MISSION
In families affected by domestic violence, pets are also at risk. Abusers threaten, injure, and kill family pets to terrorize others in the home—yet most domestic violence shelters are unable to allow pets to accompany their owners to safety. Nearly 50% of individuals delay escaping the abuse because of concern about their pets. Ahimsa House, meaning "nonviolence," is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the links between domestic violence and animal abuse. Anywhere in Georgia and at no charge, Ahimsa House provides emergency pet safehousing, veterinary care, pet-related safety planning, legal advocacy, a 24-hour crisis line, outreach programs, and other services to help the human and animal victims of domestic violence reach safety together.

VISION
A world where humans and animals live free from domestic violence.
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Emily Christie: The Founder of Ahimsa House

Emily delayed seeking safety out of concern for her pet cat, but was able to leave her beloved pet with a friend while she entered a domestic violence shelter. When she came back, however, her cat was gone. Believing that no victim should have to choose between their safety and that of their pet, Emily founded Ahimsa House in 2004. Ahimsa House, meaning “nonviolence” in Sanskrit, Georgia’s first and only organization dedicated to helping the human and animal victims of domestic violence reach safety together.

Then and Now

Originally, Ahimsa House operated a physical shelter in a confidential location in Metro Atlanta. In Fall 2006, we recognized the need to change our program model in an effort to operate more cost-effectively and to better serve victims statewide. In March 2007, Ahimsa House launched the Emergency Animal Safehouse Services program, which houses animals via a network of foster homes and boarding facilities across the state. This allows us to accept an unlimited number of pets, of all shapes and sizes, and serve the entire state of Georgia. Additionally, our staff size has tripled, and our invaluable team of volunteers assist us on the crisis line, at community outreach events, and transporting pets within the state and across state lines.

Ahimsa House holds an animal shelter license from the Georgia Department of Agriculture.

We are a member agency of the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence and of twelve metro county family violence task forces. We are certified as a victim services provider agency by the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
Emergency Animal Safehousing

- Emergency confidential housing of pets (any species) for survivors escaping violence
- Safe transportation of pets to foster homes, veterinary visits, and reunification
- Preventive veterinary care as well as treatment of injuries or illness due to abuse or neglect
- Payment of pet deposits for victims obtaining new housing

24-Hour Crisis Line: 404-452-6248

- Available to all survivors, regardless of whether pets are placed in emergency shelter
- Crisis intervention, emotional support, and assistance to survivors and advocates for including pets in safety planning and Temporary Protective Orders
- Referrals to domestic violence shelters, counseling, and other human services, as well as pet safety programs outside of Georgia

Professional and Community Outreach: “The Link”

- Professional cross-training for community members, advocates, law enforcement officials, the court system, veterinarians, and animal welfare agencies to ensure that survivors have safe options for their pets when they are seeking shelter
- Consultation to jurisdictions on prosecuting co-occurring animal cruelty and domestic violence
- Consultations to other agencies across the country on establishing or expanding similar programs
- Public awareness campaigns about the connections between animal abuse, child abuse, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse
DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

It has been such an exciting year celebrating our 10th anniversary. Ahimsa House began as the dream of Emily Christie, who founded the organization as the result of personal tragedy. Looking back over the last 10 years, Ahimsa House has faced many trials and hardships, but has prevailed as a strong, thriving organization that is recognized as a leader in this field nationally.

In 2006 we had to close the shelter because we ran out of funding due to very expensive veterinary bills for emergency expenses, such as Tiny Tim. Tiny Tim was a one year old black lab that was shot, beaten, and kicked hard enough to shatter his leg in two places. Happily, we were able to help Tiny Tim and give him the care he needed, but helping him and other pets like him led to Ahimsa House running out of money. That is when the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* ran an article about Ahimsa House closing. Thanks to that article we received many donations, including $10,000 from Merial and the National Anti-Vivisection Society each. With those contributions, Ahimsa House reopened in 2007 with our de-centralized program utilizing a network of veterinarians, boarding facilities and foster homes across Georgia to house the pets in our program.

It is hard to believe that was only eight years ago. This year, Ahimsa House gained the funding to hire a 4th staff member, and to date we have provided over 40,000 nights of safe shelter for pets in Georgia to enable their humans to get to safety. We are proud to share our accomplishments over the past year and decade with you in this report.

