

Georgia Humane Society

Building Community Partnerships to Protect Animals & People

Executive Summary

Georgia Humane Society (GHS) was formed to change the culture of pet ownership in Georgia, by educating and training communities to safely and properly manage the treatment and care of domestic animals and improve the way animal crimes are reported, responded to, and prosecuted. The mission of The Georgia Humane Society is to make Georgia's communities safer and more humane, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Through education and training, we can help prevent animal neglect and abuse, improve management of domesticated animals during crisis emergency response, and reduce overpopulation. By creating awareness of the link between animal crimes and domestic violence, as well as other associated human crimes, we can build safer, healthier communities for all. The Georgia Humane Society's goal is to make every county in Georgia more humane by providing training and education to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, animal welfare advocates, and the public. Armed with better understanding and knowledge, and with the support of a strong coalition working together, we can fulfill our mission of making Georgia's communities a safer and more humane place to live for animals and people.

Our strategy is to build a strong, unified, animal advocacy coalition throughout the state, county by county, utilizing in-person collaboration and technology in a coordinated way that has never been done before. GHS plans to continue to strategically partner with existing local resources, agencies, and community service providers to provide in-person training opportunities, and to enhance our online presence to employ a highly dynamic interactive digital learning platform offering online access to training, education, and the support of a community of animal welfare experts and advocates. We can expand our reach with more advanced technology to create a critically needed online resource for each county and create a safety net led by the state's most experienced and knowledgeable animal welfare experts and managed by local law enforcement, the court system, animal control, rescue agencies, and citizens trained to be educated animal advocates.

Statement of Need

As Georgia's population continues to rise, we have seen an exponential increase in Georgia's dog and cat population due to a lack of education and spay and neuter best practices. Georgia's communities are in crisis, and animal crimes are often the front

door to much more serious crimes occurring in the home. Animal crimes play an intricate role in public safety, and the health of any community starts with the way the most vulnerable are treated. Animals are considered to be special victims in the compendium of domestic violence, and animal cruelty is known to be a predictor of violence against humans, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and gang violence - a connection known as "The Link". Having background knowledge of the link between animal cruelty and violence can make a considerable difference in an investigation. With education and training, several key agencies can work together as a multidisciplinary team to create an integrative approach to investigations and "The Link".

Including the treatment of domesticated animals providing companionship and emotional support as an indicator and determinant of the health of the overall community is important, especially in the midst of today's mental health crisis and the loneliness epidemic. Domestic animals provide emotional support as part of the family and community, improving mental health and wellness. Protecting domestic animals is an essential part of creating a healthy community and a system of care.

While Georgia truly is a great place to live and work, Georgia has become notorious for animal crimes such as backyard breeding and dog fighting rings. Georgia also has the worst euthanasia rate in the United States, surpassed only by California and Texas. Georgia's shelters are reporting putting down almost 20,000 healthy pets a year, but the real number is much higher, especially when considering the dogs and cats cruelly and unlawfully disposed of in many of Georgia's rural counties. We can and must do better with our domesticated animals and can turn this state around with your help.

The Georgia Humane Society Academy

The GHS Academy will serve as an expanded and more robust version of GHS's current Animal Protection and Wellness Academy (sample class list in addendum), designed to provide education and training for police officers, judges, prosecutors, veterinarians, and collateral agencies including animal control, county run animal shelters, volunteer rescue groups, animal advocates, and the general public, including school aged children.

We understand that as the problem has grown, the solution needs to grow in scale and capacity as well. We need to invest in more robust technology to educate and train each county's local resources to expand our reach beyond in-person and one-on-one solutions. Taking a proactive approach throughout the state will not only prepare local resources to properly deal with animal crimes as they occur, but it will also prevent or reduce crimes from occurring. Utilizing technology, we can connect our established

team of experts with local animal control, law enforcement, legislators, and nonprofit organizations throughout all of Georgia's 159 counties. With education and training, we can foster community collaborative associations, networking and building opportunities to work more effectively and efficiently. We can work together to foster relationship building, create stronger collaborations, and develop a holistic community strategy to build awareness of the importance of Animal Law and Animal Welfare.

