



# ANIMALS. PEOPLE. COMMUNITY.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS REPORT



# A LETTER FROM THE CEO



If I had to sum up 2024 at Lucky Dog Animal Rescue in a single word, that word would be resilience. 2024 brought a series of challenges to Lucky Dog, each testing us in new ways. And in each case, Lucky Dog was able to rise to meet the challenge.

Perhaps the biggest milestone of 2024 was the launch of our Heartworm Study. In partnership with PetSmart Charities, Toronto Humane Society, and the University of Florida Shelter Medicine program, we committed to treating 170 dogs for heartworm disease in a random sample comparison of the two prevailing heartworm protocols: the 2 injection protocol and the 3 injection protocol. The study, which will complete in 2026, looks at the efficacy of both protocols when dogs are given 2 weeks of doxycycline before and 2 weeks of doxycycline after their first injections in the series. Our hypothesis is that dogs can enter the shelter, be spayed/neutered, start doxycycline and then be treated for heartworm in only 2 weeks at the shelter. This would save shelters months of treatment time – and hopefully – turn heartworm disease into an easily treatable condition rather than a death sentence, as it now is.

Of course, taking on a study of this magnitude has not been without its hiccups. But, the incredible team working on this project has weathered them all, persevering to improve the lives of shelter dogs nationwide!

Our adoption program continued to be a successful method of lifesaving. In 2024, 2,667 dogs and cats found forever homes through our foster-based adoption program located in the DC Metro area. For the first time in our history, the split between dog adoptions (1,320) and cat adoptions (1,347) was almost equal. The challenge Lucky Dog faced in 2024 was declining interest in adoptions for larger dogs, something our volunteer base worked hard to address. Creative marketing of larger dogs for adoptions and a dedicated effort to support our large dog fosters helped us ensure that we were still able to help this important population

of at-risk animals. Seeing dogs stay in care longer – seeing larger breed puppies grow up in foster homes – can be demoralizing, but our team did not lose faith.

We also found new ways to save lives outside of our own adoption program. For the first time, we transported 35 dogs from our Rescue Campus in South Carolina to Brandywine SPCA in Delaware for their mega-adoption event in June. We also transported 309 animals to Wisconsin and Illinois in the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, serving for the first time as a transport hub in the wake of disaster. Taking on that kind of commitment – and caring for 2x as many animals as our campus was intended to do – presented new challenges, particularly when we were short-staffed in animal care. Yet, our team in South Carolina truly rose to the challenge and made sure the more than 250 animals in our care received everything they needed to get to safety.

Transport flights were a core part of our operations in 2024. Not only were we lucky enough to partner with Southwest Airlines for the third time in our organization's history to fly hurricane-impacted animals to safety, we also participated in 3 disaster-related flights with Greater Good Charities. We participated in 2 flights with the BISSELL Pet Foundation, and we set up regular flights with Dog is My CoPilot from Texas to South Carolina to Virginia. By stopping in South Carolina, we could provide medical care for dogs who were unable to receive it in Texas, and we were able to bring even more pets from our Campus to fosters and adopters in the DC Metro area. 463 animals were flown to safety with Lucky Dog on 39 different flights in 2024!

When I look back at 2024, I think about all the incredible things we accomplished. Despite the challenges. Despite the obstacles. Despite the literal hurricanes that swept into our way. I'm so proud of this team and the lives that we saved – and so grateful for your support which makes it all possible.

# 2024 OVERVIEW

## 2024 Board of Directors

Mirah Horowitz Catherine Phillips Lauren Bird Horowitz Suzy Brown Sylvia Kasser Dr. Mathieu Glassman Sarah Adams

### Saving Lives Since 2009

Lucky Dog Animal Rescue, with the collective effort of over 2,000 dedicated volunteers, has been saving the lives of homeless, neglected, and abandoned pets since 2009. Together, we rescue dogs and cats from high-kill shelters, transporting them to communities where they can find loving, forever homes. Lucky Dog has one of the highest adoption rates of any foster-based animal welfare organization, saving the lives of 2,500-3,000 pets every year – over 30,500 since its founding. As shelter euthanasia rates begin to climb for the first time in recent years, our united work at Lucky Dog has never been more crucial.

In 2024, Lucky Dog rescued animals from 40 shelters across 13 US States and Territories and 3 other countries. Without a facility of its own in the DC Metro area, each and every one of the animals Lucky Dog transported to the area went directly into a loving foster or forever home. None of our lifesaving work would be possible without the army of volunteer foster parents who give their hearts, their homes and their time to caring for countless Lucky Dogs and Cats.

