



Centre County PAWS
Strategic Plan
July 2010-June 2013

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1. Summary

This is PAWS' first formal strategic plan, and is intended to continue the exceptional work that our non-profit organization has accomplished over the past three decades through the dedication of our volunteers and support from the community. The Strategic Planning Committee collected input for the plan from PAWS members, volunteers, and the community at large in a variety of ways, the results of which have been distilled into seven broad goals to be pursued during the next three years.

Key recommendations include working toward enduring financial stability, continuing our spay-neuter program with emphasis on education and practice, focusing on animal welfare initiatives, developing more effective communication with our stakeholders, and showing consideration and respect for all the dogs, cats, volunteers, and members of the public involved with the organization.

2. Background

2.1. Our History

2010 marks the 30th anniversary of Centre County PAWS, founded in 1980 by a group of citizens concerned about cat overpopulation in Centre County. PAWS began as a network of foster homes for cats, without a physical facility of its own. Community awareness of PAWS grew slowly in the 1980s through word-of-mouth and the PAWS newsletter. One milestone in the organization's history occurred in 1990 with the opening of Wiscoy Pet Food Company. PAWS began showing cats at Wiscoy, increasing its profile in the community, and also began advertising in local media at about this time.

Another major milestone for PAWS occurred in 1995 when Dr. Fred Metzger and Mr. Lee Metzger generously offered PAWS a lease on a 900-square foot building near Metzger Animal Hospital for \$1 per year. This building, which housed about 30 cats and no dogs, became the first PAWS Center. PAWS began a fledgling dog program relying on foster homes in the early 1990s. By 1998 PAWS was holding regular showings on Sunday afternoons of dogs available for adoption, a tradition that continues to this day. A major expansion of the dog program occurred in 2002 with the agreement of several local boarding kennels to house PAWS dogs at little or no cost to PAWS. This continued until the opening of the new PAWS Adoption and Education Center in 2007 when PAWS dogs were moved to the Center.

The fundraising campaign for the current PAWS Center began in 2005. The campaign quickly succeeded in raising most of the funds needed to construct the PAWS Center, and the University Area Joint Authority agreed to lease 10 acres of its land to PAWS on a long-term basis for \$1 per year.

Groundbreaking took place in Fall 2006, and the new 14,000-square foot Center opened to the public in the Fall of 2007. The new Center contains space for more than 100 cats and more than 30 dogs, as well as a fully-equipped surgical suite, meet-and-greet rooms for the visiting public, isolation and quarantine rooms on the cat and dog sides of the facility, an outdoor cat play area, cat sunrooms, a dog play yard, administrative offices, and a finished basement for meetings and events.

With the move into the new Center, which is 15 times larger than our previous facility, it became clear that major changes would be needed in the organization and operation of PAWS. PAWS hired its first

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full-time employee as Shelter Supervisor in 2007. Since then three part-time employees have also been hired, two for cleaning and maintenance and one for accounting and administrative operations. Volunteer recruitment and training have been formalized and enhanced, fundraising through events such as the Fur Ball has increased significantly, teams and committees in PAWS have been given responsibilities previously taken by the Board of Directors, and the Board of Directors has shifted from day-to-day operations to a policy and governing role. An updated PAWS Mission Statement was written in 2008 and the first PAWS Policies and Procedures Manual was completed in 2009.

2.2. PAWS Mission and Values

The core of PAWS' energy and continuing success lies in its focus on three areas: putting animal welfare first, valuing its staff and volunteers, and supporting the principle of non-euthanasia. Centre County PAWS is committed to finding homes for homeless cats and dogs, educating citizens on responsible pet ownership, providing spay/neuter assistance, and ending pet overpopulation. We are a non-euthanasia, member-supported, volunteer enabled organization dedicated to the **Promotion of Animal Welfare and Safety**. [See [Appendix A](#) for the complete Mission Statement.]

3. Methodology, Data Collection, Findings

Two formal data gathering processes were employed to collect much of the information used to form the basis of this plan: 1) a 6-question survey was made available online to all members, volunteers, and the general public; and 2) multiple Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) meetings were conducted with different segments of the volunteers, members, and the Board of Directors. Personal emails received by any committee member were also integrated into the list of anonymous responses. A number of themes became apparent during the two months of data collection.