Over the years, through hard work and persistence, Ahimsa House has made a huge impact on Georgia. The link between animal cruelty and family violence is widely known. We have conducted over 150 presentations and trainings to professionals and thanks to the help of our amazing volunteers, attended over 350 events to educate communities throughout Georgia on the importance of "the link" and availability of Ahimsa House services.

Thank you for your support. I can’t wait to see where the next ten years takes us.

Myra Rasnick
Executive Director
Shelter helps abused puppy get back on all fours

By CAROLE BODGER
news@forsythherald.com

As a house full of children looked on, the young black pup now known as Tiny Tim was shot, beaten and kicked hard enough to shatter his rear right leg in two places. The perpetrator was neither stranger nor intruder; it was the children's father, who wanted to teach his wife and kids a lesson they wouldn't forget.

When the woman and children fled to a shelter to escape the man accused of abusing them and their dog, the 15-month-old Labrador retriever mix came under the protective care of Ahimsa House, Georgia's first and only refuge for the animal victims of domestic violence. Two weeks later, the safe if not physically sound puppy spends his days hobbling after rawhide toys as he awaits the reconstructive surgery he needs to save the useless limb.

"We found his leg had been repeatedly fractured in numerous places along with pellets from a pellet gun that had been shot into the same leg," said Rikki Osborne of Ahimsa House.

Veterinarian Melinda Merck said the force it would take to cause such a fracture is equal to that of being hit by a car.

Merck, co-author of the book "Investigation of Animal Cruelty: A Guide for Vets and Law Enforcement," is a veterinary forensics specialist at the Cat Clinic of Roswell, which conducted the initial exam.

"If he does not have this surgery, the only alternative is for the leg to be amputated," she said.

Unfortunately, Tiny Tim's situation is not unique. In one year, Ahimsa House has helped 57 abused pets, and 11 others currently in its care include a cat with significant medical needs. They can stay for up to 65 days, until they can be safely reunited with their families or are found new homes. At the secret location, pets' names are changed for witness-protection style anonymity.

"Abusers want to show the family you don't step out of line because it could be any of you, even the dog," said Emily Christie, Ahimsa House founder and a domestic violence survivor. "If you're seeing an animal who's maltreated, odds are extremely high that people in that household are being mistreated as well."

Ahimsa House is working with victim advocates, lawyers and the family to have criminal charges filed against Tiny Tim's tormentor, with the goal of keeping him locked far from the people and pet he abused.

"This is a typical cycle of violence," said attorney Claudine Wilkins of Georgia Legal Professionals for Animals. "The abuser starts with the pet in the home and it leads to people in the home, so prosecutors and law enforcement need to really focus in on any animal abuse that they see."

Surgery to repair Tiny Tim's leg is expected to cost $3,500—nothing to bark at for a group that relies entirely on public contributions to survive. To make a donation to help Tiny Tim or others cared for by Ahimsa House, call 404/518-5516 or visit www.ahimsahouse.org.
FROM OUR PARTNERS

“I just have to say that I am always blown away at how amazing you all are. The services you provide are so comprehensive, fast, and so well coordinated. Thank you all for being such an incredible service for survivors here in Georgia.”
— Carrie Lippy, PhD.
CDC, Division of Violence Prevention

“It is great to know that domestic violence survivors have yet another resource to help them through the enormous amount of change they face. Thank you for the work you do!”
— Assistant Director,
Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center

“You are such an asset to this state and I’m thankful you were willing to share your expertise with Central Georgia.”
— Jamie Bormann,
Central GA Council on Family Violence

“Thank you so much for helping our client with boarding for her dogs. She is now able to come into shelter and she and her children will be safe. Again, thank you for all your help.”
— Sheila Traub,
Victim Advocate, North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network
Sunny and Captain are a pair of wonderful nine year-old Samoyeds and the service animals to the daughter of a client in our Direct Services Program. These dogs have been more than loving pets; they helped the daughter of our client turn her life around. Our client’s daughter was adopted as a baby, and suffered from severe behavioral issues. When a friend gave Sunny and Captain to our client, no one expected the bond between the daughter and her pets would have such long lasting effects. In fact, the daughter’s psychiatrist believed the dogs were doing as much, if not more, good than counseling was. With Sunny and Captain as her service animals, the daughter has developed into a levelheaded teenager no longer suffering from behavioral issues.