2024 marked the first full year of operations at Lucky Dog's Florence Rescue Campus following its opening in March of 2023. In 2024, Lucky Dog greatly expanded its spay/neuter efforts, focusing in particular on helping local shelters meet their surgery demands as well as dedicating one day a week to pets owned by members of the public. 2024 also marked the start of our free core vaccine and microchip clinics, sponsored by Petco Love & Fi Nano. Clients are also able to purchase a rabies vaccine for only \$10. More than 3,828 animals spent time on Lucky Dog's campus before traveling north for adoption, more than 2,036 dogs and cats were spayed/neutered to prevent future pet overpopulation, and more than 616 pets received vaccines and microchips at our clinics.

### Lucky Dog Making a Difference in Times of Disaster

The late summer and early fall of 2024 pushed Lucky Dog's South Carolina Rescue Campus to the limits of its capacity as we stepped up to help shelters directly impacted by natural disasters. In August, Hurricane Debby moved up the eastern seaboard, causing damaging flooding throughout South Carolina. Before the storm hit we took in 5 cats from Darlington County, 3 dogs from Marion County, and 2 dogs from Dorchester Paws in Charleston -- all of whom were displaced as part of pre-hurricane evacuations. Luckily the Rescue Campus experienced only minimal flooding, which did not impact our operations. The animal shelter in Marion County, located only 25 minutes from our Campus, was not so lucky. They were evacuated by the National Guard in the middle of the night as rising water threatened the lives of the dogs in their care. The next day, we took in 24 cats, two guinea pigs, and 14 dogs from the shelter. Over the next week, we continued to take in dogs and cats from Marion that had no place to go, pets that were rescued from rising floodwaters and dangerous situations. When Marion's shelter was allowed to reopen 2 weeks after the flooding, we were able to keep 40 of the more than 50 animals in our adoption program, finding them forever homes in the DC Metro area.

The end of September brought another storm – Hurricane Helene – followed quickly by Hurricane Milton in October. These two storms devastated shelters across Florida and up the East Coast, particularly in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee and Western North Carolina. As we have done so many times in the past, Lucky Dog sprung into action.

First, in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Helene, we flew 125 dogs and cats from Florence, SC to Waukesha, Wisconsin making critical space at our rescue campus for incoming animals. One day later, 33 dogs and 5 cats arrived from Florida where they had weathered the storm in shelters that needed to be ready to help storm-impacted animals. Within days, we transported 23 dogs and 9 cats to Lucky Dog fosters and adopters in Virginia, opening up even more kennel space.

A shelter in Eastern Tennessee, just west of Asheville, North Carolina, was desperate for help. Working with Greater Good Charities we brought 25 dogs and 101 cats to safety on our Rescue Campus, again making room for this storm-impacted shelter to care for community pets in need.

Seventy-two hours later, in our third partnership with Southwest Airlines, we flew 145 dogs and cats from our Campus to partner shelters in Wisconsin and Illinois. With dog crates strapped into each row of seats and cats placed securely “under the seat in front of you,” these animals had a journey that most could only dream about.

The flight marked the third time Lucky Dog was able to partner with Southwest Airlines – and the second in as many years. Even though our campus is not built to house more than 200 animals at one time; even though we had cats living in every possible space throughout our vet clinic, and even though we knew how enormous a drain on staff this effort would be, Lucky Dog stepped up and saved lives. Because that is what we do.

### 2024 Events

In addition to our 134 adoption events conducted in 2024, Lucky Dog put on 3 major fundraising events: its 11th Annual Casino Night, its 13th Annual Wags and Wine, and its 15th Anniversary Summer BBQ - all made wildly successful by our dedicated supporters and volunteers. Lucky Dog also brought smiles by putting on 36 pup parties supporting mental health and wellness throughout our communities.

We were able to raise funds through several campaigns including Giving Tuesday, Do More 24, Share the Luck Donation Drive and the World Bank Community Connections Campaign.

# 2024 NORTHERN VIRGINIA IMPACT

In 2024, we made a huge difference for people and animals in our community. Here are a few of our significant achievements.



**2,667**

LUCKY DOGS, CATS, &  
GUINEA PIGS WERE  
ADOPTED INTO LOVING  
FOREVER HOMES



ANIMALS WERE SAVED  
FROM MORE THAN

**40 SHELTERS**

ACROSS

**13 US STATES &  
TERRITORIES &  
3 COUNTRIES**



**117**

TRANSPORTS WERE  
CONDUCTED TO SAVE

**2,615**

LUCKY DOGS, CATS, & GUINEA PIGS



**1,457**

VOLUNTEERS JOINED THE  
LUCKY DOG FAMILY



**484**

NEW FOSTER FAMILIES  
GENEROUSLY HOUSED ANIMALS  
ON THEIR WAY TO ADOPTION



**134**

ADOPTION EVENTS WERE  
SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED  
ACROSS THE DC METRO AREA

# 2024 SOUTH CAROLINA CAMPUS IMPACT

In 2024, we achieved great things on behalf of the people and animals across the rural south via our South Carolina Rescue Campus.

