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**The Animal Thrift Project** is a program of the William A. Harrison, Jr. Foundation. The primary purpose of the store (name to be announced) is to create a sustainable revenue source to raise funds for animal care organizations in Greater Richmond through sales of donated merchandise in a retail setting. Our support will include direct grants to non-profits already doing the work: TNR and feral colony management; animal rescue, including native wildlife; low-cost pet spay/neuter; parasite prevention; and minor medical intervention.

**Our dream** is to help connect and amplify these organizations, including the 50+ vital smaller ones that are largely built and run by volunteers, and to become a reliable, helpful hub that unites the animal community. Our retail space will host ongoing adoption events, vaccination clinics, and provide an accessible home to a permanent pet food and supply pantry. Over time, our efforts will include partner programming, targeted education, fundraising events, and even a cat cafe.

Richmond is one of few cities of its size without a non-profit retail store that benefits animals. **We are changing that.**

In 2021, **68,794** cats and **60,200** dogs entered Virginia shelters.

**61,528** of those were owner-surrendered.

Source: Virginia Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services Animal Custody report

The overwhelming barrier for all groups of pet owners nationwide is **financial**, for all types of care: 80% for preventative care, 73.8% for sick care, and 55.7% for emergency care.

95% of respondents indicated they considered their animal to be a **member of the family**.

Nearly all veterinarians surveyed agree that there is a relationship between the owner's **emotional health** and being able to obtain care for their pet.

Source: Access to Veterinary Care: Barriers, Current Practices, and Public Policy report

**While a few of the roughly 30 thrift stores in Greater Richmond are also non-profit**, there is not one that raises funds to benefit animal care. There are several successful ones in other parts of the state. Shoppers love the thrill of the thrift, but passion for animals is the driver that will send support to *this* store, versus the competition.

Our initial mission was simple: to raise funds through the sale of donated items to benefit local animal rescue and care organizations. Our research into the market, and meetings with leaders from many of these organizations helped us understand some of the underlying challenges, and revealed even more ways we might be helpful.

Last year, thousands of Virginians relinquished their pets. Economic hardship often prevents pet owners from purchasing adequate food or providing even basic medical care, which is in turn a leading cause of owner surrenders. This is especially devastating for seniors living on fixed incomes, whose pets are a primary source of companionship. Studies repeatedly show that pets can provide significant support for good mental and emotional health.

Animal care organizations report that others simply abandon their animals, which leads to overpopulation in stray and feral colonies. That adds to out-of-control animal reproduction, flea infestation, heartworms and other devastating communicable diseases.

Unspayed female cats give birth to an average of 1.7 litters each year, with as many as five kittens per litter. In 2021, 68,794 stray or abandoned cats and 60,200 dogs entered Virginia shelters.

Local animal organizations that offer medical care are understaffed, which prevents them from providing vital services. There is a nationwide shortage of veterinary techs who help meet many of those needs, such as spaying and neutering. Some animal organizations are even partnering with veterinary students by providing scholarships for the two year program in exchange for the student working in their clinics for a specified time following graduation.

And it's proven time and again that people do want to help; they just don't always have the funds to do so. We can help them help.

Our store will connect the animal-loving population, which is extraordinary in Richmond, with caregivers, rescue organizations, foster efforts and clinics. It will provide a way for them to participate in solutions by donating their household goods, furniture and supplies, to be sold in our store. Donors—as well as shoppers—will know they are directly contributing to a cause they believe in.

