

# ROLLING OUT HELP

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Invited by Pat Laurens, German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America

## Community Outreach

On the Sunday before the June Delegate meeting in Raleigh, a small group of Delegates and AKC Reunite staff came together to discuss the feasibility of a pet disaster relief trailer program. After a four hour meeting followed by two days of Delegate tours of a fully stocked trailer, the consensus was “Yes, let’s do this!”

The AKC Reunite Board of Directors helped accelerate the program by providing their unanimous support of the project and allocating \$250,000 over the next two years to help AKC clubs make AKC Pet Disaster Relief a reality.

In less than 100 days, AKC Pet Disaster Relief was launched at the September Delegates Meeting. The American Kennel Club, AKC Reunite, and AKC dog clubs are now joining forces to donate mobile trailers filled with non-perishable pet sheltering supplies to local emergency management teams. These custom-configured 16-foot trailers will store and deliver essential supplies to designated emergency pet sheltering locations to help pets in harm’s way as a result of a disaster. AKC Pet Disaster Relief trailers are filled with supplies to create one of two types of safe, temporary sheltering for at least 65 displaced pets:

### Co-location Shelters:

A shelter that houses both humans and their animal companions. The people housed at the shelter are responsible for their animal’s general care.

### Lost and Found Pet Shelters:

Displaced animals are housed in what often becomes a pop-up reunion center as people and animals are reunited. Approved volun-

teers and shelter staff provide animal care.

**And the program is off and running!** After AKC Pet Disaster Relief was launched at the September Delegates’ Meeting, Almira Dallas, from the Forsyth Kennel Club, jumped into action and met with her local Emergency Management authorities near her home in Pamlico County, North Carolina. “Our area is prone to hurricanes and flooding,” said Mrs. Dallas. “During these times, we need a better way to help people with their pets. AKC Disaster Relief trailers can provide my community a practical solution to shelter pets during an emergency evacuation. It is just what we have needed. Trailers like this have helped other areas of North Carolina, specifically during Hurricanes Irene and Isabel and after the May 2011 tornadoes. Pamlico County can now also benefit, thanks to the vital equipment and supplies in an AKC Pet Disaster Relief trailer.”

Exactly one month after the launch of the program, Mrs. Dallas hand-delivered a \$12,000 check and a completed Grant Application to Tom Sharp, AKC Reunite CEO and AKC Pet Disaster Relief Task Force Co-Chair. Along with Mrs. Dallas’ generous donation on behalf of the Forsyth Kennel Club, AKC Reunite, the German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America, the American Chinese Crested Club, and the English Springer Spaniel Field Trial Association Foundation have each contributed \$2,500 in funds to make AKC Pet Disaster Relief a reality for Pamlico County. For their contributions, each of these Club’s logos will also be featured on the trailer. “Clubs are definitely thinking out of

the box with their donation strategies,” said Mr. Sharp. “We are working with some national clubs to split their donation among multiple trailers so their organization can get the maximum national exposure. For example, a club can choose to make a \$10,000 donation, allocating \$2,500 to four individual trailers. Local clubs are meeting with their local Emergency Management teams to introduce AKC Pet Disaster Relief and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. We are delighted with the immediate outpouring of support this program has already generated and look forward to all the good this program can do in promoting the AKC Community as the champion of all dogs.”

Along with providing a life-saving resource, the AKC Pet Disaster Relief donation program requires Emergency Management teams to showcase the trailers at a minimum of twice a year at county fairs, parades, Responsible Dog Ownership Days, and other community events to promote disaster preparedness awareness. Pat Laurans, German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America Delegate and AKC Pet Disaster Relief Task Force Co-Chair, sees these trailers as “Billboards for the good works of the AKC, AKC clubs and their members, and AKC Reunite. How great is it that we can proactively plug-in at the local level and align our dog-loving community with the necessary, responsible pet care and sheltering assistance when they need it most?”

Ms. Laurans adds, “Right now, each and every one of us needs to get involved. Our job is to get our clubs to provide the funding for this worthwhile program. Right now, with your support and the financial

commitment of your clubs, we will roll out help to pets and their people so desperately needed in times of disaster. Right now, it is up to all of us to turn this incredible opportunity into a reality and show the world that the AKC and AKC Reunite really care about all dogs and their people, that we are not just supporters of champion dogs, but indeed we really are supporters and we take care, because we are the dog's champion. This is a wonderful program and opportunity for our dog loving community and we as the AKC Family are the ones that can help us make this happen. I hope all clubs will help us roll out help."



