



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

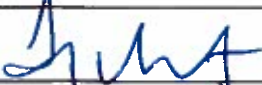
### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County  
Program Title: "The Year of the Cat"  
Program Category: Organizational Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Nina Stively  
Title: Director  
Department: Department of Animal Services  
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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Tim Hemstreet  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: 



# *The Year of the* **Cat**

## *Overview and Summary*

Loudoun County Animal Services had previously struggled with finding live (adoptive) placement for cats and kittens, leading to the development of a group of programs dedicated to life-saving, collectively referred to as “The Year of the Cat.” The programs included comprehensive vaccination protocols, community engagement through volunteer-driven foster care, affordable herd health-oriented treatment for contagious disease, progressive adoption programs and training of a volunteer corps known as “Kitty Candy Strippers” to provide compassionate, hands-on care to sick kittens being housed at the shelter. Launched in October of 2015, the percentage of cats leaving Loudoun County Animal Services alive went from 57% to 84%. Additionally, the increased traffic generated from public awareness of these programs and community engagement led the Department to see an overall doubling in volunteer hours, and euthanasia of all species dropped by 67%.





**THE YEAR OF  
THE CAT  
FOCUSED ON  
THE KEY AREAS  
OF ADOPTION,  
TRANSPARENCY,  
VOLUNTEERISM  
AND  
PROGRESSIVE  
MEDICAL CARE.**



## *Problem*

Loudoun County Animal Services (LCAS) is an open-admission animal shelter and animal control facility that receives approximately 2,000 animals per year. Although live-release percentages for dogs are high nationwide, cats typically lag behind due to a combination of factors including prevalence of contagious disease, low adoption rates, susceptibility to stress and higher intake numbers than other species; LCAS was no exception. Although the shelter had not been euthanizing cats for lack of space, they were being euthanized for a variety of reasons, including age, appearance,

behavior and developing common upper respiratory infections while in the building. At the lowest point in 2015, less than 45% of the cats arriving at Loudoun County Animal Services were leaving the facility alive through positive outcomes such as adoption or being sent to rescue, and contagious disease was all-too-common. LCAS set about identifying several key areas of improvement in order to increase the quality of life for cats entering the shelter, improve overall health and maximize their chances of leaving the facility alive.

## *Innovative Solutions*

Launched in October of 2015, the “Year of the Cat” programs sought to address deficiencies in the animal shelter’s cat-based programs through the following elements:

- Engagement of the community through transparency and volunteerism

- Adoption of progressive adoption programs

- Aggressive, modern, affordable treatment of contagious disease in conjunction with establishment of cleaning and vaccination protocols

The goal was to eliminate euthanasia of healthy and treatable cats at Loudoun County Animal Services through this multi-pronged effort, and the success of the program is already being realized. The efforts throughout the Department have combined to find homes for 366 more cats than in the same period the year prior, and the increased visibility of the shelter has improved public perception and engagement substantially.

*Engagement of the community through transparency and volunteerism.*

Historically, LCAS utilized social media (primarily Facebook, but also Twitter and Pinterest) to some success, posting positive stories and photos of adoptable animals. There was also a volunteer corps, both at the shelter, and in a network of foster homes, to play with cats on the adoption floor and house kittens until they were of age to become available for adoption (8 weeks in the Commonwealth of Virginia). However, both of these initiatives focused entirely on the positive aspects of the Department’s programs and shielded the public from the struggles of disease outbreaks, overcrowding and kennel stress that caused animals not yet on the adoption floor to behaviorally backslide into fear, depression and aggression while at the facility.



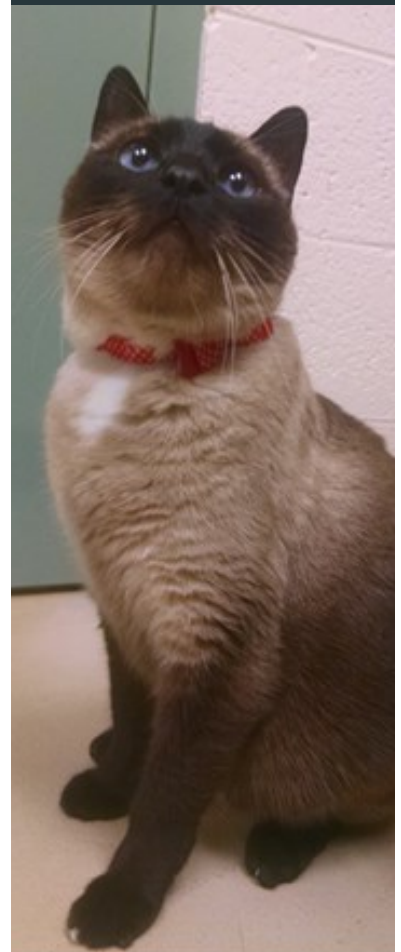


*Willie arrived at the shelter in May of 2016 with an infection so severe, that he lost an eye. But he made a full recovery, thanks to volunteer care, and has since been adopted.*

