



# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



ahimsa house

RESCUE. REBUILD. REUNITE.





"ESCAPING WITHOUT THE PETS WASN'T AN OPTION, NEITHER WAS HEALING WITHOUT THEM. I JUST WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO IT ALL WITHOUT MY PETS."

# 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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# LETTER FROM MYRA

If you have been following the Ahimsa House journey for a while (or even just follow us on social media), you have probably heard about overwhelming influxes of kittens or celebrated a milestone of hitting a record-breaking total number of pets in the program. And this is all true; the Direct Services program continues to experience significant growth in all areas. However, 2018 was also a groundbreaking year for Ahimsa House in an entirely separate area, and its one we don't often talk about: Fundraising!

As victim advocates and animal rescuers, we aren't necessarily well-versed in asking people for money. None of us entered this field because of our strengths in soliciting donations. Fundraising is challenging, but without it, Ahimsa House's lifesaving programmatic work would be just a great idea. So we were honored when one generous donor pledged to match donations made to Ahimsa House on Georgia Gives Day 2018, an annual statewide online fundraiser aimed to boost nonprofit engagement and drive philanthropy. Our supporters rose to the challenge, and together our network raised a grand total of \$31,500 in less than 24 hours. To put this into context, \$31,500 would cover routine veterinary care for approximately 263 Ahimsa House pets.

Most of this support came in the form of relatively small donations from many unique contributors; demonstrating the depth of our support system and the power of social media. We saw all of our social media platforms blow up in numbers and blossom with engagement this year. While "likes" and "shares" may not directly funnel finances into the Ahimsa House bank account, every single one spreads awareness of program services to those who may need them or who may pledge the next huge match donation!

In addition, both our annual Joining Hands & Paws Gala and the Walk, Wag & Run 5K record-breaking amounts; thanks to generous in-kind donations from our partners, silent auction donations from our supporters, and of course, the dedication of our volunteers and Board members. These angels worked tirelessly to coordinate and execute fantastic events that captured the spirit of our work. We are so grateful for your support, along with every donor who so graciously contributed this year. It is each of you that enables us to continue serving the people and pets who need Ahimsa House. We look forward to breaking more records together in 2019!

Sincerely,



Myra Rasnick  
Executive Director

# OUR SERVICES



Up to 60 days of confidential safehousing for the pets of domestic violence victims who are seeking safety until they are able to be reclaimed.



24-hour crisis line for victims and advocates, providing crisis intervention, community referrals, legal advocacy, and safety planning.



Preventive veterinary care, including spay and neuter surgeries, as well as treatment for illnesses or injuries due to abuse.



Safe transportation of pets to foster homes, veterinarians, and reunifications.



Pet supplies, pet food, payment of pet deposits, and other assistance victims may need in order to move forward with their lives together.



Training for human services and animal protection agencies, as well as direct outreach to the public to raise awareness.

# RUBY'S STORY

It was not unusual for Ruby to witness violence between her parents at home. But life as she knew it came to a screeching halt one tragic night, when Ruby's dad murdered her mom and took his own life right in front of her. Suddenly, Ruby was alone in the world, with no one to take care of her, love her, feed her, or... let her out to go potty.

Ruby's story is unique because the survivor in this story is a pit bull. Soon after the murder-suicide, the victim's mother moved into the house with her dog, Penelope, who got along well with Ruby before the incident. But Ruby's behavior immediately began to deteriorate as a result of the trauma of witnessing the crime and losing her owners. She became extremely fearful of every room in the house except one bathroom, and had to be

carried through the front door each time she went outside because she was so afraid of the house. Ruby aggressively guarded the home from anyone entering, including people (and pets) she had loved before the incident. Ruby and Penelope were constantly at each other's throats, and the burden of managing traumatized and fighting animals, on top of grieving the loss of her daughter, became too much for Ruby's new caretaker.