To learn more about AKC Pet Disaster Relief and how your club can "Help Roll Out Help", go to: [www.akcreunite.org/relief](http://www.akcreunite.org/relief) or call 919-816-3980.

## ROLLING OUT HELP PART II - A DELEGATES PERSPECTIVE

### This is an exciting way to give back to our Communities

MARY LOU OLSZEWSKI, American Bloodhound Club

While I didn't get to see the AKC Reunite Pet Disaster Relief Trailer in Raleigh this past June, I was sold on the cause when I listened to the presentation at our September Delegates meeting. The AKC Reunite Pet Disaster Relief Trailer Project is the most exciting and most worthy project I have ever seen emanate from the AKC.

What struck me was this was not just about dogs but about all animals and the people too. We have all seen the images of Katrina, the Moore, Oklahoma tornado, the Jersey Shore, the wild-fires in the West, and floods just about everywhere. So many people and their animals have had to suffer through these disasters in the recent past and over the

past decade. In many of these disasters the animals always seem to get

separated from their families. It breaks my heart when I see the sadness in the eyes of the animals and I feel tremendous joy and relief when the animals and their owners are brought together after a disaster.

Immediately following the September Delegates Meeting I brought the message of the *Trailer Project* to the board of the Northeastern Maryland Kennel Club. I was granted approval to reach out to the two counties in our territory and explore the opportunity.

Who were these Emergency Management officials and how would I find them? Would they even give me their time? I found finding the players was pretty simple. These are the offi-



cialists that can make the decision for the county or local municipality. There's no sense for any us to expend energy if you are not speaking to the person who can actually make this happen in his/her local community. A quick Internet search on any local county or municipality can provide you with an amazing amount of information. That search should yield you the names of the key players as well as some background on their current plans.

It didn't take me but a couple minutes to find Emergency Management officials for both Harford and Cecil Counties in Maryland. I was also able to read about their current plans which gave me some background as to their potential need or maybe not, for an *AKC Reunite Pet Disaster Relief Trailer*.

So you are aware the key players, at least in my territories, are Emergency Management and Animal Control. Everything was right there on the Internet. So, I picked up the phone and made a call to the Emergency Management in both counties. I also sent them an email which introduced myself and included a few words about the project and why they might want to meet with me. My advice is to keep your communication simple and not try to overwhelm them with AKC speak. Almost immediately I got a reply to the email I sent Cecil County. This official politely told me that their plan included a partnership with Animal Control and a local no-kill shelter, however, he was curious and wanted to know more. I was pleased to get my first appointment. It was just a couple days later when the club treasurer and I paid a visit to the Emergency Operations, Cecil County, Maryland.

What we found in Cecil County was heart wrenching. They are a

huge county (or at least by Maryland standards) which sits in the northeast of Maryland bordering the Chesapeake Bay. Cecil County is mostly rural but they do have a couple of larger cities, i.e., Elkton, Perryville, and Port Deposit. My strategy was to talk to them first. I wanted to hear about their geography and their plans for both residents and pets in the event of a disaster. Letting them talk first gave us a tremendous perspective that we could later refer to as we were presenting our project. We met with the Director of Emergency Management, an Emergency Management Planner, and Animal Control. The more they talked the more I knew that they were in trouble. They discussed having a few crates stockpiled but nothing really defined in the event of a small or even a mega disaster.

In fact, the Planner was new in his position and he was just now in the process of writing a plan. He needed help.

We heard stories that made us cringe. In Port Deposit, Maryland, which is located on the Susquehanna River at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, they always have floods. Animal Control shared that in the last flood residents had evacuated but left bags of dog food scattered on the upper floors of their homes in hopes that their animals would swim to eat and survive. They described in vivid detail the nightmare of having to save 26 cats in an abandoned house that was rapidly flooding. This was alarming and I knew they were desperate to find resources to help.

So with that background in mind, we quickly assessed that there was an immediate and dire need. This organization needed our help, and the residents and pets of Cecil County Maryland needed an AKC

Reunite Pet Disaster Trailer immediately, if not sooner.

