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**MONROE COUNTY
HUMANE ASSOCIATION**
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MCHA Opens Crisis Housing for Pets of Bloomington's Unhoused Community During Extreme Temperatures

Bloomington, IN – In collaboration with the Bloomington Police Department, Monroe County Humane Association (MCHA) has opened its Crisis Housing Program to offer shelter to pets belonging to Bloomington's unhoused community amidst the recent extreme cold weather.

On Friday, January 12, members of MCHA's Street Outreach Team and BPD social workers visited a local encampment to collect several dogs, transporting them to the MCHA E. Susan Bartlett Crisis Housing Center. This initiative allowed owners the opportunity to seek refuge from the severe cold at local shelters, where pets might not typically be allowed to accompany them.

During their stay at MCHA's facility, these pets will receive essential preventive care and vaccinations. Once the frigid temperatures subside, the MCHA team will transport and reunite the pets with their owners.

"I'm incredibly proud of the MCHA staff and board members who stepped up over the weekend to provide care and love for these animals. By doing so, it was possible for both pet and owner to stay warm and protected during these cold temperatures. A special thank you to Dr. Mary Alice Cox and Outreach Coordinator Liz Austin for making it happen" said MCHA Executive Director Andrew Krebbs.

The MCHA Street Outreach Program is committed to providing vital veterinary wellness care to pets owned by individuals facing housing instability or homelessness. The program is founded on the principle that all pets deserve exceptional care, irrespective of their owners' circumstances.

For these individuals, the relationship with their pets transcends mere comfort and companionship; it becomes an essential source of stability and emotional support amidst the adversities of homelessness. Without a safe place for their pets during extreme weather, most would avoid seeking shelter for themselves.

Learn more about the Street Outreach Program and Crisis Housing Program at monroehumane.org.

About MCHA Street Outreach Program

The Monroe County Humane Association (MCHA) Street Outreach Program, in collaboration with Bloomington Police Department (BPD) social workers, and local entities such as Beacon, Middle Way House, Kinser Flats, Bloomington Housing Authority, Crawford, and Wheeler Mission, proactively reaches out to pets and their owners in various circumstances, including those living on the streets, in vehicles, or in transitional housing. The approach is to meet people where they are, ensuring services are as accessible as possible to those in need.

Reflecting national trends reported by the National Institutes of Health and leading animal welfare organizations, an estimated 10-15% of Bloomington's unhoused population owns pets, a figure that follows the national trend and is steadily increasing.

Outreach Coordinator Liz Austin and Veterinarians Jim Koch and Mary Alice Cox, identify health issues in pets, and arrange for veterinary appointments at the MCHA Clinic for comprehensive care at no cost. This includes organizing transportation, either through BPD social workers or using MCHA's outreach vehicle. Additionally, the team vigorously supports spaying and neutering initiatives, coordinating and funding these procedures to encourage animal health and control pet overpopulation. The program 2023 was funded in part by the City of Bloomington's Downtown Outreach Grant.

About MCHA Crisis Housing Program

The E. Susan Bartlett Crisis Housing Program acts as a haven of hope for those in urgent need for free or low cost. Whether victims of domestic abuse seeking safety, individuals grappling with housing instability, or facing unexpected medical emergencies, the program provides a lifeline when it matters most. The Crisis Housing Center Team works in partnership with local law enforcement agencies, domestic violence shelters, social workers, and community shelters.

The Crisis Housing Program exists thanks to a significant bequest from E. Susan Bartlett, a passionate supporter and champion for all animals. Five kennels at the Crisis Housing Center are sponsored by Virginia Metzger in memory of her loving dogs.

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