Dear Supporters and Friends,

As we review another impactful year at Humane Action Pittsburgh, I extend gratitude to each of you with great pleasure and appreciation. Your unwavering support and commitment to our cause have driven positive change for our community and the voiceless creatures we tirelessly advocate for.

Over the past year, we have achieved significant milestones in advancing animal protections. Our initiatives have touched animals of all kinds, leaving a lasting impact that resonates with empathy and kindness. We’ve also improved human life, as animal issues are always interconnected with issues that touch us.

One area where our efforts have been particularly poignant is supporting domestic violence survivors. By creating awareness and implementing targeted training sessions, we’ve strived to provide protection and resources for those in need, both humans and animals. Together, we’ve worked towards breaking the chains of cruelty and fostering a community that values the well-being of all its members.

Our commitment to environmental stewardship has manifested in creating habitats for pollinators and contributing to the preservation of essential ecosystems. Our dedicated team’s work and our community's support have allowed us to make meaningful strides in ensuring that our environment remains a thriving and balanced home for all species.

In pursuing a greener and healthier planet, we've also made significant progress in reducing single-use plastic. Through education, advocacy, and collaborative efforts, we've successfully diminished the environmental impact of disposable plastics, paving the way for a more sustainable future through our newly-led Plastics Collaborative.

One of our proudest moments this year has been the monumental victory in passing a ban on cruel products made from force-feeding animals, such as foie gras. This achievement reflects our commitment to protect all animals.

As we look back on the past year's accomplishments, we are reminded of a community's incredible impact when united by a common goal. Your support has been the driving force behind these achievements, and we are immensely grateful for the shared dedication to creating a world where compassion knows no bounds.

We look forward to building upon these successes and exploring new avenues for positive change in the coming year. Together, we can continue to be a beacon of hope for those who cannot speak for themselves and work towards a future where kindness and compassion prevail.

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey. Here's to another year of making a difference!

For all animals,

Natalie Ahwesh
Natalie Ahwesh, M.Ed
Executive Director
Meet HAP

Our Vision

A world without animal suffering where all beings are treated with compassion.

Our Mission

To advance the protection of all animals by empowering people to affect change through education, policy, and community action.

HAP is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusivity. As such, all of HAP’s employees and senior leadership are CARE REDI certified through Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (C.A.R.E.).

SETTING THE STANDARD

We educate on animal issues, offer solutions, set animal protection standards, prioritize progress over perfection, adapt when necessary, stay prepared, and maintain strong connections in advancing our cause.

BUILDING TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Advocacy is effective through cooperation and a shared vision. HAP values inclusivity, professional etiquette, and welcomes all, regardless of race, faith, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

FOSTERING EMPOWERMENT

We work with exceptional individuals passionate about animal well-being, fostering a creative culture by respecting opinions and ideas. Committed to developing remarkable leaders and advocates within our team to fulfill our mission.

CREATING COMMUNITY

We are stronger together. Collaborating with colleagues, sponsors, legislators, and leaders in business, faith, and advocacy, we find that animal protection is well within reach. With enthusiastic support of each other, we reach goals that we only dared to dream.

DELIVERING RESULTS

Establishing clear goals, working systematically, and measuring success by protecting animals and promoting their well-being using effective altruism as a guiding principle.
In 2023, Humane Action Pittsburgh experienced a remarkable year of growth and positive impact as a nonprofit organization. The organization achieved significant milestones through dedicated efforts and community support in advancing its mission for humane action and animal welfare. Whether expanding outreach programs, fostering community engagement, or advocating for meaningful policy changes, HAP thrived in its commitment to creating a compassionate and sustainable future. The year marked a testament to the collective strength of volunteers, donors, and advocates working together to bring about positive change for animals and the community. As the organization continues to grow, the spirit of compassion and activism in Pittsburgh has been elevated, leaving a lasting legacy of progress and a promising outlook for the future.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS, ADVISORY COUNCIL, STAFF