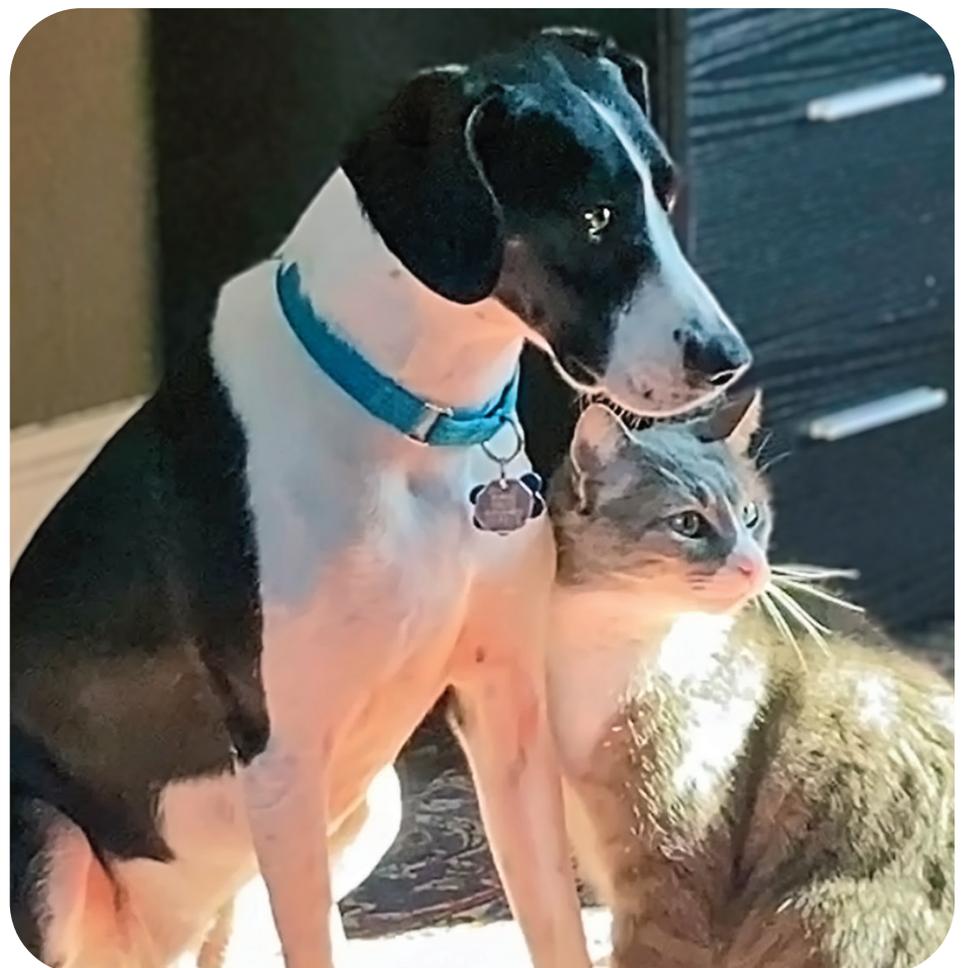
Proceeds from the store will create a sustainable, ongoing fund, from which we will provide annual grants to non-profit animal care organizations for specific, mission-driven long- and short-term goals, such as:

- supplementing vet tech scholarships;
- low-cost spay and neuter clinics;
- supplies for feral colony management, such as humane traps, food, and preventative medicines;
- rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured wildlife; and much more.

Additionally, partnerships and our retail space can provide a dependable hub for:

- regular pet adoption events;
- adoption meet-and-greet sessions;
- a reliable, easy access pet food and supply pantry
- vaccination clinics;
- animal behavior education events;
- outreach and food/supply deliveries to teams that access seniors and underserved populations (such as Meals on Wheels, Feed More, and mobile caregivers.)

**We intend to connect, elevate, amplify and fund proven organizations and innovative approaches to provide the most impact possible, with funds generated by community donations, purchases and financial contributions.**



## William A. Harrison, Jr. Foundation Leadership Team



**William A. Harrison, Jr.** has more than 30 years of leadership experience in the local nonprofit community, including the Fan Free Clinic (Health Brigade), the Richmond Red Cross, and ten years as Executive Director of Diversity Richmond. During his tenure there, he refurbished the image and impact of the Foundation, their primary revenue source, Diversity Thrift, and the building itself, while creating partnerships and programming that built the center into a nationally recognized space and voice for the LGBTQ+ community. Not done serving Richmond, Bill created his Foundation and this premier Animal Thrift Project to help sustain another underserved community. Bill shares his home with his rescue cat, Billy, and dog, Lillie.

