



Best Friends Animal Society
SAVE THEM ALL

Augusta Animal Services Offer of Support

Partnership Goals:

Augusta Animal Services has a history as a high-volume shelter with limited positive outcomes for animals. The shelter currently ranks #32 nationwide in shelters with the highest lifesaving gap, and it ranks #1 in Georgia. In 2023, 46.2% of animals entering the shelter did not make it out alive. During the shelter assessment completed by the National Shelter Support team in March 2024, several foundational issues were noted in the existing programs at Augusta Animal Services. Best Friends would like to utilize their resources to address those issues with the goal of closing the lifesaving gap of 554 cats and 1,295 dogs being killed at Augusta Animal Services, therefore achieving a save rate of at least 90%. Several programs were either lacking fundamental elements to make them successful, or were missing entirely, so Best Friends is extending an offer of training and staff to help address the concerns noted in the assessment and improve the overall operations of Augusta Animal Services.

How We Can Support You:

Best Friends can provide staff, training, and support to implement or level up programming that is designed to decrease length of stay and increase save rate for both cats and dogs in the shelter. This training and support would be offered to Augusta Animal Services through ongoing virtual and in-person support **at no cost to the shelter**.

Training and support would include the following:

- Staff embed
 - Best Friends would like to collaborate with city leadership through a project with our [National Embed Program](#). The Embed Project would place a Best Friends employee in a leadership position at Augusta Animal Services (AAS) for up to one year. This staff member, paid by Best Friends, would act in the role of overseeing all aspects of the agency's field and shelter operations to implement proven lifesaving strategies that would guide AAS toward achieving no-kill status. Agencies with the highest lifesaving gaps, like AAS, are eligible to receive this support to lead systemic change and coach the agency on sustaining new ways of working. The Project also is supported by a team of subject matter experts, and through the Project's agreement, we may also provide extra funding for operational expenses, and staffing grants. The



Best Friends Animal Society

SAVE THEM ALL

Embed Project's support would help AAS achieve life-saving results in just a few months, which may normally take years to accomplish.

- Veterinary support
 - A lack of spay/neuter services was noted as a major bottleneck preventing animals from being ready for adoption in a timely manner. Best Friends, in partnership with the Humane Society of Northeast Georgia (HSNEGA), would like to provide a medical team of 5 (including a vet, medical coordinator, 2 vet techs, and an administrator) that would be responsible for providing the necessary medical care to prepare animals for positive outcomes such as adoption and return to field (e.g. vaccines and s/n). We would provide these staff for 18 months while also trying to help AAS recruit a new staff veterinarian to oversee the shelter population before the end of that timeframe.
- Community Cat Program
 - When the current TNVR program was launched in August of 2023 the goal was to reduce cat intake at the shelter and help AAS become a no-kill facility for cats. While intake was reduced, it was not as significant a change as anticipated, and in over 6 months the save rate still averaged 66.2%. Because we have failed to achieve the desired lifesaving goals in the program's current form, we propose a change.
 - Effective 6/1/24, AAS would pivot to SNR (shelter-neuter-return) and take on the community cat program in-house.
 - Best Friends would provide a grant of \$50,000 to cover the salary of a Community Cat Program Coordinator for a period of 12 months to oversee the program and help the shelter with this transition.
 - Best Friends will assist with designing and printing collateral to advertise the program and support AAS with any necessary press releases or advertising to alert the public to the change.
 - HSNEGA would continue to provide the s/n surgeries for the program through their contracted veterinarian and vet techs working in the shelter.
 - Best Friends will provide training through our National Shelter Support Team on community cat complaint mitigation to better equip officers, dispatch, and shelter staff to respond to complainant calls regarding community cats and nuisance behaviors.



Best Friends Animal Society

SAVE THEM ALL

- To help ensure that methods highlighted in this training are implemented, Best Friends will provide an assortment of deterrents that can be given to the public to help deescalate complaint calls and better serve the community.
- Training and mentorships
 - Best Friends will provide in-person and virtual training on the following topics:
 - Managed and diverted intake with an emphasis on kitten diversion and supported self-rehoming/owner retention.
 - Dog body language, safe handling techniques, and enrichment
 - Customer service and adoptions
 - Return to owner (RTO) and in-field return to owner (F-RTO)
 - Pathway planning and daily population rounds
 - With more in-depth mentorships focused on helping AAS staff build out a foster program and expand/improve their existing volunteer program
- Compassionate end of life care
 - Euthanasia training with our National Veterinary Medical Team for any staff that assist with shelter euthanasia.
 - Best Friends will work with shelter leadership to help draft new euthanasia protocols and checklists to ensure consistent and transparent decision making.
 - Best Friends can help purchase the sedative recommended in our assessment to help improve the current euthanasia practices at the shelter.
- Scholarships
 - Best Friends would like to provide scholarships in the amount of \$3,000 to send at least two members of the AAS staff to Orlando to attend the Best Friends National Conference. At the Best Friends National Conference, staff will learn the latest actionable tools and data-driven techniques to take home and immediately start saving more dogs and cats in their community to reach or sustain a no-kill status in 2025.
- NACA membership and training
 - Best Friends would like to pay for all members of the field services team to receive membership to the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA). This includes access to a library of webinars and other resources through Justice Clearinghouse for staff to utilize at their convenience to increase their breadth of knowledge and stay up to date on modern animal control policies and practices.