3.1. How is PAWS Perceived?

The SWOT meetings provided four general categories of response; strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. PAWS has many strengths and while they were mentioned many times by different respondents, they are only summarized in this report because the task at hand was to concentrate on responses from the other three categories to provide direction toward improvement.

3.1.1. Strengths

- PAWS has knowledgeable and dedicated volunteers. This was the most frequent comment by respondents in our data collection. Our volunteers are regarded as our real "wealth," even more noticeable than the valuable and critical monetary contributions of our donors.
- There is considerable pride in the new facility, its management, maintenance, and landscaping.
- Our foster home program is excellent, providing home situations and valuable feedback on behavior and medical needs.
- PAWS has a hard-working volunteer medical team.
- The organization is fulfilling its stated mission.
- Participants noted PAWS' excellent publicity program, attractive promotional materials, and

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informative web site.

3.1.2. Limitations and Weaknesses

- Participants expressed a need for improved communication strategies with volunteers and the public, applicable to both new and seasoned volunteers. Survey participants cited a lack of positive personal interactions when coming as a visitor or when working at the facility, and an obvious inhospitable atmosphere at times.
- Although improving, policies are not perceived to be applied consistently in all cases.
- A negative impression has been noted which comes from volunteers giving out incorrect information, especially to the public.
- There is a strong community perception that it is difficult to adopt from PAWS because of too-stringent requirements.
- Shortage of paid employees and trained staff places undue pressure on volunteers.
 - ✓ An observation identified repeatedly in both the SWOT analyses and surveys is a shortage and a strong need for paid employees and trained staff.
 - ✓ Respondents communicated the need for trained medical personnel, a larger cleaning/maintenance staff, more individuals who have time to devote to daily record-keeping, up-to-date mailing lists, etc., and more individuals to concentrate on fundraising and publicity. SWOT and survey participants pointed out that increasing the number of paid employees will be essential to PAWS' growth, progress, and overall effectiveness.
- Volunteer retention and satisfaction rates must be improved; many people attend the orientation and training classes for new volunteers but few stay on.
- Although the medical team is regarded as conscientious and hard working, a desire to increase the number of people involved was frequently expressed as a way for volunteers working with the dogs and cats to feel better informed and educated.
- The organization is perceived as being "State College-centric" i.e., not devoting enough attention to other parts of Centre County.
- The mortgage on the PAWS Center needs to be paid off, and funds need to be raised for an endowment to support ongoing operations and provide a cushion against financial hardship.
- The organization's donor base could be expanded by more attention to middle-income households and the rural population of Centre County.
- The facility has incurred a lengthy capital improvements wish list, including space for showing dogs with behavioral issues and adoptable cats with special medical needs.
- Membership is relatively low compared to the potential in the community.
- PAWS is unprepared for emergencies, either one occurring at the PAWS Center or in the community at large to which PAWS would be asked to respond.

3.1.3. Summary

PAWS staff and volunteers have reason to feel proud of the many strengths that survey participants

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recognized; however, the areas identified most often as trouble spots or issues of concern include the following:

- Communication between volunteers and volunteer interactions with the public need to be improved to enhance the work environment and better PAWS' image.
- Finances should be addressed with long range planning to enable the improvements needed within the facility in both property and staffing, and to ensure the future survival of the organization.
- Facilities need to be examined and possibly modified to provide better sheltering and showing of the animals.
- Adoption policies and procedures need to be explained to all potential adopters and applied in a consistent manner to reduce or eliminate the perception that PAWS practices are unreasonable or unfair.
- The perception of PAWS being an elitist organization needs to be examined, understood, and changed.
- PAWS needs to become more efficient in its operations, especially in information technology-related areas (e.g. record-keeping and mailing lists).

4. The Strategic Plan

Centre County PAWS, with its roots in the dedication of a few visionary community members 30 years ago, has grown into a large, complex organization, but volunteers are still its “heart and soul” as the Mission Statement affirms. Over the next three years, PAWS volunteers and staff will pursue seven broad goals as outlined in this planning document. These key areas are where PAWS needs to put its collaborative energies, and will define how we will gauge our success. All seven goals are crucial; the presentation order is not indicative of their importance.

