



Our Companions Animal Sanctuary
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Fall 2006

Our Companions Quarterly

Can You Dig It?

Our Companions Celebrates Groundbreaking in Ashford

By Susan Linker, CEO, Our Companions

YES - the big day has arrived! On August 23, 2006, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary held a groundbreaking ceremony to officially announce the start of the first phase of construction of a pet resource center and animal sanctuary in Ashford, CT. Hosted by the always funny Damon Scott, radio personality from 96.5 WTIC-FM, the event included a real-life canine construction crew along with a group of committed volunteers and donors.

We announced details about the project including the unveiling of architectural renderings and the overall site plan. The Honorable Congressman Rob Simmons, Representative Diana Urban and Representative Pam Sawyer also spoke to the crowd, lending their support.



Sasha can dig it! Sasha was among several dogs who formed our canine construction crew.

Not to be upstaged by Damon Scott, who was dressed as a dog, WFSB Channel 3's Scot Haney appeared as our secret celebrity spokes-cat. Noting the lack of felines in attendance at the event, Haney lead the crowd of more than one hundred human supporters in a delectable toast of Dog Drool Soda while chanting: "Cats rule! Dogs drool!"

The groundbreaking was possible due in part to a very special group of donors who have contributed approximately \$130,000 in gifts and pledges as part of the Home for Good Capital Campaign which was launched earlier this year.

The first phase of construction is scheduled to begin this fall and will include the demolition of massive factory-style chicken coops which remain from the land's prior use as an industrial egg farm. After demolition, the outdoor recreational center will be constructed. This will include a dog park, reflection gardens, interpretative hiking trails, nature preserve, bird observation area, and pond-side picnicking.

Also included in Phase One is the construction of a Pet Resource Center. This multi-use facility will offer life-saving services including low-cost dog training and behavioral modification programs, high-volume free sterilization for feral cats, adoption center and an education center that can seat up to 500 people. The Resource Center will also be the site of regular events that include Adopt-A-Thons and other community educational programs.

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No Pet Should Ever Be Homeless

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Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, a nonprofit organization, is a leader in the movement to end the unnecessary euthanasia of pets in Connecticut.

Our Companions Celebrates Groundbreaking (Cont.)

Phases Two and Three will include the animal housing components where homeless pets at risk of being destroyed will be transferred to the sanctuary for rehabilitation and adoption. To learn more about our plans and how you can get involved, please see page three.



Marie Joyner, Our Companions Chief Operating Officer, 96.5 WTIC FM's Damon Scott, Representative Diana Urban, Congressman Rob Simmons, Representative Pam Sawyer, WFSB Channel 3's Scot Haney and Susan Linker, Our Companions Chief Executive Officer.

"The goal is to create a destination for pets and animal lovers," says Gail Perkins, a Board member of Our Companions and donor to the Capital Campaign. "Beyond its function of saving animals, sanctuaries attract people who want to become involved in animal welfare, but find the high-stress environment of traditional shelters too depressing. The sanctuary will be a beautiful place that will mobilize pet-minded people and save countless animals."

Congressman Rob Simmons added, "As a proud pet-parent of four beautiful dogs, I am so happy to see animal welfare improving in Connecticut. This project will certainly be a wonderful resource for people and animals – what a more perfect location than the beautiful northeast corner."

More photos of the event are on pages 4-5. Visit us on-line at www.ourcompanions.org for even more photos.

Crickett's Fund To Cover Veterinary Care

Crickett spent the first nine years of her life tied to a tree, often with no food or water in her bowl. Every day she would watch as her owners showered love on another dog who, unlike her, shared a special place inside their home. Shunning Crickett was cruel enough, but her "family" had one final insult in store. Rather than take Crickett with them when they moved to a new house, they had plans to euthanize her.

A neighbor discovered their plans and called Our Companions immediately. Sue King, one of Our Companions' animal welfare professionals, became involved and after observing her neglected condition, rushed Crickett to a veterinary clinic for a thorough examination. She was diagnosed with Lyme Disease, heartworm, and other parasites – all highly treatable, but prohibitively expensive for some owners and potential adoptive families.

