

# COMFORT IN A WORLD OF SUFFERING

Amid an avalanche of bad news surrounding the pandemic, one bright spot quickly emerged at Liberty Humane Society – the community response to our appeal for foster parents.

Thanks to the commitment of our foster community, LHS was able to place nearly 100 animals in foster care a full two weeks before New Jersey’s shelter-in-place order was announced. The even better news is that 40 percent of those animals have since been adopted and will be in their ‘forever’ home as soon as they can be spayed or neutered.

“We had an overwhelming response to our call for emergency homes when it became clear that the restrictions of the pandemic and our concern for our workers’ health necessitated that the shelter pare down to a skeleton staff,” says Irene Borngraeber, LHS executive director. “Although emergency animal control continued, we had fewer than a handful of animals that needed to be cared for in our shelter because the public quickly stepped up.”

Neeru Patel of Jersey City was one of many people in the community who answered our call for assistance.

“Being part of the community means being involved and pitching in - especially when it comes to times like these,” says Neeru, who with her husband, Asish, have cared for multiple litters of kittens and their mothers for LHS and are in the process of adopting Mona Lisa, the mother of the three kittens they most recently fostered. “Giving time and helping to care of sweet

kittens and cats is the easy part! If you’ve spent any time at LHS, you know that it’s the staff who really do all the hard work.”

Fosters provide a clean, loving, safe and nurturing environment for animals. Animals who are fostered are healthier and happier, which means they are well-prepared for their permanent homes. Most fosters agree that helping save the lives of pets by preparing them to find forever homes is one of the most rewarding things they have ever done.

Our need for fosters are year-round, but grows from May through October during kitten season. If you are interested in fostering, visit [www.libertyhumane.org](http://www.libertyhumane.org)



**A Cozy New Home for Josephine** A sweet girl with a big heart, Josephine is just one example among many who found a home after being lovingly fostered during the pandemic.



**Finding the Perfect Placement** This lovely lady was in our care for 8 months before she found the right home. Vittle V, was sweet but only on her own terms. She wasn’t fond of other cats and being around them made her moody and swatty. Then she contracted ringworm. Poor thing! After being gently fostered, she was ready when the right adopter finally came along.

# THE POST



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COVID-19 did not catch LHS by surprise. We went into March fully aware of what we needed to do to change our operations and ensure that our animals, our staff, and the public were as safe as they could be. We thought those changes would be temporary. We’re now ten months into the year that defied all our plans.

I say this, because it’s important to acknowledge that we are tired. Operating under these restrictions has been incredibly challenging, especially as the “temporary” became rather permanent.

Despite this fatigue, we are incredibly proud of what we have been able to accomplish, with your help. Together, we have been able to place more animals into foster care than ever before. We’ve reunited lost dogs with their owners through curbside delivery. We’ve continued to provide emergency medical care to animals who were injured or sick.

We’ve done all this while constantly adapting to changes in our environment, and circumstances. Despite the construction shutdown earlier in the year, our kennel renovation is still underway, and we are so looking forward to welcoming you into that beautiful space in 2021!

I know this year has been extraordinarily difficult for many people, and I cannot thank you enough for your support. Your generosity has enabled us to take advantage of the unique opportunities this strange year presented, set some important goals, and actually grow! Thank you for staying with us; we are so excited to share with you what the future holds.

My best wishes to you and yours for stability, comfort, and joy—this year and beyond.

Irene Borngraeber, Executive Director



Kitten Ivy learns to snuggle in foster care, while puppy Dobby shows off his Cone after major leg surgery.

LIBERTY HUMANE SOCIETY



### SHELTER & ANIMAL CONTROL CONTACT INFO

**Shelter contact information**  
[lhs@libertyhumane.org](mailto:lhs@libertyhumane.org)  
201.547.4147

**Animal Response Team**  
201.547.4888

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# HOW YOU CAN HELP

The world we live in now is much different from the one we knew before. This once-in-a-generation crisis has affected all of us in very real and painful ways. Unfortunately, we will soon be noticing yet one more disheartening effect as our homeless animal population swells.

In March, Liberty Humane Society's animal control programs were temporarily halted due to the coronavirus pandemic. That loss will be felt acutely as spring litters are born and these animals eventually flood into our shelter system.

