



January 26, 2021

**ADOPT.**  
**DONATE.**  
**VOLUNTEER.**

Del. Mary Lehman, MD District 21  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Bill Hearing: House Bill 146  
Department of Agriculture  
Spay/Neuter Fund  
Extension and Fee on Commercial Feed

To the Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to have the opportunity to write this letter in support of House Bill 146. HART for Animals, Inc., has been rescuing homeless animals and finding them homes since 2003. Your support for HB 146 will help reduce the number of stray cats and dogs in Western Maryland (Garrett and Allegany Counties).

When HART began, most animals arriving at the Garrett County Shelter (1,200 per year) had to be euthanized due to lack of space and funds. In a mostly rural community, 'stray' animals were quasi-adopted without anyone actually owning them. As a result, kittens became feral and within a very short time went from 'cute' to cat colonies of 60 cats, almost impossible to control. Many of our residents are happy to acquire 'barn cats' but, realistically, cannot take on the expensive burden of spaying or neutering them. As a result, rescue organizations like HART must deal with the overwhelming consequences of "kitten season" every summer.

We have been applying for and receiving grants from the Maryland Department of Agriculture since 2016. We call our program "**Lifesaver**" because it genuinely saves the lives of the animals by preventing unwanted births – to date, close to 3,000 cats and dogs have been spayed or neutered at HART with the Lifesaver program.

I include a copy of our Lifesaver application as well as some information about HART. In closing, we ask you to make every effort to continue this treasured program, truly a 'lifesaver' to our low-income residents.

Respectfully,

Mercedes M. Pellet  
Development Director

**HART FOR ANIMALS**  
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**CONTACT US**  
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[www.hartforanimals.org](http://www.hartforanimals.org)

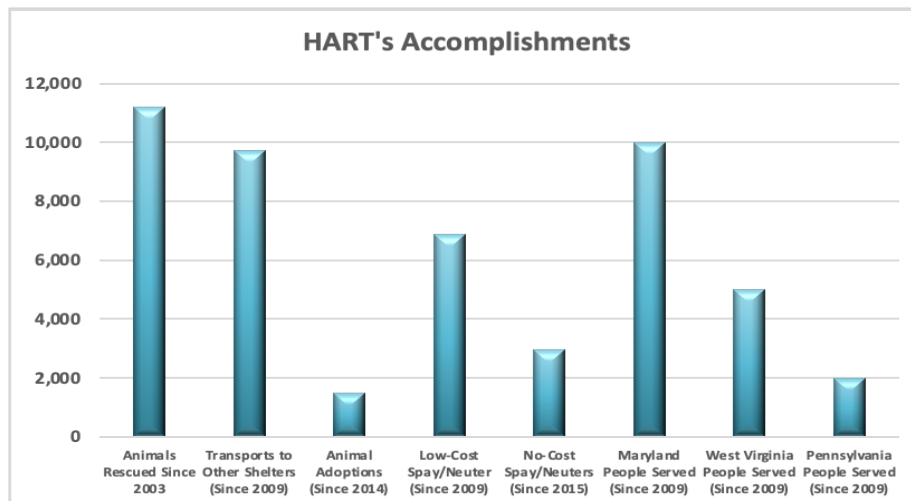


## HART FOR ANIMALS, INC.

<p><b>Our Vision</b></p>	<p>Animals everywhere deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. We envision a world where we treat <i>all</i> living beings with utmost compassion for only then can we become a civilized community.</p>
<p><b>Our Mission</b></p>	<p>To improve the condition of animals in Western Maryland and surrounding regions through: rescue and transport; accessible spay/neuter surgeries; building and operating a humane animal center; sheltering and adopting homeless animals.</p>
<p><b>Communities We Serve:</b></p>	<p>General population in Western Maryland and the surrounding region; pet owners residing in the Deep Creek Lake area and beyond; low-income pet owners; K-12 children; vocational students at Garrett College; visitors to Garrett County.</p>

HART for Animals is a *hybrid* organization, which combines the social welfare logic of a nonprofit organization with the strategic plan of a business enterprise to ensure its long-term sustainability. *This is essential because HART does not receive any funding from local government.* Started by volunteers in 2003, HART raised \$3.5M to build the HART Animal Center in Accident, Maryland, on land donated by the county. Throughout the fundraising process, HART continued its mission programs, carefully recording all metrics to track its progress and compiling reliable data for fundraising and strategic planning. Since HART is an innovator in its approach to be self-supporting, it freely shares its data and processes with other nonprofit organizations.

