Building Better Housing for Dogs

Dogs live and play together in new habitat prototype.
As I write this, spring is in the air — and innovation is blooming at Animal Humane Society.

In this issue of Animal Tracks, we’re excited to share stories about two exciting new projects that demonstrate our commitment to providing the best possible care to animals in need.

In Golden Valley, we’re opening a new habitat prototype that will transform the way we care for dogs in our shelters.

Dogs, like people, are social animals, and housing them in solitary kennels in environments that are flooded with sensory information — like the smells and sounds of other dogs — contributes to stress and anxiety.

That’s why we’re developing new housing that allows dogs to socialize, play, and show off their personality to potential adopters. The habitat prototype includes private areas where dogs can take a break and shared spaces that encourage dogs to interact with each other and potential adopters in a more natural, inviting setting.

We’re starting out small, but what we learn in this space will shape our plans for future dog housing at AHS.

Across the river in St. Paul, another exciting endeavor is taking root. In April, we purchased a building on University Avenue that will eventually house a new veterinary clinic and community program center serving Frogtown, East St. Paul, and surrounding communities.

Our existing outreach efforts help thousands of people and pets every year, and a new place to deliver services and care year-round will help us support even more.

These new initiatives are all part of our efforts to advance our mission — to engage the hearts, hands, and minds of the community to help animals.

Our work is as vital today as it’s ever been — and your support makes it all possible. On behalf of the animals and people we serve, I extend my gratitude.

Best,

Janelle Dixon, President & CEO
Animal Humane Society’s outreach programs support the health and well-being of animals in Twin Cities communities where poverty is high, resources are scarce, and affordable pet care services are limited. Since 2013 these programs have supported thousands of pets and families in Frogtown and East St. Paul by hosting wellness clinics at community parks and shuttling animals to our Kindest Cut clinic in Golden Valley.

But that’s about to change. In April AHS purchased a 10,000 square-foot building on University Avenue in St. Paul that will eventually house outreach programs and a new veterinary clinic in the heart of these underserved communities.

This new facility will help AHS fill a vital need in an area with few pet resources. “The people in these communities love their pets,” says Kathy Mock, chief government affairs and community engagement officer at AHS. “One of the biggest barriers they face is the lack of access to affordable veterinary care. This new clinic and program center will make a huge difference.”

Creating a permanent presence also demonstrates our commitment to these communities, says Mock. “We want people to know that we’re here to stay.” The building — at 1159 University Avenue West — is located a block from the Lexington Avenue transit station. It includes off-street parking and ample space for training classes, educational programs, and office space in addition to a clinic. AHS will renovate and occupy the building in stages. Starting later this year, it will be home to our outreach team as well as pet training classes and educational programs. The veterinary clinic will open later, after AHS has raised funds to renovate and build out the clinic space.

AHS is also in the early stages of planning for a new St. Paul adoption campus to replace our aging shelter in Como Park. We’ll share more about both of these exciting projects as our plans take shape.

Puppy day at the capital

Transportation, public safety and taxes are just a few of the topics members of the Minnesota Legislature debated in the 2018 session. But all the tough talk came to a halt when some fluffy, four-legged constituents came to the state capitol for a visit this past March. Five Bichon/Poodle puppies took over a room at the State Office Building to call attention to the importance of companion animals in Minnesota.

“We thought this would be a great way to give lawmakers a break from their work and a chance to meet some of our wonderful animals that need homes,” says Kathy Mock, chief government affairs and community engagement officer at Animal Humane Society. Nearly 200 people came to the event, including legislators from both political parties. It was a chance to showcase the bond between humans and animals, and introduce AHS to state leaders. Several AHS veterinarians also spent time talking about their work.

“Our mission is to engage the hearts and minds of the community, so reaching out to state leaders is important,” says Mock. “It’s crucial they know pets are family to most Minnesotans, and animal laws have the ability to influence their constituents.” Minnesota legislators are currently discussing a bill that would end euthanasia by gas chamber in animal shelters. AHS does not use gas chambers and, along with 24 other Minnesota shelters, supports the bill to ban them. Currently, 27 states have full or partial bans on the use of gas chambers for euthanasia.