Last year at this time, LHS spayed or neutered 425 outdoor cats through our Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program. This year, we were able to complete only 95 surgeries before our clinic had to be shut down for the safety of our workers.

We are asking for your help in dealing with this growing problem through humanely fostering kittens in need. If you find kittens, please do not KITNAP them from the mother. Reach out to LHS to find what resources are available, and consider fostering those animals or donating much-needed supplies or funding to help us care for them. To learn more, please visit [www.libertyhumane.org](http://www.libertyhumane.org)



## FEAR-FREE FROM THE START

Change can be hard for anyone. Typically, animals admitted to shelters are scared and exhibit signs of stress. The strange sights, smells, and sounds of their new environment, combined with the presence of unfamiliar people and other animals, contribute to their unease.

To address this, LHS has partnered with the Fear Free Shelter Program in order to help shelter occupants quickly become more acclimated to their surroundings. The program focuses on the emotional needs of animals as they transition into

and out of the shelter through the use of stress-reduction tactics and techniques.

Our staff is now entirely certified in this program and, as a result, our shelter has been designated a "Fear-Free" facility. The program is important, as even short-term stress can negatively impact an animal's health and adoptability. The calmer the pet, the more likely they will find their forever home.

"This is just one more way LHS works to improve the lives of pets in our community," says Kim Saunders, director of operations.



**Signs That We Care** Our staff proudly display certificates showing their completion of Fear Free training, a program that supports the emotional needs of animals transitioning to and from a shelter environment.

## LHS AND CAT PROGRAM: PURR-FECT TOGETHER

LHS was recently accepted to participate in a behavior modification program for shelter cats developed by animal welfare advocate Jackson Galaxy, best known for his television series My Cat From Hell. The program, called Cat Pawsitive, focused on the shelter's hardest-to-place cats: those too shy to come forward and those who display unwanted behaviors, such as swatting or biting.

Shelter staff and volunteers used positive reinforcement and clicker training to make the cats more comfortable around people, allowing the animals to gain confidence while providing them with mental and physical stimulation. Trainers determine what reward the cat will work for, whether that is food, a toy, or a scratch behind the ear. The reward then becomes a reinforcement for the cat to replace the undesirable behavior with one that is positive. The 15-minute training sessions are short but highly structured and were conducted twice a day. LHS staff quickly noticed the program's value to the cats selected to participate.

Kim Saunders, the director of operations at the Liberty Humane Society, explained that eight of the 14 cats that they worked with have since been adopted. Unfortunately, the program had to be temporarily suspended because of the pandemic, but the other animals are still continuing their progress while in foster homes. "We found it very effective. It was really in line with our idea of providing enrichment and making the cats happier," says Saunders. "We saw a number of adoptions of these harder-to-place cats and all the cats became more at ease around people. Hermoso, our longest resident, was in the program and he was adopted out, so that was a real success."



*After being adopted and returned twice due to behavior, Hermoso finally found his match through the Cat Pawsitive training program.*

## NEW! PET OWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

LHS is pleased to announce a new pet owner assistance program designed to provide emergency relief to owners struggling with issues that could rise to the level of surrendering their pet.

The program, funded through a \$5,000 challenge grant from Columbia Bank Foundation and Petco Foundation, is designed to provide access to resources to keep pets in their homes. It begins with either a virtual or phone consultation to discuss the situation, a review of the animal's medical history and an assessment of the commitment of the pet owner. Issues that can be addressed include problem behaviors, pet food insecurity, and essential medical needs.

Many issues can be resolved quickly, but to resolve more challenging behavior, LHS partners with Instinct Dog Training to provide consultation with a behaviorist to

design a program for the owner to work with their pet.

Gruyere, a sweet, two-year-old dog, is one pet who has benefited from this program. Gruyere was originally a shelter dog. He was fearful and needed to learn how to play. By providing his adopter with a support plan that included remote assistance, Gruyere was able to find a home with the comfort and stability he craves. Continued support for owners who adopt animals known to be challenging is key to helping adopters manage problem behaviors. His owner now checks in virtually to discuss any issues that arise, keeping Gruyere happy and his owner in tune with meeting his needs.

If you are struggling to handle a situation with your pet, LHS may be able to help. Reach out at [www.libertyhumane.org](http://www.libertyhumane.org)

