



DONATION EXPANDS EFFORTS to Safely Shelter Pets in Crisis

Fear for safety in one's own home and fleeing as a result of it is a concept hard to fathom for most people. Unfortunately, every 15 seconds in the United States an act of domestic violence occurs. Though men are sometimes the victims of abuse, women are disproportionately impacted, and about four women will lose their lives to such acts daily. It is hard for many to understand why anyone would choose to stay in such a situation.

According to Abby Miller, a licensed master social worker and executive director of Care Lodge Domestic Violence Shelter in Meridian, the reasons that victims stay and continue to subject themselves to abuse are varied and many, but if they have children and/or pets, fearing for their safety is almost always near the top of the list.

"A victim will often delay leaving an abusive partner if they can't take their children with them or secure a safe location for their pets," Miller said. "It's a heartbreaking situation that we see time and again in my profession; however, since the development of the MSU CVM Safe Haven for Pets program, we've been able to provide a pet-sheltering solution for many domestic abuse victims in our area."

And now, according to MSU CVM Clinical Sciences Professor Dr. Sharon Grace, a generous donation to the Safe Haven for Pets program from Jim and Julia Rouse of Suwanee, Georgia, will provide more domestic violence victims the chance to place their pets in safe shelter during times of crisis.

The idea for the Safe Haven for Pets program evolved from Dr. Grace's years as a private practitioner in Franklin, Tennessee, where, in 1996, she was called upon to provide medical care to "Cleopatra," a severely abused kitten. Although the kitten

ultimately succumbed to her injuries, Dr. Grace was determined to use the difficult experience to somehow accomplish a greater good. As a result, she began working with a local domestic violence shelter in Tennessee to offer short-term boarding to pets belonging to families disrupted by violence.



Previously on faculty at MSU CVM, Dr. Grace returned to the College in 1999 and, while attending a domestic violence conference in 2007, met Leslie Payne, past director of Care Lodge. The two exchanged ideas about the need for a program to provide safe shelter for pets belonging to Care Lodge clients, a conversation that ultimately led to the 2008 launch of the MSU CVM-based Safe Haven for Pets program. Now in its twelfth year of operation, the program has provided almost 3,000 days of temporary boarding to 80 pets belonging to over 40 families entering Care Lodge, all at no cost to the owner or to Care Lodge. And while there is growing interest in the possibility of housing pets on-site at domestic violence shelters, that approach is not workable at all shelters. Safe Haven for Pets fills the gap by offering other solutions.

"Our program not only offers shelter and much-needed TLC for these animals, but it also provides vaccines, flea and tick control,

splay or neuter surgeries, heartworm and parasite testing and treatment, and any other medically necessary services for them until their owners are able to be reunited with them,” Dr. Grace said.

The College’s third-year veterinary students deliver hands-on care to the animals under the supervision of MSU CVM Associate Clinical Professor Dr. Christine Bryan, who provides the day-to-day medical care for the animals on a volunteer basis.

“The program is an eye-opening experience for many of our students and often proves beneficial to them for years to come when dealing with clients who are in an abusive relationship. For some students, it can even open the door to their own pursuit of this type of service work,” Dr. Grace said. “It is also beneficial to these animals, who are often fearful and untrusting of most humans when they arrive. The program clearly benefits both humans and animals in a variety of ways.”

Started with grant funds and donations, Safe Haven for Pets has been totally self-supporting since its inception, and the recent unprecedented gift from the Rouses has allowed Dr. Grace to expand the reach of the program beyond Care Lodge and the MSU CVM campus. As of this summer, several other Mississippi domestic violence shelters have been brought under the program’s umbrella, with each shelter working directly with Dr. Grace to find the best nearby pet-sheltering solution for their clients. The Rouse donation will support boarding and veterinary care for each pet during the time that the owner needs safe shelter, with Dr. Grace overseeing continued administration of the new partnerships.

“For more than a decade, we’ve provided a much-needed and valued service for pets belonging to families impacted by domestic violence. It’s such a blessing to see our program grow to benefit others in need,” Dr. Grace said. “Who’d have thought that Cleopatra’s sad story could be transformed into such a meaningful and important legacy for good?”

WeRateDogs

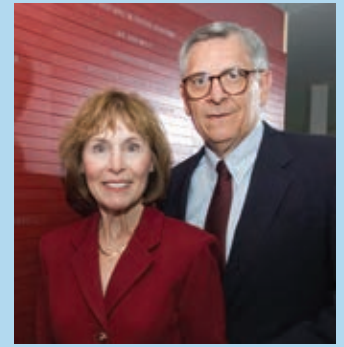
MSU CVM had a quick visit from the founder of WeRateDogs, Matt Nelson, in October. WeRateDogs is a Twitter account with nearly 7.6 million followers that rates people’s dog photos with a humorous caption about the dog.

Nelson was visiting MSU to give a presentation on how WeRateDogs was founded but had time to stop by the Wise Center to meet Bully XXI and learn about all the College does for animals of all shapes and sizes.

During his visit, Nelson was able to visit the Homeward Bound area and chat with Terri Snead, a CVM population medicine technician and the logistical director for Homeward Bound of Mississippi.

“Since meeting Matt, there have been two occasions where he shared fundraising appeals on his platform for Homeward Bound and one of our partner rescues,” Snead said. “Both times the amount raised was double that requested, providing funding for the next rescue emergency.”

MEET THE ROUSES



The 2012 MSU National Alumnus, Jim Rouse is a 1962 MSU industrial management graduate who spent 42 years with ExxonMobil Corporation before retiring as vice president in 2004. He is a native of Libertyville, Illinois, who grew up in Germantown, Tennessee. Julia Rouse is a former first-grade teacher and Laurel native who attended the Mississippi University for Women.

In addition to their philanthropic support, Mr. and Mrs. Rouse actively volunteer their time and service to MSU. A current member of the MSU Foundation Board, of which he is a past president, Jim also is a past member of the boards of the Alumni Association and the Bulldog Club, as well as the dean’s advisory board in the College of Business.

To donate to the Safe Haven for Pets Fund, visit vetmed.msstate.edu and click on “Make a Gift” or contact MSU CVM Development Director Jimmy Kight at (662) 325-5893 or jkight@foundation.msstate.edu.



The first fundraiser was in support of a partner rescue—Yellow Rabbit Rescue—and a litter of puppies they took in that were all diagnosed with Parvo. That fundraiser was created one day, and the \$6,500 goal was met the next day. The second fundraiser was for a sweet-faced dog named Guinness that needed orthopedic surgery. With the fundraiser, Homeward Bound included an Amazon list of things he needed, such as a crate, bed, and chew toys.

“For a solid week we had deliveries from Amazon, many with notes wishing Guinness well or telling us how the donation was in memory of their beloved dog. More than anything, we have been touched by the kindness and compassionate nature of WeRateDogs and its followers. It’s a very unique forum,” Snead said.