

125 Years is Just the Beginning

Unleashing Our Future

A bold vision for 2024-2026



ATHENS AREA HUMANE SOCIETY
Three Year Strategic Plan



Executive Summary

125 Years is Just the Beginning

Celebrating the Bond Between People and Pets... **for Life**

As the Athens Area Humane Society celebrates its 125th Anniversary, we enthusiastically publish *125 Years is Just the Beginning*, AAHS's 2024-2026 visionary strategic plan to reaffirm **who we are, what we stand for, why we are uniquely qualified to address the challenges ahead** and most critically—to fully embrace what we *must* become to achieve our bold vision.

Over the next three years, we aim to realize our full potential as an exponentially more effective and influential voice on behalf of those that cannot speak for themselves—the most vulnerable companion animals in our community.

Since opening our new animal care center in October 2021, AAHS has become the second largest provider of high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter (HQHVSN) procedures in Georgia. Our adoption center is more akin to a pet day spa than a conventional pet shelter, offering exceptional levels of social, physical and cognitive enrichment to reduce stress and anxiety and ensure that pets are quickly adopted into loving forever homes.



Cheryl McCormick, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

There are so many programmatic and community engagement successes to share, and I am grateful you are joining us in this new frontier of growth and impact.



Executive Summary

In the coming years, our focus will be on accelerating and amplifying impact and wins for pets beyond the walls of our animal care center—in our community, at the state capital, and through partnerships with shelters east of the Mississippi—from Michigan to Maine to New York and North Carolina.

On November 18th, 1899, a small group of Athenians, led by socialite Louise DuBose, gathered around her breakfast table to galvanize their energy, leverage their influence, and focus their passion on creating a more compassionate, humane community—one that protected animals, starting with carriage horses—from abuse, neglect, and cruelty. In 2024, a small group of Athenians, led by Board President Christina Moore, gathered around our boardroom table to dream big—to break barriers to affordable veterinary care, keep pet families together, and inspire a caring community to action to ensure our next 125 years are just effective as our first.

Thank you, generous reader, for all you do to support AAHS's mission. All that we have accomplished for the most vulnerable dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens **has been because of you and your big heart for pets.**

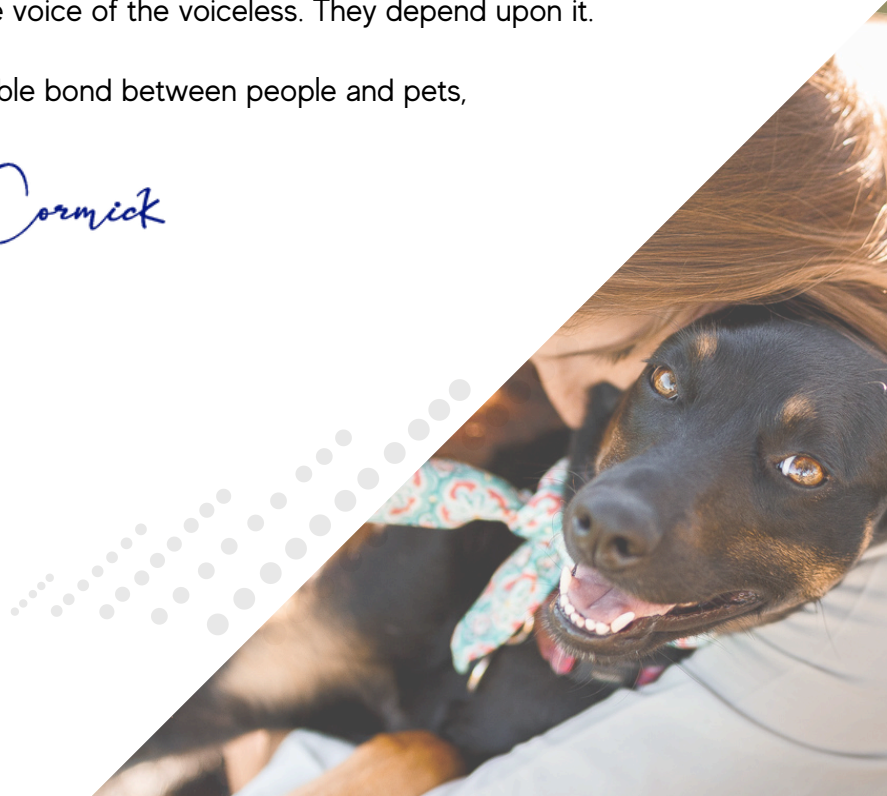
We are never more effective than we are thinking and acting boldly in service of our deeply-held conviction that all dogs and cats deserve a loving home. We are inspired and ready to act.