“We thought this would be a great way to give lawmakers a break from their work and a chance to meet some of our wonderful animals that need homes.”

New AHS veterinary clinic and community program center will help pets in need

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Like so many twins, Heather Swanson and her sister Kirsten were born with a lot of similarities: the same nose, same smile, same magnetic personality, and a deep love and respect for animals.

“It wasn’t much of a surprise when Heather chose [former Price is Right host] Bob Barker as her hero for a school project,” says their father, Brad Swanson. “They understood the importance of his spay/neuter message, and spread that message wherever they could.”

Both sisters became active in animal rights issues, starting advocacy work as early as 11 years old. Heather volunteered at or helped financially support feline rescue organizations in all the places she lived, including Florida, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Their passion for animals was evident throughout their lives, and is now, even after their passing.

Heather was studying veterinary medicine when her sister Kirsten died at the young age of 33. Fourteen years later, a seizure would take Heather’s life at age 47.

Prior to her death, the twins’ parents had created a trust in Heather’s name. Heather had asked that if anything should ever happen to her, the trust be donated to an animal welfare organization. “When I found out AHS performed spay/neuter surgery, I was thrilled,” says Dawn, mother of the twins. “That is something Heather always felt so passionately about.”

The Swanson trust will fund nearly 2,500 sterilization surgeries for stray cats, helping AHS reduce the population of unwanted felines. By planning her legacy, Heather is now the hero she so revered as a young child.

Petunia's journey

**FROM SUFFERING STRAY TO AWE-INSPIRING AMBASSADOR**

Love comes in all shapes, sizes, colors, and faces. At Animal Humane Society, we celebrate those differences — because what makes us unique makes us beautiful.

Petunia is proof of that. She arrived at AHS in terrible pain, suffering from severely infected ears and eyes. A Stillwater police officer found this sweet bulldog wandering the streets and brought her to our Woodbury shelter for help. Our veterinary staff rushed to her aid, cleaning her infections and working to determine the best course of action. After examining her ears closely, it was clear there was too much damage in her inner ear canals and both ears would have to be removed. Within days, delicate surgery was done and Petunia went to foster care for recovery.

Less than two months later, Chad and Trisha Severson adopted Petunia and couldn’t be more in love with the adorable, earless bulldog. It’s clear her disability is not affecting her quality of life. Since her adoption in February, Petunia has been an ambassador for AHS at events like Whisker Whirl and the Walk for Animals. And her sweet face and gentle demeanor shined through during our WCCO-TV telethon, where Petunia and her family shared her journey live on air — inspiring viewers to donate nearly $15,000 to AHS within minutes of hearing her story.

Petunia is just one of the thousands of wonderful animals with special needs who come through our doors hoping to find loving homes. Her family says they intend to keep sharing her sweet girl’s story to spread the word about AHS’s lifesaving work.

See a video about Petunia and her journey at animalhumanesociety.org/petunia

A lifetime of love and a legacy for cats

If you're interested in leaving a legacy that helps make the world a safer, more loving place for companion animals, visit animalhumanesociety.org/legacy
It started small — a boots-on-the-ground effort that we knew would take time. Five years later, the impact of Animal Humane Society’s Community Outreach program is far reaching, and continues to grow.

The outreach program, which serves low-income families living in Frogtown and East St. Paul, will host eight wellness clinics in 2018, both indoor and outdoor. These events offer free wellness exams, vaccines, nail trims, spay/neuter appointment scheduling, guidance from the behavior team at AHS and St. Paul Animal Control, free pet food, and more.

“We meet people where they’re at through a large presence in the community — offering services in multiple languages, and creative problem solving when our clients reach out about hardships they face as pet owners,” Community Outreach Coordinator Molly Budke says. 

“Over half of our staff live in, or very near the communities we work in,” Budke says. “We respond to feedback about the accessibility of our program, so clients know we understand the area, and we’re here to stay.”

This important work will continue to thrive, thanks in part, to PetSmart Charities. This year, AHS was awarded a $50,000 grant from PetSmart Charities to fund spay/neuter services in underserved communities. This grant will help reduce the population of unwanted animals and allows us to make an even bigger impact for families and pets in need.

