

The WAG Rag

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2008

And in the beginning..

Sometimes it's not the freshness of the idea, but the timing.

rate. Buoyed by that success, we looked for more ideas.

Although Walton County's population approaches 80,000, there has been no organization to speak up for the needs of companion animals. Animal lovers tend to be generous people who willingly help when pointed in the right direction. Walton Animal Guild hopes to be their compass.

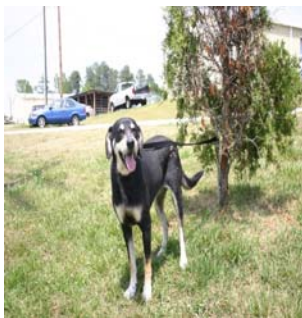
But it didn't take long to realize the overpopulation problem won't go away by merely increasing adoptions.

The solution seems very simple when viewed in black and white.

Reduced shelter admissions + increased shelter adoptions = less healthy animals euthanized.

The idea for the organization rose from efforts to increase the adoption of shelter animals. We started small, convincing the Walton Tribune to publish a Sunday pet. Those short pet profiles were remarkably successful, with more than a 90 percent placement

rate. Buoyed by that success, we looked for more ideas. But the mechanics of the solution are more complex. Strong spay and neuter programs, low-income subsidies, education, healthy foster and adoption programs, and a sense of ownership and responsibility by the community are just a few of the necessities.



Daisy poses for her newspaper photo

Walton County is surrounded by metro-Atlanta humane agencies with enviable records of saving animal lives. Locally, small, independent rescue groups already work behind the scenes to make a difference. With strong community support, we have all the ingredients to build a coalition with similarly impressive results.

But we've gotta start somewhere, right? So here we go.

Thanks to Our Sponsors

Supportive sponsors and members are the backbone of any organization. We are extremely grateful for the generous contributions and assistance of the following animal heroes:

Roy and Mary Jane Mal-lady, Atlanta, GA

Dr. Henry Wall, Monroe, GA

Boss Brothers Country Store, Loganville, GA

John and Joanne Cox, Monroe, GA

Jane Robinson, Infinite En-deavors Publishing, Monroe, GA

Robbie and Sara Thomas, Monroe, GA

Janet Fox, Monroe, GA

We appreciate your sup-port!

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DID YOU KNOW?

- *Sixty-three percent of all American households have a pet.*
- *The average pet owner has 2.6 animals.*
- *Sixteen percent of family pets come from animal shelters.*
- *Nearly 85 percent of dog owners considered their pet a family member—78 percent of cat owners felt the same.*
- *Natural pet products (food and health-related items) brought in \$728 million in 2006, up from \$338 million in 2001.*

Notes from the President

Have you ever started on a hike early one summer morning to a certain landmark, only to find mid-journey that your targeted goal is farther than originally imagined? At that point you're sweaty, out of water and probably questioning your sanity in starting this journey in the first place.

Welcome to the world of WAG!

Perhaps that's not the best analogy, but it's easy to feel overwhelmed and frustrated at the immense scope of the pet overpopulation and neglect problem. Plus there's the contributing moral attitudes, beliefs, policies or procedures we can't change.

But instead we'll focus on more productive thoughts.

I've been extremely encouraged by the enthusiastic welcome WAG has received. So far we've gathered a group of smart, talented and committed people willing to tackle important issues. It doesn't get much better than that.

As urbanization continues to creep into Walton, our community is changing. For one thing, the modern pet owner places a higher importance on animal services.

As I write this, we are in the midst of working with county officials planning the new animal shelter to be constructed in 2008. Financed through SPLOST funds, the project is a major step in a new direction.

Frankly, our county doesn't have much to crow about with animal services offered to date. Limited hours in a dismal, overcrowded shelter result in higher-than-average euthanasia rates. Animal Control seems to be treated as merely a utilitarian department used to dispose of animals.

We deserve better. The animals deserve better. Let's hope officials realize the benefit of a people-friendly facility that encourages adoptions and meets our current needs, while also providing much-needed room for the inevitable growth to come.