- **Dr. Karen Phillips** - Board Member
- **Mike Labos** - Board Member
- **Katie Cruger** - Advisory Council Member
- **Kayla Seifert** - Director of Development
- **Dr. Darrell Payne** - Plastics Collaborative Program Manager

NEW VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

- **Derek Bennett** - Web Developer
- **Alexa Bradley** - Administrative Assistant
- **Dan Bucynski** - Photographer
- **Emma Cannon** - Grant Writer
- **Carol Fryday** - Newsletter Editor
- **Annelie Gustafsson** - Administrative Assistant
- **Morgan Kohler** - Web Designer
- **Kaxandra Novales** - Videographer
- **Jessica Pendrick** - Graphic Designer
- **Robel Tesfay** - Website Developer
- **Nicole Toney** - Outreach Ambassador
- **Chris D’Addario** - Regional Legislative Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS

- **Champion**
  - Michael Labos, Kevin McCluskey, Oleg Tovpeko
- **Guardian**
  - Natalie Ahwesh, Dr. Karen Phillips
- **Supporter**
  - Chris Mathyssek, Elizabeth Perkins
- **Advocate**
  - Bec Deutsch, Jenny Fuga, Ashley Macik, Shelley Meyers
- **Companion**
  - Caitlin Baiduc, Laura Bonucchi, Nicholas Casacchia, Carole Cohen, Julie Domineck, Kylie Lichtenstein, Brigitte Masone, Mary Ann Mulkerin, Beverly McKinney, Ed Powers, Susan Powers, Nicole Toney, Anthony Turo

Paige Ottaviano - University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work
Department Highlights

Compassionate Living

Foie Gras Ban

In 2023, HAP achieved a significant victory for farm animals by successfully passing Pittsburgh's "foie gras ban," a ban on selling products made from force-feeding animals. The passage of this bill makes Pittsburgh one of the only cities in the United States to ban not only the production of this abhorrently cruel product, but also its sale. This monumental accomplishment was the culmination of a dedicated two-year effort to advocate for more ethical treatment of animals in our community. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Councilpeople Erika Strassburger and Bruce Kraus for their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in championing this groundbreaking legislation.

The foie gras ban garnered overwhelming support with a decisive 7-2 vote and represents a significant step forward in our ongoing mission to create a more compassionate world for animals. Although the bill was introduced as a comprehensive package that included bans on fur sales and carriage horses, regrettably, we were unable to see those measures through to completion. Reflecting on this year’s achievements and challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to animal welfare. Looking ahead to 2024, we will reevaluate strategies to advance our goals of banning fur sales and protecting carriage horses, ensuring that our advocacy continues to positively impact the lives of animals in Pittsburgh.

Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash

HAP staff and board president with Councilman Bruce Kraus
**Plastics Collaborative**

In 2023, HAP officially assumed leadership of the Plastics Collaborative, an initiative started by Sustainable Pittsburgh in 2020 dedicated to fostering a sustainable future by reducing single-use plastics in the greater Pittsburgh region. After successfully implementing the “Plastic Bag Ban,” we look forward to expanding our reach and impact with newly appointed Program Manager Darrell Payne.

**Plastic Free July Proclamation**

We joined our friends Ashleigh Deemer with PennEnvironment and Myrna Newman of Allegheny CleanWays on a City of Pittsburgh proclamation for Plastic Free July! Thank you to Councilperson Erika Strassburger for championing this proclamation and other initiatives in the city to protect animals and the environment.
Reimagine Takeout
HAP was fortunate to be selected as a Community Partner for a consulting project at Carnegie Mellon University in the spring semester. Four undergraduate students worked hard on a project for our Reimagine Takeout campaign, adding a fantastic search functionality so consumers can find out how to compost individual takeout products best.