Please, join us in being the voice of the voiceless. They depend upon it.

In celebration of the indelible bond between people and pets,

Cheryl McCormick

Cheryl McCormick, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer





Mission

We rescue and protect companion animals by providing for their wellbeing, uniting them with loving homes, and advocating for a compassionate society.



Vision

We envision a society where all dogs and cats have a loving home and the bond between pets and people is celebrated.



Values

Lead with Compassion

We place a premium on relationships and the role they play in every aspect of our work. We invest time to understand the perspectives of others and are mindful of how our actions and decisions may impact the wellbeing of those we serve. We are intentional in our approach to creating a culture that encourages genuine concern for others, assumes good intentions, builds trust, and aligns common purpose around a unified vision.

Act with Integrity

We uphold ethical, responsible and honest conduct in all aspects of AAHS's work in a manner consistent with all applicable laws, honesty, and fairness. We subscribe to the moral ethos of AAHS and exercise practical wisdom in making sound judgments that benefit all stakeholders and the thousands of companion animals whose lives are saved and improved through the impact of our mission.

Put the Team First

We help each other thrive and believe that greatness comes from unlocking each other's full potential. We invest in, encourage and celebrate each other's success because we understand that as each individual learns and grows, so does the AAHS team. We are united in our intention to create a culture based upon a foundation of inclusion, team spirit, diversity of opinion and freedom of communication.

Inspire Potential Through Servant Leadership

We inspire others to action and anchor ourselves to the essential why of our purpose. We believe that work is service made visible and that the highest form of achievement is to see others succeed. We choose to put the interests of others above our own. We encourage others to become more than they ever believed possible and have a deeply rooted belief in the mission of AAHS and the 'call to service'



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

We work to recruit diverse candidates and ensure our team members have all the tools they need to be successful. Our mission is most effectively fulfilled through proactively supporting the values of equity, inclusion, and diversity. Diversity may be measured by, but is not to, differences in age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, class, religion, disability, geography, and profession. We acknowledge and respect the many differences that comprise thriving communities and seek diversity in our staff to ensure that a range of perspectives, opinions, and experiences are recognized and acted upon in achieving our purpose. We intend to promote a fully equitable animal welfare sector that justly represents and serves all our constituencies.



What We Believe

The Athens Area Humane Society was founded in 1899 and grew with a purpose to alleviate suffering and spread compassion throughout our community—not just the suffering of animals, but also the people who depended on animal companions for their livelihood, safety, and peace of mind.

Today, AAHS is a go-to presence in twelve counties throughout Northeast Georgia. Over 10,000 people in AAHS' community, from volunteers and donors to staff and business partners help comfort, rescue, heal, and reinforce the indelible bond between pets and their people.



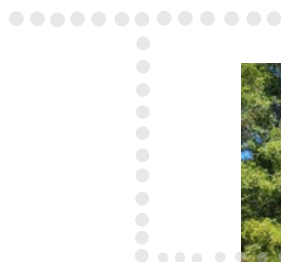
AAHS's purpose remains clear . . .
To strengthen the bond between
pets and people.



This purpose is uniquely AAHS. It's why we exist, and it's needed now more than ever. It has been the north star throughout our storied history. It's how we work in the communities we serve. It's about how we inspire and develop the people who work with us. We're clear on the vision for our next stage of growth.

We believe that it's possible to do good *and* do well— fulfilling our mission in ways that create a sustainable business model and curate a better shared future that makes a real difference in the lives of bonded pet families.

We will achieve our vision through bold and courageous action, for we are our best when we are at our boldest. What we stand for is supported by three foundational beliefs, which drive our bold future, anchor us solidly to shared values, and fuels our deeply held sense of purpose and conviction.





What We Believe

We believe in the interconnectedness of all life and that everyone can make a difference.

AAHS recognizes that the health of people is inextricably linked to the health of animals and to our shared environment—the One Health model.

We build strong partnerships with those who believe what we believe, to improve the health of companion animals and approach our work with a deep sense of responsibility—to animals, our community, and the planet.