Best Friends Animal Society

SAVE THEM ALL

- Provide scholarships for officers to complete (virtual) ACO I certification. Best Friends will reimburse the shelter for the course's cost once presented with a certificate of completion for each officer participating.

How We Can Achieve These Goals Together:

Together we can achieve the programming goals above by working on the development of and committing to a training plan focused on implementing new lifesaving programs and SOPs to address gaps noted in the current operations of Augusta Animal Services. Once the offer is accepted, implementation can mirror the following timeline:

- Within the first 30 days
 - Identify which staff members you want to attend the Best Friends National Conference in July. Once they are registered, submit the receipts to BF staff for reimbursement. Travel and lodging arrangements will need to be made by AAS staff.
 - AAS will register for Shelter Pet Data Alliance (SPDA)
 - Leadership will work with Best Friends staff to schedule virtual and in-person training times for remaining topics of concern, prioritizing daily rounds and intake diversion so those programs can be implemented as soon as possible.
 - AAS will agree to monthly check-in calls with Best Friends staff to review the trainings being done, identify upcoming training still needed, discuss any issues encountered while trying to implement new programs, and problem solve as a team to address any issues.
 - Deterrents will be mailed to AAS and training for complaint mitigation will be scheduled.
 - All field services staff should register as NACA members and begin NACA I training. Once we receive certificates of completion, they will be reimbursed for the course.
 - AAS will stop behavior assessments and make the suggested changes to their current euthanasia process. Leadership will work with Best Friends staff to formalize new standard operating procedures (SOPs) and euthanasia checklists that will be implemented as soon as they are finalized.
 - AAS and any necessary city-level leadership will meet with the Best Friends Embed Team to discuss the possibility of embedding one or more staff members at the shelter to assist with implementing lifesaving programs and making the changes outlined in the Assessment.
 - AAS leadership will work with the veterinarian provided by HSNEGA to have them become the shelter vet of record and acquire the DEA license.



Best Friends Animal Society

SAVE THEM ALL

- Any AAS staff that assists with euthanasia should review the 2022 ASV (Association of Shelter Veterinarians) and AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) Guidelines relating to euthanasia.
- Within the first 60 days
 - Training will continue and AAS leadership will ensure that all appropriate staff are participating and employing the techniques being taught in the trainings.
 - Foster and volunteer mentorships will begin. AAS will identify the staff member who will be the point person for each program.
 - A CCP Coordinator will be hired and the existing TNVR program will transition to an SNR program operated by AAS.
 - The new shelter medicine team will begin spay/neuter surgeries on community cats and animals eligible for adoption.
 - AAS will work with Best Friends to request changes to the current ordinances to update the mandated stray hold from 5 business days to 72 hours.
 - AAS will extend their adoption hours/hours of operation to make the shelter more accessible to the public, namely, being open to the public on Sundays for adoptions.
 - Kennel staff will complete the Fear Free Shelters program.
- Within the first 90 days
 - Any remaining trainings will be completed.
 - Foster and volunteer mentorships will be ongoing.
 - Staff will complete the Fear Free Shelters training and ACOs will work to complete NACA I training.
 - Staff will remain committed to providing all animals in care with daily enrichment and making sure that all dogs get exercise outside of their kennels at least once per day.

What is Required from Augusta Animal Services:

- Monthly data submitted via Shelter Pet Data Alliance (SPDA).
- Monthly check-in calls with Best Friends staff to evaluate training being done and progress being made.
- Report on impacted programs (e.g. data relating to cat and dog lifesaving) and evaluating data by type of intake to help gauge success and inform any changes.
- Cooperation and transparency from shelter leadership and staff, including attending meetings and training as scheduled.

This offer of support expires on May 31, 2024



Best Friends Animal Society

SAVE THEM ALL

Best Friends is happy to extend timelines as necessary, provided that there is a path to move the offer forward.