Ahimsa House was contacted by the victim's mother in connection with a new initiative to support surviving family members when domestic violence turns fatal. As we learned more about the situation, we saw a mother that was trying so hard to do right by her daughter's beloved pet. Her tireless efforts to help

Ruby move past her trauma and the new fur siblings find peace were fueled by her devotion and respect for her daughter's wishes. But the longer the situation went on and the more it devolved, she began carrying significant guilt and uncertainty about Ruby's future.

Ruby entered the Ahimsa House program specifically to work with a behavioral trainer that specializes in aggressive and traumatized dogs. Living on-site with the trainer, she began to heal from the traumas associated with the home. This temporary reprieve also allowed the victim's mother much-needed time to heal apart from the stress she was experiencing as a secondary victim of domestic violence. Eventually the trainer reunited Ruby and Penelope on neutral ground and began

rebuilding their relationship. The harmonious relationship that the two pets share in the home to this day is evidence of Ruby's incredible resilience.

When a loved one passes, it's often said that their spirit lives on long after they physically depart. That we carry their legacy with us as we continue to live. We like the notion that perhaps Ruby's mom lives on in every belly rub and peanut butter Kong that her fur baby enjoys; leaving a legacy of resilience, the power of the human/animal bond, and the tenacious spirit that they share. And in this way, she, too is a survivor.