When the family entered our Direct Services Program to escape their abuser, they had already left their home and all of their possessions. Since the domestic violence shelter they were entering did not accept pets, the family now feared being forced to leave their dogs as well. Thankfully they found us. We were able to provide a foster home for the animals and cover vet costs because Sunny and Captain came into our program covered in tumors. The tumors had to be biopsied, and for our client’s family, this meant the threat of extraordinary vet bills. But thanks to the support of our donors, we were able to cover the cost of these tests. And when the vet announced the results of the biopsy, the tumors turned out benign. Sunny and Captain could return to their favorite teenager with pets and family beginning to rebuild their lives together.
The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse

Up to 71% of domestic violence victims entering shelters report that their pets were threatened, harmed, and/or killed by their partners.

In a national survey of domestic violence shelters, 85% of shelters indicated that women seeking shelter at safe houses talked about incidents of pet abuse.

Women in shelters are 11 times more likely to report pet abuse than women not experiencing domestic violence.

Only 12% of domestic violence shelters nationwide (and 4 in Georgia) accept pets.

In one survey, nearly 50% of victims reported delaying seeking safety due to concern for pet’s welfare; if the pets have already been abused, numbers jump to 65%.

Ahimsa House data shows that 33% of our clients say that they delayed calling the police out of fear the abuser would hurt their pet.

28% of Ahimsa House clients refused to file charges against the abuser out of fear for their pet.
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Ahimsa House incorporates</td>
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<td>Granted non-profit and tax-exempt status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Receives shelter license from the GA department of agriculture</td>
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<td>Ahimsa House gets first case, a 6lb female Pekingese</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Tiny Tim enters the program</td>
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<td>Featured in first international publication, <em>Dog World, Japan</em></td>
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<td>Named Pedigree Rescue Organization of the Year</td>
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<td>Featured in <em>The Atlanta Journal Constitution</em></td>
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<td>Shelter forced to close doors due to lack of funds</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Decentralized boarding and foster care program begins</td>
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<td>National Anti-Vivisection Society provides $10,000 grant</td>
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<td>Contract employee hired to oversee a limit of 4 cases per month</td>
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<td>Merial gives $10,000 sponsorship</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Based on a successful financial year, the Board of Directors increase case limit to 5 per month</td>
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<td>Ahimsa House provides shelter for its first horse</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Follow-up article on Ahimsa House’s success appears in the <em>AJC</em></td>
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2009
First presentation to partnering domestic violence shelter staff
First Walk N’ Wag Festival
Rented Decatur admin office
Hired Executive Director and made Program Services Coordinator a full time position
Launched internship program
Began paying pet deposits
Lifted limit on cases per month

2010
Rented Decatur admin office
Hired Executive Director and made Program Services Coordinator a full time position
Launched internship program
Began paying pet deposits
Lifted limit on cases per month

2011
Won a 2012 Toyota Highlander Hybrid through Toyota Cars for Good Program
Moved to 8 room office in Avondale Estates

2012
Received $50,000 grant from Georgia Compassion Project
Held first Ahimsa House Birthday “Pawty” event
Hit 25,000 nights of safe shelter provided

2013
Third staff position, Victim Services Advocate was hired
Executive Director, Dr. Gupta presented at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence conference
Paid for dog to fly cross country with special needs child so the family could escape abuse
2014: WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

- Celebrated our 10th anniversary
- Raised over $30,000 in first fundraising gala
- Became the first safe haven program to receive federal funding after the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council voted to award Ahimsa House a grant through the Victims of Crime Act Victim's Assistance Grant Program
- Was honored with the Animal Defender Award from the Fulton County District Attorney’s Office at the 4th Annual National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference
- Reached record number of animals in one month (28!)
- Gained funding to hire a 4th staff member
- Provided numerous consultations for programs across the country
- Launched a new website with easy access for clients
- Reached law enforcement officials throughout the state via educational mailing
- Appeared as a guest at the following:
  - 4th National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
  - Fulton County Victim’s View show
  - Georgia Network News Radio
Out of all the blessings in the world, you guys have been the biggest one. You saved our lives.

Without Ahimsa House, my dog would never have gotten out of that home alive—and neither would I.

I just wanted to thank you for helping me with my 2 dogs; without you I never would have left my abuser. Today I've been gone for a year and I have you to thank for my new wonderful life.

Thanks to this program my pets and I will have a chance for a normal life without all the abuse.

There is no dollar value or price that can be placed on what you did for me and my dog. He is my family, and he is all I have right now.

You all have helped to change our lives. I don't believe we could've done it without you. Thank you!