Pittsburgh Ploggers
A huge shout-out to our newest Pittsburgh Ploggers university partners, Chatham University’s cross-country and track-and-field teams! And, as always, HAP continued our Community Plogging throughout the warmer months.
Habitat Regeneration

HAP Hive

At the heart of our HAP Hive campaign lies a crucial mission to combat the global bee population crisis. With over 20,000 bee species listed as endangered, Humane Action Pittsburgh is stepping up with a three-pronged approach. By minimizing harmful pesticide use, fostering pollinator-friendly environments, and installing bee hotels, HAP Hive aims to rejuvenate habitats and educate citizens. Join us in turning your yard into a pollinator haven and contribute to a sustainable future.

Contact us to discover how you can be part of this vital initiative. Together, let's make a meaningful impact and save our essential pollinators.

CONTACT HERE
Shannon.d@humaneactionpittsburgh.org

Humane Action Pittsburgh's HAP Hive initiative is making significant strides with the creation of two meaningful pollinator gardens in Swissvale and Edgewood.

Swissvale - Collaborating with the Swissvale Borough Council, the 12,000-square-foot Swissvale Pollinator Garden is a haven for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Volunteers from HAP, the Shade Tree Committee, and the community have worked diligently to lay the groundwork. Special thanks to Senator Jay Costa and State Representative Abigail Salisbury for their dedicated support.

Edgewood - In memory of Daisy Nicole, the Edgewood Pollinator Garden pays tribute to her passion for environmental health and the well-being of all creatures. Daisy's untimely passing at the age of 20 left a void that her loved ones continue to sustain with honor and unconditional love. They support Daisy's legacy by fostering her enthusiasm for bee pollination. To support these impactful projects or explore opportunities for collaboration in your neighborhood or in honor of a loved one, please consider donating or contacting our Director of Operations, Shannon Dickerson. Together, let's cultivate spaces that honor the importance of pollinators and create lasting legacies for those we hold dear.

Click the photo below to watch the video!

HAP Volunteer Ryan Walker spreading top soil
In 2023, we played a pivotal role in supporting various federal efforts to enhance animals' well-being. Through collaborative initiatives, advocacy, and community engagement, we have actively contributed to several key bills that align with our mission to create a humane future.

Orchestrated fighting of dogs and roosters is one of the most senseless forms of animal cruelty there is. No animal should be subjected to the threat of grievous injury and death merely for the sake of human entertainment.

Dogs suffer immensely throughout their shortened lives, treated as revenue-generating machines and not as the emotionally complex, sensitive, and loving creatures they are. Kept on chains and bred and trained to be more aggressive, survivors fight again and again until they are spent and killed. Others die in the contests without any medical comfort. Females are repeatedly bred, with their puppies sent forward through this dynastic torment, as long as they prove winners. Many times, dogfighters will kidnap other dogs and use them as fighting bait for their intended combatants.

Cockfighting is one of the biggest underground animal-use industries in the United States, with fighting birds raised on an agricultural scale. There are millions of fighting birds in the U.S., with U.S.-based cockfighters acting as the breeding ground for the global industry. In cockfights, handlers attach sharp knives or curved icepicks to roosters’ legs, weapons intended to enhance the bloodletting and maim or kill the birds conscripted into the pit to fight. Cockfighting is a global enterprise conducted from Mexico to Manila.

HAP was proud to convince our U.S. Senators and every House Member in Southwestern PA to sign on in support of The FIGHT Act, as well as collecting endorsements from dozens of PA-based animal welfare and law enforcement organizations.
Every year, tens of thousands of American horses go to slaughter plants in Canada and Mexico, where their flesh is packaged and sent to other foreign markets for consumption. These are healthy animals, by and large, and this is a predatory industry that takes advantage of animals never raised to be eaten.

The SAFE Act would ban U.S.-based horse slaughter or export for slaughter for human consumption. HAP’s Action Team wrote dozens of letters to Congress to ensure PA Senator Fetterman signed on to the bill. We also hosted a film screening (more on that later!) to educate residents on the issue and solution.

