

## Our History

Category : Shelter Information

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**1966:** Liz Sills and B Lovitt write to friends with the idea of forming the Virginia Beach SPCA. The first Board of Directors, elected in January includes Sidney S. Kellam, Grover C. Wright, Jr., Charles R. Grandy, Alfred L. Nicholson, Jackson L. Tignor, Joseph T. Crosswhite, Jr., Mrs. Frances P. Warren, Mrs. B Lovitt, Mrs. Elizabeth C. Sills, David Pender III, and M. Frank Abel. The City of Virginia Beach donates land on Farm Road at the intersection of General Booth and Oceana Boulevard. **1968:** \$5000 is raised to build the VBSPCA's first shelter. The American Humane Association issues a loan for \$5000 at 2%, and First and Merchants Bank offers \$10,000 at 6%. Reid Irvin oversees construction and City Manager Russell Hatchett is among those attending the site dedication. The VBSPCA begins the area's first humane education program using two monkeys, Simon and Sam, a raccoon, a boa constrictor and a rabbit named Peterella. **1969:** The shelter opens on January 1. Liz Sills, B Lovitt, Alice McCaw and others work tirelessly as the new shelter cares for more than 5,000 animals in its first year of operation. Volunteer Carol Kolback uses her radio show as "The Pet Lady" to promote the VBSPCA and kindness to animals. **1970:** The VBSPCA is instrumental in closing the primitive city pound, and a new Animal Control Center is built on Leroy Drive. The VBSPCA owns 50 fiberglass cages, and ten outside runs. The full time staff of three: Carol Kolback, E.H. (Ben) Bennett, and Juanita Pearce, plus two teenage assistants Willie Holley and Duane Pearce, keep the doors open seven days a week from 9am to 530pm. **1972:** A spay/neuter clinic is added to the shelter and is equipped with the assistance of Army veterinarians, the Virginia Beach Hospital, and The Humane Society of the United States. Adopted animals are spayed and neutered onsite in one of the first such programs in the nation. Alliances are formed with licensed wildlife rehabilitators including Dee Brandon and Sandra Krebs, to help orphaned and injured birds, raccoons, cottontails, and other animals. A VBSPCA bulletin reads: "NO ANIMAL is ever turned away from our door. NO ANIMAL is allowed to lie suffering by the road if we are called. NO ANIMAL may be mistreated if we can help, within the limits of the law." **1973:** Peggy Boykin joins the staff as Humane Education Director to establish a growing and successful program. The VBSPCA begin selling identification tags to register pets and assist with re-homing lost animals. **1974:** The shelter is hooked up to the city sewer system. Liz Sills becomes Executive Director and Carol Kolback becomes Office Manager. Office Manager earns \$95/week, female shelter workers earn \$85, and male shelter workers earn \$100. **1975:** Adoption fees increase to cover shots and deworming. A crew of 70 volunteers is recruited and trained. The first VBSPCA newsletter, called MEWS, is printed to keep Board Members apprised of shelter happenings. **1976:** The VBSPCA's first mass mailing nets 1842 new members. The Beacon begins publishing photos and descriptions of adoptable animals each week. **1977:** The Virginia Animal Welfare Act, largely written and lobbied for by Liz Sills, is signed into law. Carol Kolback is becomes Executive Director. Jim Kincaid regularly publicizes the shelter on television. A statement written by Liz Sills states, in part, "The mission of the humane society is to prevent suffering (not to prolong life as some sentimentalists mistakenly believe); to improve the condition of life for animals and people in the animal-people syndrome; to find good homes for animals or to humanely destroy them; to organize and coordinate its efforts with those of like-oriented groups to combat not only individual cruelty to animals but also their organized exploitation in dog fighting, redundant research, vivisection, guard dog industries, trapping, roadside zoos, motion pictures, ruthless hunting, factory farming, mare

