Identifying the Needs of DV Shelters that Provide Services to Survivors with Pets

PURPOSE:

AWI sought to conduct a survey which asked the community of groups that provide safe havens for pets of domestic violence survivors what their needs were and for general feedback. With that information, AWI hopes to facilitate communication between safe havens for pets programs with the goal of strengthening each individual program as well as the community of safe havens for pets.

PROCEDURE:

AWI sent emails to the groups listed on the safe havens for pets of domestic violence survivor's directory. In addition, AWI also reached out by email and domestic violence shelter-related Facebook groups.

A total of 74 responses were received from organizations throughout the U.S. 81.1% of survey respondents included advocates within domestic violence organizations, 12.2% of respondents represented an animal welfare agency, and 2.7% of responses came from individuals looking to promote the safety of domestic violence survivors and/or animals experiencing domestic violence.

RESULTS:

- The respondents represent a variety of types of safe havens for pets. 28.3% offered co-housing, 32.4% offered onsite kenneling, 40.5% offered offsite kenneling, 21.6% offered veterinary lodging, 24.3% offered pet fostering, 6.76% offered Rover's dog boarding services.
  - Note: Survey respondents were able to select more than one offering, as many safe havens utilize multiple safe haven structures to maximize the number of individuals and animals they are able to assist.
- 63.5% responded that they would like a way to communicate with other safe haven groups.
- In response to the question about where assistance was most needed, the answers demonstrate a variety of viewpoints. Out of the 74 responses, 12 indicated a need for funding opportunities, 3 indicated a need for better access to fostering agencies, and 2 indicated a need for resources to co-house pets for a longer period as well as access to veterinary services.
- Quotes from respondents when inquired about what assistance is needed:
  - "Understanding of how best to manage these situations and what resources are available in our community."
  - "Know of other shelters in my area that allow pets. Possibly mentor other orgs planning to begin welcoming pets."
  - "We need more resources for people whose pets have vet needs beyond just wellness exam, vaccinations and flea treatment. Often, pets have medical needs beyond what our clients can afford and/or that we do not have funding to help with. Another issue that we have run into is that one of our clients has to find an alternative home for their pet due to domestic violence, but the pet has issues due to being abused as well. There needs to be more rescues that has an understanding that many of these pets are only acting out because of the abuse they suffered, just like the human clients we serve."
  - "Free/ discounted pet care education resources for owners"
- When asked whether they would like to be contacted again to develop a coalition of safe havens, 62% indicated they would like to be contacted.

Identifying the Needs of DV Shelters that Provide Services to Survivors with Pets

NEXT STEPS

- Provide survey results to survey respondents
- Create a private Facebook group to facilitate communication between safe havens and establish clear community guidelines and goals
- Create a strategic outreach plan to engage as many safe havens as possible in the group
- Proactively encourage discussion and resource sharing within Facebook group
- Re-evaluate needs of safe havens in two years

FOLLOW UP:

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month 2021, the Safe Havens for Pets team created a private Facebook Group to act as a space where domestic violence advocates, human service workers, animal shelter workers, and any and all of those working to address the intersection of animal and family violence, can discuss relevant subject matter, share resources, ask questions and seek guidance.

Safe Havens for Pets Partnership: www.facebook.com/groups/1290390911420061/
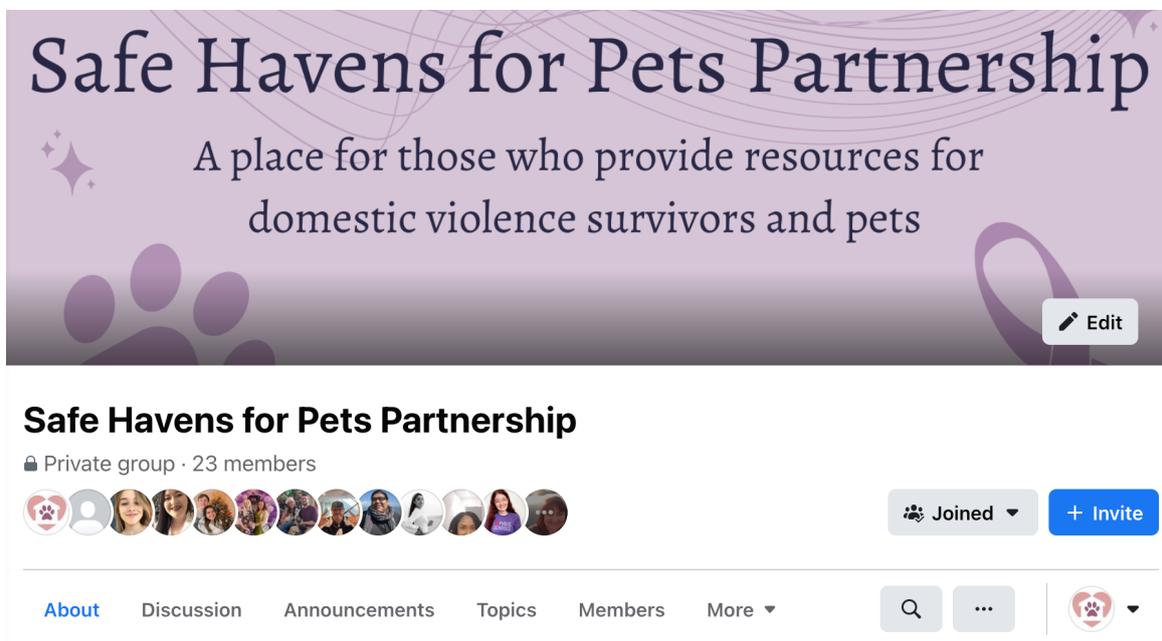
LEARN MORE:

 @SafeHavensforPets

 @SafeHavensforPets

 @SafeHavens4Pets

 safehavensforpets.org