Stay tuned.

- Karen Dean

Saving one animal won't change the world—but the world surely changes for that one animal.

Welcome To Our New Members!

As we grow, new members keep coming aboard. A warm WAG welcome to the following new faces:

Leigh Fincher, Monroe, GA
Dina Greenway, Covington, GA
June & John King, Monroe, GA
Joe & Cheryl Reynolds, Loganville, GA
Joan Sennette, Monroe, GA
Lynn Turner, Monroe, GA
Lee Ann Wilkinson, Monroe, GA
Lucinda & Peggy Wiseman, Monroe, GA

Tom and Mary Kay Hodler, dren, Loganville, GA
Athens, GA
Wayne and Carolyn Pickeral, Monroe, GA
Pat K. LeJeune, Monroe, GA
Susan Menzie, Monroe, GA
Dr. Elizabeth Perry, Oxford, GA
Amanda Born, Monroe, GA
Sydney Fuller, Loganville, GA
Karla Wardell—4 Paws Delights, Loganville, GA
Michael and Laura Harris, Loganville, GA
Dr. Elmer and Nancy Swartzmeyer, Covington, GA
Keith and Julie Foster, Eastanollee, GA
Diane Absher, Loganville, GA
Becky Albright, Loganville, GA
Cale Nutt, Lawrenceville, GA
Anne Wood, Athens, GA
Jessie Romer and Nancy Hol-

Newspaper Ads Helped Us Find New Homes!!



Gimme' Shelter

Kudos to Walton County commissioners for finally moving ahead with the much-needed replacement to the overcrowded Animal Control shelter on South Madison Avenue in Monroe.

The original structure was built in 1987 with 15 indoor/outdoor runs. In 1997 an additional 20 runs were added, for a total of 35 kennel runs.

In 2006 Walton County Animal Control had nearly 3400 animals pass through the doors. For dogs, the averaged numbers meant nearly 5 animals in each cage per day. This overcrowding guarantees frequent disease and respiratory infections.

The current shelter also has no place for adopters and animals to get acquainted; no areas to separate kittens and puppies from adult animals; no isolation areas for sick animals, insufficient staff, storage space, and just about everything else a well-designed shelter needs.

Voters gave animal supporters new hope by approving the SPLOST tax in 2006. Over \$40 million in projects are planned, including shelter improvements.

But there's a good news/bad aspect to this. If current and future space needs aren't con-



Walton County Animal Control

sidered, we risk moving into a building that's outgrown before completion.

Industry experts recommend animal shelters have a minimum of 3 sq. ft. per annual animal intake. The shelter's 2006 numbers (only slightly lower than 2005) suggest current structure needs of 10,000 - 12,000 square feet.

Population predictions suggest Walton's annual animal intake will increase to 5,400 animals by 2015 - a 60 percent increase from 2006! Clearly, facility size is a critical consideration

All this math seems to suggest the county's planned 8,500 sq. ft shelter will be inadequate. Fortunately, county officials agreed to meet with WAG representatives and we hope to find more space by "tweaking" their plans. So far, it appears sufficient space could be gained with only a slight increase in the commissioner's proposed \$750,000 building budget.

Accommodating future population growth for any facility is a challenge. But the success of capital project planning is like any other investment. Good research brings good results.

We'll keep watching.

By 2015, Walton Animal Control will handle over 5,400 animals annually—60 percent higher than in 2006.

Sponsor Spotlight



Supporting animal causes comes naturally to Ken and Susan Boss. After all, the Boss family has strong farming roots in Walton County. Susan and Ken, along with his brother Michael, are owners of Boss Brothers Country Store, a Loganville landmark since 1988. Their current location,



Ken and Susan Boss accept a sponsorship award from WAG VP Lynn Turner.

a Purina Mills American Country Store at 3084 Hwy. 78, reflects Walton's evolving blend of country and urban lifestyles. Jewelry and clever home decorations are found alongside feed store staples of dog, cat, livestock and wildlife food.