Did you know you can donate your vehicle to support Animal Humane Society? If you donate your car, truck, SUV, or motorcycle by December 31, 2018, you may qualify for a tax deduction. We’ll handle the process from start to finish, and give you a tax receipt when we come to pick up your vehicle.

Get started on your donation today at animalhumanesociety.org/vehicle
This spring was one of the busiest for AHS’s humane investigations and animal care staff. Our Critical Response Team was sent all across the state of Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin, helping remove dogs, cats, rabbits, goats, ducks, and even chickens from abuse and neglect.

AHS is the only animal welfare organization in Minnesota with full-time humane investigators, and last year they received more than 1,700 reports of possible animal cruelty. The two humane agents — Keith Streff and Wade Hanson — worked in 62 counties with local law enforcement officials and addressed nearly 450 cases involving nearly 5,500 animals.

One particular rescue mission got the attention of several major media outlets and animal lovers across Minnesota. In March, 41 Chihuahuas were removed from a single family home in Carlton County. The dogs, living in cramped, unsanitary conditions, ranged in age from six weeks to 10 years.

The couple who owned the animals told Agent Hanson that the situation “just got out of hand.” They started with two animals who were not spayed and neutered, which led to puppies who grew up and had more litters. Because the couple didn’t have the resources to spay and neuter their dogs, which were mostly healthy, Carlton County authorities and AHS investigators decided not to file criminal charges.

Authorities are allowing the couple to keep four of their Chihuahuas on the condition all are sterilized. Going forward, Agent Hanson will pay them periodic visits to make sure they don’t fall back into the same situation.

In April, a case in Fillmore County resulted in the seizure of 33 rabbits, four dogs, seven cats, and a goat, also found living in unsanitary conditions. Because AHS only cares for companion animals, (dogs, cats, rabbits, and critters) the goat was sent to a rescue partner who specializes in farm animals. Most of the other animals from this case recuperated in our care and have since been adopted.

Other cases involved dozens of dogs and more rabbits. Agent Hanson believes that in many of these situations, the people involved love their pets — they just don’t have the ability to care for multiple animals and may often suffer from mental illness.

While at AHS, every animal seized in a humane investigations case receives medical and behavioral care and individualized attention from our staff. Most find new homes through our adoption program or, in some cases, a local rescue partner. Humane investigations can be some of the most difficult work we do, both emotionally and physically, but it’s equally rewarding. The work provides the helpless and voiceless a fresh start.

Minnesota Twins pitcher gives back

A huge animal lover, new Minnesota Twins pitcher Jake Odorizzi has pledged to donate $50 to Animal Humane Society for every strikeout he throws this season. He offered the generous gesture when he came to AHS for a tour, where he visited adoptable animals.

On top of that offer, the Minnesota Twins promised to match Odorizzi’s donation at the end of the season. “We’re Midwesterners originally and it’s great to be back in that atmosphere of good wholehearted people and animal lovers,” says Odorizzi. “It’s great to see so many people giving back and volunteering their time to animals in need.”

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Walk through any animal shelter in the United States, and you’re sure to see a similar sight: rows of dogs in individual kennels. It’s the traditional model for housing canines — one that animal welfare organizations have long viewed as the only practical option.

Shelters have housed cats together in colony rooms for many years, but fear of fighting and disease has led shelter managers to keep dogs separated from one another. But what if it didn’t have to be that way? What if dogs — who are naturally social — could live in groups during their shelter stay?

Animal Humane Society President and CEO Janelle Dixon is determined to find a way.

Traditional shelter housing can cause fear and distress in dogs because it doesn’t necessarily allow them to express their natural behaviors, says Dixon. “Dogs are social animals, and it’s very stressful for them to hear and smell other dogs without being able to see or interact with them,” she adds.

As AHS begins planning for a new St. Paul shelter to replace the aging facility in Como Park, Dixon sees an opportunity to experiment in the way shelters care for dogs. “We want to make sure our future facility will represent the best way to house dogs.”

No other animal welfare organization we’re aware of has successfully conquered this challenge, says Dixon. Last year she and other AHS leaders visited shelters throughout the country to survey innovations in animal housing. They were disappointed to find facility after facility with limited advances — often dressed up with more attractive materials.

