

HCHS Grant Proposal—General Operating Funds

Reason for requesting funds

In west Alabama's rural Hale County, with less than 18,000 residents, 49 percent of citizens ages 18-64 live below poverty, according to the Hale County Housing Resource Center. And the citizens are not the only ones struggling—hundreds of stray dogs and cats peer timidly from under buildings and dart from the roads. Many were abandoned by local owners during dire financial times, but many more never had homes in the first place. This overpopulation is not only sad for the animals, but it is unsafe for the community. Strays' lack of socialization can make them dangerous to both people and pets, especially if the strays feel threatened. In addition, the Hale County Extension Service has reported numerous dog attacks on the county's 19,600 heads of cattle. These dangers can also culminate in financial issues: loss of livestock means loss of money, for example. Fortunately, this need in the community has been addressed with the opening of the Hale County Animal Shelter in Greensboro just this past March. It's now possible for the Hale County Humane Society (HCHS), which operates the shelter, to curtail the stray overpopulation by taking in animals and giving them a chance to be adopted. Of course, every cat or dog adopted will be spayed/neutered if they are not already – it is included in the adoption fee. As the overpopulation decreases, so will strays' struggle for survival and people's dangerous and costly situations.

Part of the HCHS helping meet this need in the community, however, is *keeping* the animals healthy once they enter the shelter. It is vital to keep the shelter from being a breeding ground of disease by administering necessary vaccinations, such as those that prevent distemper and feline leukemia. The HCHS wants to have the animals vaccinated as soon as possible after they come to the shelter to ensure a healthful shelter environment and, ultimately, give stray cats and dogs the best opportunity for a healthy, happy life. When people do adopt from the shelter, they should expect the animal will remain well and not pass disease to their other pets.

For these reasons, we are requesting \$4,955 from the William and Charlotte Parks Foundation, under the category of general operating funds, to cover the cost of vital preventative vaccinations for at least 60 percent animals as they arrive at the shelter. For the remaining 40 percent, we have already secured preventative vaccination funding (\$3,303) from the private Roper Foundation in Trussville, Alabama (tax ID# 631260549). We also have in place a potentially renewable one-year contract with Hale County, which contributes \$25,000 for all shelter building expenses and some operational costs. In addition, the humane society will be funded by adoption fees—\$50 per animal, which includes spay/neuter costs— and individual donations.

Statement for use of funds

As previously stated, the requested \$4,955 would be general operating funds, covering the cost of preventative vaccines for 60% of animals that enter the shelter. We estimate that 1,860 animals will be taken in annually, and the average preventative care cost per animal is \$4.44, based on prices from Jeffers Pet, Inc. (See Appendix C for detailed budget information.) Each dog would receive the Univac vaccine, which prevents parainfluenza, parvovirus, distemper, and adenovirus; and each cat would receive Feline Focus, which prevents rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and feline leukemia. Vaccines would be administered by shelter manager Dee Sullen, trained by veterinarian James Payne at the Greensboro Veterinary Hospital.

HCHS efforts to reduce animal suffering

All that is *required* of each county by Alabama law is an animal control facility, where dangerous and stray animals can simply be contained and euthanized. However, the HCHS came together and has worked for nearly two years to ensure the Hale County Animal Shelter, once opened, would house an adoption program to give surrendered pets a chance at a long, comfortable life. This was done with the help of experienced board members Charlie Burke, secretary, and Betsy Rogers, who have been involved in animal welfare philanthropy since 1982. The couple operated the Bessemer Humane Society in Bessemer, Alabama, for 20 years. With the HCHS, they have helped organize membership drives that

have brought in about 30 members so far. They have also successfully sought out HCHS volunteers, who, since the shelter's opening, have been transporting animals to foster homes and rescue groups across Alabama. The shelter already has direct contact with five rescue groups, including ADAR Rescue in Tuscaloosa and Adopt-a-Rot in Birmingham, and this list is constantly growing. Through ADAR, the shelter has even placed dogs in rescue groups in Massachusetts and Florida.

HCHS planned efforts to assess program effectiveness

Each animal that comes through the Hale County Animal Shelter will have a health record, which will indicate what vaccines, if any, the animal had before entering the shelter. If a surrendering owner cannot provide documentation that the above-listed vaccinations have been given, or if the animal is found and brought to the shelter, the preventative vaccines will automatically be administered. Records will also indicate if the animal was adopted, taken to a foster home or rescue group, or if it died in the shelter, and if so, the cause of death.

Additional HCHS planned programs to benefit animals

Auburn University Rural Studio, which constructed the shelter as a student outreach project, continues to help us fulfill important needs by partnering with other AU departments to utilize faculty and student expertise. The Department of Communications and Journalism's web design class is currently constructing a website for the shelter, which will include access to PetFinder. This service will allow pet-seekers all over the country to see and learn about adoptable animals at our shelter, and we feel strongly that our adoptions will increase as a result.

We are also excited about our pet education program, which we would like to begin next school year in the fall. Some of our HCHS board members and volunteers have agreed to go into Hale County schools and talk to students about spaying/neutering and other aspects of responsible pet ownership. We hope teaching students early on that pets deserve optimal care will result in them becoming caring pet owners later in life.