

Dear Amy,

During these difficult days, we are grateful that the Barry Community Foundation is offering financial relief to charities that have been affected by Covid-19. What a beautiful gesture in honor of your 25th anniversary! Because of the pandemic, our clients' needs have increased dramatically, our donations have dwindled, and most of our major fund-raisers, such as SummerFest and our annual Lasagna Dinner, have been canceled.

Last year, we increased our Spay/Neuter reimbursements from \$20 to \$40 and we doubled our Good Samaritan certificates to \$50 each. Good Samaritan certificates are given to anyone who takes a sick or injured stray cat or dog to a veterinarian for medical attention. As a result, our expenses have increased substantially. Year to year, our Good Samaritan expenses increased from \$2,200 to \$2,720 and our Spay/Neuter expenses increased from \$8,780 to \$15,980. We also launched a new education program for any second-grade class in Barry County that wants to participate. Our initial outlay for this revamped program was \$620.

Because of Covid-19, our Pet Meals on Wheels expenses have doubled. And since the number of people facing financial hardships has increased, more and more residents rely on our Pet Food Pantry for assistance.

Our latest program has been to tackle the feral cat crisis in Barry County. We have a team that traps feral cats and finds temporary foster homes for them while we schedule their spay/neuter appointments. We then seek permanent homes for them.

We are including some excerpts and photos from our 2019 newsletter which highlight the programs we offer in Barry County. Thank you for your consideration and thank you for your generous support of the charities in our community.

Warm regards,  
Carol Mantle, Treasurer

*"As an organization, we are honored to assist pet owners in so many different ways. Today, one of our major goals is to promote spaying and neutering to prevent pet overpopulation and reduce the number of homeless dogs and cats in our community. At any time of the year, residents of Barry County who are in financial need can contact us for a spay/neuter voucher that can be used at participating veterinarians. This year we increased the value of the vouchers from \$20 to \$40. Over the last six years, we have provided almost \$50,000 worth of vouchers to assist area residents.*

*In addition, we have funds to cover other veterinary services for those who need monetary assistance. Last year we provided \$5,400 worth of care through this program. We also provide vouchers to people who have rescued animals that need medical attention. This year, we increased the value of our Good Samaritan vouchers from \$25 to \$50.*

*We stock a pantry with dog and cat food for those who have fallen on hard times and can't afford to feed their pets. And we coordinate with the Commission on Aging to provide Pet Meals on Wheels to seniors who request the service.*

*We also help fund wildlife rehabilitation efforts in Barry County. We're so grateful to have Dawn Koning, a Vietnam veteran, an accredited wildlife rehabber, and an all-around amazing woman, sit on our board. She spends countless hours, day and night, nursing orphaned and injured animals back to health before she releases them into the wild. For those who will not survive, she provides a humane end to their suffering. Very few people have the stamina, the skills, and the emotional strength to do her very challenging job. Thanks to the support of our remarkable donors, last year we were able to allocate \$5,500 to help Dawn carry out her noble calling.*

*We have set aside funds for residents of Green Gables Haven who need housing for their pets while they seek shelter from abusive relationships. Studies have shown that victims will remain in dangerous situations because they fear what might happen to their pets after they leave. As a pet becomes an increasingly vital member of the family, the threat of violence to that pet becomes a powerful force for the abuser. Multiple studies have found that from 49% to 71% of battered victims reported that their pets had been threatened, harmed, and/or killed by their partners. Those victims are up to 48 percent less likely to break free from an abusive situation because they don't want to leave their pets behind. We want to remove that barrier.*

*We have also partnered with the Red Cross to fund housing for pets displaced as a result of emergencies or natural disasters*

*Education is an important part of our mission. We participate in the Barry Community Foundation's scholarship program by providing financial assistance to an area student pursuing an animal-related field of study.*

*We also reach out to second-graders, who are at a very formative age, to promote the humane treatment of all animals. Pets help children develop empathy, loyalty, compassion, and responsibility. Our "Caring for Pets" program is available to all second-grade classes in Barry County. We talk about how to care for family pets; and we show how an animal can use its face, ears, tail, and posture to let us know whether it's friendly or threatening. Most importantly, we emphasize how pets, like any family member, should be treated with love and respect.*

*By using student volunteers and our plush kittens, we also demonstrate how neutering and spaying just one male cat and one female cat can prevent over 2,000 unwanted births during a four-year period. We wrap up our program by giving each student a certificate of achievement, an origami dog, a paw-print pencil, some stickers, cat and dog paper clips, drawing and coloring projects, and our phone number. We ask them to find out if their pets have had that "special operation". If their family can't afford to pay for the procedure, we let them know that the Humane Society will help."*