Boss Brothers also offers fun events each year like photos with Santa, customer appreciation days and plenty of pet-related educational seminars. Check their website at www.bossbrothers.com for more details.

The store is open Mon., Tues, Weds & Fri. 7:30 am - 6 pm, Thurs. until 7:30 pm and Saturdays until 4 pm. Closed Sunday. Call them at (770) 466-0570.

A Season Full of Greetings

Fall and winter have been a busy time for WAG. In October we made our debut as sponsor of the annual Loganfest pet show. Nearly 35 entries competed for titles of best dressed, best kisser, fastest tail wagger, and other dubious-talent events. The show's ten-year history makes it a much-anticipated event and we appreciate the Loganville Chamber and Betty McCullers allowing us to help



Tough competition at Loganfest

out. We're proud to be part of the fun.

Loganville attorney Stuart Oberman gallantly agreed to continue his duties as show announcer and kept the crowd entertained and informed.

Our first appearance at the Monroe Christmas Parade was a blast! Although our humble float didn't win any awards, we definitely had the most enthusiastic paw-waving



Sparky displays his custom-made WAG coat at the Monroe Christmas Parade.

Pomeranian, Ginger, helped by her owner, Rita Moyers. Lee Ann Wilkinson and Simba, along with Cheryl and Joe Reynolds and Sparky walked the entire route, greeting bystanders and wagging hello.

Santa Claws stopped by Tractor Supply and Boss Brothers Country Store in December, posing with nearly 60 pets for holiday portraits taken by Kelly's Photography. Many thanks to the folks at Tractor Supply and Boss Brothers for their hospitality.

Santa soldiered through sittings with dogs, cats, rabbits and horses and gave plenty of families happy holiday memories with their pets.

And of course, these events would have gone nowhere without our faithful and hardy volunteers. Lynn Turner, Jane Robinson, Diane Absher, Pat Vaughn, Dina Greenway, Karla Wardell, Rita and Herm Moyers, Joe and Cheryl Reynolds, Lee Ann Wilkinson, Mandy Born, Roy Mallady, Dennis Spruell, Ken and Susan Boss and Bill and Karen Dean pitched in and helped make these seasonal events lots of fun. We're already looking forward to next year!



Santa greets two of his hooved fans at Tractor Supply in Monroe.

Catch our new pet segment each week on Walton Entertainment, MUN Channel 16!

MEDIA MOMENTS

It's not exactly Good Morning America, but WAG has been getting a fair share of local media attention. The good folks at WMOQ, 92.3 FM, Julio and Melanie Ann, invite us to stop by the first Thursday of each month from 8 to 9 am. to talk about upcoming events or important pet issues.

We've also been spotted on WMUN Channel 16, thanks to cameraman Paul Mullins who has a knack for turning up whenever something interesting happens in Walton County. In February we'll start a monthly "Pet Stop" segment, featuring interviews with locals in the animal in-



dusty. Mullins, a great animal supporter, films the shelter pets featured each week on Walton Entertainment, available to MUN TV customers.

We also occasionally snag a mention in the Walton Tribune, so keep your eyes and ears tuned in the months ahead.

A Home After the Holidays

We all like to spend happy holidays with family and friends. Animals are no different.

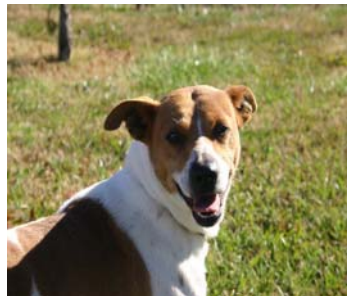
Our Home for the Holidays adoption drive highlighted deserving pets during the month of December. Each display ad in the Loganville Tribune and the Walton Advertiser featured four shelter animals waiting for homes.

Our goal in getting these furry faces in front of approximately 20,000 readers was to empty the shelter kennels as much as possible. And although we weren't able to get every animal adopted, we did see the majority exchange the concrete shelter floor for a warm home.

Best wishes to all new owners and may these new pets live long and healthy lives!