We believe in the possibility of a humane society.

We show deep compassion and empathy towards others, recognize their inherent worth and dignity and work to ensure that every pet family has the support needed to thrive.

We believe that the community we want tomorrow begins with the way in which we operate today—as individuals, citizens, and as an organization.

We believe that the indelible bond between pets and people has significance to human, animal, and community health and welfare.

We recognize that pets change people on an emotional level. Pets also make people healthier mentally, physically, and socially. So professionals who keep animals healthy—from veterinarians to shelter staff—contribute to the health of individuals, families and communities. These realities put AAHS at the center of conversations about public health.





Keystones of AAHS's Vision

On the next pages of this forward-thinking strategy, we've identified three keystone areas that permeate all we do. These three initiatives guiding our efforts for the next three years include:



Reducing barriers to accessible veterinary care, including socioeconomic, geographic, and/or knowledge-based barriers.

Access to veterinary care is a critical factor in improving the quality of companion animals' lives and is a growing national crisis, compounded by the acute shortage of veterinarians. A 2020 study from Banfield Pet Hospitals revealed an estimated 75 million pets in the U.S. may not have access to veterinary care by 2030. AAHS aims to break down barriers to AVC in our community by engaging influential stakeholders such as veterinary professionals, academics, and community members in what 'care' means to them and including the voices of pet guardians who struggle to afford care for beloved pets.



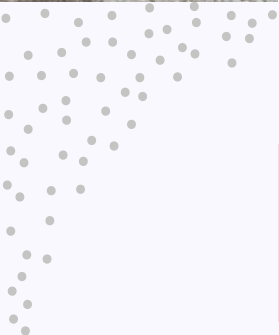
Embracing the power of community-centered sheltering and partnering with human services agencies to protect the most vulnerable bonded pet families. Pet families that stay together, play together.

No animal shelter can meet all the needs of its community on its own. Community-centered sheltering has the power to increase access to lifesaving pet support services that keep bonded pet families safe, healthy, and together. AAHS strives to create a unified network of support services by merging human health and animal welfare approaches to wellbeing. Learning directly from pet families about their needs—rather than assuming we already have the answers—will help create a tailor made portfolio of services . . . by, of, and for our community.



Fueling philanthropic investments, creating exciting marketing opportunities & deepening community outreach.

Joyful, relationship-based philanthropy fuels our program portfolio and strategic initiatives and is in turn influenced by it. Auditing organizational capacity and committing to robust investment AAHS's fundraising and marketing/outreach potential allows us to guide the allocation of financial, human, and social capital in service of AAHS's mission and create social change in an increasingly dynamic, nonlinear, and interconnected world.





Access to Veterinary Care

Making veterinary services accessible to more pet families in more ways.



Reducing barriers to accessible veterinary care, including socioeconomic, geographic, and/or knowledge-based barriers.

Strengthen clinic brand and position AAHS as a leader in shelter medicine/teaching clinics in the southeastern US.

- FY 1 Q2** Create mission and vision statements by and for clinic staff to provide unanimity in purpose and tell the story of their future.
- FY 2 Q1** Determine the optimal' percentage of volume-to-public pet patients based on community needs assessment and existing organizational capacity; pivot operations to the optimal model.
- FY 3 Q1** Create a pipeline of LVTs by underwriting technical college tuition in exchange for post-graduate service in nonprofit shelter medicine/HVHQ clinics.

Position AAHS's high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter (HQHVSN) surgery center and wellness clinic as a collaborative partner with a community of veterinary practioners providing a spectum of care to pet families.

- FY 1 Q3** Host a series of meetings with local generalists, specialty practitioners and veterinary academics, culminating in a one-day workshop, to discuss local and regional collaboration and strengthen referral networks.
- FY 2 Q1** Conduct a feasibility study and community needs assessment to determine if emergency and/or urgent care services can be provided and what operational/capital investments are required.

Expand the scope and capacity of clinic services to pet families in rural communities and those in vulnerable situations.

- FY 1 Q3** Establish partnership with Met Life™ to offer discounted pet insurance plans to adopters and clinic clients.
- FY 2 Q1** Secure capital investments for a transport vehicle to provide same day pick-up/drop off services to pet patients in rural Georgia communities receiving spay/neuter procedures.
- FY3 Q1** Conduct feasibility study for establishing and/or participation in 'street vet' program providing free veterinary care, treatment, and supplies to pets of individuals experiencing homelessness and housing vulnerability.





