



# ANIMALS PEOPLE COMMUNITY

2023 HIGHLIGHTS REPORT







## A LETTER FROM THE CEO

On March 9, 2023, Lucky Dog Animal Rescue recognized a dream which had been a long time coming, a dream of having a facility in the heart of the rural south – where pet overpopulation was a significant issue and access to vet care difficult to come by. A place where our efforts and energy would have a massive impact. The opening of our South Carolina Rescue Campus has not disappointed.

In the first nine months of operation, we have housed dogs and cats while they wait for transport to our adoption program in Northern Virginia. We treated ringworm cats, parvo puppies, and panleuk kittens. We have provided spay/neuter surgeries for our own animals, as well as local shelters in the surrounding area and for the general public. We are off to a truly amazing start.

In 2023, Lucky Dog continued to be a resource to pets in need across the United States. When devastating wildfires decimated Lahaina on the Hawaiian island of Maui, we immediately sprung into action. I reached out to our friends at Southwest Airlines who had chartered a 737 for us in 2018 to evacuate dogs and cats from Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Once again, Southwest immediately stepped up to the plate, offering a flight to the island to bring supplies and a flight back to the Pacific Northwest with evacuated animals. We then worked with Greater Good Charities, the Maui Humane Society, and other West Coast-based organizations to make this flight a reality – only 6 days after our initial ask went out.

Of course, 2023 was not without its challenges. For the first time since 2020, animal rescue organizations across the nation saw dog adoptions slow, particularly for larger breeds.

At the same time, owner surrenders increased and shelters throughout the country fell into crisis. Like other organizations, Lucky Dog has struggled to adjust to what has become the new reality, altering our transport expectations and working hard to recruit and retain fosters so we could continue to save shelter animals. While this is not easy work, I am proud of our organization's resilience and the fact that we never give up hope.

Dogs are only part of our adoption story. Lucky Dog also has a thriving cat program. In 2023, we adopted out 1,164 cats and kittens – more than in any previous year, and we launched partnerships with three PetSmart stores, where they house some of our cats that are up for adoption. We are excited to continue to grow our cat adoption program.

Lucky Dog remains an organization like no other, completing more than 3,000 adoptions without any brick and mortar presence in Northern Virginia. A feat only possible because we have thousands of volunteers who foster, provide transportation, serve as adoption coordinators, handle at adoption events, and so much more. We chose to invest in an area of the country that most animal welfare has forsaken because that is where there is so much need. And, we step up to help in times of disaster, even if our own animals are not directly at risk. 2023 was a clear example of everything Lucky Dog stands for, of all we can accomplish when we put our minds to it. It tested our ability to innovate, to pivot, and to readjust based on the reality of the world around us. And, it showed how brightly we can shine.

# 2023 OVERVIEW

## Saving Lives Since 2009

Lucky Dog Animal Rescue, with the collective effort of over 2,000 dedicated volunteers, has been saving the lives of homeless, neglected, and abandoned pets since 2009. Together, we rescue dogs and cats from high-kill shelters, transporting them to communities where they can find loving forever homes. Lucky Dog has one of the highest adoption rates of any foster-based animal welfare organization, saving the lives of 2,500-3,000 pets every year – over 28,000 since its founding. As shelter euthanasia rates begin to climb for the first time in recent years, our united work at Lucky Dog has never been more crucial.

In 2023, Lucky Dog rescued animals from 37 shelters across 10 states and territories. 98% of the 2,644 animals we rescued last year came from an area where median family income was below the national poverty line, making our work more impactful than ever. Without a facility of its own in Northern Virginia, each and every one of the animals Lucky Dog transported to the area went directly into a loving foster or forever home. None of our lifesaving work would be possible without the army of volunteer foster parents who give their hearts, their homes and their time to caring for countless Lucky Dogs and Cats.

Adding to its important work in Northern Virginia, in 2023, Lucky Dog opened its Florence Rescue Campus to increase the organization's lifesaving capacity, helping local shelter pets and serving natural disaster victims. Phase 1, which included the construction of an infectious disease ICU, ringworm treatment center, vet clinic, and transfer kennels, has been completed and is fully operational. More than 2,116 animals spent time on Lucky Dog's campus before traveling north for adoption, and more than 1,424 dogs and cats were spayed/neutered to prevent future pet overpopulation.

## Lucky Dog Making a Difference in Times of Disaster

In August 2023, devastating wildfires destroyed the historic town of Lahaina on the island of Maui. Working closely with Southwest Airlines and Greater Good Charities, Lucky Dog Animal Rescue was instrumental in flying 33 dogs and 103 cats to safety in an emergency airlift from Maui to Portland, Oregon.

Also in August, Lucky Dog welcomed 13 dogs to our South Carolina campus as part of an evacuation as Hurricane Idalia barreled down on the Florida coast. Each of those dogs then traveled to Northern Virginia to find their loving forever homes.



*Lucky Dog Lahaina rescue*

In January, Lucky Dog Founder and CEO Mirah Horowitz was named one of 2024's ten Washingtonians of the year! The luncheon celebrated the accomplishments of an esteemed group of individuals who are striving to improve their communities. We are proud that Lucky Dog's work was recognized on such an important stage.

Additionally, in February 2024, Francis Marion University and the South Carolina Morning News presented the Marion Medallion award to recognize Pee Dee citizens who have made sustained and significant contributions to improve the region and the lives of its residents. This year, we are proud to share that our founder, Mirah Horowitz, was honored with this prestigious award, another testament to her unwavering dedication and leadership.