The “Year of the Cat” programs emphasized transparency, and invited the public and volunteers to be a part of the shelter’s solutions in finding live placement for all animals. Social media posts demonstrated staff working with animals “behind the scenes,” and sought volunteers to work with cats who were struggling with the stress of the shelter environment. The more proactive, honest approach to marketing saw Facebook followers increase by 70% with exponentially higher rates of engagement through sharing, liking and commenting. Facebook, being free of charge and with a page now “liked” by more than 9,000 people, became the Department’s most effective tool in volunteer recruitment, offering further opportunities for savings- measured both in financial costs and the lives of animals in our care. Perhaps the most powerful example of the Facebook-volunteer link was seen in the creation of the “Kitty Candy Strippers” volunteer program.

It has been well-documented that common feline upper respiratory infections increase with stress and length of stay in sheltered cats, and outbreaks at LCAS had historically been handled through depopulation- the euthanasia of large groups of cats until the disease was thought to be under control. When depopulation was not put into place, LCAS would isolate sick cats, offering no human interaction, other than daily cleaning and medicating. During the “Year of the Cat,” the Department recognized that this quarantine process was not encouraging health and well-being, and “Kitty Candy Strippers” were recruited to help this neglected population heal. The Kitty Candy Strippers are a volunteer corps trained for the specific purpose of handling (while wearing PPE) cats and kittens who were quarantined for illness or too fearful to go up for adoption. Prior to this program, approximately 80% of sick cats were euthanized during a typical disease outbreak due to space limitations, lack of understanding of treatment options and poor recovery rates. However, the positive socialization and

**IN THE EIGHTEEN MONTHS SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THIS PROGRAM, ADOPTION REVENUE HAS REACHED \$132,850, UP FROM \$77,210 IN THE SAME PERIOD OF THE PRIOR YEAR.**



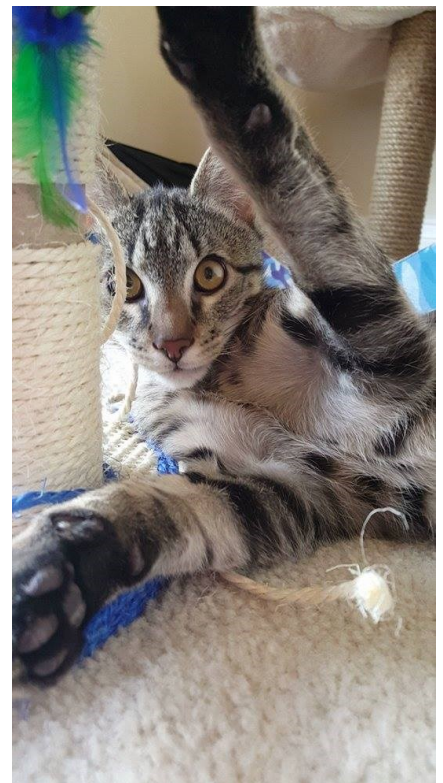
*“Cats who were terrified upon arrival at the shelter after having spent their entire lives in a single home were given the opportunity to live in staff offices, and the more home-like environment gave frightened felines a comfortable space to come out of their shells.”*



provided to the cats by Kitty Candy Strippers reduced the number of days the cats required prescription treatment, improved sociability, increased the rate of recovery and, literally restored cats in quarantine with the will to live.

#### *Adoption of progressive adoption programs*

“Adopt, don’t shop” is a common mantra used in animal sheltering, but unfortunately, LCAS had been holding onto old fashioned perceptions on what the perfect home may be, and adopters were inconvenienced through cumbersome applications and selective screening. Staff would select which animals were available for adoption based on standardized behavior assessments and personal selection. The latter meant that senior pets and those with handicaps or manageable medical conditions were never presented to the public for adoption, and were instead euthanized. During the “Year of the Cat,” LCAS shifted gears, and instead, offered all pets up for adoption that were not dangerous or suffering and sought creative ways to showcase these pets. Animals with special needs were presented for adoption with full disclosure on their conditions, and to the surprise of the Department, were adopted readily by kindhearted members of the community. Additionally, the Department streamlined the adoption application process, eliminating unnecessary hurdles, and offering a friendly, customer-focused process that enabled citizens to meet and take home their new pets on the same day. Cats who were terrified upon arrival at the shelter after having spent their entire lives in a single home were given the opportunity to live in staff offices, and the more home-like environment gave frightened felines a comfortable space to come out of their shells. The Department also began offering



EINSTEIN: Prior to the “Year of the Cat”, a kitten with a heart condition like Einstein would not have been placed up for adoption. But thanks to the program, he was adopted and is thriving in a loving home.



**BARRY:** Staff changed tactics and focused on positive attributes as well as changed the stigma around FIV+ cats to help felines, like Barry, find homes.



barn cats for adoption- creating an opportunity for the public to have “organic pest control” on their farms, while finding homes for cats that had previously been dubbed unadoptable due to fearfulness or having a need to live primarily outdoors.

#### *Aggressive, modern, affordable treatment of contagious disease and establishment of cleaning and vaccination protocols*

The Department had struggled for years with prevention and treatment of contagious disease in the cat population. Medical protocols, when available, were not current and had never been reviewed by professionals trained in shelter medicine techniques. As a result, the cleaning protocols were ineffective, the vaccine schedules were not in line with optimal prevention, and treatment for disease was frequently inefficient. A comprehensive review and rewrite of all medical protocols was implemented, new vaccine schedules were standardized and PPE became part of standard use for all staff in cat intake areas. Although modern drugs and vaccinations were used, an audit of all medical expenses and efforts to bring medical treatment in-house, rather than being sent out to the vet, allowed the Department to keep costs stable while improving the health of the animals in the facility. And, although treatment for disease was being implemented, instead of euthanasia, the number of days prior to adoption for sick cats stayed the same, approximately 50 days.

### *Interagency Cooperation*

The Department partnered with the Humane Society of Raleigh County, a non-profit agency contracted to Raleigh County, WV to provide animal sheltering services for cats and dogs. LCAS provided training to their staff in the areas of animal behavior, kennel enrichment, housing and welfare. In turn LCAS received healthy, spayed or neutered and vaccinated dogs to alleviate overcrowding in the West Virginia facility. Meanwhile, the dogs were considered highly adoptable in Loudoun County, and after very short periods of time, were adopted by the public, generating revenue to support the cat-based programs for locally received animals in Loudoun. The life-saving partnership has moved



*The Barn Cat Program meant feral and semi-feral cats could be placed into “working homes.” In 2016, over 30 cats were placed into homes through this program.*



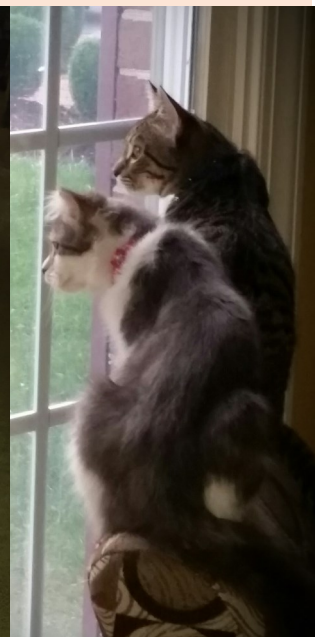
Photos, page 6 & 7:  
Successful cat adoptions  
from 2016, shown in  
their new homes.



## Cost of the Program

Costs of the program were nominal, as the greatest improvements were seen as a result of cost-free measures, such as the Kitty Candy Stripers and the change in adoption policies.

Costs of implementation of other aspects of the program were entirely offset by the increase in adoption revenue from larger numbers of cats (and subsequently, other pets) going home- an increase of \$55,640- and a partnership with Raleigh County, West Virginia for dog transfers. The “Traveling Tails” partnership brings in healthy, social, spayed/neutered animals (primarily dogs and puppies) from this under-resourced area to satisfy the unmet demand for adoptable dogs in Loudoun County, while generating revenue for the Department’s operational costs related to cats received from the local population. In 2016, Traveling Tails generated \$19,255 in revenue, with less than \$3,000 of associated expenses, enabling the Year of the Cat to provide medical treatment, sheltering and comprehensive care, and saving the lives of 360+ additional Loudoun County cats. (To contrast, in 2014-2015, when the inbound transfer program was informal and unstructured, expenses associated spay/neuter and medical care of transferred animals well exceeded revenue generated.)



