



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Pets for Life

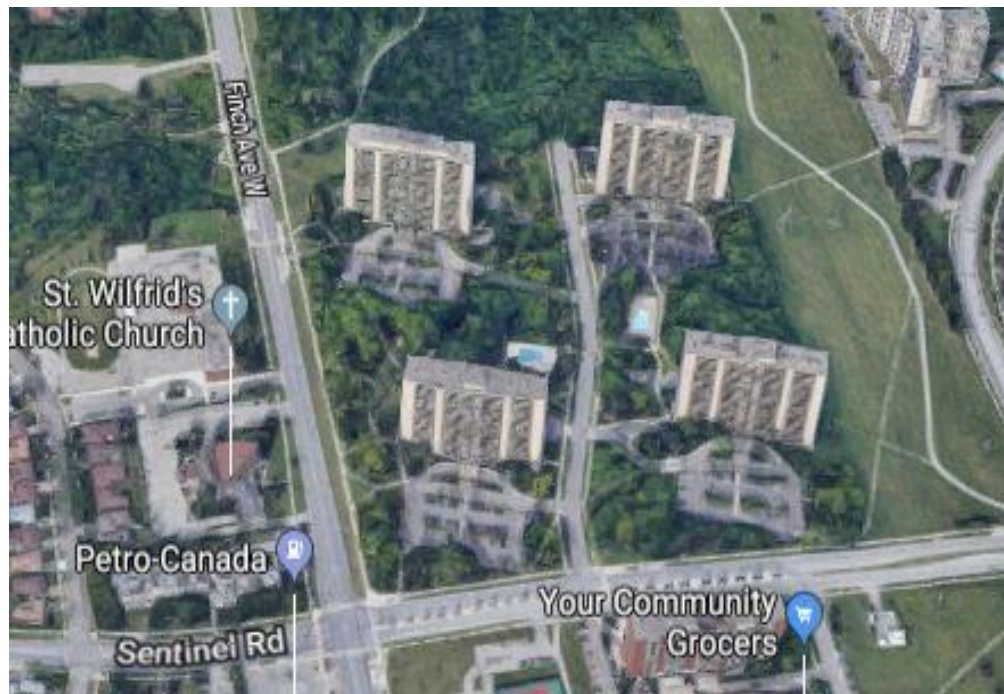
Changing the Conversation

Pets for Life



- Pets for Life is a program of the Humane Society of the United States transforming the lives of dogs and cats.
- Driven by social justice, Pets for Life honors the love people have for their pets by closing the service gap that exists for people and pets in underserved areas.
- Pets for Life addresses systemic inequities and access to care issues in animal welfare.

Rethinking the Narrative on Cruelty and Neglect



- Focus on direct care and closing the resource gap through outreach and information sharing
- Provide access to spay/neuter, wellness, supplies, transport services, and other basic needs for pet owners
- Focus on changing policies that criminalize poverty and negatively impact people and their pets
- Implement change in enforcement practices to distinguish differences between true cruelty/neglect and access to care issues

Acknowledge History and Today's Impact

- Acknowledge discriminatory practices and policies have long been in place impacting modern day systems that disproportionately impact low income communities of color.
- Social justice addresses equitable access to well being and opportunity regardless of a person's background.
- While access to support services is a major problem for pet owners, poverty creates unimaginable barriers that impact in more ways than just in animal welfare.



Understanding Poverty

- It is not appropriate to respond to a community's need for access due to systemic inequities solely with punishment.
- The impact of federal policies that have denied opportunity and the ability to grow wealth for black and brown communities.
- Access to care in animal welfare involves much more than hosting a free event.
- Systems that run on understanding poverty are more solution oriented



Animal Cruelty: A Look at Both Sides

- Restorative justice principles can be appropriate in animal welfare, but not always
- Without changing enforcement practices and providing proactive solutions to access to care barriers, we may be using punitive measures against families unfairly
- Cruelty to animals statutes are broadly defined, even more so with how they are enforced
- Court processes can upend a family's life, we must apply them appropriately
- Address stereotypes on what a good pet owner looks like



Thinking About The Impact

- Being accused of animal cruelty or neglect comes with a long lasting impact
- Surrender or forced surrender of a pet, pet on hold
- Accused → Acquittal or Conviction
 - Fines/fees, prohibition of ownership, surrender of additional animals, jail time, permanent record
- For people facing access to care issues, they do not need to prove themselves as pet owners, we need to provide resources and solutions to keep pets with their families.
- For people where intentional acts have been committed, restorative justice can help to reconnect communities through those practices.



More to Consider

- Equitable access to care can help alleviate case load in systems that are overwhelmed
- Poverty is pervasive and until it no longer exists, we must look at situations being fully informed about systemic inequities and social justice issues
- If we can help a community with access to care issues, we can focus restorative practices with more accuracy and purpose.





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