**Mark Burkett** is co-founder and co-owner of Mongrel in Carytown. Opened in 1991, the popular greeting card and gift store recently celebrated its 31st anniversary. Mark is also co-founder of chocolatepaper, a greeting card, gift and chocolate shop. Located on the Roanoke City Market, the store just celebrated its 16th anniversary. Both stores are consistently voted best in their class by local media/readers. Mark is co-founder of Galaxy Diner in Carytown, which opened in 1999. He sold the restaurant in 2004. Prior to entering the retail realm, Mark worked in banking for 14 years, as branch manager, mortgage loan originator, and in the secondary market. Devoted to his faithful dog companions since childhood, Mark says they bring out his best paternal instincts. His current lucky dog, Lillie, gets to go to work with him every day.

**Laura Cotterman** is a nonprofit fundraising professional with over 20 years of success. She is also a lifelong farmer, animal lover and advocate. She works as a volunteer for City Kitty Project RVA, not only fundraising but fostering kittens and helping with community cats. "Animal rescue organizations need help," she says, "and the WAHJF has the vision to provide resources, from direct funding to programming to assisting pet owners and

rescues, to providing space for adoption events and veterinary care clinics. I have seen firsthand how this support will make a large impact on animal welfare in RVA. I am looking forward to making a difference for animals and their owners at scale with this excellent project."

**Lisa Cumbey** is a designer and creative director specializing in strategic brand expression, and is well-known for her discerning cross-discipline creative approach. Lisa, along with her team at Design Manifesto and Propolis Design Group, has won numerous awards for branding, packaging, event and print design, and her work has been juried into many publications. She has been an active board member for a number of Richmond non-profits, has rescued, repaired and homed countless urban cats, and is enjoying her first little dog, Lola Grace. "I'm really excited to work on this effort to help the animal community. We're all animal lovers, obviously. But more than that, we appreciate the impact that caring for these creatures has on the human heart. We want to help people enjoy, and be able to sustain, those relationships."

**Mike Doherty** is co-owner of Mongrel in Carytown, and has more than a decade of retail and product development experience. Using his background in graphic design and web development, Mike excels at the technical side of creative marketing communications, in addition to his role in operations and finance. Mike is a life-long animal lover with a particular soft-spot for hound dogs. His current hound, Tucker, was rescued in rural Virginia after being abandoned for his lack of interest in hunting or sports—two things he has in common with Mike.

**Dr. Justin Jones, DVM**, has always had a passion for making veterinary medicine more accessible for all animals. He owns and is the solo practitioner of Jones Veterinary Care, a full service clinic focused on increasing the availability of high quality, affordable veterinary care in the Richmond area. Dr. Jones shared, "This venture could have an immense positive impact on our community. There are very few affordable care options for animals in our city and even fewer funding sources for people who have no discretionary income at all. I come in contact with people each and every day that would benefit from the success of this endeavor. It would directly save lives, because when someone can't afford veterinary care, it often results in euthanasia, or an animal succumbing to a disease."

**Jerome Legions** left Anthem BCBS to become an entrepreneur, creating Grass Cutters, LLC. However, his true passion is community engagement and volunteering. Since 2016, he has been the president of Carver Area Civic Improvement League. In addition to his volunteer political campaign strategist work, Jerome serves on several boards, including Reimagining Monument Ave. (Treasurer), Embrace Carver Elementary School Foundation (Secretary), and City of Richmond's Participatory Budget Commission, among others. He works tirelessly for his passion project, Moore Street School Foundation. "I am so excited to be included as a member of WAHJF. Although Richmonders love their fur family members, the agencies that facilitate adoptions and administer care of animals prior to adoption need help. Day to day operations can be a struggle. This mission will help to lessen the load." Jerome has two dogs, Bella and Shi Shi.

