



New Year, New Direction

As I begin this update to you the air is full of excitement about the largest lottery in history. People are wildly buying tickets in the hope of winning over \$1 billion dollars. Reportedly the chances are better to be elected president, land on the moon, or find a dog that scoops his own poop. And yet millions of us hopefully drop a couple of bucks to dream dreams and vision visions.

As lucky as we feel to be on the board of directors, we are not counting on MHS winning the lottery. We have indeed been hoping and dreaming and visioning. But we have spent the past year deeply and widely learning about the current situation of MHS, trends in the animal welfare industry, and the needs of the Monadnock region. Informed by this extensive data gathering, a task force of senior staff and board members then created and proposed a three-year strategic plan. In December the board of directors approved the plan to move MHS in the direction of sustainability. We did this carefully and soberly, as well as hopefully, knowing that the future of this precious community organization depends on our next steps.

Strategic Plan Highlights

The full text of the strategic plan is available on the **MHS website**. Our core values remain the same. We believe in:

- **Vision, innovation and integrity:** success is created through dedicated and knowledgeable change guided, by truth and trust
- **People and pets:** we are compassionate stewards of animal welfare.



- **Openness and transparency:** we are honest, respectful and nonjudgmental
- **Engagement:** we are stewards of the community's trust and include, engage with and are accountable to our constituents and the community.



Our purpose is clear and renewed. We enrich the lives of the people and companion animals of our community. We serve the

community as a leader in animal welfare and community services. We foster a compassionate community by promoting and providing for the well-being of animals.

Three years from now we want to be a sustainable, more innovative organization. We want to be the "go to" professional resource for animal welfare groups in our area. And we want to be ready to rebuild the endowment as a source of sustainable funding. Our wild audacious goal is to be the center of a vibrant network of animal welfare services that celebrate the animal human bond. We will be an innovative center for animal rehoming in all its forms.



Here's our theory of how we can get there: IF we live within our current resources and renew our people, facilities, and systems and IF we develop services and programs that meet the needs of the people and pets of the Monadnock region, THEN we will become an organization sustainably funded by the community it serves.

Strategic Priorities

Five priorities will drive our work during the next three years. They are not intended to spell out every detail of what will be done operationally but to provide both direction and accountability. The five priorities are:

- 1. Continue to provide excellent services and programming** by carefully tracking our financial position and adjusting operations as necessary; ensure rehoming and foster care are “state-of-the-art” services; maximize net contribution of current and new pet-related services intended to serve as sources of funds (for example, Boarding and Daycare, Grooming)
- 2. Increase organizational capacity** (not size but the ability to get things done), by investing in people and facilities to manage organizational health, creating clear roles and responsibilities, and supporting a culture of innovation
- 3. Develop more collaborations** by leveraging our reputation with other community nonprofits and businesses
- 4. Improve marketing and communications** by inspiring, informing and engaging through social media, website and traditional methods
- 5. Grow our fundraising and development** by building a donor-centric organization with a culture of fundraising excellence and stability; grow fundraising proceeds 15% per year



A Project-based Approach

Given the significant challenges for staff and managers to provide our current day-to-day services, we plan to create time-limited strategic projects to help us accomplish the goals of the three-year plan. Under the direction of the executive director, specific, high value projects will be determined. A small team consisting of appropriate staff, board members, volunteers, and, where necessary, paid or pro bono professionals will be created to accomplish the work.

By using this project-based approach additional resources of time, talent, and treasure can be brought to bear on projects that will make a significant difference for MHS. Each project will have a plan and budget and be tracked against its goals. Where justified, the board will authorize specific funding from reserves, apart from the operational budget.



In the past year we've made significant progress in this manner on some key initiatives to improve organizational infrastructure. Most of these projects have been accomplished with little or no need for additional funds but by the focused attention of staff, supplemented by volunteers, board members, and professionals with the resources to get it done. Each project has made a significant difference to the financial well-being of MHS and/or has put in place systems or practices that help staff improve the quality of service they are able to offer the community.