## Events

In addition to the 150 adoption events conducted in 2023, Lucky Dog put on two major fundraising events: its 10th Annual Casino Night and its 12th Annual Wags and Wine event - both made wildly successful by our dedicated supporters and volunteers. Lucky Dog also brought smiles by putting on 22 pup parties supporting mental health and wellness throughout our communities.

We were also able to raise funds through several campaigns including Giving Tuesday, Do More 24, Share the Luck Donation Drive and the World Bank Community Connections Campaign.

**2023 Board of Directors** - Mirah Horowitz, Marcia Marsh, Suzy Brown, Catherine Phillips, Lauren Bird Horowitz

**Advisory Board** - Nancy Logan, Ryan Pratzel, Sheila Raebel, Stephany Smith, Suzy Brown, Trevor Johnson



# 2023 NORTHERN VIRGINIA IMPACT

In 2023, we made a huge difference for people and animals in our community. Here are a few of our significant achievements.

**2,814**

LUCKY DOGS & CATS WERE ADOPTED INTO LOVING FOREVER HOMES

ANIMALS WERE SAVED FROM MORE THAN **37 SHELTERS** INCLUDING **10 NEW SHELTER PARTNERS**

**99**

TRANSPORTS WERE CONDUCTED TO SAVE

**2,743**

LUCKY DOGS & CATS

**1,268**

VOLUNTEERS JOINED THE LUCKY DOG FAMILY

**429**

NEW FOSTER FAMILIES GENEROUSLY HOUSED ANIMALS ON THEIR WAY TO ADOPTION

**150**

ADOPTION EVENTS WERE SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED ACROSS THE DC METRO AREA

# 2023 SOUTH CAROLINA IMPACT

We also opened up our South Carolina campus in 2023. Here are more of our achievements on behalf of the people and animals across the rural south.

**100**

LUCKY DOGS WERE TREATED FOR HEARTWORM DISEASE

**85 ANIMALS**

WITH EXTRAORDINARY MEDICAL CONDITIONS WERE SUPPORTED

**45+**

CATS WERE TREATED FOR RINGWORM

**1,450**

ANIMALS WERE SPAYED OR NEUTERED

**62**

DENTAL CLEANINGS & OTHER SURGERIES WERE CONDUCTED

TREATED **15 PUPPIES** FOR PARVOVIRUS

TREATED **6 CATS** FOR PANLEUKOPENIA

HOUSED MORE THAN **1,100 DOGS** AND **650 CATS**



# VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT



*Chip Reid and his lucky dog*

Two-and-a-half years ago, I retired from my job as a CBS News correspondent on a Friday, and the very next day started volunteering at Lucky Dog Animal Rescue. I had heard so many glowing reports about Lucky Dog from dog park friends that I was confident this would be the place for me. I loved it from the first moment. When I got home that first day my cheek muscles actually ached from smiling so much, and it's been that way ever since.

The absolutely adorable dogs and cats, the exceptionally helpful and super-dedicated LDAR employees, and the passionate army of animal-loving volunteers all add up to a beautiful experience every weekend. For the first two years I handled whatever dog they assigned to me, and the bonding

was always instantaneous. And on days when "my" dog was adopted, I got to share in the joyous experience. I also volunteer to drive as many dogs and cats as I can fit in my car to and from adoption events. I drive like I'm transporting nitroglycerin.

When they asked if I would be willing to help at the contracts table, I discovered pet adoption utopia. I get to experience the utter joy of adoption several times each day, helping to guide adopters through the final phase of the process before they take their precious new family member(s) home! I strongly encourage anyone considering volunteering for Lucky Dog Animal Rescue to take the plunge. There are so many different roles you can fill. There's sure to be one (or more) for you!

# ADOPTION STORY - AZUL

We lost our beloved 11 year old dog, Sky, suddenly to hemangiosarcoma. Worst of all, before the holidays. We were devastated beyond words. She was so special because she contributed as a Lucky Dog foster sister and the best at welcoming, playing with, and helping to adapt the fosters adapt to home life.

Then came Azul, his one brown eye and the other blue with his stylish brown "cow" patches! He is a shy dog, loving, gentle, smart, chill so his description said ... sounds perfect for us and for our other dog, Riley, who was also grieving her sister. It was decided - we'll adopt a Lucky Dog in honor our late Sky, as she would've wanted that for us. When we met Azul, we learned more - he was a stray in Puerto Rico, father of two litters to the same mother dog, so loyal. He was a rescue long-stay for 10 months and likely more at the shelter. The untold story of the healed scars and bite marks all over his body. I was saddened to imagine what he's gone through, and we vowed to make it up to him to trust again and live a full life safely with us.



*Azul's lucky foster mom*



*Azul's puppies*

Many adventures ahead - he's been hiking trails in the mountains, zoomies at the beach, relaxing at the park. Azul is everything we imagined and so much more. From a shy/scared dog, he's made an AMAZING transformation - he's come out of his shell and he's so silly, an explorer, an unassuming gentleman. He's got an amazing memory of people, places, cars and sounds. He has many funny faces and has a boyish charm that makes you fly across the room to give him hugs and kisses! He makes us laugh when he freezes and gives us his side-eye before he takes off for some zoomies :) He's made friends with neighbors, their dogs and spends his days running like a puppy with a huge smile. Discovering new things about him or watching him learn something is like finding treasure. He's so delightful, we love him so much! We're so grateful for Lucky Dog and all of the volunteers, thank you!