**A** study conducted by Global Data in 2022 concluded that 61% of 2,000 adult Americans surveyed shopped for second-hand items. The study also stated that 76% of the secondhand items purchased were in the categories of electronics, furniture, home goods and home improvement. It is estimated that more than 272 million Americans now buy/sell secondhand.

With no other thrift store in the region raising funds for animal care, our Animal Thrift Project will be a valued leader in the marketplace.

Thrift stores are popular shopping venues for a variety of reasons. For example, furniture, clothing, art, household goods and other repurposed items are sold at greatly reduced rates over their newer counterparts. With the constant increases in the cost of living that Americans are facing, thrift stores help shoppers stretch their budgets.

"Recycle and reuse" and "zero waste" efforts have been a boon to thrift store donations, as well as thrift store shopping. In addition to selling as much donated gently used merchandise as possible, we will donate unsaleable inventory to recycling programs (electronic parts, batteries, metals, clothing).

The nonprofit missions of thrift stores attract customers, donors and volunteers. Every community in America has a huge population of pet owners who consider their animals as family members and love supporting causes that will contribute to the happiness and care of animals and their owners.

An initial priority of our team is to raise funds for the purchase of a truck and the employment of a qualified driver and helper. The vehicle will cost approximately \$75,000. The service of pick-up and delivery of larger items, such as furniture and appliances, is an advantage for any thrift store. Many donors do not have the capacity to move and deliver larger items, and select their destination for donations accordingly. We will charge a minimal delivery fee for purchases, but pickup services for donations will be free. Furniture carries the largest profit margin in thrift stores, so it's vital that we acquire as much as possible.

Good pricing of inventory for sale is critical to a store's success. Our team has the experience to assess donated inventory and price appealingly. Excellent customer service is also imperative. Our employees and volunteers will be trained for gracious customer service, safety, and efficiency.

### **Store organization and management**

William A. Harrison, Jr., Chair, will serve as the volunteer full-time thrift store manager until the Foundation can afford to fund that position. An assistant manager, along with additional staff, will also be hired as soon as budget allows.

Initially, we will be open for business Wednesday through Sunday 10:00 AM till 5:00 PM, and extend to seven days a week when fully staffed. Pick up and delivery will be available Monday through Friday.

Staff will include two cashiers (Wednesday-Sunday), and two to three parttime employees to process and stock inventory on alternating days. The store manager will also assist with these responsibilities. Volunteers will be recruited to staff the processing center. We plan to partner with local courts for appropriate community service labor.

The thrift store will sell gently used and quality donated items such as furniture, art, clothing, household goods, kitchenware, collectibles and home decor at deeply discounted prices. A separate area of the store will showcase specially curated merchandise, in addition to select consignment.

### **Marketing**

Our team includes professional design and marketing experts who will provide pro bono services to our store. Initial announcements will be delivered through traditional press and news features, extensive social media campaigns, html emailings, and web-based push ads. Ongoing marketing will also include collaborations with local influencers, partnerships with beneficiaries and animal care providers, and persistent content generation. Our regular opt-in digital newsletter will feature interest-



ing and popular store merchandise, special donations, WAHJF activities, in-store partner events, and inspiring examples of the work being accomplished due to thrift store proceeds.

One of our missions is to highlight and amplify the existence and works of animal care organizations. Frequent stories will call attention to their work, their people, their needs, and most importantly, the animals. Our leadership is already involved in most of the relevant neighborhood associations, and our content will be included in their social media, print newsletters and mailings.

### **We're on our way**

We have received our 501(c)(3) charity designation from the IRS. Donations made after June 2, 2022 are tax-deductible.

We have signed a lease for an excellent, accessible retail location, and negotiated free storage for 90 days while waiting for the current tenant to vacate.

We have already accepted inventory donations with a retail value of over \$30,000, with more on the way.

Our fundraising goal is \$500,000, which will cover the opening costs and the first year's operations expenses. We have already received more than \$130,000 in donations and pledges. Our intention is that the thrift store will be self-supporting within 18 months, and future monetary donations will support programs that help the animal welfare beneficiaries.