farms and more — the ways of cruelty are legion.”**1978:** A humane education center and upgraded operating room are added to the shelter. Part-time veterinarians are hired to spay and neuter animals.**1979:** Puppy Kindergarten obedience training begins for the public. Susan Wagner becomes Humane Educator, the first such position in the area that included no other duties. Today, Susan serves on our board of directors. **1980:** The first regularly scheduled pet therapy begins at two nursing homes. The first “Play for the Animals” tennis tournament to benefit the VBSPCA is scheduled. **1981:** The Virginia Beach SPCA opens a full-service low-income veterinary clinic on July 13, with Dr. Clement Bloom as veterinarian. In September, the South Hampton Roads Veterinary Medical Association brings an unfair competition lawsuit for \$1.5 million against the shelter. **1982:** Circuit Court Judge Henry D. Garnett rules against the VBSPCA, saying the employer-employee relationship was an immediate danger to the VBSPCA’s charity tax-free status. He denied the Veterinary Association’s request for monetary damages. Judge Garnett rules that the VBSPCA could lease its clinic to a private veterinarian without endangering its charitable status. The Board of Veterinary Medicine concurred with the ruling 3-2. Dr. Bloom opened his private practice May 10th.**1984:** PAWS newsletter is published, the first newsletter for all VBSPCA members.**1985:** VBSPCA staff remain at the shelter 24 hours to receive pets from people evacuated due to Hurricane Gloria. The service was provided at no charge. **1986:** Plans for a \$1.2 million new shelter are developed and approved by the Board of Directors **1987:** The VBSPCA purchases 2.5 acres on Holland Road. The shelter joins the Ralston Purina Pets for People program, which covers adoption and neutering fees for adopters over 60. **1988:** Steve Burgess is hired as the VBSPCA’s first Development Director. The Celebrity and Animal Ball is held at the Resort and Conference Center, where photographs of local luminaries and their pets are auctioned off. The first Phone-a-thon raises additional money for the shelter. Building committee chairmen Joe Waldo and Jerry Collier begin construction on the new shelter, and Building Fund Honorary Chairmen Mr. and Mrs. G. William Whitehurst, Chairman C. Roger Malbon, and Executive Committee Chairman Brian Winfield begin raising funds for the capital campaign.**1989:** The VBSPCA’s Doris Malbon Taylor Shelter opens in May. New Development Director Kathy Prendergast organizes the First Annual Celebrity and Pet Fashion Show in early June, which includes an Open House to show off the new building to the public. Nearly 400 people purchase tickets and attend. Blackberry, the pet therapy rabbit, joins the staff.**1990:** Kathy Prendergast adds a Silent Auction to the Fashion Show, increases VBSPCA participation at community events such as Earth Day, K9 Karnival, Homeless Animals Day, Kids Fundango, craft shows, and the Neptune Festival. Our aluminum recycling program is established. Monthly appearances on WAVY and WTKR increase adoptions. **1991:** Sharon Adams is hired as Executive Director. Minnie becomes the shelter’s first resident Pet Therapy dog. The American Humane Association presents the VBSPCA with its Excellence Award in the areas of Facilities and Staff, Euthanasia, Operating Programs, and Community Relations. Only 68 shelters in the nation received such an award. **1992/93:** The VBSPCA, in cooperation with the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies and Virginia Beach members of the General Assembly, successfully supports legislation allowing localities to enact cat licensing legislation. In early 1993, the VBSPCA works with city council to enact the ordinance in Virginia Beach.**1993:** The VBSPCA brings lessons of compassion to at-risk 4-year-olds through the Early Discoveries program.**1993/94:** The VBSPCA opens an in-house surgical suite, licensed by the Board of Veterinary Medicine, to spay/neuter all adopted animals before they leave the shelter. The facility is made possible by a generous contribution from Dr. Bloom and other gifts. In early 1994, the shelter begins altering pre-puberal animals (those below six months of age). **1994/95:** The VBSPCA presents a community forum focusing on the link between animal abuse and family violence. The materials created for this program are still in use today, and the forum ran on cable television for several years.**1995/96:** Celebrating 30 years of service, the VBSPCA continues to its focus on animal cruelty and domestic violence. Working with the Police Athletic League, the

shelter creates a four-week class for at-risk teens to teach obedience to shelter dogs. A week-long summer camp for children living with their mothers in battered women's shelters begins.

