



# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Whether it's supporting our adopters and their pets after they leave our shelter or creating a safe behavior space to desensitize cats and help them adjust to home life, AAWL is known for going above and beyond when it comes to our medical and behavior programs. But this past year has been like no other. Adoptions have slowed and surrender requests have increased because of the rising costs of housing and veterinary care. Fortunately, our AAWL community of supporters, volunteers, fosters, and animal lovers have stepped up in significant ways to help ramp up our life-saving programs in new and collaborative ways that align with our long-term strategic plan.

Approved in 2023, AAWL's strategic plan over the next 5 years focuses on three core strategies:



1 Implement more efficient, workable practices in our shelter that help us find homes for **pets with higher needs**.



2 Develop new community-based, **accessible, and affordable vet care**.



3 Provide more medical/behavior support for pet owners to **keep their families together**.

**DONATE NOW**  
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In the 2024 Impact Report, you'll read about these expanded efforts and the animals that benefited from them. I hope you feel good about your investment in AAWL and our life-saving efforts. We strive to be good stewards of your generous support — 80% of which goes directly to save the lives of vulnerable pets and support their families who love them. As you think about your year-end philanthropy, please consider making an additional stretch gift before December 31. Thanks for everything you do for AAWL!

With gratitude,

*Alessandra Navidad*

**Alessandra Navidad**  
President and CEO

## OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE **3,482 LIVES SAVED**

**1,497** Dogs Saved

**1,985** Cats Saved

**105** Rural Rescue Trips

**3,233** Surgeries Performed  
*Inc. Spay/Neuter*





## HOMES FOR PETS WITH HIGHER NEEDS

Earlier this year, we hired a Medical Director to help lead our team of vet techs and relief veterinarians. Having a full-time veterinarian on our staff is critical to the health and well-being of all the animals in our care, especially during a time when we are seeing more complex medical issues and longer lengths of stays for all our dogs. We also launched our volunteer behavior program to help support our behavior team and provide enrichment and basic skills training to our animals.

### HAYDEN

Hayden arrived at AAWL from one of our Rural Rescue Partners and all appeared well at first sight. After a couple weeks, our medical team noticed several growths on one of her hind legs and immediately did additional testing. It was then that they discovered Hayden had a mast cell tumor — larger than expected. Although one of our veterinarians was able to surgically remove the larger mass, she still needed an additional surgery to ensure we removed all of the tumor.

Luckily, thanks to our Medical Miracle Fund, we were able to send Hayden to an outside specialist where they removed the remaining growths, and she was no longer at risk for cancer. After making a full recovery in her foster home, her foster decided to make her an official part of their family.



### SMOKEY

Smokey came to AAWL with seven other cats when their owner was no longer able to care for them. Before they came into our care, these cats lived in a very quiet home where there were few visitors outside of their owner. As a result, all of them, including Smokey, were very timid and sensitive to any noise or activity. Luckily, we were able to integrate them into our Feline Behavior Room, so our team could continue to help them build confidence and their socialization skills in a less stressful environment.

After five months, Smokey was finally ready to go up for adoption. He would accept some pets and scratches, and of course, some tasty treats from visitors. Smokey was the last of the group to find his happy ending — finally being adopted after nearly 11 months in our care. He is now thriving in his forever home, and has even become a lap cat!



## AFFORDABLE ACCESSIBLE VET CARE

This year, we received thousands of applications from people seeking to surrender their pets. Families making the heart-wrenching decision to surrender their beloved pet usually due to housing instability, behavior issues, or because they simply can't afford or access veterinary care for their pet.

This is why we have shifted our focus to a preventive care model to increase the number of animals who are receiving vaccinations — ultimately improving their health outcomes. We also have expanded our partnerships with organizations like Fix.Adopt.Save, PetSmart Charities, Chicanos Por La Causa, AZ Pet Project, Lost our Home, and Pets for the Elderly to help reach pet owners in the underserved communities near and around our shelter.



**5,881** Vaccines Given to Pets in Our Community



**2,777** Pet Families Served at our Community Vet Clinic



### MARY & DD

Mary's dog, DD, means everything to her. She is there when she wakes up, and follows her around the house throughout the day. DD makes Mary feel safe and comforted — she is her family. As a retiree, Mary lives on a fixed income, which can make it difficult to afford regular veterinary care for DD.

Luckily, Mary heard about AAWL's Community Vet Clinic through a friend and thanks to our partnership with Pets for the Elderly, we were able to provide DD a full wellness exam and vaccines along with flea, tick & heartworm prevention at no cost to Mary.

If Mary hadn't had access to AAWL's services, she wouldn't have been able to afford vaccines and preventive care for DD, which most likely would've led to health issues for her down the road.







## KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

When we piloted our post-adoption support program, our goal was to help adopters and their new pets transition into their new home together to help decrease the chance that the pet would end up back at our shelter. We thought it would take several years to see a real impact from the program, but in 2023, our first full year of the program, we saw an 11% decrease in returns. This year, we continue to see an even bigger decrease, which is why we decided to expand our post-adoption support team by hiring an Adoption Support Manager along with a part-time support counselor to connect with our adopters and address any potential concerns in a more timely manner.



### SIERRA

Sierra made her way back to AAWL after being in a home for over eight years. Luckily, it wasn't long before she was adopted again. In her new home, she began to experience litter box issues and had trouble acclimating to the other cats.

Her adopters took her to the vet and kept up her litter box, but it continued to be an issue. It was then that her new family reached out to our team. Our team was able to determine that the youngest cat in the home was too much for Sierra, so she was avoiding the litter box when she was around. Our team suggested the family provide the other cat with more enrichment to hopefully prevent her from bothering Sierra — and it worked! Sierra now uses her litter box without issues and is close with all her cat siblings.

### HOLLAND

Holland came to AAWL from one of our Rural Rescue partners after she was rescued from a hoarding situation where she lived with 45 other dogs. During her time at our shelter, she was very nervous and unsure about other humans. After three months, Holland was finally adopted by a family with another social dog at home. But even in her new home, Holland failed to make much progress — she would run away in fear every time she saw her leash.

Her family reached out to our support team with their concerns and we connected them to our Canine Behavior Manager. After several private lessons, Holland slowly started to make progress and could take short walks without getting stressed.

After months of progress, Holland now dances at her mom's bedside, excited for her morning walks, and is willing to be picked up to be put in the car for their summer walks at the mall! Holland's family shared this with our team about her progress:



***"The happy dog buried somewhere inside her is starting to show up - thank you, thank you."***