

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Karel Minor
Office: 610-921-2348, ext. 10
kminor@berkshumane.org

Humane Society of Berks County and Berks County Office of Aging Create Ani-Meals On Wheels Partnership

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County's leader in animal welfare, announced today that it has partnered with Berks County Office of Aging to deliver *Ani-Meals On Wheels* services to those receiving Meals On Wheels services. Ani-Meals On Wheels is a program that provides monthly deliveries of pet food and pet supply packages to seniors and others with mobility, health, and financial limitations. "We are excited about what this partnership will mean for our ability to help the animals of pet owners in need," said Karel I. Minor, HSBC executive director. "We know that many people are forced to choose between feeding themselves and their pets. This program will help to make sure that doesn't have to happen."

This partnership is one of only a hand full around the country like it. By combining the resources and expertise of the HSBC with the existing service structure and population of Berks Office of Aging, vital services can be delivered efficiently and effectively to those in need. Cruelty cases involving senior citizens are often cases of benign or unintentional neglect. By providing food, cat litter, and pet supplies to seniors and others in need, the HSBC will be able keep pets safe and healthy in their homes, avoiding unnecessary surrendering of pets to shelters. Berks Office of Aging welcomes the partnership because they see the importance of pets to the well being to their constituents but are not able to provide the required assistance for the pets.

Participation is open to those currently receiving Meals On Wheels services. Other seniors may apply through the Office of Aging or by contacting the Humane Society directly at 610-921-2348, ext. 26. Current program guidelines place qualification at incomes of 150% or below the present Federal poverty level, however, the HSBC will review all applications on a case-by-case basis. HSBC staff determine qualification and take detailed information on the caller's pet care needs. HSBC staff and volunteers then make pet care packages that are delivered monthly. Packages may also be picked up at the HSBC's 11th Street, Reading, shelter for those capable of driving but still qualifying for the program.

For program participants who are house-bound, the HSBC will also provide annual in-house veterinary health screenings at no charge, as well as basic vaccinations. HSBC Staff Veterinarian, Dr. Kelly Bendixsen, knows that catching health problems early can make an important difference. “If we can help provide basic pet health care to those whose pets wouldn’t be able to receive it because they can’t leave their homes, we can help decrease unnecessary illness and the expense that goes along with it.”

The Humane Society is seeking donations of dry and canned pet food, cat litter, and other new pet supplies. The HSBC is also seeking financial and volunteer support for the Ani-Meals On Wheels program. “We are providing this service with no funding from any government agency,” said Minor. “It’s an important program that will help pets and their people, but we need community support to make it possible.” Donated items can be dropped off any time at the HSBC or one of its donation drop-off satellite locations around Berks County. Information on drop-off sites, financial donations and volunteering can all be found on the HSBC’s website, www.berkshumane.org.

“It’s when times are the toughest that we need our pets the most,” said Minor. “That’s why we created Ani-Meals On Wheels. This program will help keep the pets of seniors safe and healthy at home, where they belong.”

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society provides adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. The Humane Society is located at 1801 N. 11th Street, Reading.

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