Building a Dream

Over the last few years, the Brandywine Valley SPCA has grown at an amazing rate. From a single location in Chester County, we have expanded to cover Chester and Delaware Counties, PA and the entire State of Delaware.

During 2017, 14,662 dogs and cats entered our shelter doors. In Delaware, the BVSPCA maintained a 98% save rate for cats and a 94% save rate for dogs, making the State of Delaware the first No-Kill State in the United States.

We’ve held that as a little known secret because we are still growing and we have more work to do. We need to save more lives.

Always pushing forward, Adam Lamb, the Chief Executive Officer of the BVSPCA, is ready to take the next step. Of the 4% that we had to humanely euthanize, approximately 37% of those animals were for behavioral issues and 63% of those animals were for medical conditions, including contagious shelter diseases such as Parvo and Ringworm.

We are happy to report that the BVSPCA has already taken measures on the medical side. By summer 2018, all three of our shelters will have a Disease Quarantine Room to treat infectious, highly contagious diseases eliminating the need to euthanize.

The BVSPCA is also planning to open a Rescue and Rehab Center in Delaware for victims of cruelty and hard-to-adopt pets suffering from behavioral issues. This facility will take dogs and cats from both Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Safe Haven

A vision ended in Delaware in 2013 and with it many people’s dreams were shattered. In 2007, a group formed to create Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary in Sussex County. Their vision was to create a haven for unadoptable animals where they could live out their lives in peace. The buildings were completed in 2011, animals were moved in and then one and a half years after opening, Safe Haven closed its doors forever.

Though well-meaning and heartfelt, their dream ended as many sanctuaries do, without enough money to pay the bills. They were forced to file Chapter 7 Bankruptcy.
The 11,500 square foot facility is set on 13 acres off of Shingle Point Road in Georgetown and was designed to house roughly 2,000 animals per year—300 to 400 at a time. Additionally, the building was the first LEED certified building in Sussex County. It boasts solar hot water heating, geo-thermal HVAC systems, a green roof and many other features.

The building has remained vacant since 2013, unable to fulfill its purpose of caring for neglected, unwanted and non-adoptable animals. It has taken five years for the bankruptcy process to be completed. In the end, the Safe Haven property will be put up for sale at auction with no stipulations as to its use. If sold for residential building, the facility could be bull-dozed and all of the money spent for the love of animals would be rendered useless. The people who believed in the vision and invested in Safe Haven, notably the Longwood Foundation, Dr. Cindy Meyers, Ron Bass, George Robbins, Barbara Keck, Carole Bradt, and the Linda K. Berdine Foundation among many others, will be heartbroken if this happens.

Our Goal

The mission of the Brandywine Valley SPCA is to put the “human” back in humane animal treatment and advocate on their behalf. We believe that engaging communities as a whole results in a happier and healthier community. Our vision is to be the recognized leader in animal welfare that empowers communities to treat life with respect and dignity.

The Brandywine Valley SPCA wants to acquire the Safe Haven property, not as a sanctuary or public shelter, but to build the following:

- **Rehabilitative facility** for animals recovering from cruelty
- **Kitten nursery** to help save lives & socialize kittens
- **Behavioral modification center** for hard-to-adopt dogs and cats
- **Hub for animals being transferred** throughout the Mid-Atlantic States

Cruelty Cases

The chart to the right represents the number of cruelty cases that have come in to the Brandywine Valley SPCA in the last few years indicating the animal’s average length of stay. While we know how to care for these animals in a shelter environment, we also know that shelter life is not the best environment for their recovery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRUELTY CASES</th>
<th># of Seized Animals</th>
<th>Average Length of Stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>102 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>59 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 to date</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In December 2015, we had the “Christmas” dogs (5 adult dogs and 7 puppies) that we had to hold for eleven months before the courts would release them. Those we could not find foster homes for lived in our kennels. The puppies literally grew up in our care during the judicial process.
On October 8, 2017, The Brandywine Valley SPCA shelter in Georgetown, DE took 31 dogs into its care following their seizure by the Delaware Office of Animal Welfare. Following a tip, the OAW executed a search warrant and found 43 dead dogs and seized 31 dogs who were transferred to the BVSPCA Georgetown Campus. 27 were severely ill and needed emergency veterinary care.

Dogs such as these need time to recuperate from the ordeal they have endured. They need medical attention, grooming, spay/neuter surgery, and a lot of compassion to build their confidence. Rehabilitation in a working shelter is not easy. Dogs are always barking and people are constantly bustling around. It is a frightening experience for a dog that has never left their cage.

