



## **ABOUT THE RIVMA COMPANION ANIMAL FOUNDATION**

### **Why The Companion Animal Foundation (CAF) Was Established**

The Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association Companion Animal Foundation was established in 2004 to provide financial assistance to low-income pet owners who cannot afford necessary veterinary care for their companion animals. The Foundation's mission is to provide affordable healthcare for all pets.

The need for urgent veterinary care is statewide and overwhelming. In a single year, there were more than 15,000 emergency visits to Rhode Island's veterinary after-hours facilities, with an average expense of \$350. The Foundation is the first of its kind in the nation despite a need across the country for similar assistance for pet owners.

Our animal companions are important to us for many different reasons. They often fill a void that humans do not. Relationships that people have with their pets can echo the emotional relationships we have with other humans and provide an attachment that sometimes can serve as the prime base of support during difficult times. With pets playing such a role in their lives, owners can feel helpless and guilty when their pets fall ill, and these feelings can be compounded when finances affect whether those pets can receive care.

### **How CAF Works**

CAF's business model is simple. It raises funds from grants, sponsorships, events and individual contributions. Funds are then utilized to support a modest administrative cost, with the balance distributed as grants-in-aid to help low-income pet owners afford veterinary care for their pets.

Grants are easily accessed by veterinarians who service their clients when the need is most urgent. The absence of any waiting period makes emergency care possible and there is no cumbersome documentation required of participants. The CAF also benefits from being the largest single source of funds statewide and is equally distributed to veterinarians across Rhode Island, with larger practices that service more clients receiving a larger percentage of funds.

### **Foundation Success To Date**

Since the first distribution of funds, more than 300 pets at 38 veterinary hospitals across Rhode Island have received CAF assistance. CAF has also given veterinary practices more flexibility when offering treatment. Veterinary support staff, as well as shelter and humane workers, have all been faced with heart-wrenching situations in which finances forced a lack of care. For all involved, the ability to help individuals who are faced with extremely difficult, even unbearable, decisions has been a true relief.

**RIVMA Companion Animal Foundation  
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401-521-PETS (7387)  
companionanimalfoundation.org**

A majority of pet owners who utilize CAF funds are first-time clients of veterinary practices. Many are seen at emergency facilities and report no primary veterinarian. This has reinforced the need for veterinary outreach and education to these pet owners, resulting in improved proactive healthcare such as rabies, heartworm, flea and tick prevention.

### **Quick Facts, November 2008**

Founded: In 2004 by the Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association

Major Funders: Rhode Island Foundation  
Banfield Charitable Trust

Funds Distributed to Date: Over \$130,000

Number of Pets Assisted to Date: More than 300 pets at 38 veterinary hospitals across Rhode Island

### **CAF Patient Profiles**

CAF patients range from needing routine wellness care to more urgent lifesaving treatments. Veterinarians have used the fund to help treat patients with cancer, skin infections, broken bones, ear infections and injuries. Cats, dogs, rabbits, birds and pocket pets have all received financial assistance. Numerous pets across the state have benefited from the program. Please visit the “**CAF Grant Stories**” area of the Companion Animal Foundation website to see in-depth profiles and videos of just a few of those stories.

#### At a Glance CAF Profiles:

- Misty, a tiny, fluffy ball of white fur, was attacked by another dog when she was out for a morning walk with her owner. Misty’s injuries were serious and her owner rushed her to a nearby veterinarian where he was told that she needed extensive surgery to repair the wounds. Disabled, and living day-to-day, he simply didn’t have the money needed to pay for the surgery. Funds from the Companion Animal Foundation made the surgery possible and today Misty is fully recovered.
- An elderly disabled man from Warwick who recently lost his wife had received a young puppy from his children. The puppy was gravely injured in a car accident and had his badly broken leg repaired with the help of CAF funds.
- A cat who was the sole family member of a disabled woman from Cranston suffered a urinary tract obstruction and was treated with CAF support.
- A dog from Cranston had an emergency intestinal operation for an obstruction.
- A dog from Newport received necessary X-Rays and treatment.
- A cat from Bristol with skin allergies was treated for a skin infection.
- A dog from Warwick was treated for an ear infection.
- A rabbit from North Kingston was helped through a difficult birth.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are there other programs like CAF?**

The Companion Animal Foundation is the first of its kind in the nation.

### **Do veterinarians have to be in Rhode Island?**

No. The Companion Animal Foundation is available to all veterinarians who are members of the Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association. Some RIVMA member veterinarians practice in nearby areas of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

### **Who can get CAF funding?**

The Foundation has established a set of criteria that veterinarians can utilize to determine whether a client is able to benefit from the fund, based on HUD community median income guidelines as well as owner participation in programs such as food stamps, heating assistance, etc. Applicants must utilize at least one of the social service programs or make less than the federal poverty level amount listed on the application form.

### **How do people apply for CAF funding?**

People ask their veterinarian if there is funding available through his or her practice. Each practice has application forms to fill out and the answers to the questions will let the veterinarian know if the applicant qualifies for funding.

