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## Athens Area Humane Society 18-month Strategic Plan (2021-2023)



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Facilitated and developed by  
Julie Meehan



1240 S. Lumpkin Street  
Athens, GA 30602  
706-542-1108  
[www.fanning.uga.edu](http://www.fanning.uga.edu)



## Executive Summary

The Athens Area Humane Society has been serving homeless, abandoned, and abused animals for 120 years. Uninterrupted. Around the clock. Every day. Even on Thanksgiving and Christmas. We extend our hearts, our homes, and our hands to all dogs, cats, puppies and kittens who enter. While in our care, they receive love for their anxious hearts, a cozy bed for their weary bodies, nourishing meals for their grumbling tummies, and superb medical care for their 'ouchies'.

They come to us by the thousands—Anxious. Scared. Alone. They leave us happy, healthy and healed. United with forever homes.

We are proud of our distinguished past. The Athens Area Humane Society isn't 'just another shelter'. You immediately sense that when you walk through our doors—our indomitable spirit and commitment to solving the pet overpopulation problem **from both sides of the leash** is palpable. We have established in Athens an extraordinary track record of service and an impeccable institutional reputation.

But for all of our past accomplishments, it is to the future we look for our greatest achievements. ***What we envision is beyond anything of the past.***

**That is why this 18-month strategic plan should matter to you.** It's a bold road map to strengthen our ability to save thousands more pets and increase our life-changing impact in communities within and around Athens.

The strategic initiatives that follow were identified by AAHS's Board of Directors and Lead Team staff on December 8, 2020 and adopted on January 21, 2021. Each is followed by interim fiscal year (FY) milestones. The initiatives are of equal importance and their order does not indicate prioritization.

*You love pets. You are a compassionate and kind person.*

**The idea of an abandoned pregnant mama dog by the side of the road**—lonely, scared, and confused as she watches the taillights of her owner's car fading in the distance, devastates you.

**The plight of lonely, neglected and sick 'backyard dogs'**—shivering, hungry, and forced to live outside with no protection from the elements, breaks your heart.

**The economic hardship facing fellow Athenians**, struggling to keep food on their tables and having to make the heartbreaking choice between feeding themselves and feeding their beloved pet, erodes your spirit.

**It doesn't have to be this way. We refuse to accept that. You refuse to accept that.**

We intend to do something about it. We invite you—ardent pet lover, caring friend, and Athenian—to join us in bringing these ambitious plans to life on behalf of the pets who need us to **do something**.

Thank you for joining us in dreaming audaciously, for making Athens a more compassionate community, and for daring to have heroic impact... **from both ends of the leash**. Read on. This is how we get there from here.

In celebration of the bond between pets and people,

Cheryl M. McCormick, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer





## Mission

We rescue and protect companion animals by providing for their wellbeing, uniting them with loving homes, and advocating for a compassionate society.



## Vision

We envision a society where all dogs and cats have a loving home and the bond between pets and people is celebrated.



## Values

We live by the AAHS values of compassion, integrity, teamwork, and servant leadership.

## Strategic Initiatives

Build a community pet clinic and adoption center—a uniquely Athenian jewel.

Grow and diversify revenue streams by harnessing novel opportunities.

Inspire community ambassadors to champion our cause and lead with equity.

Be an active civic leader in issues affecting the bond between people and pets.

## Behaviors

We place a premium on relationships and the role they play in our work.

We uphold ethical, responsible and honest conduct in all we do.

We believe that greatness comes from unlocking each other's full potential.

We inspire others to action and anchor ourselves to the essential "why" of our purpose.







# MISSION

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# VALUES

## Lead with Compassion

We place a premium on relationships and the role they play in every aspect of our work. We invest time to understand the perspectives of others and are mindful of how our actions and decisions may impact the wellbeing of those we serve. We are intentional in our approach to creating a culture that encourages genuine concern for others, assumes good intentions, builds trust, and aligns common purpose around a unified vision.

## Act with Integrity

We uphold ethical, responsible and honest conduct in all aspects of AAHS's work in a manner consistent with all applicable laws, honesty, and fairness. We subscribe to the moral ethos of AAHS and exercise practical wisdom in making sound judgments that benefit all stakeholders and the thousands of companion animals whose lives are saved and improved through the impact of our mission.

## Put the Team First

We help each other thrive and believe that greatness comes from unlocking each other's full potential. We invest in, encourage and celebrate each other's success because we understand that as each individual learns and grows, so does the AAHS team. We are united in our intention to create a culture based upon a foundation of inclusion, team spirit, diversity of opinion and freedom of communication.

## Inspire Potential Through Servant Leadership

We inspire others to action and anchor ourselves to the essential "why" of our purpose. We believe that work is service made visible and that the highest form of achievement is to see others succeed. We choose to put the interests of others above our own. We encourage others to become more than they ever believed possible and have a deeply rooted belief in the mission of AAHS and the 'call to service'.





Launch a capital campaign to fund a state-of-the-art spay/neuter clinic, shelter medicine teaching hospital, and adoption center — a hallmark of exemplary pet care and community destination that Athenians can be proud of.