Acquiring 31 dogs immediately puts a strain on any shelter because it is not designed for this purpose. Shelters are designed to showcase and promote adoptable dogs and cats to potential adopters. **Acquiring the Safe Haven property to build the Rescue and Rehab Center, we would have a safe and quiet place where they can recover and time would not be a concern.**

### Kitten Nursery

Every spring, shelters fill up with underage kittens that end up being euthanized if foster care cannot be found. Caring for underage kittens without a mother is very difficult. They need to be fed and cleaned every few hours.

The BVSPCA envisions a small kitten nursery that would take not only underage orphaned kittens, but nursing mothers as well. We would also be able to help other shelters in Pennsylvania and Delaware by taking their underage kittens. The unit would have a 24 hour staff and volunteers working to save these young lives during kitten season.

### Behavioral Modification

Strong believers in behavioral modification, the BVSPCA has recently hired two staff members to work with the dogs and cats in our shelters with more complex behavioral issues. Unfortunately, we are bound by the space in our shelter. Worse, the pets who have been with us for a long time are preventing us from taking in other pets who need new homes.

Barnes has been with the BVSPCA since June 21, 2017 when we pulled him from a Philadelphia shelter where he was on the euthanasia list. He is housebroken, knows sit and down and is clicker trained. Barnes does not like other animals.

Barnes is a perfect example of a good dog that would become more adoptable with behavioral modification. He was adopted once, but quickly returned for behavior issues. He has lived with us for 257 days.
Our average length of stay for dogs is 13 days so during Barnes’ stay, 20 other dogs could have been adopted out of the kennel he was occupying in the same time period.

This is why at many shelters, Barnes would have been euthanized, but it does not have to be that way. the Rescue and Rehab Center would be an ideal place for behavioral modification because it is closed to the public. It is a calmer atmosphere for those pets stressed from shelter life. We would use the facility to train these dogs as well as train professionals seeking a greater understanding of behavior modification.

Aimee Sadler, CEO of Dogs Playing for Life, a world renowned dog behaviorist, has already offered to launch a training center if we are successful in acquiring it. This would not only help the BVSPCA with our problem dogs, but would aid other shelters in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland as her training programs would be available to all.

A Central Hub in the Mid-Atlantic States

We also envision the Rescue and Rehab Center as a transfer hub. It would function as a center for displaced animals from high-kill shelters coming to our community for a second chance at life. Since the location will not be open to the public, we would be able to provide a quiet place for these animals to rest, be assessed medically and behaviorally, be spayed or neutered, then be transferred directly to the waiting shelter.

Already, the BVSPCA works with transfer partners across the U.S. The key is that we would now have a location to centralize and manage transfers into the Mid-Atlantic States. As a hub, the BVSPCA would also open the doors of the Rescue and Rehab Center to help with natural disasters and large hoarding cases such as those involving the Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends Animal Society or the ASPCA. If necessary, we would be able to take more than 100 animals into our custody.

Eventually, we envision additional programs aimed at saving more lives, including an educational center for children and community members.
The Cost

The Safe Haven property is slated to go to auction on June 9th. We plan to be there, but there is no way of telling how much the property will go for or how many bidders there will be.

The company in charge of the auction has reached out to other shelters, breeders and boarding facilities, as well as real estate developers. Our goal is to acquire the property for as little as possible, but we want to be the final bidder.

Once attained, the property would require some repair work as it has sat unused for five years. We want this property to remain for the animals and the best use for this property is the Rescue and Rehab Center.

Possible Revenue Sources

- Making our kennels more profitable by improving the use of our kennel space and increasing adoptions
- Fees charged for holding dogs/cats from hoarding situations with the national groups
- Adoption fees for animals that previously would have been euthanized

Why the BVSPCA?

Why should you support the BVSPCA’s interest in acquiring this property and building a Rescue and Rehab Center?

- The BVSPCA has a proven record of success
- The BVSPCA is the only local animal welfare organization financially capable of building a rescue and rehab center
- No one wants to see the property destroyed by residential development
- The BVSPCA will use the property to help other shelters
- The BVSPCA’s outreach will continue to serve the community

In Conclusion

The Brandywine Valley SPCA is here to stay in Delaware, but we cannot afford to make our dream for a Rescue and Rehab Center come true without the help and support from the community.

We are already reaching out to funders from the early days of Safe Haven to see if they would like to support its rebirth. We will also reach out to private foundations and the major funders in Animal Welfare to see if they would be interested in supporting us. Currently it is still just a dream.

The Safe Haven name has been a black eye in Delaware’s animal welfare history for the last five years. Let’s make it right. Let’s create something that will make a difference for at-risk animals everywhere. In the end, our goal is to share all that we have learned about going “No Kill” with other shelters so that they can succeed in saving more lives.