Community Sheltering & Accessing Needs:

Saving More Lives and Keeping Families Together



Embracing the power of community-centered sheltering and partnering with human services agencies to protect the most vulnerable bonded pet families. Pet families that stay together, play together.

Conduct a community assessment to provide structure, collect data and information, and strengthen relationships with current and potential partners, with the goal of developing programs and services that add-value to pet families in AAHS's service area.

**FY 1, Q4
Milestone 1**

Use existing data from municipal, government, and private sources to create a GIS database used to identify 'service hotspots', solicit funding, and seek potential partnerships.

Evaluate, staff, and scale existing and emergent Human-Animal Support Services (HASS) through the lens of community-centric sheltering.

FY 1 Q3

Evaluate existing and potential partnerships to assess ability to meet community needs.

FY 2 Q1

Host partner roundtable to develop action plan.

Implement a One Health approach to improving access to veterinary care, where resources and activities are integrated into family health care, providing baseline care to bonded pet family members.

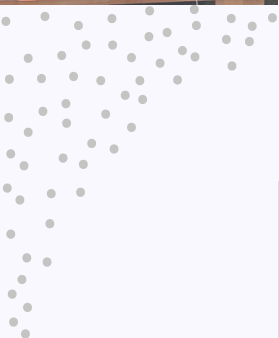
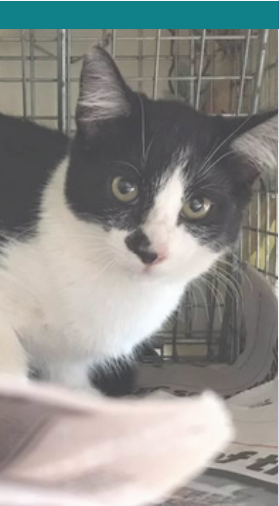
FY 1 Q3

Hire Program Director to evaluate, implement, and report on community-supported shelter and HASS initiatives.

Evaluate long-term program additions that reflect trends in animal welfare, add value to bonded pet families, and which create a more pet-friendly community

FY 3 Q2

Identify 'North Star' trends in animal welfare that drive long-term investment and programmatic success and influence strategic initiatives.





Fueling Philanthropic Investments, Creating Exciting Marketing Opportunities & Deepening Community Outreach



Philanthropy and outreach encourage exploration of human potential, sets the course, and keeps everyone headed in the same direction.

Identify and quantify untapped fundraising potential and staffing needs to optimize revenue streams and expand organizational capacity.

FY 1 Q3 Conduct a data-driven internal fundraising audit to comprehensively assess AAHS' fundraising efforts, identify strengths and weaknesses, and seek out areas for growth.

FY 1 Q4 Evaluate results of the audit against current staff model to identify gaps, and budget scenarios to address fundraising gaps that deliver extraordinary ROI over time.

Develop annual marketing plans to align promotional and advertising initiatives with existing and emergent target markets.

FY 1 Q2 Invest time and financial resources in marketing-specific continuing education for staff. Develop an annual marketing plan to support strategic, operational, and event-related initiatives.

FY 1 Q3 Implement strategy of annual marketing plan.

Implement a data-driven approach to expand corporate partnerships to leverage and secure philanthropic resources necessary to advance AAHS's mission.

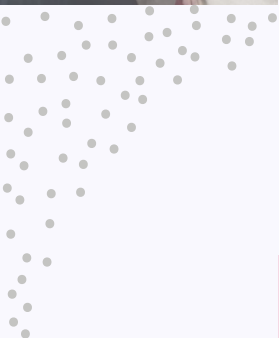
FY 1 Q2 Conduct research related to prospect corporate partnerships and create prioritized framework for cultivation based on linkage, affinity, and capacity to make philanthropic gifts.

FY 1 Q3 Craft personal, customized engagement strategies and communication plans for each corporate caseload prospect (qualification).

Create a comprehensive events strategy plan that aligns with organizational goals, excites stakeholders, and garners public support and attention for AAHS's mission and programs.

FY 1 Q2 Define Events Committee member roster and goals and objectives for each FY24 signature event.

FY 2 Q1 Host gala event recognizing the 125th anniversary of AAHS.





AAHS Board Members

Meet the leaders who are taking us to the next frontier of growth.