A month ago, I had no hope. I would never have been able to leave my abuser if it wasn't for y'all.

I wouldn't have been able to do this without you. Out of everything in my life, I took her, not clothes, not pictures, nothing.
2014 PROGRAM STATISTICS

PROVIDING LIFE-SAVING SERVICES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

- 1754 Crisis Calls
- 217 New Direct Service Requests
- 90 New Direct Service Clients

HELPING PEOPLE AND PETS ESCAPE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- 60 Cats Received
- 103 Dogs Received
- 9 “Other” Animals Received
- 449 Transports to Safety
- 9236 Safe Nights Provided
- 89% Reunification Rate
Program Costs

$100  Preventive Veterinary Care for One Pet
$250  Pet Deposit
$500  Cost Per Case
$1000 Average Cost Per Emergency Surgery
$5000 One Month of Boarding and Veterinary Care for All Program Animals
Myra Rasnick, Executive Director

Ms. Rasnick has 14 years of experience in crisis intervention, victim service delivery and program development. She received her bachelor’s degree in Psychology at James Madison University with a concentration in Women’s Studies. While completing her degree, she began volunteering on the crisis line at Citizens Against Sexual Assault (The Collins Center), where she was later employed as the Program Assistant. Upon graduation she relocated to the metro Atlanta area, where she worked as the Advocacy Coordinator for the Gwinnett Sexual Assault & Children’s Advocacy Center. Ms. Rasnick is dedicated to ending violence against women and is an avid animal lover. Marrying these passions, Ms. Rasnick joined Ahimsa House as the Program Services Coordinator in 2007 at which time she developed and implemented Ahimsa House’s Direct Services Program. She contacted service providers throughout the state and presented on Ahimsa House Services, growing referrals to the agency by more than 100%. Ms. Rasnick also developed and grew the foster home network and reached out to veterinarians and boarding facilities to establish partnerships throughout Georgia. In 2014, she accepted the position of Executive Director.

Shannon Oxford, Program Services Coordinator

Shannon has been working in the victim services field for 2 years. She graduated from Valdosta State University with a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice. After graduation, she volunteered with the Douglas County Task Force on Family Violence before accepting a job in Florida. There, she was the Lead Shelter Advocate at Micah’s Place, a domestic violence shelter in Fernandina Beach. Shannon relocated to Atlanta where she could combine her passion in ending domestic violence with her love of animals. At Ahimsa House, Shannon coordinates the Direct Services program, helping find and organize shelter and care for the animals that come into the program. Shannon was hired as the Victim Services Advocate in 2013 and accepted the Program Services Coordinator position in 2014.

Sally Terrell, Victim Services Advocate

Sally earned her bachelor’s degree in Media Arts & Design and Corporate Communication from James Madison University and began her career at a global public relations firm in Washington, D.C. During this time, Sally grew increasingly interested in combining her skills with her passion to combat domestic and sexual violence. She returned to school to pursue a Master of Social Work degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and worked as an intern at Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. This experience introduced the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, and provided Sally opportunities to gain experience in victim services and crisis intervention. Upon graduating, she relocated to the Atlanta area and was pleased to accept the Victim Services Advocate position in June 2014.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carrie Montagna-Ward, President
Marketing Manager, McKesson

Ana Minter
Director, Financial Solutions, Guidant Group

Cheri Fulginiti, Vice President
Engineering, UPS

Christi Burton
Sales Consultant, Vera Bradley

Heather Siler, Treasurer
Director, Business Analysis, Guidant Group

Lisa R. Bugni, Esq.
Partner, Alston and Bird

Kendra Westphal, Secretary
Executive Recruiter, AquantUs, LLC

Shannon Weathers
General Counsel, Council of Superior Court Judges

Mary Ann Downey
HR Metrics Coach, Shoot the Moon Services, LLC

ADVISORY COUNCIL

David Bressman, DVM
Associate Veterinarian, Well Pet Humane

Annamarie Keck
Community Member

Joey Brooks
Animal Cruelty Investigator, Gwinnett County

Stephen Walker
Owner, S. R. Walker Designs

Emily Christie
Founder, Ahimsa House

Kelly Trogdon, DVM
Owner, Faithful Friend Mobile Veterinary Clinic

Christine Cox, Esq.
Attorney

Merrie Rennard, LMSW
Ph.D. Fellow, Veterinary Social Work Program
University of Tennessee