So then, I started to roll out the program. I had prepared a short presentation and armed myself with copies for each of the participants along with brochures, donation forms, grant applications, etc. from AKC Reunite. It only took a few minutes into my discussion when these gentlemen started to discuss how they might come up with the funds post haste. They wanted a trailer and they wanted it now. In fact, they started talking about having a real need for two. Wow! We started discussing how by working together in a partnership we could come up with the required funds. They loved the fact that AKC Reunite would match funds once we identified \$12,000. That became our goal. All of us felt that the goal was achievable and there was a sense of urgency. The County wanted to kick off fund raising at a Fire Expo that Sunday and an Open House at the shelter the following week. We made a few phone calls, secured board approval, grabbed a couple of dogs, our club trailer, and we were on our way. We armed Cecil County with donation forms, literature, pictures, etc., and we got started by educating the public on the potential for an AKC Reunite Pet Disaster Relief Trailer in their community. I think it went well as many donation forms were distributed but there is lots more we need to do. Our next big session, planned for November, is to sit down and create a fund raising strategy. We are on a roll in Cecil County Maryland.

Turn the clock forward a week and we had our first meeting now with Harford County, Maryland. We both knew that Harford County was more progressive than Cecil County, but we made no assumptions. We knew from their website that they



did not have a co-location strategy which meant pets could not accompany their families in the event of a disaster. That raised a flag for me since I had also read up on the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS) of 2006.

In that meeting, we met with the Chief of Emergency Management; the Chief of Housing, Licensing and Permits; and Animal Control. We met in the local Emergency Management Control room, which was pretty cool. The Director of Emergency made a cameo appearance telling us we were in good hands. Again, my strategy was to let them talk. They seemingly wanted to create the impression that all was good until I asked a few questions about co-location and how that was working for them.

We learned that it isn't ideal when residents have to take their animals to a shelter which doesn't allow animals. The animals are surrendered to Animal Control who brings them to a building at the local humane society to be placed in crates. Animal Control then takes the animals back to the owners. Humm! I knew then that the AKC Pet Disaster Relief Trailer would be perfect for Harford County too!

We heard about the last mini-disaster when one woman had to get a taxi to take her to the school, only then to be separated from her dog by Animal Control. She was devastated. I also asked about the Maryland Search and Rescue Team (MSART) trailer that rumor said they might have. Yep, they did have a trailer, and we found that it was being used to transport some animals, and it wasn't really stocked with what they needed. It was functional but definitely not enough and it didn't appear to offer a

complete solution like AKC Reunite was offering.

Okay, it was then I started to introduce the project and I could see the wheels turning. I used the same basic presentation for both groups

**“All of us felt that the goal was achievable and there was a sense of urgency.”**

but mostly we just talked about the possibilities of how this trailer could be used and become a critical resource. I created a mental picture of how this trailer could be backed up to a school and the crates lined down the hallway so that residents could be co-located with their pets as well as take care of them. This would reduce the running back and forth to the humane society and minimize the amount of volunteers needed.

I could see them getting excited as they talked about the possibilities. I knew they were sold when they started talking about where they could come up with some funds.

While we were talking, the Chief of Emergency Management sent emails and identified some funds. She has a meeting this week and I'm optimistic that there will be good news.

The Chief of Housing, Licensing and Permits started thinking out loud about how he too could generate some funds by going to the Director of Administration for the County. I asked if this meant that they wanted to proceed with an AKC Reunite Trailer and, of course, the answer was “yes”. OMG, now we

have two in the bag, and I still need to present to the members of my club. Yikes. So, we are now on a roll with Harford County Maryland too! Yea!

Working with my local counties and AKC Reunite has been very exciting. Both of these counties have expressed a tremendous need, they are willing partners and in full agreement to move forward. My kennel club's Board has approved, and I am waiting on my presentation to the membership and hopefully their affirmation. This meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2013. The remaining decision will be how large we want our logos to be in each county. So stay tuned.

I sure hope all of my fellow Delegates are having as much fun as I have been having in helping to save the lives of animals and residents in my own back yard. I can hardly wait to start a fund for each of these counties and to begin the work of fund raising. Once we raise the goal of \$12,000 for each county, we will be well on our way to saving lives. No one looks forward to a disaster, but being prepared will sure make a difference. Thank you AKC Reunite.

It really is all about the animals. Don't you just love a worthy cause!