

Our History

In the mid 80's friends and neighbors concerned about the plight of stray cats and dogs, organized and began to act as a group to help homeless pets. They worked to care for and find homes for many stray dogs and cats.

In 1987 this group became incorporated as the Humane Society of Northwest Iowa.

In 1996 - 1997, after nearly 10 years of temporarily caring for pets in their homes, this group raised the money and with a matching grant of \$100,000 from Andrea and Norman Waitt Jr., a building to house the homeless was completed. It was named for the Waitt's dog, Chelsea, and may be correctly called the Chelsea Dog Shelter. It houses a bright reception area, shelter office, 28 dog kennels - 14 with outside runs, impound kennels, a crematorium, 4 "meet & greet" rooms, a pet care administration area, and staff lounge.

In 1999, Anne Thorne Weaver donated \$100,000 to build a large addition on the shelter's west end. Today, it houses the "Weaver Cattery" Around 35 cats and kittens temporarily call it home.

1999 was the first year of Jam for the Animals - an outdoor music festival that raised money to support the shelter. The annual event ran for 9 years, featured over 50 area musicians, and raised over \$50,000.

In 2002, Bob & Genie Reed and many of their friends organized what came to be known as "A Taste of Italy." As the HSNWIA's most popular fundraiser, it has raised over \$149,000 while providing a wonderful evening of great wine, fine cuisine, and warm friendship.

In 2005, the HSNWIA changed its adoption policy to include spay & neuter of every pet, up-to-date vaccinations, including rabies, and micro-chip identification.

In 2006, the HSNWIA received ownership of its internet domain name and began a new, expanded web site featuring success stories, pictures, & videos.

In 2008, PAWS With A Cause was begun as a program to give back to the community while fulfilling the shelter's mission statement. More than 450 times the PAWS van has brought pets to visit care facilities providing interactive pet therapy. PAWS Youth provides an education program for young people to prevent dog bites and to teach responsible pet care.

In 2011, after operating as a no-kill shelter for 7 years, the Humane Society of NW Iowa was officially designated a NO-Kill shelter!