

WHATCOM HUMANE SOCIETY PAW PRINT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2024

NEW YEAR. NEW LOOK. SAME MISSION. ♥

New Year's Greetings from WHS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I, for one, was so happy to say goodbye to 2023 and welcome with open arms the arrival of a new year and new beginnings. Last year was nothing short of a non-stop whirlwind of daily chaos with so many animals in need arriving at our shelters. It feels like a bit of a blur. Thankfully, our amazing staff and volunteer teams, supported by the generosity of our community, helped us make it through a very challenging year. Thank you!

As last year came to a close, I had the opportunity to attend an animal welfare conference in Portland, OR. The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (AAWA) held their annual conference, and for 3 days I was able to attend so many amazing workshops, learn about best practices, listen to incredibly inspiring speakers, network with peers from around the country, and connect with colleagues from all over the region.

While at a networking breakfast one morning, I realized I was sitting next to a person that I had worked with at a shelter in Northern California almost 30 years ago. She is now an executive director at a shelter in Colorado and one of the authors of a fantastic animal shelter model/movement called Socially Conscious Sheltering. We laughed as we remembered the "good old days" working in the trenches of a large urban open-admission shelter and animal control agency—and then agreed that, sadly, animal sheltering these days feels a bit like old times, with pet overpopulation back on the rise and the challenges of trying to help so many animals in need with limited resources.

I came home from the AAWA conference inspired (and maybe a bit hung over—you get a few hundred very tired animal shelter directors in a hotel bar and . . . look out!) with a renewed resolve to continue to do all I can to make WHS the very best organization we can be for the animals and people in our community. **I [Continued on pg. 8](#)**



Whatcom Humane Society
CARING FOR ANIMALS SINCE 1902

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2023 Sponsors!**

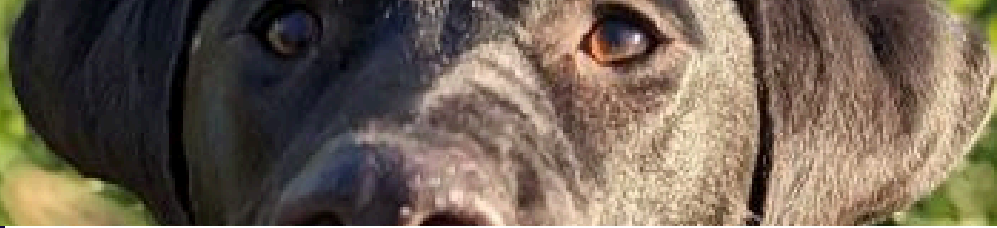
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WHS Thrift Shop**

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

The Whatcom Humane Society believes that all animals, as sentient beings, have value beyond economic measurements and are entitled to legal, moral, and ethical consideration and protection.

MISSION

Advocate for animals; educate the community to promote humane treatment and respect for animals; and provide for abandoned, injured, abused, or neglected animals.

VISION

All animals are treated with kindness, respect & compassion.

SHELTER LOCATION

2172 Division Street
Bellingham, WA 98226
Phone: 360-733-2080
Fax: 360-733-4746

SHELTER SERVICES

Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 - 6:00
Closed Mondays & Major Holidays

ANIMAL CONTROL DISPATCH

Tuesday - Sunday, 10:00 - 6:00
Monday: Please call 911
for Emergency Dispatch

FARM FACILITY

By Appointment Only

WILDLIFE REHAB CENTER

Monday - Friday, 9:00 - 5:00
Phone: 360-966-8845
*Not Open to the Public;
Please Call for Assistance.*

WHS THRIFT SHOP

1534B Birchwood Ave
Bellingham, WA 98225
Wed. - Sat., 10:00 - 5:00
Sunday, 11:00 - 3:00
Phone: 360-543-6792

'COVID dogs' overwhelm Whatcom shelter, face increasing euthanasia rates

CASCADIA DAILY NEWS ARTICLE PUBLISHED DEC. 2023

WRITTEN BY ISAAC STONE SIMONELLI, STAFF REPORTER, WITH PERMISSION FROM CASCADIA DAILY NEWS TO INCLUDE IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

READ MORE AT [CASCADIADAILY.COM](https://cascadiadaily.com)

Stephen Frostick reached down and scooped up Roxie, a bright-eyed chihuahua mix, at the Whatcom Humane Society on Dec. 1. He stood back up next to his daughter, Hudson, with the newest addition to their family in his arms. Roxie is one of the lucky ones: More than 200 dogs were euthanized between Jan. 1 and the end of November this year.