## Milestones

- Year 1 Q1** Create a campaign strategy and case for support that inspires community support and ignites philanthropic interest.
- Year 1 Q1** Develop compelling offers for a portfolio of philanthropists whose passion and interest align with funding priorities.
- Year 1 Q2** Incorporate curated foundation funders and corporate prospectuses as a core funding strategy.
- Year 1 Q2** Devise a curated, high-touch communications plan featuring content that makes quiet phase donors feel appreciated and engaged as campaign insiders.
- Year 1 Q3** Build a powerful leadership team led by influential Athenians, in preparation for the campaign's public phase.
- Year 1 Q3** Generate Phase 2 plan to create a vibrant campus featuring interactive spaces for people and pets, public art, and gardens for respite and reflection.
- Year 1 Q4** Engage consultancy to train community leadership, develop communications, and advise on timing and strategy of the public phase.
- Year 2 Q1** Engage architect and partners to actualize goals and timelines for Phase 2.
- Year 2 Q2** Finalize plan for launching public phase, including community kickoff event, live fundraising projections, and multi-platform gift opportunities.





## Reduce vulnerability to economic crises by growing, diversifying, and stabilizing revenue streams.

### Milestones

#### Year 1 Q2

**Increase internal capacity to secure funding from corporate, family, public and corporate grantmakers on local, regional and national level.**

- Conduct grant readiness audit and inventory.
- Research potential funders that align with strategic plan, mission, and goals to grow grant revenue.
- Finalize grant calendar for fiscal year, develop plan for approaching funders, and timelines for applications.
- Develop annual plan of communications and stewardship for each funding source.

#### Year 1 Q2

**Optimize opportunities to promote and accept gifts of blended assets through innovative, easy-to-use pathways.**

- Create website platforms to accept Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) stocks, and bequest commitments.
- Partner with vehicle liquidation companies to promote and realize income from car donations.
- Offer gift opportunities targeting Millennials and 'Philanthroteens', demographics with a propensity for social causes (e.g., text to give).

#### Year 1 Q4

**Bring donors closer to AAHS's mission at each step of the philanthropic cycle — identification, qualification, cultivation, solicitation & stewardship.**

- Establish qualified mid-value and major gift portfolios with strategic plans goals and three-year goals for each donor.
- Create a planned giving program designed to increase legacy gift commitments and communicate the impact of planned gifts.
- Develop and implement a year-long, data-driven direct response program that guides donors along a path of deeper investment in AAHS's mission.

#### Year 2 Q2

**Scale fee-for-service programs to reflect increased capacity at new shelter.**

- Deploy plans for increasing volume client service agreements, expanding private client portfolio and reducing costs through corporate partnerships, resulting in a 2.5x increase in income from clinic sources.
- Develop and refine systems, processes, and infrastructure to double 2019 revenue from adoption-related activities (adoption fees, retail, transport).
- Experiment with novel, experiential revenue streams (birthday parties, movie nights, meeting space rental, etc.).







## Position AAHS as a destination of choice for volunteers seeking to amplify professional impact, expand networks, and strengthen community bonds.

### Milestones

#### Year 1 Q3

**Develop infrastructure for volunteer engagement program to recruit, train, evaluate, retain, and reward a loyal corps of community members.**

- Onboard Volunteer Engagement Manager to conduct operational needs assessment and develop prioritized tasks and timelines.
- Develop recruitment, onboarding, enrichment, recognition, evaluation, and retention program for peer-to-peer volunteer leadership model.
- Design training programs for staff on how to succeed with volunteers.
- Create program dashboard to visualize impacts of volunteer activities, motivate volunteers, and identify areas for improvement.

#### Year 1 Q4

**Onboard and engage board leaders who speak the language of business and mission, and who have the management skills to navigate increasing demands of public transparency, operational performance, and efficiency.**

- Conduct a board assessment to identify strengths and establish priorities for training, onboarding, and motivating board members to strengthen governance performance and practices.
- Identify, recruit and actively engage board members who will help AAHS advance strategic priorities and add extraordinary value.
- Design an annual training calendar to deepen understanding of board member responsibilities, hone the essential skills and strategic insight needed serve effectively, and learn how to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in practice.
- Create a year-long mentor program pairing veteran board members with new board directors to accelerate integration and participation.
- Establish pipeline to board leadership through recruitment to standing (finance, development, events) and ad hoc (capital campaign) committees.
- Plan and design an effective board evaluation process to rigorously test whether the board's composition, dynamics, operations and structure are effective.

#### Year 2 Q2

**Recognize opportunities that diversity brings to animal welfare and commit to shifting culture, practices, and systems to increase racial equity throughout all AAHS operations.**

- Conduct racial equity assessment to identify AAHS strengths, areas for improvements, and needs for racial equity training.
- Secure funding to launch racial equity training at every organizational strata within AAHS.
- Develop annual DEI training and evaluation metrics that underscores racial equity as a practice supported through leadership, employees, volunteers, policies and culture.







Take an active, visible leadership role — grounded in AAHS's experience and expertise — in issues related to the relationship between people and pets.

## Milestones

- Year 1 Q2** Take a leadership role in coalitions and committees of organizations that can have a collective impact on policy and civic engagement.
- Year 1 Q2** Generate and/or refresh partnership MOUs with volume clients, municipal governments, private entities, and public institutions to harness untapped potential of expanded and scaled up programs and services.
- Year 1 Q4** Complete an inventory of internal expertise among staff and volunteers to distribute to external sites, like-minded organizations, and media that may seek experts, thought leaders and speakers.
- Year 2 Q2** Conduct a needs assessment to determine pet-related priorities for underserved, vulnerable populations in and around Athens ('Pets, People and Poverty').
- Year 2 Q2** Define two specific focus areas in which AAHS intends to be perceived as a go-to thought leader in the Southeastern US.

