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500 Homeless Animals at Struggling Sanctuary in New York Get Help from Best Friends Animal Society

Kanab, UT (04/09/2007) — Best Friends Animal Society, which operates the nation's largest animal sanctuary, has mobilized a team to meet the urgent medical and emotional needs of more than 500 homeless animals living at a deteriorating sanctuary outside New York City.

An assortment of dogs, cats, exotic and domestic birds, cows, goats, and retired carriage horses live at Pets Alive, an 80-acre sanctuary for homeless and abandoned animals in Middletown, N.Y.

Pets Alive (www.petsalive.com) has cared for homeless animals for more than 20 years, has been active in exposing farm animal abuse and puppy mills, and is the only retirement home for New York City carriage horses. The sanctuary found itself in trouble when the founder and director, Sara Whalen, fell ill with cancer.

"Sara was one of a kind," says Michael Mountain, president of Best Friends Animal Society. "A one-woman band with a heart of gold, a will of iron, more than 500 homeless animals, a small local staff – and no succession plan."

Just before Ms. Whalen died on March 19, 2007, she issued an urgent call to the Pets Alive Board of Directors to find help for the animals. She was leaving behind more than 500 creatures with only four staff to look after them.

The Pets Alive Board of Directors turned to Best Friends which runs the nation's largest sanctuary for companion animals at its headquarters in Southern Utah near the Grand Canyon. Best Friends is recognized within the animal movement for developing and implementing the best practices in group living situations for companion animals.

A Best Friends team of animal care staff, veterinary support, and sanctuary maintenance has been in New York since March 10, 2007. The team is working around the clock to provide emergency medical care, complete health checks, routine vaccinations, spay/neuter operations and loving attention. Best Friends is also making crucial repairs and improvements that enable interaction, socialization activities, adequate space and access to fresh air for all the animals.

"Local volunteers have come to the rescue and are being a great help," says Mountain. "Humane groups have been very supportive, and veterinarians in the area have also gone the extra mile. We've already been able to start placing some of the healthy dogs and cats in good new homes."

In an agreement with the Pets Alive board, Best Friends will be running the sanctuary for the next three months. This includes completing the current urgently-needed work and, at the end of June, presenting the board with a series of options for the future of Pets Alive.

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“In terms of the future, the sanctuary itself has enormous potential to do good,” says Mountain. “And that was always Sara’s vision for it. In the last few weeks, we’ve heard from many people who are closely in touch with the New York region and who can see the many roles that a sanctuary like Pets Alive could fulfill for the community as a whole. So we’ll be building all of that into our assessment.”

Best Friends is asking for support from anyone who cares about the animals. “Right now, they need all the help they can get,” says Mountain. “Any donation, large or small, will make a big difference.” Best Friends expects medical costs alone to exceed \$150,000.

For more information on how to help the animals at Pets Alive, including adoption information, please visit www.bestfriends.org.

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About Best Friends Animal Society

Located on 33,000 acres in Kanab, Utah, Best Friends Animal Society operates the country’s largest sanctuary for homeless pets and is home, on any given day, to about 1,500 dogs, cats, horses, rabbits, birds and other animals. Best Friends works globally with animal shelters and rescue groups to bring about a time when there will be no more homeless pets. Best Friends advances initiatives nationwide that promote community approaches to make the world a better place through kindness to animals, including adoption, spay/neuter, and humane education programs.

“Kindness to animals builds a better world for all of us.”