

# THE CONNECTION

May 1, 2020 — Issue 44

## PET PANTRY UPDATE By Vice President of Strategic Relationships, Deb Scola

Operating during the coronavirus pandemic has been challenging for all of us, adjusting work schedules and protocols, consolidating operations and online training.

The crisis has dramatically changed the way we do things at the Pet Food Pantry as well. To keep our clients and employees safe, we began curbside service on March 17, eliminating the need for people to come inside, or even to get out of their cars, and keeping people an appropriate distance from one another.

As time passed and unemployment began to rise, the number of pantry clients increased, and we began seeing 100 new families each week. On Tuesday we experienced our largest pantry day ever with 418 families coming through, and in the month of April, we distributed a total of 145,000 lb. of pet food. In comparison, our previous highest volume pantry day served 200 people in February, and a total monthly food distribution of 75,000 lb. Our service to the community has more than doubled in six weeks.

How is that even possible?

It's possible because of our donors and partners. To get the food in, we activated on the solid relationships we have in the pet food industry and the food rescue community locally and nationally. Partners like Purina, GreaterGood.com, HSUS, Forgotten Harvest, Premier Pet Supply and several donors have ensured consistent food deliveries.

It's possible because of teamwork. Sorting and distributing the heavy bags takes strength, energy and camaraderie with a great deal of help from staff members across the organization. Special thanks to everyone who worked hard and went home exhausted.

It's possible because MHS is recognized as an important community resource. People are learning about us through the Michigan State Police emergency resource guide, United Way's 211 helpline, Forgotten Harvest's network of food pantries and HSUS's Michigan food pantry map. We're reaching additional people by sharing food with more than 30 animal welfare partners who also serve community, and we're delivering food to 100 at-risk senior citizens who are unable to leave their homes.

The pet food pantry is an illustration of our mission to improve lives through compassionate care. By providing basic needs to thousands of families in our community at a time they need it most, we're taking away the necessity for people to forego a meal in order to feed their pets, or the worry they may have about keeping their family together.



## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

*Thank you to all who have played a part, big or small, in helping us get through these challenging times. Whether you realize it or not, you all have a huge impact on those you work with every day. Here is proof:*

### **Jan Ramos & Nicol Fernandez**

I got to spend extra time with both Jan and Nicol over the last few weeks, and I am so thankful I got to know them better. They are both such passionate people, and it shows through their actions and daily care of the animals. My favorite thing was that no matter how challenging the day may have been, they always came back to work the next day ready to give it their all.

### **Brian Andrus**

Brian is super helpful and brightens everyone's day with his jokes and laughter. He's (a little too) gleefully taken on the role of morning health inspector and is the first to laugh at any joke (whether it's actually funny or not). He was alone in the office one day and kept us all updated via email on a battle he concocted between the various figurines and tchotchkes everyone keeps on their desks. His light-heartedness really helps keep the mood up no matter what is going on.

### **Berman Shelter Med Team**

I would like to recognize Nikki, Gracie, Sam, Tierra, Che, Melissa and Ashley (the shelter med department at Berman). They have been a great source of laughter and support through all of the changes. I would specifically like to mention how they brightened my day this week. This Monday was the start of our work-from-home week. It also happened to be my birthday. Working at home while being confined to my house was not how I had imagined celebrating. Unbeknownst to me, my coworkers arranged for a surprise Zoom meeting for me. It was so great to see them all and be able to talk and laugh together! It really made my birthday special!

### **Matt Kubler**

Matt has been a great support to the small group of staff still working at Bingham, above and beyond what he is doing for the organization as a whole in his role as CFO. He takes the time to make sure each of us has the knowledge and resources to protect ourselves and our families and is always available to address concerns so that we feel comfortable coming in to work. He's also coordinated a few lunch orders, and may have even covered the bill himself once or twice. He's still quick to crack a joke even while we're all under incredible stress. We all really appreciate his support!

### **Pam Dybowski**

I would like to recognize Pamela Dybowski. Despite being in a separate department, she is always so cheerful and happy with staff at both the shelter and clinic. She is always willing to help no matter what is needed or where it is needed. She has been working at the Pantry lately helping there as well. She is the definition of a team player. She has been working on creating a board for just outside our breakroom for staff. She finished it this week at a time when we needed some cheer.

### **Erika Sikora**

I have a sweet foster dog who is HW positive. She is also very shy and has been learning how to "dog." She had to go to West two weeks ago for her injections, which, as you probably know, are not pleasant. I was so worried about her! When I got there to drop her off, Erika Sikora-Harrington answered the phone. I've known her for years, and I was thrilled she was on duty. She was very thorough and made sure she had all of the info they needed, including what we had been calling our foster at home. (Shelter name "Lara Jean" became Jeanie, because her name before intake was Chi Chi, and she answers better to Jeanie. I was so impressed that Erika asked, and I thought it showed a very high level of compassion for Jeanie and for me.) She made sure we had more food for when Jeanie came home. (She's been with us a while, and lack of appetite is not her issue!) Erika was so friendly and kind to me and to Jeanie. Jeanie actually went with her with far more confidence than she'd shown leaving Detroit to come home with me. She had to stay from Thursday to Saturday for her treatments. As much as I was tempted to check on her, I didn't want to bug our already busy staff. I was so pleasantly surprised and touched to get pictures and an update from Erika via FB! It made me feel so good to know Jeanie was doing okay. When I went to pick her up on Saturday, Erika brought her out. Erika had followed through on questions I had about giving Jeanie HW and flea preventative, which had gone by the wayside for a minute in the rush to get everyone out of the shelters. Erika was giving her the preventative outside, because Jeanie hadn't been very willing to eat in the shelter. She mentioned in passing that she'd even taken Jeanie outside to get her to eat her dinner. In short, I've always known Erika is awesome, but she really went above and beyond to take good care of Jeanie (and me), and I would love to recognize her for that.