2018

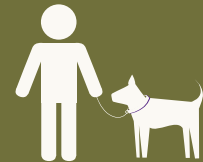
# PROGRAM STATISTICS

**3,080**

Crisis Calls Received

**252**

Direct Service Requests

**151**

New Direct Service Clients

**158**

Dogs

**108**

Cats

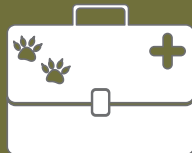
**279**

Total Animals

Vet Visits

**111**

Medical Services

**258**

Spays &amp; Neuters

**51**

Transports

**601****247**

Pets Reunited

**9**

Pets Rehomed

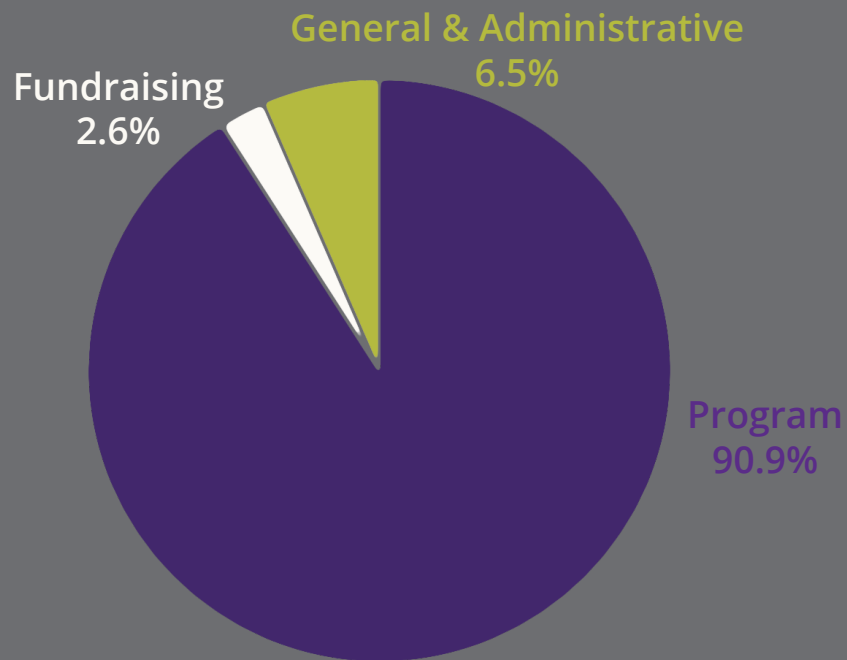
**12,182**

Safe Nights Provided

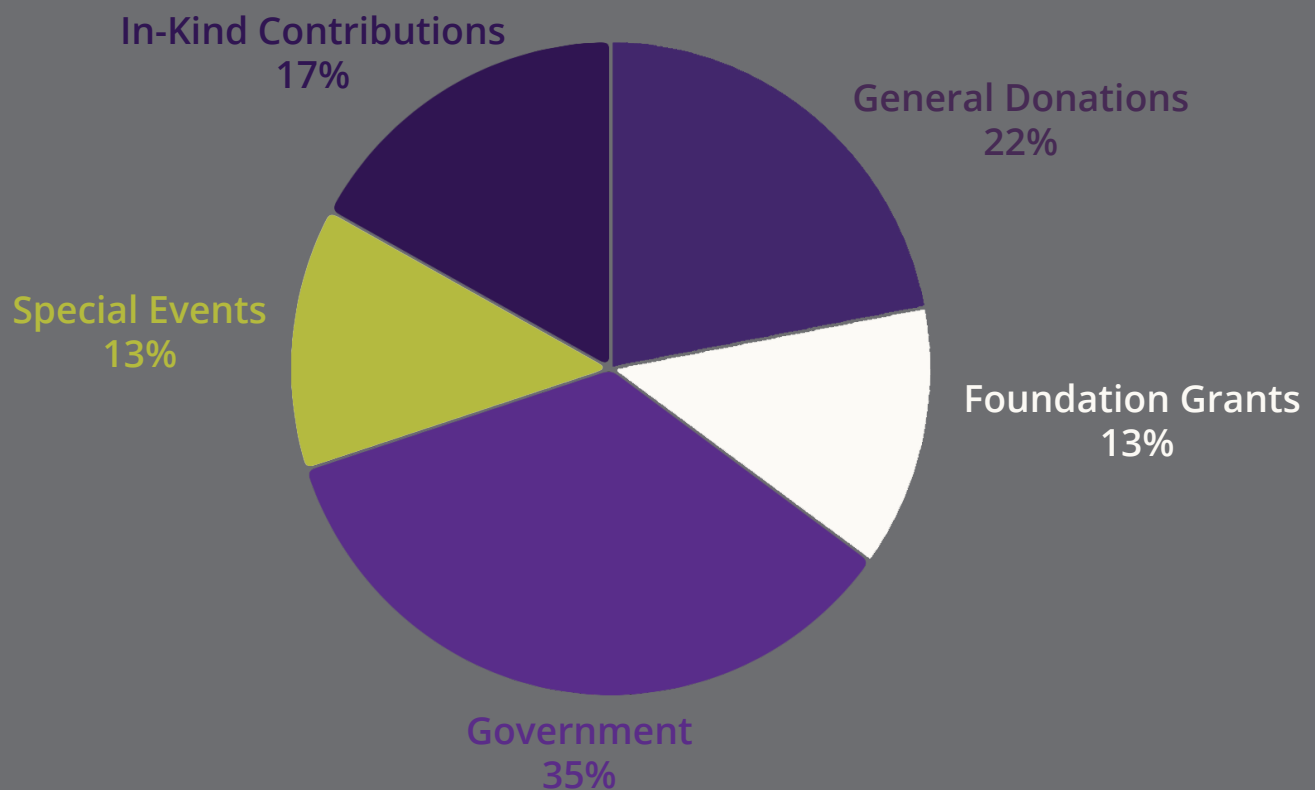
2018

# FINANCES

## Expenditures



## Revenue



# HIGHLIGHTS

**April** Ahimsa House moved out of our Avondale Estates home of 6 years into a new office in Tucker with plenty of space for our growing staff.

**June** Board members and staff came together to discuss our plans for the future and formulated a Strategic Plan with the help of a consultant.

**September** Executive Director, Myra Rasnick, Director of Program Services, Shannon Oxford, and Victim Services Coordinator, Taylor Johnson delivered a presentation about the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, Ahimsa House Services, and Recent Trends in Services at the Georgia Commission on Family Violence's Annual Conference.

**September** With funds from a one-time VOCA grant, we were able to purchase a new van to help transport humans and animals to safety.