The National School Lunch Program has a “milk mandate” for children who qualify for the nutrition assistance program. The problem is that millions of kids who participate in the program are lactose intolerant, and dairy milk makes them sick, causing many of them to throw the milk away or to drink it and risk illness. The program wastes $300 million in taxpayer dollars every year and ignores the sacrifices of the cows who produce the milk. A cow on an industrial farm produces 22,500 pounds of milk in a year (more than three times the volume that a cow produced decades ago), with the animals often suffering from foot, leg, and mammary problems, with nearly half of the cows having an inflammation of their udders. HAP was thrilled to enlist Senator Fetterman to lead this bill in the Senate.
While more and more states are looking to ban cruel and extreme confinement for farm animals such as pigs and chickens, the so-called EATS Act was introduced to stop states from allowing farm animals such fundamental rights as freedom of movement. The EATS Act would prevent state and local governments from establishing food production and distribution safeguards that make life better for farm animals and provide farmers with critical market opportunities that keep them farming.

By eliminating these opportunities, the EATS Act will accelerate market concentration in the food and agriculture industries, giving multinational corporations the win over American farmers who have invested in less cruel methods of food production, local governments who risk bankruptcy while fighting endless litigation to defend their laws, and of course animals who will be kept in cages so small they literally cannot move.

HAP fought against the EATS Act by garnering legislative signatures on a Congressional sign-on letter against the legislation and working with the Allegheny County Council on a unanimous Will of Council expressing disapproval of the terrible bill.
In our relentless pursuit of safeguarding the vulnerable, HAP is proud to present our groundbreaking efforts in advancing House Bill (HB) 1210 in 2023.

Focused on creating a more inclusive and protective legal framework, HAP spearheaded a comprehensive advocacy campaign to ensure that companion animals are allowed to be included in Protection From Abuse orders for domestic violence victims. At the heart of our efforts was a collaborative sign-on letter that garnered support from a diverse coalition, including dozens of animal welfare organizations, violence advocacy groups, and critical law enforcement entities.

Notable endorsements came from the Pennsylvania Sheriff's Association and the Attorney General's Office, underscoring the broad societal impact of our cause.

The resounding success of our campaign is evident in the bill's passage through the Pennsylvania House. As we celebrate this achievement, our gaze is firmly set on the challenges that lie ahead in 2024 – navigating the intricate landscape of the Senate.

With your unwavering support, HAP is committed to continuing the fight to pass HB1210 through the Senate, further solidifying the legal safeguards protecting victims and their cherished animal companions.

HAP meets with Rep. Christina Sappey, lead sponsor of HB1210
In May 2023, the PA House voted Yes on House Resolution 87, allowing for a study of wildlife corridors in Pennsylvania. HAP worked to get this legislation across the finish line for two years in a massive win for PA wildlife—and human residents. HAP educated house representatives and the public on the importance of the resolution, sending correspondence, meeting with elected officials, creating and disseminating educational literature, and even making a trip to Harrisburg, the state capital.

We are proud of our excellent relationships with Pennsylvania’s government leaders and sincerely appreciate their commitment to protecting animals and the environment. We would also like to say a special “thank you” to Representative Jason Ortitay, the lead Republican on the resolution and HAP’s 2023 Legislator of the Year honoree.

**House Resolution 87**

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**Rodeo Pre-emption**

In 2023, HAP achieved a significant victory in safeguarding Pittsburgh’s commitment to animal welfare. HAP took decisive action when faced with a concerted effort by unscrupulous organizations to undermine the city’s bans on instruments of pain inflicted upon animals for entertainment purposes, particularly in the context of rodeos and circuses. Working diligently behind the scenes, HAP collaborated with the Pennsylvania Senate to prevent the passage of any detrimental language that would compromise the existing bans. As a result, Pittsburgh’s stance against cruel rodeos and circuses remains firmly intact, reinforcing our dedication to creating a compassionate and ethical environment for animals within our community. This accomplishment underscores HAP’s ongoing commitment to advocacy and protection of animals, ensuring their well-being and dignity prevail over exploitative practices.
Department Highlights

Regional Initiatives

Love Your Wild Neighbor

Unfortunately, Pittsburgh continues to have one of the nation's most ineffective and inhumane trapping policies for a city of our size. Raccoons, skunks, and groundhogs are regularly trapped and killed, at the expense of taxpayers, for wildlife conflicts that are of no fault of the animals. That's why we launched our Love Your Wild Neighbor (LYWN) campaign in 2022 to educate residents on humanely and effectively solving wildlife issues. While there is still much work to be done, we are proud to have achieved significant victories in 2023.