### HART Program Statistics – 2020





<p><b>Our Program and Services</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rescuing and sheltering adoptable animals at the HART Animal Center until permanent homes are found for them.</li> <li>2. Decreasing animal overpopulation through spay/neuter surgeries of homeless cats and dogs prior to adoption, and owned pets of low-income residents.</li> <li>3. Employing an animal adoption process that ensures suitable homes and commits adopting families to return the animal(s) to HART if their life circumstances change.</li> <li>4. Rescuing homeless animals and transporting them to larger rescue groups.</li> <li>5. Encouraging community involvement through the participation and training of over 200 volunteers, trained at different levels of animal contact.</li> <li>6. Assisting low-income pet owners to pay for extraordinary veterinary care.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Our Goals 2020-2025</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transition leadership from the entrepreneurial group to the operational staff and the board of directors.</li> <li>2. Strengthen the economic sustainability of HART for Animals through its revenue centers, donations, fundraising, and grants.</li> <li>3. Create a permanent endowment to safeguard HART against economic downturns and changes in community demographics.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>4. Establish written processes for all areas of the HART Center to insure continuity and sustainable standards.</li> <li>5. Recruit new members for the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee, to create a board that can protect and promote HART’s interests.</li> <li>6. Stabilize HART’s finances through a judicious combination of budgeting, spending, and investing.</li> </ol>

## Background and Context

HART was founded in response to a local problem: the number of homeless animals arriving at the county shelter exceeded its capacity to hold them or funding to shelter them. As a result, most of the 1,000 unclaimed animals were euthanized every year. HART’s goal was to stop the euthanasia of healthy animals by transporting them to larger rescue groups in more populated areas, where they would have a better chance of being adopted. The first year for which reliable statistics have been compiled and recorded was 2004, the first full year of HART’s rescuing activities.

HART is located in Garrett County, Maryland, in the Appalachian Mountains, where the lack of industry has had a negative impact on the local population. The lack of jobs has resulted in aging of the population and departure of the young, as well as an increased reliance on safety-net social services. There is, however, the resort area of Deep Creek Lake where visitors from surrounding areas either have a second home or make the lake their summer destination. This is the economic reality in similar communities in Appalachia, few of which have the benefit of a summer influx of visitors. Aware of this reality, during the planning stage in 2006, HART devised an

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2010 Census, Garrett County had a population of 30,097; in 2019, that number is 28,973, with 12.7% of the population living below the poverty line.



innovative strategic plan for 2010 to 2015 – one that would allow the organization to carry out its charitable mission of saving animals without depending on local government for funding. This strategy was based on developing the following competencies:

- Transition the organization from a small group of volunteers into a strong entity, with its own brand, mission, and operational plan.
- Based on a business model, develop a solid fundraising program that could raise enough money to build a large animal facility while continuing to carry out its charitable programs. HART funds those programs solely through donations, grants, and fundraising events.
- Recruit volunteers who had prior experience in the skills needed to create a strong organization that would inspire confidence to community stakeholders, foundations, and donors.
- Develop a business model that would allow HART to support its fixed costs (salaries and facility mortgage/maintenance) through revenue centers that provide animal-related services to the general public.

This strategic plan was carried out successfully from 2010 to 2015. Construction of the HART Animal Center was completed in 2016 at a cost of \$3.5M, creating 38 new permanent jobs for the county. The first part of the HART Center, which contained the **Bredel Veterinary Clinic**, the **Bed 'n Bark Inn**, and **MuttWorks Grooming**, was completed in 2014. The construction of the largest section of the Center, the **Adoption Wing**, was completed in April 2016. The Adoption Wing has the capacity to house 100 cats and dogs; some stay a few weeks and some may stay a year. As previously mentioned, the Adoption Wing is sustained through grants, individual donations, and fundraising events.

# Lifesaver Application

NO-COST SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM



## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICATION?

