



Humane Society of Louisiana - Celebrating our 20 Year Anniversary

HURRICANE KATRINA - FINAL REPORT, 2008

The Humane Society of Louisiana has been a statewide leader in the field of animal protection since 1988. From our headquarters in New Orleans, our private, nonprofit organization has worked with animal shelters, elected officials, law enforcement agencies and community leaders for two decades, forwarding the cause of animal protection and working to create a more humane Louisiana. *Our local, grassroots animal protection agency has no affiliation with any national agency, and our programs are reliant on the support of local donors and volunteers.*

To carry out our mission, HSL, a licensed private detective agency, works with parish and local officials and animal shelters to professionally investigate acts of cruelty, to expand animal protection laws and to educate law enforcement agencies on effective cruelty investigations techniques. We also promote cruelty prevention and actively work to improve Louisiana's animal protection services, particularly in rural areas, where no other shelters or programs exist; we operate 12 volunteer chapters in such communities. Throughout our history, we have worked to bridge the gaps between existing services and the unmet needs of animals around our state.

Hurricane Katrina created an unprecedented crisis for the residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, as well as for animals. When the storm devastated our hometown in late August of 2005, both human and animal relief efforts were immediately overwhelmed by the scope of the disaster. Once HSL officials carried out the evacuation of our own shelter's animals, we rose to the challenge. We established an emergency office in Ohio, where our Board President had evacuated, and implemented an effective disaster relief program to aid the animal victims of Katrina.

Our primary efforts included :

- Operating an emergency disaster relief shelter, *Camp Katrina*, at Tylertown;
- Coordinating the distribution of supplies and resources to other animal welfare groups throughout the disaster zone;
- Assisting hands-on with various relief efforts on the ground;
- Partnering with other 501(c)3 agencies to provide foster homes for Katrina victims; when attempts at reunification failed, the animals were placed into loving homes.
- We continue to provide sanctuary care and shelter for Katrina animals still homeless after the storm.

Our Hurricane Katrina disaster relief effort was mobilized by a handful of New Orleans residents, who were Katrina evacuees themselves. It was supported by thousands of donors, national animal protection agencies and more than 500 volunteers from across the United States and Canada. We were involved in the relief effort in every capacity. Some highlights of our relief programs were as follows. We:

Rescued, fostered and provided sanctuary care to animal victims:

- Evacuated 157 shelter animals to safety prior to the hurricane;
- Operated *Camp Katrina* disaster relief shelter in Tylertown, Mississippi;
- Hired boat crews to save the lives of animals in the New Orleans area;
- Accepted animals from overwhelmed shelters, rescue groups and pet owners;
- Provided monetary contributions to small rescue groups undertaking hands-on rescue;
- Offered free housing for rescuers in New Orleans working with other agencies, and more;

Provided veterinary care for injured, sick and traumatized animal victims:

- Coordinated 20 volunteer veterinarians, 52 vet techs and scores of animal control professionals, along with 477 volunteers working at *Camp Katrina*;
- Invested more than \$300,000 in veterinary costs to relief effort apart from donated services;
- Assisted partner agencies fostering animals out of state with the costs of ongoing vet bills;

Transported animal victims:

- Coordinated ongoing transports of 1760 animals to foster and permanent homes from Hawaii to Canada and across the United States;
- Relocated animals to new homes and foster homes for other agencies, including *Companion Animal TV* and *Spay Mart*;
- Engaged a volunteer pilot to fly pets to new homes on a commercial airline;
- Worked with *Companion Animal TV* as lead agency in the initiation of a multimillion dollar *Maddie's Fund* grant for the region, which will soon be submitted with the goal of funding ongoing transports;
- Aided small animal control agencies with grant applications resulting in the donation of transportation vans from HSUS, and more;

Provided temporary and long-term shelter for displaced animal victims:

- Utilized our *Happy Tails Adoption Center* and an apartment in New Orleans to house more than 50 cats for displaced local residents during the storm's aftermath;
- Donated a cat housing room to the *Louisiana SPCA* for feral cats for several months following the hurricane;
- Currently providing ongoing, longterm care for 90 Katrina victims, assuring them with lifelong care if not adopted;

Carried out intake and identification activities for animal victims:

- Took in 1750 animals at *Camp Katrina* in the first 9 months following the storm;
- Admitted 696 animals at *Camp Katrina* during the last half of 2006 & all of 2007;

Coordinated lost and found animal victims:

- Worked with pet owners, foster homes and volunteer organizations working to reunite families with their pets;
- Coordinated foster care homes posting photographs on Petfinder to actively seeking reunions;
- Financed air fares and transport costs for pets to facilitate reunions;
- Took custody of pets after failed reunions, when former owners were no longer in a position to keep them;
- Worked with cat trapping efforts at *Memorial Medical Center* in New Orleans, to successfully reunite abandoned pets with their owners;

Coordinated and helped distribute emergency animal supplies and food donations:

- Established an emergency office to coordinate thousands of calls and emails daily to effectively solicit and manage millions of dollars worth of supplies for the region;
- Coordinated the distribution of truckloads of pet food via *Second Harvesters Food Bank* in New Orleans to area pet relief agencies;
- Carried out a major media campaign in the Cleveland, Ohio, area, coordinating food and supply drives to direct resources to the region;
- Purchased cages and kennels for *Animal Rescue New Orleans*, a generator for St. Bernard Animal Control, and more;
- Provided funds to small groups for needed supplies;
- Distributed crates, carriers and supplies to groups fostering Katrina victims across the nation;
- Secured storage space at *Camp Katrina* for emergency food and supplies for subsequent distribution;
- Used HSL trucks, vans and volunteer vehicles to distribute supplies in the disaster zone;

Locating permanent homes for unclaimed or surrendered animal victims:

- Constructed a satellite adoption center in Maine in conjunction with a local veterinary clinic and area adoption partners for Katrina victims;
- Reopened *Happy Tails Adoption Center* in Jefferson parish to showcase Katrina victims after the storm, featuring animals for other groups in addition to our own;
- Utilized behaviorists, trainers and all available means possible to prevent euthanasia of Katrina survivors with the goal of adopting them, whenever possible;
- We are currently raising funds for sanctuary style housing in Tylertown for Katrina feral cats and long term dogs, and we will continue to undertake every effort to find them loving, permanent homes.

Apart from challenges inherent in our disaster relief program, the Humane Society of Louisiana has faced many difficulties associated with the storm. We are still working hard to recover from losses directly associated with the disaster. These are a few of the many challenges we have faced since Katrina:

Additional Challenges faced by the Humane Society of Louisiana since Katrina:

- Destruction of our New Orleans shelter
- Extensive property damage at our *Thrift Store* in Gretna, resulting in its closure
- Closure of our *Happy Tails Adoption Center*
- Extensive damage to the kennels and animal housing areas of our Acadia chapter
- Failure to receive adequate compensation from our insurance company
- Ineligibility for federal government grants due to our private nonprofit status
- Failure of national agencies soliciting for Katrina relief to fully fund our recovery or the replacement of our shelter
- Loss of key donors and monthly pledge contributors due to relocation
- Cancellation of annual events and activities and closure of annual event venues
- Outstanding bills from our disaster relief rescue effort
- Longterm costs of caring for unadoptable Katrina animals

In spite of many difficulties, the Humane Society of Louisiana has survived against the odds in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Although we lost our shelter, we have slowly but steadily been rebuilding our organization's infrastructure and are prepared to serve the animals and citizens of Louisiana for another 20 years and beyond.