

Capital Area Humane Society

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Columbus Cats in Crisis

Capital Area Humane Society launches “Be an AdvoCAT” campaign to educate the community and address cat overpopulation in central Ohio

Columbus, Ohio (January 30, 2007) – There’s a cat crisis in Columbus. Cat overpopulation has remained consistently high over the last decade, and today some local animal organizations estimate there are more than 1 million stray and feral (or free-roaming) cats in central Ohio.

Unfortunately, even when these cats are found, they have nowhere to go. Unlike dogs, local laws provide no protection or services for cats that stray, and cats are not accepted at the county’s animal control facility, the Franklin County Dog Shelter. As a result, the privately funded Capital Area Humane Society serves as the default animal control facility for cats.

During 2006, the Capital Area Humane Society took in more than 13,000 homeless animals, which include dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs and other companion animals. More than 10,000 of the animals brought to the shelter were cats. Nearly 8,000 of the cats were reported to be strays, meaning that more than half of all animals received by the Humane Society were stray cats. The sheer number of cats that the Humane Society and other cat organizations take in every year is straining already limited resources.

“No publicly funded agency accepts cats and although there are a number of other privately funded organizations devoted to cats, their resources are limited so the vast majority of stray or feral cats are brought to the Humane Society,” said Jodi Lytle Buckman, executive director of the Capital Area Humane Society. “No other shelter accepts additional cats once they reach their capacity and while we are an open-admission shelter, we simply do not have the resources to care for all of them. Our organization responds daily to cats in crisis as the default animal control service for cats in the community and the numbers are too large for us to be able to find homes for all the homeless cats in our community.”

In 2006, the Capital Area Humane Society was able to find homes for almost 3,000 of the animals they took in. The placement rate for dogs at the organization is 81 percent, with the remaining dogs being ineligible for adoption due to severe medical conditions or temperament that makes them a threat to the community. Comparatively, the Humane Society is only able to find homes for 15 percent of the cats brought to the organization. Tragically, nearly 9,000 cats were unable to be placed in permanent homes due to medical conditions, poor temperament, owner-requested euthanasia and because they were feral. Due to the number of cats coming into the organization during peak intake months, the Humane Society is forced to consider euthanasia when cats have mild, treatable medical conditions. “The placement rates for cats are dramatic and heartbreaking, and is directly linked to the volume of cats we take in as an organization,” said Buckman.

Be an AdvoCAT

The Humane Society is launching the “Be an AdvoCAT” campaign to educate the community about the cat crisis and implement programs to help improve the plight of cats. Through the Be an AdvoCAT campaign, the Humane Society is launching an educational effort to inform the community of the seriousness of the problem and what they can do to help. Each month, the campaign will feature a new message related to cats in our community – including microchipping, keeping cats indoors and spay/neuter programs. “With the introduction of the Be an AdvoCAT campaign, the Humane Society is asking members of the community to join us in addressing this problem for the good of the animals as well as the good of the community,” Buckman said.

The first focus of the year-long campaign is programming for lost and found pets. Local laws require licenses for dogs, but not for cats, which help in reuniting families with lost dogs. Also, there is no law-enforced method for handling cats that stray, meaning that many communities are not required to pick up stray cats and there is no standard location, such as the Franklin County Dog Shelter, where they are brought. “These hurdles combined with the lack of a coordinated community approach to finding lost pets, can hinder a family’s likelihood of being reunited with their lost and much-loved cat,” said Buckman. “A missing pet is a missing family member. In addition, if lost pets are not spayed or neutered, they can add to the problem by producing unwanted litters.”

The Humane Society is improving its lost and found process by partnering with Pet FBI (Pets Found by the Internet), a non-profit organization which runs a Web site (www.petfbi.org) that

provides information on missing and found pets in Ohio. The Humane Society has installed a computer workstation in its building at 3015 Scioto-Darby Executive Court in Hilliard, where community members can search databases for lost dogs or cats, or post information about a found pet. Templates for posters and door hangers will be available, as well as the opportunity to print copies of a lost or found poster. In the coming months, the Humane Society will also work with other area animal organizations to coordinate a standardized, real-time approach to lost and found reporting, and develop a regional approach to increase the use of implanted microchips for both cats and dogs.

“This is just the beginning of a year-long campaign to engage the community in addressing cat overpopulation in central Ohio,” Buckman said. “We have many more ideas and will be implementing them with the help of our animal welfare partners and the community. We believe that the best way to make progress is to educate and work collaboratively with our community. We’re asking for the community to join forces with us to become an AdvoCAT for the cats in crisis in central Ohio.”

To become an AdvoCAT with the Humane Society, interested individuals can sign-up in person at the Humane Society, located at 3015 Scioto-Darby Executive Court in Hilliard, or by sending an e-mail, including name, mailing address and e-mail address, to AdvoCAT@cahs-pets.org.

About the Capital Area Humane Society

Capital Area Humane Society, a non-profit animal welfare organization founded in 1883, is dedicated to addressing the needs of animals and people in our community. Visit www.cahs-pets.org for more information.

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