Christina Moore
President



Lindsay Lucas McConnell
Vice President



Tracy Mathews, CPA
Treasurer



Elizabeth Guest
Secretary



Carol Bitner,
At Large



Mukul Chaudhary
At Large



Michelle Clendenen-Shaw
At Large



Carolina Darbisi, Ph.D.
At Large



Laura Emerson
At Large



Autumn Field
At Large



Laura Green,
At Large



Makayla Jones
At Large



Allison E. McCarthy, Esq.
At Large



John Rogeberg
At Large



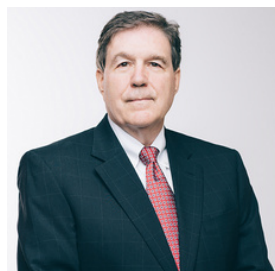
Dana Skelton
At Large



Edward D. Tolley, Esq.
At Large



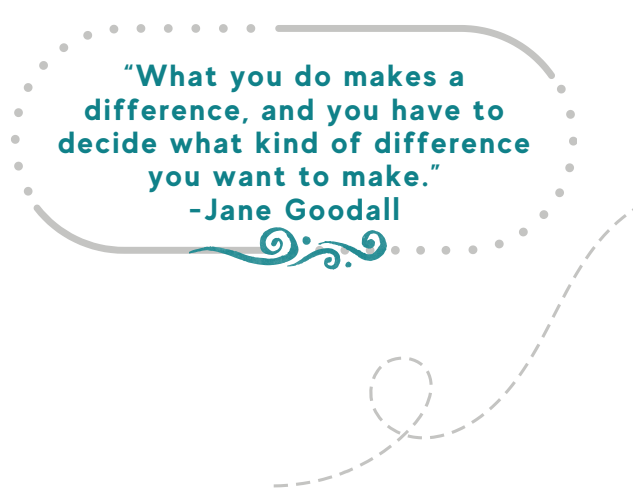
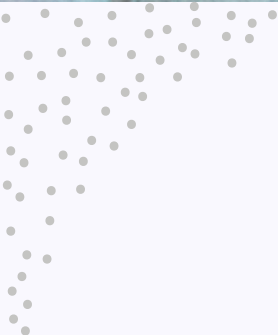
Jessica Wofford, Ph.D., DVM
At Large



J. Edward Allen, Esq.
Advisor

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

-Jane Goodall





125 Years Is Just the Beginning

The sheltering model we've known over the past 100 years segregates people issues from pet issues. And yet increasingly, pets are perceived as being an integral part of the family. When pets suffer, the entire family is in crisis. Our role in helping pet families play together and stay together is expansive as it is deeply personal. We hope that this visionary strategic plan will stimulate interest and action among all stakeholders to achieve the lofty goals described in the plan. Your generous support helps AAHS reimagine the way human animal support services are developed and delivered in ways that genuinely change and save lives right here in our community.

You give pet families a reason for hope—and a way to keep pet families together.

Thank you for your generous gift of support. Here's how to save a life today:

Gifts of Cash

The simplest way to support AAHS is through a gift of cash.

Gifts of Stock

Gifts of appreciated stock are a great way to make charitable contributions. When you donate stock, you avoid capital gains and receive a tax deduction based on the higher price of the stock.

Multi-Year Gifts of Mixed Assets

A multi-year gift of mixed assets (e.g., cash and stocks) can help save thousands of lives. Pledges may be made up to a five-year period.

Recurring Donation

Your ongoing monthly, quarterly, or biannual gift provides lifesaving help for thousands of dogs and cats and makes it easier for you to give a significant gift of impact over time.

Matching Gifts

Many employers match charitable gifts made by employees – some even double donations. Check with your employer to determine if they will increase the impact of your gift!

Leave a Gift in Your Will

You can make a bequest by including language in your will leaving a portion of your estate to AAHS, or by designating AAHS as a beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy. Bequests can be made for a specific amount, for a percentage of your estate, or for a portion of what is left after you have made bequests to your family.

Gifts of Goods or Services

We appreciate donated products and services, such as pet food, litter, kitten and puppy formula, and gift cards to purchase pet-related supplies and equipment. Another way to support AAHS's mission is to provide pro-bono services and/or skills that advance resource equity. From legal services to videography, your skills help us increase capacity and achieve our mission.