### **Eva Tutschek**

As you know, our team has been divided among other locations at this time, so trying to stay connected with one another has been a little challenging. I would love to recognize Eva Tutschek for helping us along the way. Every morning she sends our group messages of encouragement, funny pictures or wishes for a great day, and that has meant so much to me. It is so comforting to know that we are all doing okay, and her morning messages inspire us all to stay in touch. Something as simple as a quick picture of a cat with bunny ears on has brightened many mornings and reminded me that I'm not alone.

### **Stephanie Garza & Jarrod Bear**

I just wanted to give a shout out to Stephanie Garza and Jarrod Bear. Both have been working at the Pet Pantry and have been such a wonderful help. They both work and support in whatever way they can and go the extra mile time and time again. On top of their hard work, they are constantly making sure to give a boost of moral to everyone there throughout the day.

*You are all truly an inspiration! Please keep the feedback coming by emailing your recognition to Andrea Buchanan at [abuchanan@michiganhumane.org](mailto:abuchanan@michiganhumane.org). Thank you for all you do!*

## FIRST (AND LAST) DIGITAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK A SUCCESS

By Director, Volunteers & Community Solutions, Katie Franklin, CVA



Every year in April, we stop and pay extra attention to our volunteers, and this year, while unusual, was no exception. Last week we celebrated volunteer appreciation week across the organization digitally for the first time ever! Social distancing may have meant we didn't get to celebrate in person, but with staff help, our volunteers know they were not forgotten. We shared stories about the work they do on social media, and many of us collaborated on a special thank you video recognizing all of the hard work they do. We capped off the week with a Zoom call on Friday attended by 75 volunteers – many of whom wore their volunteer uniforms for the occasion! A thank you to everyone who helped make this week a success!

## YOUR PURRFECT PET AUCTION

By Director of Special Events, Becky Hanel

As another MHS colleague stated in the last few weeks, I paraphrase, “the only certainty during the pandemic is change is inevitable.” MHS was forced to postpone our major fundraising event, the 31st Annual Purrrfect Bow Wow Brunch. We had previously rescheduled the date for November 15, but due to unforeseen circumstances, we needed to move the date again. The new, confirmed date is Sunday, October 4, 2020. This date change moves the event from this fiscal year to next fiscal year.

The Development Team has quickly learned, like all MHS operations, to be very nimble and creative during these times. To supplement lost revenue for this fiscal year, we have launched an online auction called “Your Purrrfect Pet Auction.” As I write, this auction launched April 23 and concludes on May 2 at 9:00 p.m. The purpose is twofold: 1) provide MHS supporters the opportunity to celebrate their pets as we wait to be together again, and 2) capitalize on a \$20,000 match generously gifted by our Development Co-Chair Katie Abraham and her husband, Erik Abraham.

As the auction is themed around celebrating pets, what is more important than that as we sit at home – RIGHT! There are many firsts in the auction, one being a new MHS 365 Days of Pets desk calendar. The winning bidder of each date will proudly be displaying their pet's “headshot” on that date they won. Please check out the auction at [www.michiganhumane.org/brunch-auction](http://www.michiganhumane.org/brunch-auction).

To help promote the auction, we encourage you to share the Facebook posts about the event with your friends and family. Thank you for your hard work and happy bidding.



## MICHIGAN HUMANE IN THE NEWS

[Click here](#) to see how the Michigan Humane Society was in the news this week.

*\*Please note this link is not viewable on a mobile device.*

## PARKING LOT MAINTENANCE AT BINGHAM FARMS

A Note from JFK Property Manager, Kevin Stolzenfeld

Since many of the governor's restrictions have been lifted, per Executive Order No. 2020-59, we scheduled to begin April 25. This work should be complete within two weeks, weather permitting.

We were planning on doing the work in two phases once the governor's orders were lifted; however, these restrictions were lifted sooner than anticipated, and we will be replacing the lot in one phase. There has been very little traffic to the building and we would like to complete the work and eliminate additional inconveniences after the order expires on May 15. ASI will accommodate access to the building entrances and will provide parking as needed, but please try to use the South entrance as much as possible. We will be replacing much of the concrete at the East entrance.



We were not planning to begin this MUCH-needed work until after the stay-at-home order was lifted. Our contractors are very eager to get back to work and will be following the guidelines set forth by the CDC and Oakland County Health Division to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### JACK THE CAT

Jack the Warehouse Cat has been busy being a model. Check back every week to see what mischief he has gotten into.

This week we present “Jack in the Box.”



### TRIVIA

**Q. What was the name of Harry Potter's snowy owl?**

Send your answers to [theconnection@michiganhumane.org](mailto:theconnection@michiganhumane.org), and the first person to answer correctly will receive a prize!

*Congrats to Tierra Garrison on winning the last trivia question. The answer to that trivia question was a polar bear.*

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