Fallout from the pandemic triggered a "perfect storm" of pet overpopulation, exacerbating euthanasia rates as some dogs adopted during COVID arrive at shelters burdened with significant behavioral and medical issues, experts say. As the pandemic eased and workers returned to offices, unsocialized pets have been surrendered. At the Whatcom County shelter, the largest increase in intake numbers and challenges are connected to dogs. While the number of cats being brought in is also on the rise, euthanasia rates due to behavior issues remain relatively low.

"We're in a crisis of care, because they just keep coming in the doors," said Laura Clark, Executive Director of the Whatcom nonprofit. "It's really been treading water and triaging emergency after emergency."

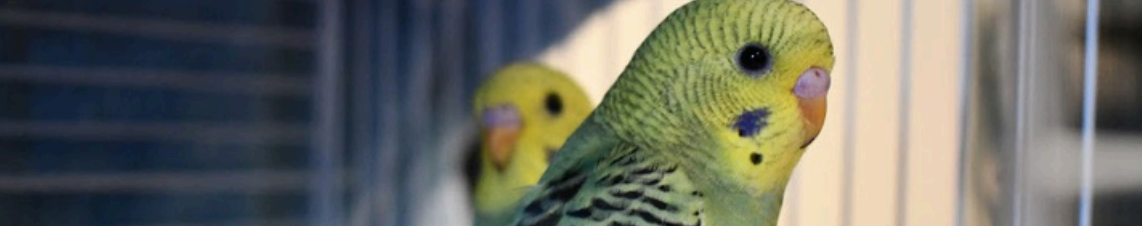
The pressure on Whatcom Humane Society, an open-admission shelter, is compounded by pets being brought in from outside the county and even from British Columbia. "It's not uncommon for us now to receive surrendered animals from out of county—it's a daily occurrence," Clark said.

The Whatcom Humane Society runs the only brick-and-mortar animal shelter in the county, as well as a farm and a wildlife rehabilitation center. These are operated by a core staff of 43 and about 350 active volunteers, who help with about 4,500 animals annually.

By the end of November, the shelter faced a stark reality: Of 200 euthanized, nearly half the number was due to behavioral issues, such as biting, nearly double the figure from 2020. Additionally, 31 dogs were put down for medical reasons. While the entire U.S. animal-care system is faced with the daunting task of navigating the crisis, open-admission shelters shoulder the heaviest burden. Open-admission shelters cannot turn away any animal for any reason, unlike limited-admission shelters—often self-advertised as "no-kill" shelters—where a team can mitigate their liability by refusing to take pets when their facility is full or when the animal has a significant bite history.

"It doesn't matter if it's a horse or a hamster, we've got to figure it out," Clark said.

With the shelter pushed beyond capacity, euthanasia rates started to rise sharply in 2022, Clark said. That year, intakes were up about 15%. The shelter faces a similar number of cases this year. Nationally, intake numbers are also up, as are euthanasia rates, which have nearly doubled between 2021 and 2023, according to data collected by Shelter Animals Count. | [Continued on pg. 7](#)



The “Real Life” Shed For Dogs

BRINGING HOME ONE PAW CLOSER FOR SHELTER DOGS

WRITTEN BY TODD FOLSOM, WHS VOLUNTEER



The notion of providing a furnished room where shelter dogs can experience “real life” in a home-like environment was an idea embraced by the staff of WHS. The concept is that dogs can be brought into the space to spend time relaxing, playing with toys, and interacting with volunteers or staff—all in a room that looks and feels like a real home. Since there was no space inside the WHS shelter that could be set aside for this purpose, Executive Director Laura Clark purchased a small shed that had been built by a volunteer crew at Habitat for Humanity.

The shed was trucked to the shelter and installed by RAM Construction. Easier said than done! The shed had to go onto a gravel pad behind the shelter facility near the dog kennels, but that pad was also surrounded by a chain link fence. The RAM crew brought a high-lift vehicle to move and place the shed into a very small space between the fence and building. The crew rigged straps around and under the shed, then lifted it off the ground and slowly, slowly advanced the shed over the fence and down onto the gravel.

Next, it was time for several WHS volunteers to complete the interior. We needed to put down a vinyl plank floor, cover the stud walls with plywood, install cleanable plastic on the walls, build steps, etc. Finally, a beautiful paint job (inspired by San Francisco Victorian houses) on the exterior finished up the project. The shed was furnished with a small sofa, a dog bed, a shelf unit, some art work, and a bunch of toys. We also added another door to isolate the area so that dogs brought into the shed can be off leash.

I was involved with the work to finish the interior of the shed, and during this period, I was also spending a lot of time with a dog named Fluffernutter. This dog was great, but he was also large, longhaired, mostly black, and stressed in the noisy kennels—he didn’t present particularly well to potential adopters. Fluffernutter had spent most of his young life in someone’s backyard, so he didn’t know much about the world, and he became a long-term resident at the shelter.

While I was working on the plank floor, I decided to show the new shed to Fluffernutter. He became the first dog into the shed, and I kept on bringing him there briefly while it was being finished up. | [Continued on pg. 6](#)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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THRIFT SHOP

Dana Browne, *Manager*
Jo Williams

Save the Dates: Whatcom Humane Society's 2024 Events

OUR LINEUP OF FUNDRAISERS HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE, PUPS INCLUDED!

Woof & Whiskers Awards Luncheon

March 8 | Bellingham Golf & Country Club

22nd Annual Gala Auction & Dinner

May 18 | Four Points By Sheraton Hotel

Putts Fore Pets Golf Tournament

July 18 | Bellingham Golf & Country Club

Dog Days of Summer Festival

August 25 | Division Street Shelter Grounds

Sips & Suds: Beer, Wine & Cider Social

September 27 | Fisherman's Pavilion

Virtual Birdhouse Auction

Fall 2024

Happy Tails 2025 Calendar

Fall 2024

Mark your calendars for our doggone awesome annual fundraisers, and visit our website and social media for all the details and updates.

We work hard to make our fundraisers welcoming and fun, heartwarming and educational, and builders of community—events to remember in the name of animal kindness. Funds raised from each event are vital to our annual operating budget.

Interested in increasing your impact? Sponsoring a Whatcom Humane Society event is a great way to promote your business to thousands of animal lovers. When you become a WHS sponsor, you not only benefit from unique public relations and advertising opportunities, you become a part of the WHS family of supporters making a crucial difference in the lives of animals in need and in service of strengthening our entire community.

For information about these events or sponsorship, please contact Fundraising & Donor Engagement Manager Paige España at 360-733-2080 ext. 3014 or email development@whatcomhumane.org.


Whatcom Humane Society
CARING FOR ANIMALS SINCE 1902

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL AWARDS LUNCHEON

Woof & Whiskers

Our 2024 Honorees:

- COMMUNITY FOOD CO-OP —
- MEL WALTERS, PUGET SOUND ENERGY —
- NORTSHORE VETERINARY HOSPITAL —

PLEASE RSVP BY FEB. 28: [WHATCOMHUMANE.ORG/EVENTS](https://www.whatcomhumane.org/events)
FREE WITH VEGETARIAN LUNCH PROVIDED.



Two Paws Up & Many Thanks To Our 2023 Event Sponsors!

OUR WORK WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

92.9 KISM	Esary Roofing	Michael Brodsky	Radiant Heart
AEP	Fairhaven Veterinary Hospital	Mountain Veterinary Hospital	After Care
Ameriprise	Final Touch Auto Spa	Mud Bay	Red's Aquarium & Pet Supply
Animal Emergency Care	Guardian Northwest Title Co.	The North Fork Brewery	Saratoga Commercial Real Estate
Antech Diagnostics	Heritage Bank	Northshore Veterinary Hospital	SaviBank
BP Cherry Point	Honda of Bellingham	Northwest Foot & Ankle Institute	SSC
Cat Nap Inn	Joy of Pilates	Northwest Propane	Sullivan Plumbing
Courtenay Excavating	KAFE 104.1	Petrogas	Tetrick Family Dentistry
Cypress Veterinary Hospital	Keith Cook	PetStop	TM Anderson Law Firm
Doc Swinson's Whiskey	Kulshan Veterinary Hospital	Rescue Pet Vet	WECU
	Louis Auto Glass		



Pet Loss Support

Provided by the Whatcom Humane Society

Our monthly, in-person support group provides a safe place for connecting grieving pet owners with experienced facilitators and other resources. Whether you are currently suffering loss or are anticipating loss, we encourage you to join us. Volunteer counselors offer support and resources to help those who have been touched by:

- The loss of a pet
- Anticipating the death of a pet
- Dealing with the difficult decision of euthanasia
- Having suffered from a lost or stolen pet
- Wondering when/if they are ready for another pet

First Wednesday of every month
6:00PM - Sessions typically last one hour.
FREE to attend.
Registration is not required.

Whatcom Humane Society
Multipurpose Room
2172 Division St. Bellingham, WA 98226



For more information, please email us at outreach@whatcomhumane.org or call us at 360-733-2080 ext. 3116

For a complete list of resources, please visit www.whatcomhumane.org/resources



STAY CONNECTED WITH WHS

Learn more about us:
whatcomhumane.org

Get the latest updates:



[@whatcomhumanesociety](https://www.instagram.com/whatcomhumanesociety)

Sign up for WHS e-news:
Visit our website or email administration@whatcomhumane.org

Lend us a hand:
Leave a pawitive review on Google and Yelp



Dog Shed, continued from pg. 3 |

I also took him on outings where he learned about joggers, cyclists, and strollers. Part of this process included helping him learn that getting into a car was not scary.

After eleven months at the shelter, a person from Happy Tails Happy Homes, a local rescue group, came to see Fluffernutter, and he was accepted into their wonderful foster program. Of course, on "leaving day" he had to get into their vehicle: I brought him out, and he jumped right in! Within a couple of weeks, Fluffernutter was adopted and has since become a Canadian.

Today, the "real life" dog shed is known as the House of Fluffernutter. It is a calm place where dogs can be free of leashes and kennels for a little while, play with toys, and sit beside their humans.



Whatcom Humane Society's Working Cats Program



The Whatcom Humane Society's Working Cats Program places healthy semi-feral, feral, and non-socialized adult cats with adopters looking for cats not suited for indoor-only living environments.

Benefits

- Provides natural pest population control
- Ideal for barns, stables, warehouses, ranches, wineries, churches, etc.
- Provides previously homeless animals with a safe place to live and helps reduce the number of cats euthanized in shelters

Requirements

- Completed and approved WHS adoption application
- Cats must be adopted in pairs if there are no resident working cats on the property
- Adopters must provide food, water, and shelter year-round as well as any necessary veterinary care
- Adopters will need to allow 2-4 weeks for cats to acclimate to their new space



Contact:

Working Cat Coordinator
workingcats@whatcomhumane.org

(360) 733-2080 ext. 0
 For an adoption application visit
www.whatcomhumane.org

What we provide

Working cats adopted from WHS will receive:

- Spay/Neuter Surgery
- Ear tip
- Microchip
- Initial FVRCP Vaccination
- 1-year Rabies Vaccination
- Flea Treatment (30 day)
- Dewormer
- FIV/FelV Testing

WHS will provide adopters with instructions on how to transition working cats into their new environment.

Adoption Fees

\$25 - Single Cat

\$40 - Pair

Interested in adopting 3 or more working cats? Great!

\$20 Per Cat



YOU AUTO DONATE!

Donate your old car, truck, boat, boathouse, RV, or trailer to benefit the animals at Whatcom Humane Society. All donated vehicles must be running and able to be driven, with a clean title. Your donation is tax deductible and will help support our daily operations across 3 facilities! For more information, please contact Paige España at 360-733-2080 ext. 3014 or email development@whatcomhumane.org





COVID Dogs, continued from pg. 2 | “We’ve really seen that the number of animals entering shelters has now reached where we were in 2019,” Shelter Animals Count Executive Director Stephanie Filer said. “And the number of animals in shelters continues to increase because we’re not sending them out as fast as they’re coming in.”