**1996/97:** Construction begins on the shelter's new treatment and assessment wing, enabling better care for animals with physical or temperamental issues. **1997:** The VBSPCA's air conditioning system breaks, and a *Virginian-Pilot* editorial urges readers to "Dig Deep", explaining that "not only is the Virginia Beach SPCA the only local shelter that accepts every single animal presented, but it finds foster homes for animals in special hardship cases." On Christmas Day, the *Virginian-Pilot*'s front page features Brandi Williams, a 6-year old girl who was in a coma at CHKD and responded only to visits by the VBSPCA's pet therapy dog, Princess. Princess and the VBSPCA volunteers are credited with a "miracle" for bringing Brandi out of her coma. **1998:** The VBSPCA presents a community forum on "Living with your Wild Neighbors." Wildlife biologists and others discuss ways to humanely handle urban and suburban wildlife conflicts. **1999:** The VBSPCA coordinates development and enactment of Virginia's first Felony animal cruelty legislation. The felony statute is limited to repeat offenders. **2000:** The VBSPCA organizes a summit with all area rescue groups to find the best ways to help animals get adopted. **2001:** Celebrating 35 years of service, the shelter is praised by *Virginian-Pilot* columnist Patrick Lackey for setting a record in adoption rates for dogs and cats. Eighty three percent of dogs found homes, as did 58 percent of cats — the latter being 26 percent above the state average. The VBSPCA goes back to Richmond, getting aggravated animal cruelty upgraded to a first-offense Felony. **2002:** Plans are announced for the Second Chance Campaign and a \$1.4 million expansion and renovation. The Princess Foo Foo Memorial Garden is established in honor of the shelter's late, great pet therapy dog. **2003:** The VBSPCA officially opens its new low-cost veterinary clinic for low-income households on Spay Day USA, neutering and spaying 125 in one day! The *Beacon* features the VBSPCA's wonderful newly renovated dog kennels, long before the shelter renovation is complete. The VBSPCA signs an agreement with Virginia Beach Animal Control so that all animals adopted from Animal Control are spayed or neutered by the VBSPCA's clinic before they go home. The Scoop the Poop campaign is launched, drawing attention to the environmental and social problems caused by failure to pick up after pets. Continuing in the tradition established in 1985, shelter staff spend 24 hours at the building to accept animals from people being evacuated due to Hurricane Isabel. More than 100 animals are accommodated. Our wildlife rehabilitators assist more than 200 animals displaced by the storm. **2004:** The VBSPCA initiates Tidewater Partners for Animal Welfare and Sheltering (TPAWS), a new partnership with all area open-access shelters and pounds with the mission of increasing adoptions from shelters, decreasing the number of animals turned in to shelters, and sharing information and expertise regarding the unique problems faced by open admission shelters. Poop pollutes goes national as the syndicated Annie's Mailbox column, appearing in newspapers across the country, lists the VBSPCA website as a resource. More than 4500 people from all over the country download VBSPCA materials from the site. The VBSPCA is recognized as bucking traditional SPCA practices by the *Virginian-Pilot* in a story about our "Home for the Holidays" campaign to find homes for pets at Christmas, featuring home deliveries of pets on Christmas Eve by Santa Claus. Our Humane Education section introduces to innovative new programs: Tails & Tots is a free monthly class for 2-6 year olds and their parents featuring pet care tips and activities, and Listening Ears is a program utilizing animals to assist grade-school aged students who are reluctant readers. The Be A Lifesaver campaign is launched. Utilizing funding from the Alfred L. Nicholson Fund of the Norfolk Foundation, an in-depth public opinion research survey is conducted to determine what it would take to convince more pet owners to acquire their animals from shelters and pounds. The very first Be A Lifesaver ads are designed and placed. **2005:** The Be A Lifesaver Campaign dominates the year's activities as the VBSPCA pushes to saturate South Hampton Roads with the message of adopting from a shelter. The campaign's award-winning ads are featured on

radio, television, newspapers, billboards, and on flyers and posters. Responding to Hurricane Katrina, the VBSPCA sends a team of 10 staffers and board members to assist at shelters in Gulfport, MS, Baton Rouge, LA, and Gonzalez, LA. They return 8 days later with 108 animals rescued from the storm-ravaged region. For the third year in a row, the VBSPCA works closely with local law enforcement personnel in dealing with cat "hoarder" cases, finding homes for dozens upon dozens of animals confiscated from horrific conditions. Our Pet Therapy department adopts a "therapy" cat to a local church and "therapy" dogs to two more nursing homes. These animals actually live among the congregation and residents, bringing unconditional love in exactly the places it is needed most. Working with the Virginia Beach Department of Parks and Recreation and Juvenile Court Services, our Humane Education Department develops a new Pets and Pals program, in which at-risk teens are taught by the VBSPCA to train adoptable dogs using "clicker" training methods.