**November** Georgia Gives on Giving Tuesday was our most successful one yet, bringing in \$31,500!



## RESCUE. REBUILD. REUNITE.

When survivors enter their pets into our program, it is always with the intention that they will be reunited when they are settled in to new, safe housing. However, there are some instances where our clients are unable to take their pets back. In these cases we work to adopt the pets out or transfer them to one of our rescue partners to find a new forever home. Each year we track our reunification rate--the percentage of pets that are reunited with their families--and we are proud to report that 2018's rate was 96%!

# SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MURDER-SUICIDE

Ahimsa House began serving surviving family members of intimate partner homicide in response to a need expressed by the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV). As part of GCFV's Support for Survivors of Murder-Suicide initiative, they noticed a growing trend of surviving family members suddenly and unexpectedly caring for pets of their deceased family members while coping with the trauma of losing their family member. In some instances the pets were exhibiting

problem behaviors because they themselves were experiencing stress from losing their owner and their change of environment. In other instances, the sudden financial burden of caring for the pets were too great for the survivor. Therefore, we began providing behavioral training for the pets if needed, assistance integrating the pets in their new environment, payment for necessary veterinary care and provision of pet supplies (food, etc.).





Who We Are

## 2018 STAFF

**Myra Rasnick**

*Executive Director*

**Shannon Oxford**

*Director of Program Services*

**Samantha Altfest**

*Community Services Coordinator*

**Taylor Johnson**

*Victim Services Coordinator*

**Justin Maslanka**

*Victim Services Coordinator*

**Zach Clifford**

*Victim Services Advocate*

**Laura Remillard**

*Victim Services Advocate*

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Karen Swope**

*President, Live Nation, Senior Client Development Director*

**Edie Sanders**

*Vice President, Intelligrated Software, Senior Project Manager*

**Heather Siler**

*Treasurer, Guidant Group, Director, Operations*

**Carol Neal-Rossi**

*Secretary. Issues Consulting, President*

**Kathryn Burmeister**

*Board Member, Burmeister Law Firm, LLC, Partner*

**Cheri Fulginiti**

*Past President, Vice President, Engineering, UPS (Retired)*

**Carrie Montagna-Ward**

*Past President, McKesson, Marketing Manager*

**Courtney E. Quiros**

*Board Member, Alston and Bird, LLP, Associate*

**Meredith Ragains**

*Board Member, Executive Director, GA Lawyers for the Arts*

**Seslee Smith**

*Board Member, Morris, Manning & Martin LLP, Partner*

**Eddie Turner**

*Board Member, Community Solutions, Improvement Advisor*

# ADVISORY COUNCIL

**David Bressman, DVM**

Associate Veterinarian, Crabapple  
Animal Hospital

**Joey Brooks**

Animal Cruelty Investigator,  
Gwinnett County

**Emily Christie**

Founder, Ahimsa House

**Christine Cox, Esq.**

Attorney

**Paul Ebbs**

Field Supervisor, Fulton County  
Animal Services

**Maya Gupta, Ph.D.**

Senior Director of Applied Research,  
American Society for Prevention of  
Cruelty to Animals

**Annamarie Keck**

Community Member

**Hon. Shawn Ellen LaGrua**

Superior Court Judge, Fulton County

**Melinda Merck, DVM**

Owner, Forensics Consulting, LLC

**Merrie Rennard, LMSW, Ph.D.**

Fellow, Veterinary Social Work,  
University of Tennessee

**Christy Showalter**

Director of Training, Georgia  
Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Kelly Trogdon, DVM**

Faithful Friend Mobile Veterinary  
Clinic

**Stephen Walker**

Owner, S. R. Walker Designs

# JOINING HANDS & PAWS

*2018 Gala*



2018 was a year of changes for our annual Joining Hands & Paws Gala. While change can mean exciting new opportunities, it can also bring a lot of uncertainty. Unsurprisingly, our planning committee, in-kind donors, sponsors, and supporters made the revamped event exactly what it always has been -- a resounding success for our pets and their people!