Clark noted that in Whatcom County, no sooner does the shelter celebrate a successful adoption than three more pets arrive, vying for the newly vacated space. But, due to a variety of issues, not all pets that end up there are considered viable for adoption. Amy Wilkinson, the Animal Care Lead and Behavior Specialist at the shelter, is among those in the office who are faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to euthanize an animal. “No one wants to euthanize an animal,” said Wilkinson in her office with Frank, a rescue dog she adopted from the shelter years ago.

Pets are typically euthanized due to severe illness, uncontrollable aggressive behavior, terminal conditions, or an overly high population in shelters with limited resources for their care. There were cases where a dog killed another dog or inflicted serious harm to multiple humans: cases where the dog would be euthanized for public safety reasons. There were also cases where a dog suffered from severe mental distress, self-mutilation, or other medical conditions. These cases still exist, but so do more borderline ones. These are situations where staff feel that with just a bit more time, they could help dogs with behavioral issues, such as handling sensitivities or reactivity, overcome their challenges and become suitable for safe adoption. But, under the current circumstances, there isn’t always the time nor resources. “We do our best to find the live outcome for every animal,” Wilkinson said before pointing out that the kennels have often been running at or beyond capacity in 2023. “There’s just a lot more borderline dogs that have expedited outcome decisions.”

Failure by owners to bring their puppies in regular contact with other dogs and other people during the pandemic has resulted in an increase in pets being fearful of strangers, dog aggression, or other behavioral issues that impact adoptability. Many of them have bite histories. “It’s not impossible to deal with those problems, but definitely more challenging,” Clark said.

Many people stopped working remotely by 2022, which opened the door to other behavior issues, said Christine Monroe, a Whatcom County veterinarian who founded Rescue Pet Vet in Ferndale. For example, if a dog has rarely been left home alone, this could manifest as separation anxiety, which can result in the pet barking constantly, destroying household items, or soiling the house. Additionally, the economy has played a “huge” role in why animals are entering shelters, Filer explained. “Generally animal shelters reflect what’s happening in a community,” Filer said. Where homelessness is an issue, a lot of animals come into a shelter’s care because of housing issues. Where there is food insecurity, animals come in due to a pet owner’s inability to provide food for both of them, she explained.

“People can’t afford them,” Frostick said, waiting for the adoption of Roxie to go through. “People are stressed right now. The cost of everything is up.” Pet owners are also struggling to find affordable veterinary care, Clark said. In these cases, Clark suspects that people might be waiting longer than they should to take a pet in for medical attention, leading to more desperate situations and, ultimately, ending with the animal arriving at the shelter.

Seasoned shelter workers agree that there is a path forward for communities struggling with pet overpopulation—but pointing fingers is not part of the solution. “It’s really easy for people to want to place blame on someone,” Filer said. “What we’re seeing across the board, whether it’s shelters or pet parents, is that people are doing the best they can with what they have.”

Local experts say there are opportunities to rebalance pet populations in Whatcom County by addressing underlying systemic issues and educating potential pet owners about responsibilities. For Wilkinson, it all boils down to increasing access to spaying and neutering, which fell far behind national goals during the pandemic. The procedure can also help with certain behavior problems, noted Monroe, who runs Spay Neuter NorthWest. Additionally, Wilkinson said that more community volunteers would help. Volunteers can feed and provide enrichment activities to dogs who are already up for adoption so staff has more time with animals who are teetering on the borderline. “As an animal welfare community, we’re all going to have to sit down and work together to solve this community problem,” Clark said.