Daisy now has plenty of reasons to smile!



Happy Scrappy



No more cold concrete for Rocky.

Did you Know -

There are an estimated 90 million cats in the United States.

More Appreciated WAG Supporters

Hardy and Linda Hurdle, Monroe, GA

Joan and Wayne McMillan, Social Circle, GA

Mike Mealor and Dr. April Mitchell, Monroe, GA

Monroe Veterinary Clinic, Monroe, GA

Lamar and Debbie Mullinax, Oxford, GA

Dr. Elizabeth Perry, Oxford, GA

Bob and Judy Emmons

Barbara Postlewaite, Monroe, GA

Rod and Laura Templeton, Monroe, GA

Jim and Joyce Evans, Monroe

Alexis Burton, Snellville GA

Welcome to all!

The Three R's— Reading, Ritin' and Rescue

Kind children become kind adults. By becoming involved in WAG's rescue and adoption efforts, students get an early lesson in empathy for others. To welcome the under-18 crowd into our group, we've established the School Ambassador program. Students at each primary or high schools in

Walton County will have an opportunity to bring the humane message to friends and classrooms through art projects, essays, and other creative ways to help animals. All interested students are welcome!

Also, lucky Walton

Career Academy vet science students will be shadowing Dr. Beth Perry, one of Walton's strongest spay/neuter promoters, giving them an up-close view of the effort, commitment and rewards of the veterinary profession.



The Road Ahead

Operation “Big Fix”

As the blank canvas of 2008 stretches in front of us, there’s much planning to be done.

Spay and neuter is on the agenda in February. Spay Day, a program of the Humane Society of the United States, is the last Tuesday of the month, so get your party hats ready!

WAG launches “Operation Big Fix” this month, bringing spay/neuter into low-income neighborhoods of Walton County. Volunteers will transport pets for surgery and back home. WAG is paying for the first 24 pets signed up, but we hope to do many more. We’ll let you know the results.

Owning fighting dogs or attending a dog fight is a felony in 47 states—but not Georgia, Wyoming and Idaho.

This spring we head to Loganville for monthly adoption events at Boss Brothers Country Store. Weekends are an ideal time for families to find a pet. Warm weather will give the animals plenty of opportunities for successful meet and greets.

By now, is there anyone on the planet who hasn’t heard of Michael Vick’s vile crimes? At least Vick managed to shine a light on the horrendous practice of dogfighting.

Vick’s nefarious flunkies would have been safer in Georgia. Nationally, our state ranks near the bottom for effective dogfighting laws. We’re one of only two in the

country where it’s legal to own fighting dogs and one of only three states with no punishment for spectators at dogfights.

Previous legislative efforts to strengthen laws got nowhere. But Vick may be dog’s best friend this year. Outraged animal lovers and shame-faced Georgia politicians may finally do the right thing.

Whatever the reason, this is our best shot at getting these desperately needed laws.

Let your state representative hear from you. For details and easy links to contact your representative, visit:

www.georgiadogfightingbill.com.

Our Corporate Friends

What do businesses like Hurdle Land & Realty, Accolades Awards, Legacy Bank and Creative Occasions have in common? They’re all much-appreciated sponsors of Walton Animal Guild.

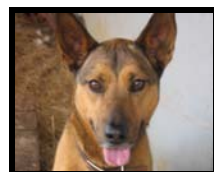
These businesses show the true meaning of the phrase “community partners” by investing in our local programs and efforts. In turn, we are proud to acknowledge them as supporters.

Profitable companies chose their expenditures wisely, so we are proud that these entrepreneurs and leaders have expressed their confidence in our plans and goals.



A Bloggin’ Buddy

In this round-the-clock, 24-hour world, current news is critical to staying informed. So we’ve dispatched one of our more literate canine helpers to offer his unique perspective of the breaking animal issues in Walton County.



“Buddy”

As a former stray, Buddy knows the challenges homeless dogs face. Unlike many others, this 5-year old Genuine American Dog managed to snag a home and leave the streets permanently behind.