To date there have been several important projects completed and others are about to be launched. These include:

- Adoption of a new investment strategy for the funds of MHS resulting in a 45% reduction in investment costs and a prudent rate of return
- A revision of the paid-time-off policy resulting in healthier, more sustainable workplace practices, increased wellness of staff, clearing of a major liability and significant annual cost savings
- Revision and updating of the entire chart of accounts and the creation of critical financial reports that are easy for staff to update and produce.
- Renewal and refocus of Boarding and Daycare to ensure the highest quality service in a safe, nourishing environment and result in a significant income gain.



To accomplish these projects staff efforts have been supported by the generous involvement of board members

Peggy Bedore, with HR expertise, Chris Bowen and Jennifer Thompson, with financial expertise, and volunteers Jon and Val Starbuck, with financial, HR, and management expertise. Lynn Rust, CPA, PC and Christina Flood contributed a great deal of their time and expertise to accomplish the business office accounting revisions. Denise Mazzola, CPDT-KA, of *Everything Dog* and well known to the local community, generously conducted a thorough evaluation of the business model of boarding and daycare.

Teams are now being formed for the following projects:

- A major website revision to capture the spirit and philosophy of MHS, with an effective, eye-catching design. Navigation will be user-friendly for both knowledgeable and first-time visitors. The content and e-commerce will become easily managed internally. And the overall site will create an emotional connection, foster a sense of community and communicate that we are leaders in our field. Carol Laughner, MHS Director of Marketing & Development will lead this project.
- Creation of a Planned Giving Program. Some of the most critical financial support of MHS in the last few years has come from planned gifts made through trusts, bequests, asset transfers and other arrangements. One way of honoring our long and strong 140-year presence in the community is to provide donors with ready ways to plan gifts that will ensure our future. This project will be led by Val Starbuck and involve senior development staff, board members and professionals in the community.

Stay tuned for more projects being started in the coming months. Please be prepared to be asked to help and if you have time and talent to offer, please let a board member or Joe Olsen know of your interest. These are not glamorous projects. There's very little bling involved. But if you want to help in concrete ways and invest some sweat equity in helping MHS reach our strategic goals, you can really make a difference.

New Board Member

Regrettably for us, Scott Rochwarg was asked by C&S Wholesale Grocers to head up a new project in Maryland and reluctantly had to step off the board. We wish him all the best in this endeavor.



We are delighted to announce that Val Starbuck was elected to the board in December to fill the position previously held by Scott. We are extremely grateful to have Val, one of last year's Volunteers of the Year, join as a board member. She brings enormous talent, prodigious energy and a wide knowledge of the local community.

Finding Our Strength

The past year has been a time of transition. As in all transitions, something ended. In our case, we reached the limit of using our reserves to fund our work in the way we had been doing for the past ten years. We took the time to reflect deeply on where we were and what we needed to do to create a future for MHS. Now we enter the last phase of transition—a new beginning. The strategic plan starts us on a path of challenging changes and exciting undertakings. We begin with hope, nourished by the amazing community of people who love MHS. The outpouring of support over the past year, gifts of the heart and gifts of the pocketbook, show the true strength of this organization and why it has stood for 140 years. We are deeply grateful to be part of this work with you. We look forward to the year ahead.



An Invitation

You're Invited to MHS's



Please come to a celebration of our 140th Birthday on Sunday, January 24th from 2:00-3:00 pm in the MHS Guinane Training Center at the facility in Swanzey. Refreshments will be served including homemade cupcakes and whoopee pies. Everyone from the Monadnock region and beyond is invited – children are encouraged to attend!

Musical entertainment will be provided by local deejay, CJ the DJ. Monadnock Therapy Pet teams will be there for everyone to enjoy. There will be games for children including a fishing game, a birthday mural, bucket ball toss, and a photo booth. Grab bag prizes for all games! Party favors and plenty of fun for all ages

Following the festivities there will be a semi-annual meeting of MHS to discuss the new Strategic Plan.

We Want to Hear From You!

If you would like to respond to this update, we welcome comment at:
boardchair@humanecommunity.org