NOW ACCEPTING:

FURNITURE (PLEASE CALL AHEAD)
PET SUPPLIES: LEASHES, COLLARS,
BOWLS, CRATES, CAT TREES
KITCHEN ITEMS: DISHES, CHINA,
GLASSWARE, SMALL APPLIANCES
VINTAGE COLLECTIBLES
KNICK-KNACKS
NEW OR GENTLY USED
ADULT CLOTHING & SHOES
ACCESSORIES
ARTWORK
JEWELRY
BOOKS
CLEAN, WASHED LINENS,
CURTAINS, THROW RUGS
HOLIDAY DÉCOR
ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES
HOUSEHOLD DECOR

WHS Thrift Shop

PARK MANOR SHOPPING CENTER

1534B Birchwood Ave
Bellingham, WA 98225
360-543-6792

SHOPPING HOURS:

Wednesday-Saturday:
10:00-5:00
Sunday: 11:00-3:00

DONATION HOURS:

Wednesday-Saturday:
10:00-4:30
Sunday: 11:00-2:30



SORRY, WE CAN'T TAKE:

LARGE APPLIANCES, TV'S, OLD STEREO
EQUIPMENT, VCR'S, DVD PLAYERS,
CASSETTES, VHS TAPES, CRIBS, WALKERS,
HIGH CHAIRS, CAR SEATS, BABY
STROLLERS, BED PILLOWS, MAGAZINES,
BUILDING & REMODELING MATERIALS,
CARPET (RUGS OK), ELECTRIC BLANKETS,
CHILDREN'S CLOTHING/SHOES/ETC.,
CLEANING SUPPLIES, HELMETS (ANY
KIND), COMPUTER ITEMS,
ENCYCLOPEDIAS, MEDICAL SUPPLIES,
FUR COATS, LEATHER PRODUCTS, WOOL,
CASHMERE, SILK, FEATHERS, GAS
POWERED YARD EQUIPMENT, GOLF
CLUBS/BAGS, HELMETS (ANY KIND),
HEALTH & BEAUTY PRODUCTS,
COSMETICS, MATTRESSES OR
WATERBEDS, DOWN PILLOWS OR
COMFORTERS, PAINT/HAZARDOUS ITEMS,
STUFFED ANIMALS, UNDERGARMENTS

Message from ED, continued from pg. 1 | I'm thrilled to report that as we welcomed the new year, we also welcomed two talented new members to the WHS leadership team: Paige España, our new Fundraising & Donor Engagement Manager, and Ainsley Hay, our new Companion Animal Services Manager.

Paige spent six years working as the operations director and executive director for Animal Aid in Portland. While there, she managed all fundraising activities for the organization, including raising \$300,000 for a small capital campaign to renovate their shelter. During her time at Animal Aid, she established a monthly donor membership program, managed direct mail giving campaigns, and oversaw special events. In addition, she has served on the board of directors for Born Again Pit Bull Rescue, the community advisory committee for the Multnomah County Animal Shelter, and is currently on the board of the Seattle Animal Shelter Foundation, a group that works to subsidize funding for the Seattle Animal Shelter.

Ainsley is originally from South Africa, where she started volunteering at her local shelter at age 16 and later spent over 4 years as the manager and inspector of the wildlife protection unit of the NSPCA, enforcing animal welfare laws, performing inspections at captive wildlife facilities, managing staff and volunteer teams, and overseeing prosecutions related to wildlife inspections. In addition to this work, Ainsley has spent several years as a veterinary nurse and LVT at a variety of facilities including the Johannesburg Zoo, an exotic animal clinic, a bird hospital, 24-hour emergency animal clinics, and small and large animal veterinary hospitals. Most recently, she served as the safety, accreditation, and regulations administrator and as a vet tech at a large specialty hospital in Vancouver, BC. In her "spare time", she has also volunteered with a group that travels to remote Western Alaska to assist with large scale spay/neuter clinics in Yupik villages.

The new year is filled with so many possibilities. Our staff and volunteer teams will continue to work tirelessly and remain ready to respond to the animals that arrive at our shelters in need of care and services, advocacy, and protection. Our work is only possible because of our incredible community—our partners, supporters, business sponsors, adopters, and donors all make WHS the special place that it is. I hope to have the opportunity to see many of you in the coming months or throughout the rest of the year at the shelter, at a WHS event, or out in the community. Thank you for helping us help so many animals.

*With sincere gratitude and appreciation,
Laura Clark, Executive Director*