**132**

LUCKY DOGS WERE TREATED FOR HEARTWORM DISEASE

**INCLUDING 112 AS PART OF OUR HEARTWORM STUDY**

**81 ANIMALS**

WITH EXTRAORDINARY MEDICAL CONDITIONS WERE SUPPORTED

**45+**

CATS WERE TREATED FOR RINGWORM

**2,036**

ANIMALS WERE SPAYED OR NEUTERED

**441** X-RAYS WERE TAKEN OF

**103** ANIMALS

**110**

DENTAL CLEANINGS & OTHER SURGERIES WERE CONDUCTED

**4**

LOW COST VACCINE & MICROCHIP CLINICS WERE RUN ADMINISTERING

**793 VACCINES & 173 MICROCHIPS**

TO COMMUNITY ANIMALS

HOUSED

**2,240 DOGS**

AND

**1,586 CATS**

AND

**2 GUINEA PIGS**

# VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Mollie Kolaitis



In 2014, after I moved to Arlington, VA, I was looking for a place to volunteer with animals. I am an attorney, and at the time, I was in court a lot. One day, one of my colleagues and I were chatting before our trial together, and he told me about Lucky Dog. As soon as I got home, I looked up how to get started. I started small, driving dogs to and from boarding and handling them at adoption events.

I later decided to move to a pet-friendly building just so I could start fostering dogs. Every time a dog would go to their adoptive home, I would bring in another. Eventually, I was asked if I would be interested in also fostering cats. I liked cats but had always considered myself a dog person. But I started becoming more experienced with cats and learned how much I loved them! Over the years, I have now fostered 66 dogs and puppies and 100 cats and kittens! I remember each and every animal that I have had in my house, and they all hold a special place in my heart.

I have held various other roles with Lucky Dog - for awhile, I was a volunteer liaison, training new volunteers at the weekly adoption events. In the last couple years, I have taken on the role of Cat Adoption Coordinator. We are a small but mighty (and fantastic!) team, and I have helped over 500 cats and kittens on their way to their forever homes!

I have miraculously only foster failed twice - both were cats! The first, Melvin, was my sweet soul cat. He had a terminal illness that took him much too young, but he was the best cat ever. There will never be another Melvin! But two years ago, Melvin sent us our sweet and quirky (and slightly cross-eyed) torbie girl, Feta, and our lives haven't been the same since in the best ways possible.

Being a part of an organization that helps save the lives of sweet creatures is the best way I can think of to spend my free time. I am at most cat adoption events, and this organization is a huge part of my life. It helped me find my best furry friends, and I just want to help other people do the same!

# ADOPTION STORY

Noel



1263 days. Almost 3 ½ years. That is how long Noel spent with Lucky Dog Animal Rescue waiting for a forever home. In December 2020, Noel was saved from Florence County Environmental Services' animal control shelter, very very pregnant.

Terrified and alone, she was a high priority to get out of the shelter, where babies routinely got stuck in drains or squeezed out of the kennel doors and died overnight. Luckily, we were able to find a foster willing to take Noel into her home, giving her a safe place to give birth.

Little did we know, this sweet girl would spend the next three and a half years of her life with us in various foster homes, patiently waiting to find that forever adopter. After delivering her puppies and nurturing them into healthy, happy butterballs ready for their forever homes, Noel waited. And waited. And waited.

She became a staff and volunteer favorite, slowly showing her personality to those who were patient enough to spend time with her. Yet, that same shyness that endeared her to us made adopters routinely pass her over, particularly when we explained she would need time to warm up in any new home.

As her last foster, Irene Marquez, explained to People Magazine, when Noel arrived, "we had to carry her into the house, and she ran into her crate and then got to the furthest corner of the crate and sat there for 18 hours. It was heartbreaking, but slowly, with patience and love, she came out of her crate... and out of her shell."

"It took her three days to venture out of the crate and come out into my family room area. And she kind of peeked her head in but didn't approach, and then she walked right back into her crate. But then she started doing that every day. And then, it took another two weeks for her to fully explore the basement. And in three weeks, she actually got up on top of a couch," Marquez recounted to People Magazine.

What Noel truly excelled at was being a foster sister to puppies, letting the puppies crawl all over her whenever Irene added a couple little ones to her foster family. Not only did Noel help puppies, but they helped her, encouraging Noel to become more and more like a confident dog!

The final turning point came with a Nextdoor post that caught the eye of Joe Capra and Valerie Smith. One look and they just knew that she was the perfect pairing for their dog Truffles. As Capra recounted to People Magazine, "we saw her, and then we talked to Lucky Dog about it and found out she'd been in foster care for three years, and we were like, 'Yeah, no more of that.'

"I took one look at her, and I was like, 'Wow, she's my dog. I can't wait to bring her home,'" Smith recalled to People. What's truly amazing is how fast Noel acclimated to her new home, hiding in her crate for just a few minutes before joining her new family on the couch for a movie. Noel seemed to know that she had found HER family. And, that was only possible because of the incredible work of countless staff and volunteers who never gave up on her – not even after three and a half years.