How a mid-sized brown dog is able to type out a regular blog is a closely guarded WAG secret. But like other well-known newsmen, Buddy is devoted to keeping his audience “in the know.” So check out www.wagwalton.com and click the “Buddy’s Blog” link.

Elvis is in the building

Wiggling hips, vocal howls and striking good looks. It's got to be the King—of Beagles, that is.

When Elmer and Nancy Swartzmeyer decided to get another pet after the death of beloved beagle, they found it hard to imagine another animal in his place. But the decision to adopt a rescue or shelter dog was easy.

“There are so many deserving animals,” said Elmer Swartzmeyer. “We’ve adopted other shelter dogs before and knew how few actually find homes.”

So Swartzmeyer hit the internet, checking sites like Petfinder.com for the perfect companion.

But fate seemed to be conspiring against him. “Every time I’d find one I was interested in, it would be gone by the time I called,” he said. “I was beginning to wonder if we’d ever find what we were looking for.”

Until the day Swartzmeyer stopped at Walton County Animal Control. Shivering on the cold concrete floor and casting mournful eyes his way, was a pitifully thin and



dirty male beagle.

The lucky beagle hasn’t been thin or dirty since. The spunky guy was named “Elvis” because, says his new owner, “he ain’t nothing but a hounddog.”

Long Live the King!

Georgians bought 46,000 of the original spay/neuter license plates, paying for 19,000 surgeries statewide.

Tag Your Support

Remember to support Georgia’s state-supported spay/neuter program with a specialty tag. Money from the tags fund low or no-cost surgeries. Each veterinarian is eligible to perform three state-subsidized sur-

geries per month. The state reimbursement allows them to offer discounts to clients who may be unable to afford the regular surgery costs.

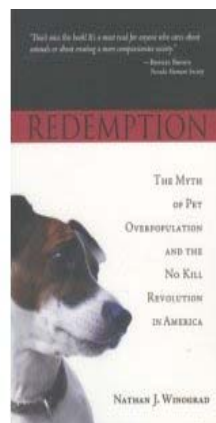
Ask about the plates when you renew your auto tags.



Books Worth a Look

Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America. By Nathan Winograd. Almaden Publishing.

Winograd, a former attorney turned animal advocate, details the history of the humane movement and how society misguidedly came to accept the euthanasia solution.



Winograd worked in California and New Jersey, helping guide two shelters to near no-kill status and placing every healthy animal in new homes. He’s become an outspoken leader in the no-kill revolution and offers a unique and often blunt perspective on the issues.

Walton Animal Guild, Inc.

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Upcoming Dates

- 01/15/08 General Meeting, Monroe-Walton Public Library,
6:30 pm
- 02/19/08 General Meeting. Monroe-Walton Public Library,
6:30 pm
- 02/28/08 Spay Day USA—Humane Society of the United States
- 03/18/08 General Meeting, Monroe-Walton Public Library
6:30 pm

Community Partners for Pets



**YES! I WANT TO HELP WAG PROVIDE A BETTER FUTURE
FOR ANIMALS IN WALTON COUNTY.**

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Memberships:

Individual \$20 _____ Family \$30 _____ Student (under 18) \$5 _____ (free w/ family membership)

(Student's School attended) _____

Sponsor levels: Guardian \$50 _____ Patron \$100 _____ Bronze \$250 _____

Silver \$500 _____ Gold \$1,000 _____ Platinum \$2,500+ _____

Members receive the quarterly newsletter, **The WAG Rag**, invitations to exclusive club member gatherings and notice of special WAG events.

Check if you are interested in helping with projects promoting any of the following animal welfare issues:

Spay/Neuter programs _____ Pet Health _____ Humane Education _____
Fundraising _____ Adoption promotion _____ Fostering pets _____



What's Your Tale?

Have you recently adopted a shelter or rescue pet? Tell us your story and be featured in an upcoming issue of the WAG Rag. Send mail to P.O. Box 169, Monroe, GA 30655, or e-mail the details to wagwalton@yahoo.com