

Wisconsin Humane Society: To acquire Bay Area Humane Society and Door County Humane Society

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The Wisconsin Humane Society to acquire Bay Area Humane Society and Door County Humane Society

MILWAUKEE — Officials at the Wisconsin Humane Society (WHS), Bay Area Humane Society (BAHS) in Green Bay, and Door County Humane Society (DCHS) in Sturgeon Bay, have announced a new vision for their organizations: BAHS and DCHS have chosen to strengthen their work for animals by becoming a part of the Wisconsin Humane Society.

“Nonprofit animal shelters operate with limited resources, and it is even more difficult because every organization is separate and has to separately fund

overhead costs,” said John Matter, board chairman of WHS. “The consolidation of our experience and resources not only strengthens all of us, but is a better return on investment for the community that supports this critical work for animals.”

WHS was approached separately by leadership at both organizations about succession plans to ensure the continuation of animal sheltering and other services in their respective communities. Both BAHS and DCHS were looking for an ongoing framework that would reliably sustain their operations into the future. The three organizations have worked together the past several months to solidify plans for the acquisition.

“This is truly the best thing that could have happened for the Bay Area Humane Society,” said Marlene Walsh, executive director at BAHS. “I’m retiring at the end of the year, and I’m thrilled that our succession plan is the Wisconsin Humane Society. In the end, the animals win. The resources that they can bring to the region will strengthen our ability to serve animals in need.”

The board at Door County also voted unanimously to become part of WHS. As a small organization, DCHS found that the challenge of bearing overhead costs alone was threatening the future of their work. WHS can bring efficiencies and innovative philosophies to ensure that service to animals continues uninterrupted in that region.

Service to new communities is not foreign to WHS. In 2004, the Milwaukee-based WHS acquired the Ozaukee Humane Society, and in 2013, it acquired the Countryside Humane Society in Racine. The consolidation of staff and resources helped to ensure high-quality animal care and services to animals and families in both counties.

“As Wisconsin’s oldest animal welfare organization, WHS has always worked to identify and respond to the most pressing needs of animals,” said Anne Reed, President & CEO at WHS. “Today, the fragmentation of animal welfare into so many different organizations has created a new need: the need to support vital work for animals with strong, simple infrastructure. We believe that local organizations face significant risks to sustainability and relevance if each one is a separate silo that must reinvent every wheel.”

All three organizations were already committed to finding a home for every treatable and safe animal, no matter how long it takes. WHS helped pioneer the

approaches that make this possible in the 1990s, and BAHS and DCHS have followed them for some time. These approaches will continue. In addition, the organizations expect that this change will bring more resources for medical and behavioral care for animals at the new locations.

The organizations are working jointly to make the transition as smooth as possible for their dedicated staff and volunteers. In Green Bay, Olivia Webster will serve as the shelter operations manager; she has been with BAHS for 10 years. In Door County, Carol Boudreau, currently the executive director at DCHS, is excited to stay on to manage the Door County location. WHS will also be hiring new positions right away to support the work of their foster/transfer, human resources, volunteer, fundraising, animal care and client service teams. There are no plans to merge the locations, lay off employees or reduce pay.

“We have so much to look forward to – a partner that can offer everything from best practices in shelter medicine to health insurance and benefits for our staff, to innovative approaches to adoption,” said Boudreau.

The boards of all three organizations voted unanimously in November to approve the acquisition of BAHS and DCHS by WHS, pending conditions of closing, which include satisfactory environmental assessments of the land, title reports on the real estate, satisfactory agreements with any needed municipalities, and membership approval at DCHS. WHS hopes to close the transactions as early as the end of 2017.

The George Kress Family Foundation is generously helping to support the acquisition. Other donations are being sought to help with transition costs, which are estimated to be about \$175,000 and include expenses for animal care equipment, veterinary supplies, training, travel, facility improvements and advertising.

“We are incredibly grateful for the vital work Bay Area and Door County Humane Societies are doing for 4,000 animals in their regions,” said Reed, “and we are excited to bring our resources to sustain lifesaving services for animals and the people who love them.”