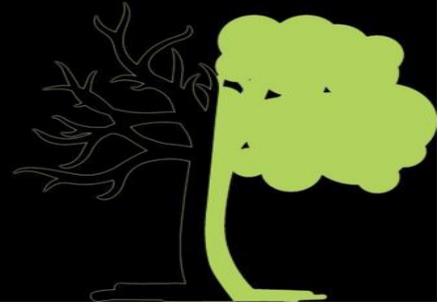


Awareness Harmony Acceptance
Advocates



AHA Advocate Talk: Animal Rescue Fund



Samantha Ellison: How did Animal Rescue Fund get started and can you talk a little about ARF's mission?

Animal Rescue Fund: ARF began in 1998 when founder Terri Panszi decided she wanted to help animals at the Muncie Animal Shelter. She rescued about 20 animals and rented out the back of a veterinarian's office to house them. A few volunteers helped her care for these animals until she could find them permanent homes. Over the course of weeks and months and years, ARF grew to what it is today. In the 15 years since ARF began, it has assisted in the rescue of more than 10,000 animals including dogs, cats, pigs, ducks, goats, and more. ARF now operates out of five buildings located on a 2 acre property that was donated by an animal lover. There are as many as 150 animals at ARF at any given time. ARF's mission is to provide shelter, medical care, and love to unwanted, abused, abandoned, and neglected animals in need until permanent homes can be found.

SE: What programs and services does Animal Rescue Fund provide?

ARF: ARF provides many services to the community. First and foremost, we provide

shelter, medical care, and love to animals in need. We also provide adoption services for those looking to add a furry friend to their family. For low-income families, we provide vouchers to have their pets spayed/neutered at little to no cost to the family. We also have a pet food pantry for low-income families that otherwise may have to take their animals to a shelter because they cannot afford to feed them.

SE: If there was one injustice Animal Rescue Fund could help combat or solve in the world what would it be and why?

ARF: One social injustice that people may not think of is pet overpopulation. Anyone who has an animal that is not spayed or neutered is most likely contributing to the issue of pet overpopulation. Millions of animals enter shelters each year. Of those, more than 50 percent are euthanized. These are healthy, adoptable dogs and cats that there is simply no room for. We work every day to battle pet overpopulation by providing vouchers to pet owners that could not otherwise afford to have their animals spayed or neutered, encouraging pet owners to spay and neuter their animals, and spaying or neutering all the animals at ARF. If the issue of pet overpopulation were solved, we would all be out of a job here at ARF. However, it is our wish that there would not be an abundance of animals and not enough families and individuals to provide these animals with a home.

SE: How can people get involved or volunteer with Animal Rescue Fund?

ARF: Anyone over the age of 18 can volunteer at ARF. They need to visit us during our adoption hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 1-5 p.m. Volunteers must read through the Volunteer Handbook and sign a form, and then they can get started. We have many volunteers and their tasks include: cleaning up after the animals; ensuring the animals have food, water, blankets, and treats; helping unload donations; doing laundry; taking dogs to the Bark Park; and generally socializing with the animals.

SE: Where does Animal Rescue Fund get inspiration from?

ARF: Our inspiration lies in the faces of all the animals we see, care for, and save every day. We care deeply for each and every animal that comes to ARF. Seeing these babies' sweet faces is what keeps us going. It makes the time, effort, and emotional strain worth it to know we are saving lives and finding wonderful homes for animals that can be adopted and providing a loving safe haven to those that are unadoptable.

SE: If Animal Rescue Fund could work with any organization or community leaders who would it be and why?

ARF: We would love to work with government leaders to establish stronger spay and neuter laws. Once again, ARF, along with all the other animal rescue organizations and municipal animal shelters, would be out of business if there were no unplanned litters of kittens and puppies. That would mean that no animals are senselessly euthanized due to lack of room in shelters. If we could convince government officials of the economic and

societal burden that pet overpopulation causes, we could make changes to the way our society views spaying and neutering and pet overpopulation in general.