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TACOMA ANIMAL SHELTER GRAPPLES WITH RECORD-BREAKING DOG CAPACITY CRISIS: COMMUNITY HELP NEEDED

TACOMA, Wash. – The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County is turning to the community for support to address a record-breaking capacity crisis as the shelter cares for 264 dogs, the highest number in seven years.

Fueled by the intake of 60 dogs and cats from a Pierce County Animal Control cruelty investigation on Dec. 16, the capacity crisis has stretched the shelter's resources beyond its limits. Following the large-scale intake, the shelter was caring for 147 dogs in the facility plus nearly 100 in foster homes, which was a challenge at the time.

Now, just a week later, the number of dogs under the shelter's care has climbed to a total of 264, further straining the shelter's outdated facility and resources.

"While we need adopters and foster volunteers, we need more," says Emily Keegans, Chief Operating Officer at the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County. "We need the community's active participation in animal welfare."

With this continuing capacity crisis, office spaces have been repurposed to house multiple dogs, and temporary kennels are being used when no other kennel is available, creating an urgent need to prevent more animals from entering the overcrowded shelter. A key measure is keeping lost pets out of the shelter while helping reunite them with their families, within the communities in which they are found.

"Most lost pets don't wander far from home," says Keegans. "While many think the shelter is the best option for found animals, bringing them to a shelter can actually hinder their chances of quickly reuniting with the families. Temporarily caring for lost pets near where they were found is often the fastest way to get them back home."

The shelter urges community members to play an active role in animal welfare by:

- **Temporarily caring for lost and found pets:** Check for ID tags, post signs in the neighborhood where the pet was found, and use local lost-and-found platforms to help reunite the pet with their family. The shelter can assist by scanning for a microchip, posting found pets on its website, and providing additional support to facilitate reunification. Additionally, the shelter can provide food, supplies, and crates (while supplies last). For more information and resources, visit www.thehumanesociety.org/lostpets.
- **Adopting:** With 264 dogs under the shelter's care, adopters are desperately needed to provide loving homes and create life-changing space for animals in need at the shelter. The shelter plans to waive adoption fees for dogs one year and older Jan. 2-5. To view all animals available for adoption, visit the shelter website at www.thehumanesociety.org/adopt.

- **Fostering:** For those unable to adopt, the shelter is seeking foster volunteers who are able to foster dogs. Foster volunteers provide a temporary safe space for a dog in need, while the shelter provides all the supplies and ongoing veterinary care. Learn more about fostering at www.thehumanesociety.org/get-involved/foster.

“The number of animals coming in exceeds the number going out into new homes,” says Keegans. “This crisis underscores the need for our community to help prevent unnecessary shelter entries, ensuring our limited resources can continue to serve animals in need of immediate medical attention.”

As one of few open-admission shelters in the state, the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County accepts all animals, regardless of age, breed, or medical or behavioral needs. However, the shelter’s outdated facility and limited resources make community support essential during this capacity crisis.

About the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County

The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County was founded by a handful of compassionate community members and has grown into one of the state’s largest animal welfare agencies. Each year, we find loving homes for more than 6,000 pets, reunite over 1,100 animals with their overjoyed owners, and provide care for thousands more in our community. Additionally, we offer several comprehensive programs and resources, including Spay/Neuter & Wellness Vouchers, a monthly Vaccine & Wellness Clinic, a Pet Food & Supply Pantry, behavior advice, and private rehoming services. Learn more at www.thehumanesociety.org.

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