## Results and Success

The Year of the Cat programs were initiated in October of 2015, and attempted to address the multifaceted struggles faced by a municipal agency managing challenging feline intakes. Government-operated animal shelters, such as Loudoun County Animal Services, generally operate as open-admission facilities, accepting all animals that come to the door, regardless of health, age, condition or behavior. Without being able to effectively plan for the types of animals that may need shelter services, LCAS, like many municipal agencies, was unable to humanely handle the pressure of “kitten season” from April through September, when feline intakes are typically 3-5 times higher than the rest of the year. Euthanasia was seen as an acceptable way to manage the population, and transparency on policies and decision-making was unheard of. The Year of the Cat, however, sought to view every cat as an individual, engage the public in solutions, and maximize life-saving without increasing taxpayer burden. The success of the program has been felt throughout the agency over the past 18 months, when compared to the same time period in the year prior.

The overall live-release rate (number of animals leaving the facility alive through adoption, transfer and reunion with owner) went from 65 to 89%, with 1,072 more animals leaving the facility alive, even in the face of greater intakes (3,255 vs 3,578).

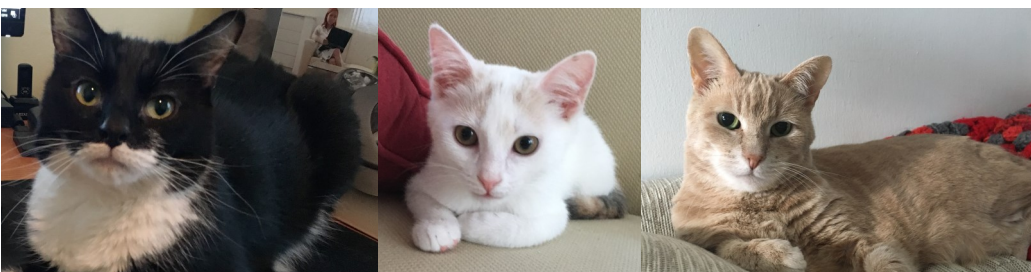
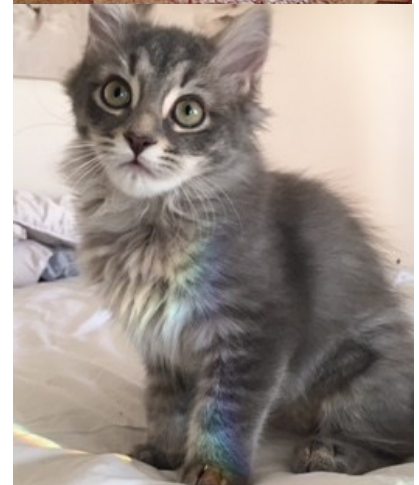
Cats in particular saw a jump in live-releases, going from 57% to 84%, through a combination of adoption efforts and improved public perception and visibility, which resulted in higher traffic. Through focusing on their needs as a species, cats saw significant improvements in welfare, with the elimination of the practice of depopulation in the face of disease, and more compassionate adoption strategies. As a result, 366 more cats left the facility alive.

In the eighteen months since the launch of this program, adoption revenue has reached \$132,850, up from \$77,210 in the same period of the prior year.

Volunteer hours for cats in shelter and foster homes have spiked more than 300%, through improved visibility and increased opportunities for engagement, resulting in an estimated cost savings to the County of \$322,131 using the Virginia Employment Commissions estimator.

Staff have reported greater job satisfaction, less stress and reduced compassion fatigue, now that their work is focused on life-saving and requires less euthanasia (down 67% from an average of 3 animals euthanized every day, to approximately 7 in a whole week).

The programs under the umbrella of the “Year of the Cat” were intended to create long-term change for the agency, the County’s companion animal population, and the community and they have done just that. It is the hope of Loudoun County Animal Services that the success of this program is permanent, and that this program can serve as a model for other jurisdictions struggling to keep up with challenging animal intakes on a limited budget.