After our Gala's previous home at the Venetian Room closed its doors, we found the perfect location for our growing event at Monday Night Brewing's new Garage event space on the BeltLine. Our generous supporters helped us raise \$66,000 to support our live-saving work.

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

Shannon Oxford, Chair  
Samantha Altfest, Co-Chair  
Hailly Butler  
Christine Conrado-Staskiewicz  
Anne Clarke  
Cathy Duffy

Meghan Farley  
Cheri Fulginiti  
You-Jin Han  
Maria Maldonado  
Barbara Mislan

Carol Neal-Rossi  
Myra Rasnick  
Christy Roe  
Jami Stark  
Karen Swope



# WALK, WAG, N' RUN

It's always a great day when our friends come out by the hundreds to show their support for people and pets who have escaped domestic violence. But the icing on the cake for our 7th annual Walk, Wag, N' Run 5K and Fun Run was that it was our most successful one yet. With over 400 runners, we had more participants than ever before, and raised over \$29,000!



## PLANNING COMMITTEE

Carol Neal-Rossi, Chair

Samantha Altfest

Meghan Farley

Cheri Fulginiti

Nicole Janoulis

Shannon Oxford

Myra Rasnick

Edie Sanders

Karen Swope

Devyn Wittmeyer

# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Foster volunteers provide a safe place for a pet to rest and recuperate for stays ranging from 5 to 60 days. Fosters pick which pets work best for their family, have no out-of-pocket costs for veterinary services or pet supplies, and have 24-hour support from Ahimsa House staff.



Crisis line volunteers represent Ahimsa House on our 24-hour crisis line on evenings, weekends, and holidays, providing crisis intervention and community referrals. Volunteers graduate from a 10-hour training and always have the support of on-call staff.



Transport volunteers assist with driving pets to foster homes, veterinarians and boarding facilities, and back to their owners for reunifications. Transports occur during business hours, evenings, and weekends, all over Georgia and Metro Atlanta, and transporters make their own schedules.



Community outreach volunteers assist Ahimsa House at outreach events like adopta-thons, festivals, and community events across the state, helping spread the word about our services to potential clients and other volunteers. Spring and fall are especially busy times for outreach.

# GIVING BACK

Donations from compassionate people help us continue our life-saving work. Ahimsa House relies heavily on our donors to provide care for the pets in our program. Your donation ensures that pets 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. There are lots of different ways to give back to Ahimsa House!

# WISH LIST

Thanks to generous donors, we rarely need to purchase pet supplies! Donations can be sent directly to us via our Amazon Wishlist. See our website for our most up-to-date needs.

- Unopened dry and canned pet food for all life stages and diets
- Treats
- Litter, litter boxes, and litter scoops
- Leashes, collars, and harnesses
- Chews (dental and regular)
- Toys
- Carriers and crates
- Flea and tick medication
- Water and food bowls
- Gift Cards (Uber, Lyft, VISA, PetSmart, Amazon, Gas Stations)
- Three hole punch and regular copy paper
- Stamps

# IN-KIND SUPPORT

Ahimsa House is proud to partner with veterinary, boarding, and pet supply businesses across the state of Georgia. We are always seeking additional partners who can assist with low cost or free services as our program grows! Help us connect with new partners by speaking with your own vet about the valuable work that we do, or sign up to be part of our brochure brigade to disseminate our information in your community.

# TRIBUTE DONATIONS

Wondering what kind of gift to purchase for those hard-to-shop for people on your list? Consider a special contribution to Ahimsa House to honor the caring and generous spirit of your friends and family. This is a unique gift that makes a lasting impact throughout the year.

Tribute donations can be made in honor or in memory of a special person, pet, or occasion. It may be a member of your family, a friend, a business associate, or a neighbor. These donations not only show how much you care about your special someone or pet, but they also show how much you care about the important work we do here at Ahimsa House. Honorary and Memorial gifts to Ahimsa House can express sympathy, love, appreciation, congratulations or best wishes to those you honor or remember.





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