“No one was doing anything different,” says Dixon. A few of the newer shelters were designed with kennels that opened up into dog play areas, but no one had fully embraced a new model for housing.

According to Dixon, ideal housing must fully support the Five Freedoms for animals:

- Freedom from hunger or thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury, or disease
- Freedom to express normal behavior
- Freedom from fear and distress

Embraced by veterinarians and other animal welfare professionals, the Five Freedoms were established to ensure that animals are protected from unnecessary suffering.

Traditional shelter housing can’t always fully support the fourth and fifth freedoms — especially when it comes to canines. That’s why Dixon has proposed this new model for housing dogs — one that’s being built and tested at AHS in Golden Valley.

HABITAT DESIGN

In January, construction began on a new group housing prototype for dogs — the first of its kind in the nation. “This space will allow us to explore new ways to enrich the experience of dogs in our care and new ways for dogs to interact with each other and potential adopters,” says Dixon. “Our goal is to provide housing that allows dogs to socialize and play together, with private areas where they can go when they need a break.”

AHS has renovated space in its Golden Valley site to build the habitat prototype, which features shared living space for up to six dogs with individual dens.
space for up to six dogs with individual dens for meals and rest. It opens to the public in June.

Dixon knows there are no guarantees for success in the project, but believes the benefits far outweigh the risks. “We are making no assumptions. There’s been little to no research about dogs living together in a shelter environment and literally nothing on how to design such a space.”

Anne Johnson, director of shelter services, was tasked with managing the project. It was her duty to bring the best and brightest minds together to make the dog habitat a reality. She gathered leaders from AHS’s veterinary and behavioral teams as well as experts in animal care and customer service to determine what is needed to create the ideal space and what types of dogs would best interact in a playgroup.

Of course, the space has to be great for people, too. It was designed so that shelter visitors can enter the habitat with guidance from AHS staff and volunteers. “It has to be two spaces in one — one that’s ideal for the dogs and welcoming to potential adopters. The goal is for adopters to be immersed in the dogs’ environment instead of the other way around. You’re more likely to experience a dog’s true personality that way,” says Johnson.

AHS hired HGA Architects to assist with the design of the project. The Minneapolis firm had never built shelter housing for animals, but Rich Bonnin, lead architect on the habitat prototype, has extensive experience building hospitals.

Bonnin says the project has been more complicated — and rewarding — than he anticipated. “From an architectural standpoint, it’s a little bit funky. Not only does it have to appeal to dogs and people, but it also has to be durable and easy to clean.” AHS is testing different types of materials in the space to see what works best. Everything from lighting and airflow to door handles and hinges will be evaluated over the next couple of years. “It feels like an adventure,” says Bonnin. “As an architect, I’m trying to predict the future. I’m wondering, ‘Could this become a standard for the future in animal sheltering design?’”

**DOG BEHAVIOR IN THE HABITAT PROTOTYPE**

With all of the obvious benefits, why hasn’t this model been tried before? According to Dr. Graham Brayshaw, director of animal services and chief veterinarian at AHS, shelters have kept dogs separated from one another because they fear dog fights and the possibility of a dog biting a person during rough play.

Those risks can be mitigated, says Brayshaw, and the potential benefits are tremendous. “The best place for any dog or cat is in a home, but while they’re in our care, enriched housing like the habitat or a colony room is the next best thing.” It’s especially important for animals who have a longer stay in shelter, he says.

While the habitat prototype was under construction, AHS staff and volunteers began evaluating interactions using shelter animals in a mockup of the space. The initial results have been positive — after each play session dogs show less stress and undesirable behavior in the adoption center. “In shelters, stress is tied to disease. Keeping stress levels down helps prevent diseases, which keeps our animals healthy and adoptable,” notes Brayshaw.

The habitat prototype is designed to house up to six dogs, but the actual number will depend on the size and personalities of the dogs. A team led by Behavior Modification and Rehabilitation Manager Liv Hagen has been training staff and volunteers to recognize dog behavior signals, teaching them what’s appropriate behavior and what isn’t. At least one staff member and one volunteer will be present in the habitat whenever the dogs are together.

“We’re teaching people basic dog language. For example, what’s an appropriate greeting? We’re looking for relaxed ears and butt sniffing that forms half circles,” says Hagen. Hagen and her team are already learning how dogs react to each other in the space — and how much play time is ideal.

“So far, most dogs need a break after about 20 minutes of play,” notes Hagen. During those breaks, dogs will be in their individual dens, where they will get personal enrichment with puzzles, games, and one-on-one time with volunteers. Adopters will be welcome in the space during both playtime and breaks.

Hagen and her team are also preparing staff to respond to aggressive behavior. “Dogs typically show signs of aggression before they act, so we’re
training staff and volunteers to recognize those signs and respond in a way that keeps everyone safe.”

AHS is also testing technology in the space, including digital information screens and 360-degree cameras that will stream live video to the AHS website.

AN EXCITING FUTURE

Leaders at AHS hope what they learn from the habitat prototype will shape future housing at AHS and in shelters everywhere. To that end, every aspect of the project is being documented by Dr. Terri Zborowsky, a University of Minnesota researcher with expertise in how people and animals use buildings. Zborowsky will help staff apply scientific methods to more than 70 questions shelter and animal experts want to answer about the project. The researcher will document everything so other animal welfare organizations can learn from the experience as well.

“We’ll keep asking questions,” says Dixon. “There’s so much to learn.”

Meanwhile, excitement is building in Golden Valley, as crowds gather to watch dogs romp and play during training sessions in the habitat, which opens to the public this summer, once staff and volunteers are adept at managing dogs in the space.

Dixon is excited, too — both about this groundbreaking work and the community support that makes it possible. “Together we’re making the world a better place for animals.”

The habitat prototype opens to the public in June. You can access the habitat’s doggie cams at animalhumanesociety.org/habitat.

The Five Freedoms

The Five Freedoms are internationally accepted standards of care that affirm every living being’s right to humane treatment. These standards were developed by Britain’s Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1965 and adapted by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians for companion animals in shelters.

The Five Freedoms ensure that we meet the mental and physical needs of animals in our care:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst** by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor. This must be specific to the animal. For example, puppies, adult dogs, pregnant cats, and senior cats all need different types of food provided on different schedules.

2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area. This means you should provide soft bedding and an area with appropriate temperature, noise levels, and access to natural light. If an animal is outside, it must have shelter from the elements as well as appropriate food and water bowls that will not freeze or tip over.

3. **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment. This includes vaccinating animals, monitoring animals’ physical health, treating any injuries and providing appropriate medications.

4. **Freedom to express normal behavior** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animal’s own kind. Animals need to be able to interact with — or avoid — others of their own kind as desired. They must be able to stretch every part of their body (from nose to tail), and run, jump, and play. This can be particularly challenging when animals are housed in individual kennels.

5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering. The mental health of an animal is just as important as its physical health — as psychological stress can quickly transition into physical illness. These conditions can be achieved by preventing overcrowding and providing sufficient enrichment and safe hiding spaces.

Embracing the Five Freedoms supports the health and welfare of the animals in our care and provides adopters with the best possible insight into their personalities.
Together, we raised nearly $1 million to help animals in our community get the second chances they deserve. Every dollar contributed helps Animal Humane Society provide lifesaving treatment and compassionate care to the 23,000 animals that come through our doors each year. Thank you for supporting animals and Animal Humane Society.

Thousands of animal lovers and their pets came together to donate, walk, and celebrate, making the 2018 Walk for Animals a monumental success!
There's no place like home

There is nothing we love more than reading updates about animals adopted from Animal Humane Society. We are thrilled to hear about their new lives and see how happy (and spoiled) they are in their new homes.

Visit animalhumanesociety.org/happytails and prepare to have your heart warmed!

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Trudy is almost 9 years old and has had a pretty rough life. She is no stranger to Animal Humane Society as she has been there several times over the years and has spent time in many different homes. You would expect a cat who was once a stray to be a bit timid, shy, and skittish. Trudy is none of the above!

The moment I got her home she bounced right out of her box to explore her new surroundings and snuggled up to me within 30 minutes of arriving home. She is so affectionate, loving, patient, and calm.