# Kennel Statistics Table for selected impounds between 10/1/2013 and 4/30/2015

		Dog	Cat	Sm Animals	Livestock	Total
	BEGINNING SHELTER COUNT (10/1/2013)	14	62	12	0	88
	ENDING SHELTER COUNT (4/30/2015)	16	34	18	0	68
	<u>Intake</u>					
A	Owner Surrender	404	731	357	149	1641
B	Stray	707	655	55	23	1440
C	Return	28	18	3	0	49
D	Other	121	79	24	2	226
E	Total Intake	1,260	1,483	439	174	3,356
F	Owners Requesting Euthanasia	51	46	2	2	101
G	Quarantined	0	0	0	0	0
H	Adjusted Total Intake [E - (F+G)]	1,209	1,437	437	172	3,255
	<u>Outgoings</u>					
I	Adoptions	300	641	289	26	1,256
J	Transfers to Other Organizations	44	116	16	0	176
K	Return to Owner	608	77	7	7	699
L	Total Live Animal Outgoings	952	834	312	33	2,131
	<u>Animals Euthanized</u>					
M	Healthy	0	0	0	0	0
N	Treatable-Manageable	0	0	0	0	0
O	Treatable-Rehabilitable	0	0	0	0	0
P	Untreatable-Unrehab	0	0	0	0	0
Q	Owner Requested Euthanasia	51	46	2	2	101
R	Other	260	643	108	139	1,150
S	Total Euthanasia [M+N+O+P+Q+R]	311	689	110	141	1,251
T	Owner Requested Euthanasia	51	46	2	2	101
U	Quarantined	7	23	0	0	30
V	TOTAL ADJUSTED EUTHANASIA [S-(T+U)]	253	620	108	139	1,120
W	DIED OR LOST IN SHELTER CARE	0	18	10	0	28
X	TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings [L+V+W]	1,205	1,472	430	172	3,279
	Animal Placement Percentage (Total Live Animal Outgoings (L) / TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings (X) X 100)	79.00	56.66	72.56	19.19	64.99
	Euthanasia Percentages (TOTAL ADJUSTED EUTHANASIA (V) + DIED OR LOST IN SHELTER CARE (W) / TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings (X) X 100)	21.00	43.34	27.44	80.81	35.01



# Kennel Statistics Table for selected impounds between 10/1/2015 and 4/30/2017

	Dog	Cat	Sm Animals	Livestock	Total
BEGINNING SHELTER COUNT (10/1/2015)	10	39	15	3	67
ENDING SHELTER COUNT (4/30/2017)	16	19	8	5	48
<u>Intake</u>					
A Owner Surrender	454	698	404	127	1683
B Stray	663	591	49	8	1311
C Return	102	60	15	1	178
D Other	324	104	85	10	523
E Total Intake	1,543	1,453	553	146	3,695
F Owners Requesting Euthanasia	71	45	1	0	117
G Quarantined	0	0	0	0	0
H Adjusted Total Intake [E - (F+G)]	1,472	1,408	552	146	3,578
<u>Outgoings</u>					
I Adoptions	685	1,055	461	135	2,336
J Transfers to Other Organizations	74	79	69	1	223
K Return to Owner	567	66	9	2	644
L Total Live Animal Outgoings	1,326	1,200	539	138	3,203
<u>Animals Euthanized</u>					
M Healthy	0	0	0	0	0
N Treatable-Manageable	9	20	1	0	30
O Treatable-Rehabilitable	6	5	1	1	13
P Untreatable-Unrehab	111	164	8	3	286
Q Owner Requested Euthanasia	71	45	1	0	117
R Other	12	29	2	2	45
S Total Euthanasia [M+N+O+P+Q+R]	209	263	13	6	491
T Owner Requested Euthanasia	71	45	1	0	117
U Quarantined	4	5	0	0	9
V TOTAL ADJUSTED EUTHANASIA [S-(T+U)]	134	213	12	6	365
W DIED OR LOST IN SHELTER CARE	1	24	6	0	31
X TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings [L+V+W]	1,461	1,437	557	144	3,599
Animal Placement Percentage (Total Live Animal Outgoings (L) / TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings (X) X 100)					
	90.76	83.51	96.77	95.83	89.00
Euthanasia Percentages (TOTAL ADJUSTED EUTHANASIA (V) + DIED OR LOST IN SHELTER CARE (W) / TOTAL Adjusted Outgoings (X) X 100)					
	9.24	16.49	3.23	4.17	11.00

