

**ANIMAL OUTREACH of CAPE MAY COUNTY, INC.,
BUILDING UPDATE AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Animal Outreach has been asked recently about its goal of building a shelter on its land in Lower Township. The organization's Board of Directors would like to provide an update, but first a brief history of what has brought us to this point is necessary.

In the late 1990s, Animal Outreach decided to build a shelter because the need for this service in the community was so great. At that time, there was no County Shelter - no facility whatsoever to help alleviate the problem of abandoned and homeless animals. Our organization stepped up with a plan to build a facility that would address that need. Fortunately, within a few years of our decision, a facility was opened by the county to address these needs, and a lot of that pressure was relieved. The enormous problem of animal homelessness in the county remained, however, and there was reason for us to continue to pursue a new building.

For many years, we operated out of a small trailer. In 2007, tragedy struck when a fire destroyed that trailer and all of the cats inside perished. The outpouring from the community was overwhelmingly supportive. Funds were received to be used for purposes of creating a shelter. In the months that followed, the organization purchased a piece of land in Lower Township that it planned to use to construct a building. We continued our pursuit with the pro-bono help of two architects to create designs. Within a few years, we put the project out for bid. When the sealed building bids for the project were opened, we discovered that the cost of building on our parcel was cost prohibitive. With estimates at near one million dollars or more, the cost far exceeded what we could expect the community to support through private donations. We had potential support from the USDA, but, unfortunately, that help would have been by way of a loan that needed to be repaid with interest.

Several challenges existed with the land we purchased. There were environmental concerns, there was a limited footprint on which to construct a shelter, a lack of utilities, and there were several regulations we needed to consider when designing a building. After much discussion and many meetings, the Board decided that the land purchased was, unfortunately, not workable for a building project.

In 2012, while nearing a determination that we were not able to utilize our land, we took the interim step of opening a temporary Adoption Center. This has turned out to be a viable solution that has worked for three years and continues to be very beneficial to both the organization and the community. At this Adoption Center, we have found homes for more than 300 animals, and, more importantly, we have learned firsthand what is financially and physically required to operate a facility. What we did not anticipate, but were grateful to discover, is that having a visible "storefront" setting rather than a shelter in a less-noticeable area is a huge asset. Many local and out-of-town visitors come in to see the animals simply because they see our window. It's a very warm and welcoming atmosphere, and people are able to enjoy the animals as they safely play and roam throughout the center. We are certain that this plays a large part in the success of our adoption rate. The lesson was invaluable, and the positive effects are growing.

Right now, we are planning to sell the land that we own in Lower Township. The lesson we learned about the visibility of our current Adoption Center location, along with the overwhelming hurdles associated with that particular property, has led us to the decision to sell that parcel. We have not abandoned the hope of one day building the shelter, but our recent focus has been on increasing the

success of our new storefront shelter and Adoption Center. It is important that we remain focused on addressing the problem of homelessness and that we stay flexible in the way we best address that issue.

Animal Outreach has always been and will continue to be committed to financial accountability and stewardship with the donations entrusted to us. There is currently about \$163,000 in equity or cash that is earmarked for a shelter and adoption center. We have a successful storefront shelter and Adoption Center in full operation. We invite the public to visit our storefront at 600 Park Boulevard in West Cape May to see how well we are serving the county by sheltering and adopting the most vulnerable members of our community. In the future, we may need to officially abandon the plan to build our own facility. At that time and as we have always done, we, the volunteer leaders of Animal Outreach, will make sure that the collected funds for this project are handled properly. Donors of the funds to the building project can review our IRS 990 form at any time to consider our reallocation funds if that time comes. Of course, any donor can contact us about any donation they've given to Animal Outreach. The latest 990 filing can be found on our website: www.aocmc.org.

We are extremely grateful for every dollar given to the organization, and we're dedicated to using those donations responsibly. We work under the auspices of independent bookkeeping and accounting firms to manage our interactions and ensure accountability. We are in good standing with the NJ Department of Consumer Affairs, Charitable Registration Section, and we are current with all of our tax filings and other required documentation.

We are excited by the success we have achieved with our Adoption Center, and we look forward to expansion in the future. We remain committed to our original goal of alleviating animal homelessness. As an organization run almost entirely by volunteers, we have always managed our Adoption Center with integrity, good stewardship, and a passion for saving lives. We have a new business model in the storefront that has proven successful in placing animals in forever homes, and the community loves and supports it. We will continue to operate the storefront until a viable and reasonably priced shelter plan becomes an option as we seek to expand. We deeply appreciate the support and commitment we have had and continue to receive from our community.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Animal Outreach of Cape May County

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