Call Us: 301-387-7729  
Email: info@hartforanimals.org  
Online: www.hartforanimals.org

**THE LIFESAVER PROGRAM** offers no-cost spay/neuter services to pets of low-income owners who are qualifying Maryland residents. If you qualify, the program will pay the entire cost of spaying or neutering your cat or dog, plus the cost for the rabies vaccine. See the guidelines on Page 2 to determine your eligibility for this lifesaving program. If you need financial help to have your pet spayed or neutered, complete this form. This program is made possible through a grant from THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

**PLEASE CALL #301-387-7729 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.**

## Your Information

NAME	EMAIL	
ADDRESS	PHONE	
CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE
HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN YOUR FAMILY?		

## Pet Information

*CIRCLE OR HIGHLIGHT EACH*

PET NAME	BREED	AGE	Sex	Species
			Male / Female	Dog / Cat
			Male / Female	Dog / Cat
			Male / Female	Dog / Cat
			Male / Female	Dog / Cat

Current Veterinarian (if you have one) NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Financial Information

Lifesaver is a program based on income and residency. You are eligible for this program if you are a Maryland resident and your income is 10% under the Maryland WIC Income Guidelines, or you qualify for food stamps, or other government support.

Check the category that applies. Guidelines are updated when WIC is updated and effective until June 30, 2021.

- SINGLE (\$21,245 or less a year)
- FAMILY OF 2 (\$28,705 or less a year)
- FAMILY OF 3 (\$36,164 or less a year)
- FAMILY OF 4 (\$43,623 or less a year)
- FAMILY OF 5+ (Add \$7,459 per family member)

**PROOF OF INCOME:** Provide a copy of one of the following:\*

- Last year's 1040 Income Tax Form
- Proof of Social Security, Food Stamps, or SSI benefits
- Pay Stubs (last 3 months)
- W-2 Forms for Family

\* Additional information may be requested to help determine eligibility in certain circumstances.

## Maryland WIC Income Guidelines\*

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Lifesaver is a program based on income and residency. You are eligible for this program if you are: (1) a Maryland resident; and (2) your income is 10% under the Maryland WIC Income Guidelines, OR you qualify for food stamps OR other government support. See the chart below for qualifying income range.

SINGLE	\$21,245 or less a year
FAMILY OF 2	\$28,705 or less a year
FAMILY OF 3	\$36,164 or less a year
FAMILY OF 4	\$43,623 or less a year
FAMILY OF 5+	Add \$7,459 per family member

*\*Guidelines are effective until June 30, 2021 and show qualifying income 10% under Maryland WIC Guidelines. Visit the Maryland Department of Health website at <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/wic/> for more.*



**The Lifesaver program is made possible through a grant from The Maryland Department of Agriculture.**

## Terms & Conditions

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1. HART For Animals, Inc. reserves the right to limit the number of spay/neuter surgeries per family to a maximum of six (6) pets, under seven (7) years of age.
2. Lifesaver does not include or cover feral cats.
3. All pets must live in the same household as the signatory.
4. Lifesaver requires the applicant to schedule an appointment prior to spay/neuter services. Appointments can only be rescheduled by calling 24 hours in advance; otherwise, the appointment will NOT be rescheduled.

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**POST-SURGICAL PICK-UP:** I understand that Lifesaver will pay for the veterinary costs associated with the spay or neuter procedure(s) performed under this program and the rabies vaccine, and that I will be responsible for paying any additional costs. This payment will be made at the time the pet is dropped off prior to surgery.

APPLICANT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZATION:** I authorize HART for Animals, Inc., and all participating veterinarians, employees, and volunteers to receive, prescribe for, treat, or operate upon my pet(s) when presented per this agreement. I agree to hold harmless, and release HART for Animals, Inc., the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and all participating veterinarians, employees, and volunteers, from and against all actions, damages, disabilities or expenses, including attorney's fees and witness costs that may be asserted by any person or entity including myself, arising out of or in connection with the care, treatment, surgery, or safe-keeping of the animal(s). Further, I understand that it is not possible for HART to guarantee that any medical or surgical procedure will be successful and without complication.

**I have read and understand the above paragraphs.**

APPLICANT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_