Establishing a more collaborative, integrative approach amongst counties and within regions for in-person trainings will reap great rewards in working better together. However, due to the unique make-up of each county, some information will be highly specific to one singular county entity and cannot be adequately addressed treating multiple counties as one singular region. With that being the case, and with the sheer size of the geographical area encompassing the 159 counties that make up the state of Georgia, the only feasible way to scale an effective and truly customized training and education resource for each county is to build an online digital platform.

The Georgia Humane Society's Academy's Online Education & Training Program will include the following sections and features:

First Responders, Law Enforcement and Animal Control: Training & Education for Law Enforcement and Animal Control would feature short videos of animal law experts, experienced animal control officers, and others highlighting key facts and brief summaries of animal law and care lessons critical to their work. Each lesson will be broken down into a new activity every three to five minutes to keep content highly engaging and create a dynamic, interactive learning experience. Our law enforcement first responders desperately need animal safety training to protect themselves and the public. Providing easy to understand lessons in animal law, including key points delivered as "what you need to know" pulled from lengthy legislation for those first to arrive on the scene of an animal crime, who rescue the injured and secure the scene, is critical for their safety and to ensure that they effectively document and collect evidence critical to prosecution.

Lawyers, Prosecutors, and Judges: Oriented toward a more scholarly approach, this section would link to an online library with all of Georgia's animal laws and legislation, complete with a summary, key concepts, and the full legislative text of the law along with case studies and history of cases. This section will include the Animal Law Source ToolKits created by GHS. Legislators, judges, lawyers, and law students would be able to easily find the information they need with expert perspective on how the law should be utilized as a tool in their toolkit for success.

Animal Advocates, School Groups, and the General Public: This section would be open to the public, designed to deliver content in an engaging and effective learning experience through gamification. Lessons would incorporate game-like elements such

as badges, scores, and rewards to motivate learners. This section could be subdivided with one path designed to serve as a training for adult animal advocates and the other for children.

Crisis Management: GHS will moderate and respond to requests for support with guidance from our organization as well as local crisis response teams and qualified community partners.

Pilot Program - DeKalb County: We have established a partnership with DeKalb to collaborate on the creation of their portal. Dekalb County understands the potential of building a portal in such a way that it can serve their needs and be customized county by county to be rolled out in all 159 counties. We are excited about the prospect of creating innovative solutions by collaborating with Dekalb's animal control, law enforcement, shelters, court system, animal emergency management, and other agencies, operating as a more effective System of Care.

Conclusion

Our Academy is intended for a wide variety of professionals, including animal cruelty investigators, local agencies, GA DOA inspectors, veterinary professionals, animal shelters, rescues, and others who are responsible for the care and control of animals, disease prevention and emergency preparedness. Training will save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce human/animal crimes. Positive police-community relations using "pet outreach programs" will change public perceptions in local communities.

We know spaying and neutering companion animals is a proactive way of reducing pet overpopulation. However, to achieve this goal, we must change the culture of pet ownership, educate local communities, support local veterinarians, and create an awareness program that will change the next generation.

GHS will continue to provide the same high standard of top-quality expert education and training our organization has become known and respected for over more than 30 years. We are seeking support to expand the reach and impact of GHS, to address the animal welfare issues throughout the state in a more effective and efficient manner. With your support, GHS can achieve a more coordinated effort throughout the entire state. A more advanced online education and training platform will become an invaluable resource for every community in all 159 of Georgia's counties. Together, we can create better and more humane communities.

About Us - Board of Directors

Claudine Wilkins

Our Founder and Executive Director, Claudine Wilkins is a former prosecutor and past chair of the State Bar of GA's Animal Law Section, who has devoted her life to protecting animals and forging a trail in animal protection by changing how the justice system responds to animal cruelty cases. Claudine drafted legislation amending GA's antiquated animal laws resulting in the passage of the Georgia Dog Fighting law in 2008. In 2009, Ms. Wilkins petitioned the State Bar of Georgia to create the Animal Law Section which was founded later that year. Her continuing efforts include the passage of The Responsible Dog Owner Act in 2012, revamping GA's dangerous dog law which protects the public by penalizing reckless dog owners, and the Animal Cruelty law passed in 2014, amending the law and significantly improving the state's legislative power to prosecute animal cruelty cases. Claudine is the founder of The Animal Protection Society (TAPS), Animal Law Source (ALS), the Animal Protection Conference & Expo (APCE), and the Georgia Humane Society (GHS). In the last three decades, Ms. Wilkins has shaped the way our justice system responds to animal cases. Through her work, better laws on the books, accessible education is online, and thousands of animals have been rescued from neglect and abuse.