1. PAWS will become a leader in animal sheltering best practices, including outstanding medical care and emergency preparedness.
2. PAWS will promote and provide education for responsible pet ownership throughout Centre County.
3. PAWS will expand its efforts to serve the disadvantaged pet population of Centre County.
4. PAWS members and leadership will create a positive, welcoming environment and supportive climate for volunteers.
5. PAWS volunteers and leadership will generate a positive, welcoming atmosphere for visitors at our facility and through our web presence, programs, and other outreach.
6. PAWS will initiate a plan and processes for identifying and funding future operations and facility improvements, including staffing and physical plant.
7. PAWS will continue the task of cultivating robust, enduring financial health and stability within the organization.

5. Practical Recommendations and the Next Steps

These seven primary goals are purposely broad since it will be critical for the various committees in

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PAWS to take ownership of the next steps and to craft practical strategies for implementation. The Board and committees can use the goals and sample strategies presented here to develop tactics and timelines they feel are practical and attainable.

Each committee or responsible individual has a short custom list of suggestions from the survey and SWOT analyses to use for information purposes and to help develop approaches for the next three years. There are also many additional practical suggestions in the SWOT and survey responses that will be available for committees to draw from for ideas.

Each group or individual will receive a tracking sheet that can be filled in with ideas and proposed timelines for years 1-3, amended, kept up to date, and maintained on Google documents or other online software.

6. In Conclusion

The 2010 Strategic Planning Committee wishes to express its thanks for the candid, constructive and valuable comments received during the planning process, and to encourage the same level of constructive dialogue among the committees as we move into the planning and implementation phases of the initiative. Please feel free to continue to contact the committee members with your thoughts, questions, concerns and ideas. We hope many of you will participate over the next three years in making an excellent organization even better.

APPENDICES

A. Mission Statement

Centre County PAWS, Inc. is committed to:

- placing homeless cats and dogs into loving forever homes and making a lifetime commitment to each of these companion animals
- reducing companion animal overpopulation through spay/neuter programs and education
- promoting responsible pet care through education and by example
- acting as an advocate on behalf of companion animals
- building, nurturing, and respecting the human - animal bond, and
- proactively seeking new approaches in the effort to end the suffering of companion animals in our society caused by cruelty, neglect, or human apathy.

We will make decisions, enact policies, and implement programs in accordance with our three core principles:

We are a non-euthanasia organization. We believe that every animal has value and deserves a high quality of life and a permanent home, and that every animal must receive individual consideration, regardless of how many animals we take in. We believe that the life of an animal must always take precedence and that euthanasia is only an option when needed to provide a merciful end to either a state of irresolvable acute suffering, severe aggression, or severe self-destructive behavior.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of PAWS. We are committed to ongoing education, training and communications so that all of our volunteers are well-informed about organizational matters, day-to-day operations and volunteer expectations. We believe that each of our volunteers should be treated with professionalism, warmth, respect, and compassion. We value the time and energy that each volunteer gives to PAWS and to the animals in our care. We encourage the open expression of ideas and suggestions, and we wish to cultivate the creativity and enthusiasm of each volunteer. We work to create a safe, happy, enjoyable atmosphere in which each volunteer can contribute in his or her own way and receive fulfillment and satisfaction from this contribution.

We are a community organization. Members of PAWS, donors, and the general public are essential to the success of PAWS. We are committed to treating our members, donors, and the general public with dignity and respect. We strive to create cooperative relationships with other community organizations in order to further our mission.

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B. Adoption Statistics

Cat Adoption Statistics

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
January	29	34	30	29	30	16	15	17	14	26
February	20	24	18	24	32	15	12	20	18	15
March	17	19	13	18	15	20	14	12	19	29
April	12	10	18	15	21	14	9	16	20	8
May	28	25	14	21	24	14	21	14	18	18
June	27	27	19	20	14	19	15	24	22	11
July	13	16	15	18	19	19	12	23	20	16
August	28	19	27	27	30	12	7	23	17	23
September	16	19	30	21	14	17	8	23	24	12
October	6	28	18	15	22	19	14	20	13	34
November	15	7	23	13	14	17	15	19	19	8
December	26	30	16	18	28	16	17	18	12	21
Total	237	258	241	239	263	198	159	229	216	221

Dog Adoption Statistics

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
January	12	9	16	9	9	12	5	13	25	13
February	6	6	11	14	10	10	11	14	13	18
March	7	13	13	10	4	12	15	17	18	15
April	17	13	12	15	6	21	12	13	13	26
May	12	16	15	9	11	15	10	21	31	18
June	8	6	13	21	12	12	11	7	21	18
July	9	9	18	9	11	15	18	17	12	17
August	5	15	17	22	15	18	18	19	24	30
September	4	14	7	9	5	10	13	12	21	12
October	6	11	11	9	6	9	12	10	21	31
November	8	14	14	9	18	14	15	15	20	23
December	2	12	2	9	8	18	25	19	21	13
Total	96	138	149	145	115	166	165	177	240	234

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C. Survey Questions and Summary of Responses

Due to the size of the document containing the survey response comments, it is available online only. The summary data is provided below. There were 143 responses as of April 12, 2010.

1. How are you associated with Centre County PAWS? Please check all that apply.

- Current PAWS volunteer – 50%
- Was a PAWS volunteer in the past – 13%
- Current PAWS member – 41%
- Was a PAWS member in the past – 6%
- PAWS donor – 50%
- Attended one or more PAWS events – 44%
- Currently fostering PAWS animal(s) – 6%
- Fostered PAWS animal(s) in the past – 25%
- Adopted PAWS animal(s) – 57%
- Surrendered animal(s) to PAWS – 6%
- On the waiting list to surrender animal(s) to PAWS – 1%
- Received financial assistance from PAWS – 3%
- My animal(s) went to a PAWS spay/ neuter clinic – 3%
- Other, please describe: – 8%

2. Overall, how would you describe your experience with Centre County PAWS?

- Not applicable – I don't have any experience with PAWS – 2%
- Excellent – 57%
- Good – 36%
- Fair – 3%
- Poor – 1%

3. What can we do at Centre County PAWS to improve your experience in the future?

4. What would you like to see as the *two highest* priorities for Centre County PAWS over the next three years? Please check up to two boxes.

- Not sure – 4%
- Take in and adopt out more cats and dogs – 39%
- Improved facilities for cats and dogs with special needs – 13%

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- More low-cost spay/neuter clinics for owned cats and dogs – 29%
- More spay/neuter clinics for feral cats – 24%
- More public education about responsible pet ownership – 33%
- Greater collaboration with other animal shelters and rescues – 17%
- Rescue animals in addition to cats and dogs, please indicate: – 6%
- Other, please describe: – 16%

5. Does Centre County PAWS need to change in order to operate more effectively and/or efficiently?

- Not sure – 41% checked this box
- No – 21%
- Yes – 38%

6. Please feel free to make additional comments about Centre County PAWS. We welcome all ideas, input and feedback in our quest to be the best we can be.

Respondents had a variety of additional comments that are available to the committees and teams in PAWS.

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D. Parking Lot Items To Remember During Implementation and For Future Planning

- Construct a pet memorial garden.
- Work with the community to establish animal control program and guidelines (exactly what to do when a stray is found)
- Consider suggestion of an “external relations committee.”
- Study current space for potential low cost enhancements.
- Determine if signage visibility from the road can be improved.
- Consider the organization’s role in more formal advocacy.
- Develop ways to measure and assess our progress.
- Investigate being part of regional pet transport networks (another alternative for people to volunteer.)
- Consider numerous web and publicity suggestions from respondents.
- Bring in speakers and programs/films – for volunteers and the community.

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E. Capital Improvement List (as of 7/2010)

- Wind issue and temperature issues resolved (*dog*)
- Play yard lighting (*dog*)
- Generator wiring (*general*)
- Water softener (*general*)
- Security system/key card system (*general*)
- Noise abatement materials in kennels (*dog*)
- Heating in outdoor troughs (*dog*)
- Replacement of carpeted cat towers with Feline Snoozers (*cat*)
- Better outdoor kennel lighting for winter cleaning (*dog*)
- Industrial sized washer/dryer (then move current washer/dryer back to intake) (*cat*)
- Divider(s) for the cattery to make into 2 rooms (*cat*)
- Temperature control for the administrative/surgical wing (*general*)
- Ability to play soothing music throughout building (*general*)
- Fenced-in grass play area (away from the dog kennels) (*dog*)
- Cat door for porch (*cat*)
- Extended doors at the front desk (reaching the floor) (*dog*)
- Stone/paved area by cat intake so cars can back directly up to the door (*cat*)
- Paved driveway to the back basement entrance (*general*)