### **Where does CAF get its funding?**

CAF raises funds from grants, sponsorships, events and individual contributions.

### **What does the CAF do with donations it receives?**

The vast majority of donated funds (90%) go directly to pet care. Each veterinarian receives an annual stipend that goes to support the care of the pets of low-income owners. That stipend amount is dependent on the donations received and can vary from year to year.

### **What sort of medical problems get treated?**

CAF patients range from needing routine wellness care to more urgent, lifesaving treatments. Veterinarians have used the fund to help treat patients with cancer, skin infections, broken bones, ear infections and injuries. Cats, dogs, rabbits, birds and pocket pets have all received financial assistance.

### **How does the CAF operate?**

CAF is run by a volunteer board of directors and a part-time administrative assistant. The board consists of veterinarians and community members, all of whom have a deep love and respect for our companion animals and understand how important pets are to their human families.

### **How can people make donations?**

You can donate through the website ([www.companionanimalfoundation.org](http://www.companionanimalfoundation.org)) or by sending a check directly to the CAF at 11 S Angell St., # 311, Providence, RI 02906. All donations are fully deductible as a charitable contribution under IRS guidelines.

## **Board of Directors**

CAF was established by veterinarians and is governed by a veterinary and community-based board of directors.

### **Board of Directors**

#### **Cathy Lund, DVM, President**

Cathy Lund, DVM, is the owner of City Kitty Veterinary Care for Cats in Providence. She graduated from Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine and later worked at the Cat Practice in New York City, where she realized that being a cat veterinarian was "purr-fect" for her. Dr. Lund also volunteers at Southside/Broad Street, the Providence Preservation Society and is a member of the Providence Historic District Commission. She is the past president of RIVMA. Dr. Lund and her husband restored their Providence home and she enjoys painting, architecture and community development.

#### **Henry Wietsma, DVM, MS, DABVP, Vice President**

Henry Wietsma, DVM, MA, DABVP, is the owner of the Wickford Veterinary Clinic. His area of specialty is avian medicine, and he is affiliated with Ocean State Veterinary Specialists, where he sees avian and exotic patients. He is a past president of RIVMA. Dr. Wietsma is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine and received his master's degree in immunology from Ohio State University. He is an avid snowboarder and also enjoys sailing with his wife and two children.

#### **Courtney Rebensdorf, DVM, Secretary**

Courtney Rebensdorf, DVM, owns and operates Oaklawn Animal Hospital in Cranston. She is a graduate of Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine and is a past board member of Volunteer Services for Animals. She also serves on numerous veterinary panels throughout the country. She has been honored by the Women's Center of Rhode Island for her Pet Safe volunteer work, and she is a former president of RIVMA. Dr. Rebensdorf lives in Providence with her husband, enjoys art and music, and is a gourmet cook.

#### **Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM, Treasurer**

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM, is co-owner with his veterinarian wife of Ocean State Veterinary Specialists, a referral veterinary center in East Greenwich. He graduated from Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and later completed an internship at Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Boston. He became board-certified in small animal internal medicine after completing his residency at Purdue University. Dr. Block pursued his interests in animal welfare and the human-animal bond and received his master's degree from the Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University in 1997. He is a trustee of the Rhode Island Foundation, an adjunct professor at Tufts, and a past-president of RIVMA.

#### **Roy Dubs**

Roy Dubs is a Rhode Island native and a founder of Ocean State Job Lot. As a successful entrepreneur, Dubs is responsible for building a New England company that now comprises seventy stores. Roy is a member of the board of directors of Turning Pointe (I looked it up and Pointe is the correct spelling) Therapeutic Riding which promotes riding to the developmentally challenged and also physically and emotionally impaired individuals of all ages.

**Randy Kass**

Randy Kass is a certified public accountant and owner of Kass & Associates in Providence. He has a long interest in animal issues and shares his Cumberland home with his fiancé, two cats and a dog. Mr. Kass is active in many non-profit ventures, including Capital Arts in Providence.

**Wayne M. Kezirian, Esq.**

Wayne M. Kezirian is a partner in the law firm Gaebe & Kezirian in Providence. He is a trustee of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

**Elizabeth M. Myers, Esq.**

Elizabeth M. Myers is a partner in the law firm Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP. Her practice concentrates in all aspects of corporate, antitrust and healthcare law, with extensive transactional experience in mergers, acquisitions, reorganizations, business tax planning and equipment leasing. She represents for-profit and not-for-profit corporations, hospitals, clinics and physician groups before the Department of Justice, Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general.

**Lisa M. Signorelli**

Lisa is a fundraising consultant. She is an avid fundraiser, having served in senior positions at University of Rhode Island, University of Connecticut and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is a graduate of URI, enjoys dog training and lives in Providence with her husband, two dogs and three cats.

**Press inquires, please contact:**

Cathy Lund, DVM, CAF President  
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