Mara Morrison

Dr. Mara Morrison is a native Texan but has called Atlanta home for over twenty years. Receiving her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mara remained at UNC for medical school. She completed her residency at Northwestern University in Chicago, IL and is board certified in Anatomic Pathology. Mara has had a passion for helping animals since she was a young child. Caring for injured animals in her neighborhood and picking up stray dogs was a common occurrence, and Mara still picks up every stray dog she comes across but has put her love for animals into a focus on making changes. She has been fostering dogs for over ten years, taking in injured, critically ill, and emaciated dogs, as well as pregnant and nursing moms and their litters. She continues to foster to this day. Mara served on the advisory board for Angels Among Us Pet Rescue and has also been very active with other charities as well. She was a past chair of the Arthritis Foundation Crystal Ball and has worked for almost a decade to support the Red Clay Ranch Equine Rescue. She also is very active with the Atlanta Ronald McDonald Charities and supports a school for impoverished children in Kigali, Rwanda known as The Faith Foundation. Mara is also the past president of the Mount Paran Woods Garden Club. In addition to her charitable activities, Mara also runs a foundation in her late husband's memory - The Thomas J.

Morrison, III Foundation. The foundation presents a memorial golf tournament which donates all profits to different charities every year.

John Copenhaver

In 2019, John joined the GA Pet Coalition's all volunteer board where he currently serves as president. He is also the chairman of the Companion Animal Executive Committee formed by Gary Black, the GA Commissioner of Agriculture. He is an executive on the board of the Animal Protection Society and Canine Cellmates. He was on the advisory board for Angels Among Us prior to that. After graduating from Brown University in 1975, he received his law degree from the U of GA. After graduating from law school in 1979, John clerked for the GA Court of Appeals from 1980-1981. After having served for many years in the private sector, with positions at AT&T, Bellsouth and IBM, John left IBM to be appointed by Pres. Clinton to the position of Regional Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region Four which includes eight southeastern states. He also served as Chairman and CEO of the Disaster Recovery Institute in Washington, DC. John's love for animals goes back to his childhood and he believes deeply in the mission of the GA Pet Coalition and is proud to be a part of the animal welfare movement that is constantly improving the quality of life for companion animals in GA.

John Tyler

John is Counsel in the Tax Practice of Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP. Mr. Tyler is an attorney as well as a certified public accountant who focuses in the areas of tax planning and controversy. Mr. Tyler graduated from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania in 1968 with a B.A. in economics and subsequently served as an officer in the U.S. Navy. He received the J.D. from Emory University School of Law. After graduating from Emory, Mr. Tyler joined the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen & Co. where he practiced tax planning. He is a member of the American Bar Association (section on taxation) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. John has worked with several animal protection not for profit organizations including Friends of Duncan and the Georgia Pet Coalition, which he co-founded. He lobbied successfully to make animal cruelty a felony in Georgia and to strengthen the dog fighting laws. He supported the new Georgia Pet Foundation license plate which is increasing funding for Spay and Neuter in Georgia.

Cheryl McAuliffe

Cheryl has worked in the animal welfare field for more than 30 years, including positions as the Georgia State Director for the Humane Society of the United States and as the

Vice President of Media for the Georgia Legal Professionals for Animals. Cheryl was also the Representative for the Georgia Chapter of Cleveland Amory's Fund for Animals. Cheryl also serves on the Georgia State Council for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and has been involved with the Clinica Veterinaria de Isla Mujeres for many years. Cheryl is the Chairperson of the GA Pet Coalition, a unique statewide partnership wholly dedicated to legislative advocacy on behalf of companion animals.

Victoria Stillwell

Victoria is the Executive Director of the Victoria Stilwell Foundation - a non-profit charitable organization committed to providing financial assistance and dog training expertise to small rescue shelters and assistance dog organizations who practice positive training methods. As co-founder of the national Dog Bite Prevention conference series, Stilwell is a National Ambassador for the American Humane Association and is a member of its 'No Animals Were Harmed' Committee. She also serves on the Advisory Boards for DogTV, Dognition, The Grey Muzzle Organization, RedRover, and Canine Assistants, and she is a member of the US Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC).