Newsletter Spring 2025

New-York Historical Society Explores the History of New Yorkers and Their Pets over Three Centuries

Since our founding nearly 160 years ago, the ASPCA® (The American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®) has been the leading voice for animals in the United States. We're excited to share that our role as a leader in the animal welfare movement is featured in the new "Pets and the City" exhibit at the New-York Historical Society!

The exhibit opened in October 2024 and explores the rich, complex and varied relationships between New Yorkers and their animal companions. Over 300 pieces of art, objects, photographs, documents and memorabilia take the viewer on a journey that spans three centuries. It was curated by Roberta J.M. Olson, curator of drawings emerita, who pulled most of the items from the New-York Historical Society's Museum and Library collections. Olson told *The New York Times*, "Many of the themes that we have in here are about compassionate treatment of animals, the bond between animals and humans, or pets and humans, and the sustainability of both."

New York City's role as the epicenter of the animal rights movement is heavily featured, including the 1866 anti-cruelty law and the founding of the ASPCA. Select images from the ASPCA's archives are showcased, including our role operating New York City's first equine ambulance, providing spay/neuter services to shelter animals and the official ASPCA seal depicting an angel of mercy protecting a fallen carthorse from a spoke-wielding abuser.

Other highlights from the exhibit include compelling visual representations of pets in the family, working animals, presidential pets and a fun compilation video of animals in iconic New York films and TV shows.

The exhibition is on view through April 20, 2025.

Caring for Animals Past, Present and Future

Rita Gorman first developed her love of dogs while spending time on Rhode Island's beaches at her childhood summer home. Rita became friends with the neighborhood dogs, including a Collie named Scout and a Husky named Bandit. She spoiled the neighbors' dogs with daily walks, treats and ample playtime while their owners were at work.

After graduating from college and beginning her career as a teacher, Rita quickly adopted her own dog, a Malamute named Callie, and from then on always had a furry companion or two at her Westerly, Rhode Island home. "Everyone who knew Rita knew how special her pets were to her," recalls Richard, Rita's childhood friend and executor of her estate.

Like the neighborhood dogs of her childhood, Rita's dogs – including Callie and lab mixes named Brandy, Maxie and Maggie – enjoyed daily walks on the beach and Rita's love and affection.

Rita's love for dogs was not only limited to those in her home. She spent most of her free time volunteering at local animal shelters and rescues to walk dogs, clean cages, assist with adoptions and step in wherever was needed to find loving homes for animals.

When Rita began thinking about estate planning after her mother passed away in 2013, she knew she wanted to continue to help animals. She ultimately donated most of her estate to local and national animal welfare organizations, including the ASPCA®. In addition to including the ASPCA as a beneficiary, Rita had the foresight to make plans for any animals that might outlive her through a testamentary trust. When Rita passed away in 2022, her last dog, Maggie, was immediately adopted by two close friends who had recently lost their own dog, and Rita's trust was able to take care of all of Maggie's needs.

Rita's generosity will ensure that countless dogs – and cats – are able to receive the loving care she so selflessly bestowed in her lifetime. "We are sure Rita has been reunited with Maggie, Maxie, Callie, Brandy and Bandit, and they are now somewhere beyond the Rainbow Bridge – together," says Richard.

Secure your legacy!

If you have any questions about including the ASPCA in your estate plans or making a plan for your pets, please reach out to our Planned Giving team or visit:
aspca/org/plannedgiving

Legacy Society Support

Hannah Grune
Director, Planned Giving
(646) 706-4743
hannah.grune@aspca.org

Nicole Nahas
Senior Director, Planned Giving
(646) 706-4665
nicole.nahas@aspca.org

424 East 92nd Street, New York, NY 10128
TEL: (800) 628-0028
aspca.org