good Shot Judy**.

The January 2019 gala and auction was our most successful fundraiser to date and leaves us looking ahead to the next year's event with great enthusiasm. All proceeds benefit GMHS and will be used to save the lives of homeless pets in the organization's service region, which spans from the Northern Neck to the Peninsula.

A huge and heartfelt thanks to the many people who made the event a fantastic success, including the Auction Committee, staff, volunteers, generous donors, and auction attendees. Visit our [photo](#) gallery for more images from the event as captured by Volunteer Photographer **Ray Stubblebine**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 6, 2019
*FABULOUS MUTT SHOW
DAFFODIL FESTIVAL
MAIN STREET STAGE*

APRIL 20, 2019
*GRAY BEARDZ
MOTORCYCLE GROUP
HOGS FOR DOGS
POKER RUN
DAMON'S*

JUNE 1, 2019
*FAMILY FUN DAY
GMHS GROUNDS*

SEPTEMBER 14, 2019
*RUN FOR RESCUES 5K
BEAVERDAM PARK*



Photo by Ray Stubblebine

Bruce Nelson and Sara Harris were recognized by the Auction Committee for developing the auction video.

Auction Video

If you attended The Mad Hatter's Gala & Auction, you will recall the artfully created video that played during the Giving Period. Thank you to **Sara Harris**, of Sara Harris Photography, and **Bruce Nelson**, of Bruce Nelson Photography, who donated their time and talents to craft the auction video. Visit the GMHS [website](#) and scroll down to check it out.