

Deb Kern

Marketing Director at HSHV and a resident of Superior Township

First I want to say that I do not envy your positions right now and I understand that cuts must be made somewhere. I only ask that you look at valued services for what they really are – True money saving resources.

I have worked in Ann Arbor for 28 years and I love this city. I left a corporate job and took a significant pay cut because I saw what our Humane Society could become if people that really cared got behind the mission. To say that it was a challenge is an understatement but I could not be more proud of my decision or what HSHV has become over the last six years.

We invest a significant amount of time and resources into making sure that pet owners in our community can be reunited with their lost pet. The Department of Agriculture states that stray animals must be publically posted. That means you must have a way to let people know you have their animal. We do that now through our website which is interactive so that people can see all the strays that come in and so that people that have lost animals can post pictures and information.

We also provide great customer service for frantic community members who call hoping that we have their beloved pet. In fact, we answered over 5,000 calls from the public so far this year from people checking to see if we had their lost animal. And, we are open 7 days a week so that people can come in and look for their pet. These are people in need of help and we are there to help them.

Another critical piece is that people must know where to go to find their pet. HSHV has always been that facility. I have to wonder if the County is really ready to my elderly neighbor on day 6 that her poodle of 10 years was euthanized on day 5 because she had no idea where to go until then. If stray cats and dogs are housed in many kennels as has been proposed by the County, you have to wonder how in the world people will know where to turn for help.

The extra outreach we do at HSHV, such as banner ads that link to our Lost & Found site, and posting daily on Craigslist and doing advertising in all the small Heritage Newspapers so that rural families also know where to go and who to call is not cheap. HSHV pays for this because it part of our mission and euthanizing people's pets in the very last thing we ever want to do.

HSHV has the highest return to owner rate in Michigan – that means that more people in our County – Washtenaw County are happily reunited with their pet than any other community in Michigan.

I was at the meeting when the commissioners and Bob Gunzel embraced the wonderful partnership that HSHV had with the County and agreed to help us get a new shelter built. I helped lead the 8.5 million dollar capital campaign. You – our commissioners – recognized that

the partnership with HSHV was what our community members wanted because they believe their pets are beloved family members.

It seems insane to me that you helped us become what we are – an award winning shelter - and are now ready to pull away from a contract, and moreover a service that you must perform anyway, without more thorough examination of how we could possibly work together to bring in more revenue and maybe even save more lives.

As I stated in the beginning - I understand it's a difficult time but I am asking you to realize that you actually have an ace up your sleeve in a partnership with HSHV because we know how to save lives AND we ALWAYS find the most cost effective way to do that.

Thank you.

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