



WASHINGTON HUMANE SOCIETY AND WASHINGTON ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE ANNOUNCE MERGER

Merger Will Create First End-to-End Animal Care Organization in Major U.S. City, Including Adoption and Rescue, Humane Law Enforcement, Low-Cost Veterinary Services, Animal Control, Behavior and Training, Spay/Neuter, and More

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Washington Humane Society (WHS) and the Washington Animal Rescue League (WARL) today announced a definitive agreement to merge the two organizations to create the first end-to-end animal care organization in a major U.S. city. Founded in 1870 and 1914, respectively, WHS and WARL will bring together a comprehensive set of animal care and protection programs that touch the lives of more than 60,000 animals each year, including:

- **Rescue and Adoption** – With a combined 90% save rate for animals, WHS and WARL have built national models for effective rescue and adoption programs, and they offer public access to two major adoption facilities. WARL also transports and places adoptable animals from overcrowded shelters and from rescue operations outside the region.
- **Humane Law Enforcement** – Under its 145-year-old congressional charter, WHS serves as DC’s “animal cops” protecting the District’s animals from cruelty and harm.
- **Low-Cost Veterinary Services** – WARL’s state-of-the-art medical center provides veterinary care to all families in the District, regardless of their ability to pay.
- **Animal Control** – WHS serves as the District’s animal control agency, responding to nearly 1,500 calls per month for animal emergencies ranging from lost and injured companion animals to injured wildlife.
- **Behavior and Learning** – WHS and WARL offer a wide range of education programs for pet owners to help strengthen relationships and address common household problems.
- **Spay/Neuter Services** – WHS runs the region’s only high-volume low-cost spay and neuter center, helping address the root cause of pet overpopulation.

- **Pets for Life** - WHS goes door-to-door in under resourced communities to help pet owners get information and access to veterinary services, vaccinations, behavior training, spay-neuter services, and other important resources.
- **Other Programs** – WHS and WARL also offer programs ranging from humane education programs to a “Safe Haven” program for the pets of victims of domestic violence, and a pet food bank for families facing difficult financial times

Lisa LaFontaine, President and CEO of the Washington Humane Society, will become President and CEO of the combined organization. The board chair will be Roger Marmet, currently Chairman of the Board for the Washington Animal Rescue League. All of the current board members for WARL and WHS will join a new combined board. A new name and brand for the combined organization will be announced in coming weeks.

“This is a historic day for the animals of our region,” said Lisa LaFontaine, President and CEO of the combined organization. “Washington will be the first major city to bring together every animal-related program in a end-to-end system for area residents and animals. By unifying the District’s two iconic animal welfare organizations, we are creating a model organization that can tackle the systemic challenges facing animals in our region and nationally. Together, we can achieve our vision of a community where there is a loving home for every unwanted animal, affordable medical care for every sick and injured animal, an end to animal abuse and cruelty, and stronger bonds between animals and people through education and training. Both of our organizations shared a single guiding principle throughout this process - that we should do whatever is best for the people and animals of our region.”

The merger has been approved in unanimous votes of both the WARL and WHS boards, and the two organizations have been working at the leadership level for the last several months to lay the groundwork for a smooth and efficient combination. Given the significant and growing responsibilities of the combined organization, the organization expects to have a larger combined staff as programs continue to expand and grow.

“When we looked at the incredible opportunities from this merger, the answer was clear,” said Roger Marmet, Chairman of the Board of the combined organization. “This merger will allow us to save more animals, help more animals, protect more animals, and find more animals permanent loving homes. Ever better, it creates a one-stop destination for residents for all animal-related needs, whether a search for a new companion to join their family, financial assistance with veterinary care or pet food, assistance with behavioral problems, vaccination or spay/neuter services, or help from officers for a lost, injured, or abused animal.”

Both the Washington Humane Society and the Washington Animal Rescue League have distinguished legacies extending into the early days of the animal welfare movement. The Washington Humane Society was established in 1870 and was awarded a congressional charter with the mandate to run the District’s humane law enforcement programs. It remains the only animal welfare organization in the nation to receive such a charter. The Washington Animal Rescue League was founded in 1914 and opened the District’s first animal shelter that same year, with a special focus on sick and injured horses, as well as dogs and cats.

“By bringing these powerhouses together, we are uniting our resources, our people, and our more than two centuries of combined experience,” said Jay Timmons, outgoing WHS Chairman. “Doing so will mean saving the lives of even more animals, offering even greater access to care. Throughout the years, our two organizations have grown, changed and evolved. We’ve taken on challenges in our own respective ways...but we’ve each touched innumerable lives with our shared dedication to such an important cause.”

As the two leading animal welfare organizations in the District of Columbia, WHS and WARL have worked closely together over the last 100 years as they have expanded their programs to include animal control, humane education, low-cost veterinary services, spay-neuter programs, and more. Of particular note, the organizations have collaborated closely on transfers of adoptable animals in recent years to reduce overcrowding at WHS’s New York Avenue facility. Both organizations now have live release rates over 90%, and they are committed to finding homes for every adoptable animal in their care while protecting an open access policy for all animals in need.



Following the merger, the combined organization will run five animal-care facilities in the District:

- 15 and 71 Oglethorpe Street, NW - Adoption, behavior and training, and veterinary care
- 1201 New York Avenue, NE – Adoption and animal control services
- 7319 Georgia Avenue, NW – Adoption

- 7315 Georgia Avenue, NW – Humane law enforcement
- 1001 L Street, SE – Spay and neuter services and vaccinations

The organization will outline its future facility plans for some of the older WHS facilities over coming months.