



# The Lifesaver Spay/Neuter Program

Project #  
20-507

County: Garrett County

Number of Cats Spayed:	115	Number of Dogs Spayed:	69
Number of Cats Neutered:	110	Number of Dogs Neutered:	64

Amount Received: \$29,155	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0
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### Project Synopsis:

HART for Animals joined the MDA's No-Cost Spay/Neuter Program in 2015. Since that time, we have performed a total of 2,942 no-cost surgeries for the MDA. Despite the many challenges caused by COVID-19, we were still able to complete 358 surgeries in 2020. The program has been very successful in Garrett County and Allegany County, where people begin to contact us in November of the previous year. Unfortunately, due also to the pandemic and the reduction in personnel, HART missed the deadline to apply for 2021.



### Project Description:

The Lifesaver Program was given its name to identify it as a way of saving the lives of animals in our mountain community. When HART began to raise funds to build the HART Center, most of the animals arriving at the shelter had to be euthanized due to the county shelter's lack of space and funds. We opened the HART Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic in 2009, working with volunteer vets to help pet owners who could not afford the veterinary fees. We created a process that helped our low-income residents to keep their pets. When the MDA program was announced, we incorporated it into a formal, well-structured program that could help any pet owner who qualified financially under the Maryland WIC Guidelines.

### Summary of Approach:

The experience of the last five years has allowed HART and our clinic staff to make the program accessible to our two counties, Garrett and Allegany. We have improved the application process, including by providing the application on our web page or, for less digitally able clients, by sending them the application or asking them to come in so that we can help them. The Lifesaver Program has become what we intended - word-of-mouth has made the program popular and effective.



**Accomplishments:**

In 2020, we used the entire amount of our grant and provided surgeries to eight more patients than the 350 that we had committed to do. We also improved our application process by redesigning our form into a two-page format, which will make it easier for our Lifesaver clients. After five years, our reputation precedes us in unexpected ways. We had already completed all the Lifesaver surgeries for 2020, but, as always, many had not been able to apply in time. Our head veterinarian went on a 6-week maternity leave in December, so she decided to hold a HART Neuter-A-Thon for male cats. All the available appointments were taken within two hours of announcing it on Facebook - and 56 male cats were neutered at \$25 each, including rabies vaccination. As part of the event, the young staff members were asked to come up with a unique name for the event so we could repeat it annually. They did. They came up with the name "Festival of Testicles," and everyone enjoyed the day (except the cats, of course). Please see the picture in the Center.

**Lessons Learned:**

Our low-income pet owners have benefited from this program. We are very saddened that we will not be able to offer the program in the current year. However, Ashley, one of our employees, decided to adopt a cat from the shelter last January. She named the female cat Raven, but there were so many things wrong that survival seemed uncertain: she was unvaccinated, had an eye infection, respiratory distress, and weighed only 5 lbs. It turns out that Ashley and Raven could benefit from our various programs (including Lifesaver) and have now bonded into a loving team. Raven now weighs 10 lbs! Raven's and Ashley's picture is on the right. The picture on the left is of one of our adopted kittens, a living example of why HART came into being.

**Attachments:**

Lists of the animals spayed and neutered in October, November, and December, along with the Summary Page for the whole year.

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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM**