Melinda Merck, DVM
Senior Director of Veterinary Forensics
Anti-Cruelty Initiatives, ASPCA

Shawn Ellen LaGrua, Esq.
Inspector General
Office of Secretary of State Karen Handel
The Ahimsa House 10th Anniversary Gala, held at the lovely Glenridge Hall, was a huge success, raising over $30,000 for our program. Thanks to all of the hard work of our planning committee and our event chair, Carole Baker, 2014’s event more than doubled the amount of money raised in any previous year. This year, in-kind sponsors such as Edge Design and Duffy Realty went above and beyond to ensure a successful and fun evening! Thank you so much to everyone who donated, attended, and volunteered.

2014 Planning Committee:
Carole Baker, Chair
Cheri Fulginiti, Co-Chair
Meghan Farley
Jane Fox
Caroline King
Audrey Lane
Becky Lucas
Carol Neal-Rossi
Cathy McMahon-Fowlkes
Carrie Montagna
Sara Wiles
Myra Rasnick
Shannon Oxford

Volunteering with Ahimsa House has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me. The ability to use my unique skills to help make a difference in the lives of others and their pets absolutely lights me up. I have been so honored to work with the team in the office and to give back for the past 4 years. I am looking forward to seeing all of the amazing work that will be done in the years to come!
Our client was living out of her car with Cookie and Cupcake in the middle of a brutal Georgia summer when she entered our Direct Services program. She had recently escaped an abusive relationship after delaying leaving for over five years out of fear of what the abuser might do to the dogs.

Over the years, Cookie and Cupcake had been exposed to extensive abuse and neglect. They were denied food and water, locked outside in extreme weather conditions, or alternatively constrained indoors despite their need to go to the bathroom or get exercise. Our client and her dogs were even forced to stay awake for days at a time when their abuser intentionally ran loud power tools at all hours of the night to prevent them from sleeping.

Suffice to say that Cookie, Cupcake, and mom were all exhausted when they came to Ahimsa House for help. But in addition to the exhaustion of escaping domestic violence, the veterinarian found that Cookie and Cupcake also had multiple concerning health issues related to the abuse and neglect they had endured. Cookie, a 4-year-old mini schnauzer, had black spots on her teeth, a strange smell emitting from her mouth, and was refusing to drink water. Test results suggested that she may have eaten something, accidentally or intentionally, which seriously put her health in danger. Cupcake, a 10-year-old mini schnauzer, had such severe ear infections that she could no longer hear and the infection was spreading to her eyes. Her hips were swollen and the veterinarian found skin lesions covering her body. Initially, we feared these could be tumors, but were relieved to learn that the reaction was allergy-related.

Thanks to generous Ahimsa House donors, we were able to support our client through her family’s transition to safety by covering nearly $2,000 in veterinary bills alone. These funds went directly to reversing the deterioration of Cookie and Cupcake’s health and set the entire family on a path toward recovery.
OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF OUR ORGANIZATION. HERE’S HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED AND HELP!

**24-HOUR CRISIS LINE:** Assist staff by answering calls from victims in need of Ahimsa House services and callers across the state.

**FOSTER PROGRAM PETS:** One of the greatest gifts you can give an animal in need is love and a safe place to be. All supplies and costs are covered.

**TRANSPORT ANIMALS:** Safely transport pets to veterinary appointments, foster homes, and reunifications according to your own schedule.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Represent Ahimsa House at local festivals and rescue events to spread the word about our services and find supporters.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** Help with our annual anniversary gala, Walk, Wag, N’ Run, and our concession stand at the PGA TOUR Championship.

**AHIMSA AMBASSADOR:** Promote us in your existing network and community. Follow us on social media and join our brochure brigade!
Ahimsa House relies heavily on our donors to provide care for the pets in our program. Donations from compassionate people help us continue our lifesaving work. Your donation ensures that pets like Sunny, Captain, Cookie, and Cupcake can be with their owners for a fresh start, that their owners don’t have to make the dangerous decision to delay leaving or even stay in an abusive situation for their pets’ sakes, and that victims of domestic violence across the state of Georgia have a resource that they can count on to keep their family safe and together.

We understand that not everyone has time or money to contribute. For information on assisting Ahimsa House via affiliate shopping, workplace giving, passing on your gently used items, and more, visit us at http://ahimsahouse.org/ways-donate.
10 YEARS OF AHIMSA HOUSE 2004 - 2014