Finding Trudy has been absolutely life changing for me and I am happy to say she has finally found her forever home.

— Katie
Our Services

Adoption
Visit the cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, and small critters available for adoption at our four locations.

Humane investigations
Our humane agents work with law enforcement officers and respond to thousands of reports of animal neglect and cruelty each year.

Lost and found pets
Post missing or found pets or view stray animals in our care on our online lost and found bulletin board.

Low-cost spay/neuter and wellness
High-quality, low-cost sterilization, dental, and wellness services are provided to pets of people in need through our Kindest Cut mobile surgical unit and at Melissa Animal Clinic in Golden Valley.

Microchip and nail clinics
Microchip and nail trim clinics are offered monthly at our four locations.

Outreach
AHS offers free or low-cost animal services that empower low-income pet owners and improve the lives of pets in underserved communities.

Pet boarding
We offer peace of mind pet boarding at Animal House in Golden Valley and at Now Boarding near the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport.

Pet food and supplies
Stock up on all your pet needs — from Purina One® dog and cat food and treats and Tidy Cats® litter, to collars, leashes, toys, and grooming supplies. Available for purchase at all four AHS locations.

Pet Helpline
Our free Pet Helpline at 952-HELP-PET will connect you to caring, compassionate advice and resources for whatever animal issues you may be experiencing.

Pet loss
Humane euthanasia and cremation services are available to the public, and a pet loss support group is offered on Monday evenings in Golden Valley.

Pet training
Think you can’t teach your dog new tricks? Think again! We offer more than 100 classes a week in Coon Rapids, Golden Valley, Woodbury, and at Now Boarding.

Surrender
Companion animals may be surrendered by appointment at any of our four open admission locations. We provide a safe refuge for thousands of animals each year and no animal is ever turned away. Appointments are required. 952-HELP-PET (952-435-7738)

Tours
Tours of our facilities are available by appointment. Maximum group size varies by location.

Youth programs
We offer fun, educational experiences for kids who love animals, including camps, scout programs, story hours, and more.

Ways to Give

Donate
AHS relies on the generosity of individuals like you to care for thousands of animals every year. Your donation helps provide food, shelter, medical care, and most importantly, the love animals deserve while they await happy new homes.

Become a Sustainer
By making an ongoing monthly gift, you’re providing a reliable source of funding that enables AHS to help animals all year long. Sustaining gifts are an easy and convenient way to make a big impact every month.

Match your gift
Many companies match their employees’ charitable donations. Double your contribution through a matching gift from your employer.

Make a memorial or tribute gift
Remember or honor a loved one with a memorial or tribute donation.

Leave a legacy
Make a lasting impact on animals by including AHS in your will or estate plan.

Contribute to our wish list
With more than 23,000 animals to care for every year, AHS needs a substantial amount of supplies. You can donate needed items any time.

Donate a vehicle
Donate your car to care for animals in need. Your vehicle will be towed free of charge and you’ll be eligible for a tax deduction.

Volunteer
Help make the world a more humane place for animals by volunteering with AHS. From walking dogs to assisting with adoptions, volunteers are integral to the work that happens every day at AHS.

Foster
From the comfort of their own homes, our foster volunteers provide essential care for animals that aren’t yet ready for adoption.

Contact Us

Locations

Coon Rapids
1411 Main St. N.W. • Coon Rapids, MN 55448
763-862-4030

Golden Valley
845 Meadow Lane N. • Golden Valley, MN 55422
763-849-2201

St. Paul
1115 Beulah Lane • St. Paul, MN 55108
651-645-7387

Woodbury
9795 Hudson Road • Woodbury, MN 55125
651-730-6008

Now Boarding
6002 28th Ave. S. • Minneapolis, MN 55450
612-454-4850

Hours
Adoption Centers
Monday through Friday 12 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Pet Helpline
952-HELP-PET (952-435-7738)
Monday through Friday 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Incoming Animals
Please call 952-435-7738 to make an appointment to surrender an animal.

Appointments are available:
Monday through Friday 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
From food to litter, we’re proud to support the pets of Animal Humane Society.

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