Touched by Crickett's story and motivated by Sue King's devotion to this sweet dog, several generous animal lovers took collections at their businesses to defray the cost of her treatment. One young fundraiser, Briana Baillargeon, contributed her own allowance and went door-to-door asking neighbors for their assistance. These kind souls raised over \$1,000 for Crickett's care.

Never before had Crickett known the kind of love she was capable of creating because she had never been allowed any contact with humans. Out of her need, she was finally exposed to people who cared, and her love spread to strangers who had never even met her. Crickett is now recovering at the home of a loving foster parent. Despite having been deprived of companionship and the basics of medical care, Crickett walked into her foster parents' home as if she was meant to be there – finally part of a family.

We know there are many more pets like Crickett. In order to help bring happy endings to their stories, Our Companions has created an emergency care fund in her honor. Crickett's Fund will pay for much needed veterinary care for neglected or unwanted pets – the first step on their road to recovery.

Crickett is still looking for a forever home. If you can offer her the love and companionship that has been denied her for so long, please contact Sue King at sue@ourcompanions.org.



Crickett relaxing in her foster home - finally inside and loving it.

Spot's Bark Mitzvah Benefits Our Companions



Spot and some of his favorite toys.

As Spot approached the age of thirteen, his human companions Sharon Sklar and Sam Petillo wanted to celebrate his momentous achievement. After all, thirteen in dog years is almost 70 years for a human. If Spot were a human boy, he would celebrate his Bar Mitzvah at thirteen - so why not a Bark Mitzvah?

As is customary with a Bar Mitzvah, Spot had to complete a project and he selected to give to those less fortunate than he - the homeless, neglected and abused animals that Our Companions seeks to help. Sharon and Sam invited friends and family over to celebrate and Spot asked that instead of gifts for him, the guests should make a donation to Our Companions.

As Spot explains in his letter to the guests, "I want for nothing...I want to raise awareness of homeless and abused animals that are sometimes euthanized because no one has the time to help, train or love them. Our Companions is a no-kill sanctuary that is to be built on lots of land in Ashford, CT..They will house, retrain and place adoptable dogs and cats and care for those who are sick or unadoptable. There will be a groomer, trainers and a dog park. This will cost big bucks and will be a showplace for humanity. Instead of bringing me a toy, please consider making a donation in honor of my Bark Mitzvah. I am truly one of the lucky ones."

This one act of kindness from Spot and his humans raised over \$500 for Our Companions. Thanks, Spot!

As animal lovers, we know events celebrating or involving our pets are nothing new. But what if you could turn that next event into something positive for pets in-need? Next time you're thinking of hosting an event or having a party, think of Spot and his gift to Our Companions. Here are some ways you can include Our Companions in your daily life and celebrations:

- **Wedding.** Instead of handing out party favors, make a gift in honor of your wedding guests to Our Companions.
- **Tag Sale.** Sell your unwanted household items and donate the proceeds to Our Companions. And while you're at it, set up a table with literature about Our Companions and take extra donations.
- **Social event/cocktail hour.** Host a cocktail party/barbecue/picnic or luncheon. Have local businesses provide food for free or reduced cost and charge guests a door fee.
- **Work.** Ask your boss if you can have a dress-down day. Charge each person a certain amount of money to dress casually that day. You can also ask for a day off to raffle, with ticket proceeds benefiting Our Companions.
- **Pet Social.** Who doesn't love a dog in a Halloween costume? Invite your friends and their pets to a Halloween party or to a dog playgroup in someone's fenced-in back yard, charging admission.

Website Gets Face-lift

If you haven't been to our website in a while, be sure to check it out soon at www.ourcompanions.org.

The look has been updated and we've added many new features to make it more interactive and easier for you or your friends and family to become involved. Some of the highlights include:

- Volunteer page with descriptions of volunteer opportunities.
- An expanded rescue outreach section for pets in need.
- Improved giving section including an easy way to donate on-line.
- Easy sign-up for updates and our newsletter.

The site is regularly updated with the latest news, events and animals available through our rescue outreach. Check back often.



2nd Annual Dogman Classic Raises Over \$16,000

The 2nd annual Dogman Classic golf tournament was held on August 11, 2006, at Blackledge Country Club in Hebron, CT. Thanks to our golfers, sponsors and raffle participants, Our Companions was able to raise over \$16,000, surpassing not only the money raised last year but our goal for this year. These funds will help us continue to offer lifesaving programs such as behavioral training, low-cost spaying and neutering and emergency care to pets in need.

Thank you to all the golfers and volunteers for making it a successful day. We'd also like to extend a special thank you to all the corporate sponsors and businesses, listed below.

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John Gagnon's Pet Resort

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Liberty Bank
Orthopedic Associates of Hartford
Toyota of Colchester
Veterinary Specialists of Connecticut



Above (L to R): Golfers Christopher Morris, Michael Patroske, Mark Poisson, and Andrew Power.



Above (L to R): Our Companions volunteers Mara McDonald and Debby Sweeney.



Above (L to R): Lauren Banda and Corporate Sponsor Deb Prior of Inspired Gardens & Landscapes.



Above (L to R): Scot Haney and Damon Scott. Below: A personal sponsor tee sign.



Above (L to R): Tournament Sponsors Sherry and John Gagnon of John Gagnon's Pet Resort.



Above: A golfer surveys the raffle prizes.

Beyond the Groundbreaking

The groundbreaking ceremony was a momentous event for Our Companions, a symbol of all the good that will come from the creation of a resource center and animal sanctuary. It is our mission to end the euthanasia of healthy pets in Connecticut. With your help, Our Companions will achieve this goal by providing low-cost training services that prevent the need for shelters, creating partnerships with other animal welfare groups, and ultimately creating the sanctuary that will provide home-like housing for animals that need a home until they can be adopted.

We are so pleased to have come this far, but much more is needed. The groundbreaking was just a part of a much larger goal to raise \$15 million over the next ten years, our Home for Good Capital Campaign. Over the 10-year period, Our Companions has identified three phases of the Home for Good Capital Campaign. The phase approach will allow us to begin using the land as soon as possible to deliver our services to the community.

Phase 1 - Comprehensive Resource Center, Dog Park and Nature Preserve

The first phase of the Home for Good campaign is the most critical as it establishes the lifesaving preventive services that are inherent to our mission and will provide the foundation for the future sanctuary.



Artist's rendering of Resource Center to be built in Phase One of construction.

The Comprehensive Resource Center will be the heart of the future sanctuary. As a multi-purpose space, the Resource Center will give us the flexibility to do what we do best: offer creative programs that address the most urgent needs facing our companion animals. Whether it's organizing high-volume feral cat "Spay Days," holding low-cost training classes for dogs with behavioral problems, leading a humane education program for children, or hosting Adopt-A-Thons, the space will accommodate a variety of activities. In addition, the versatile 500-person capacity facility will also serve as a meeting space for community organizations.

Phase 2 - Dog and Cat Housing, Bistro and Grooming

The second phase of the campaign will construct the sanctuary village of specially-designed cat "condos" and dog housing and will include a bistro where visitors can gather for a light meal.

Phase 3 - Adoption Center, Administrative Building and Guest Housing

The final phase of the campaign will include the construction of a central administration building, an adoption facility and overnight accommodations for visiting guests.

Leave a Legacy for Pets

Please consider the work of Our Companions when you are planning your will. Your gift will provide care, love and programs for pets in need far into the future. To learn how you can support Our Companions with a gift in your will, please contact Mary Lawrence at (860) 242-9999, ext. 2 or mary@ourcompanions.org.



Groundbreaking Ceremony Photos



Representative Rob Simmons and John Gagnon of John Gagnon's Pet Resort.



Left: Chloe posing for photographer. Right: Representative Diana Urban addresses the audience. Below: Thurston shows off his belly.



Above: Our Companions volunteer and Board Member, Paula Fischer. Below: WFSB Channel 3's Scot Haney reveals himself as "the cat."



Above: Our Companions Chief Operating Officer Marie Joyner and Star. Below: Carol Fritz offers some water to Pirate.



Above: (L to R): Jessica Greenebaum and Gracie.



Above: Lyle couldn't wait to get started digging.



Below (L to R): Our Companions Chief Operating Officer, Marie Joyner, Chief Executive Officer, Susan Linker and Representative Pam Sawyer.