After years of ongoing conversations with Pittsburgh’s Animal Care & Control (AC&C), AC&C made our requested revisions to their website and public-facing documents. This includes language about humane harassment, statements that trapping should only be used as a last resort, and links to our LYWN toolkit for dealing with wildlife.

Additionally, in Spring 2023, Pittsburgh Police Officer Christine Luffey, a partner and friend of HAP, contacted us to partner on developing a series of Public Service Announcements to address wild animal conflicts. Collaborating with the City of Pittsburgh, AC&C, and the City of Pittsburgh Police Department, we helped to produce informative videos covering topics such as wildlife trapping and managing encounters with coyotes. The initiative has been well received by Pittsburgh residents and received media coverage.

Thank you to Stowe Township for including our Love Your Wild Neighbor Resource guide on their website for local Char-West residents to reference when handling wildlife conflicts.

Click the photo above to watch the video!
Regional Initiatives

Law Enforcement Trainings

**Sharpsburg** - We were thrilled to collaborate with the Sharpsburg Police Department in November 2023 to organize a training session for 25 law enforcement officials hailing from various parts of Allegheny County, focusing on animal welfare laws. Alongside Humane Action Pittsburgh, representatives from the Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh and Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh lent their invaluable experience and expertise to the attendees, enriching the session with diverse perspectives.

We also appreciate the contributions of representatives from the Pittsburgh Police, the Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh, and the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office, who also presented at this training session. We aim to continue hosting similar trainings, ensuring that all law enforcement personnel in the region are well-versed in handling animal welfare cases.

**Pittsburgh** - In addition to our collaboration with the Sharpsburg Police Department, we had the opportunity to partner with the Pittsburgh Police Department in the spring to launch a program aimed at educating new police recruits on handling animal welfare cases. We extend our gratitude to Officer Christine Luffey, Assistant Chief Anna Kudrav, and Lieutenant Julie Stoops for championing this initiative.

We also appreciate the contributions of representatives from the Pittsburgh Police, the Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh, and the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office, who also presented at this training session. We aim to continue hosting similar trainings, ensuring that all law enforcement personnel in the region are well-versed in handling animal welfare cases.
Animal Protection in Action

Forging Alliances

In 2023, we proudly expanded our collaborative efforts by joining key coalitions that align with our mission of promoting animal welfare and conservation. Our commitment to legislative advocacy has been reinforced through our membership in the Defeat EATS coalition, where we actively work to prevent the passage of the terrible EATS Act. Additionally, we strengthened our network within the state by becoming a Federated Humane Societies of Pennsylvania member, fostering collaboration with like-minded organizations to amplify our impact. Furthermore, our dedication to wildlife conservation found a new avenue for expression as we joined Wildlife For All, uniting with partners who share our passion for protecting and preserving our natural environment. These strategic partnerships underscore our commitment to holistic and impactful advocacy, reflecting our steadfast dedication to creating a more humane world.

City & State PA Power 100

HAP staff embarked on an impactful trip to Harrisburg in April, marking a significant milestone for the organization. The primary purpose of this journey was to celebrate the distinguished recognition of Executive Director Natalie Ahwesh, who was honored as one of City & State's PA Power 100. This prestigious award acknowledges the top 100 influential individuals in the state, and Natalie was the sole non-legislator granted the opportunity to address the gathering. At the ceremony, she seized the moment to enlighten the audience, comprised of influential figures, about critical animal welfare issues in Pennsylvania. With unwavering dedication, Natalie addressed concerns such as live pigeon shoots and the exclusion of animals from Protection From Abuse orders, effectively leveraging the platform to advocate for change.

During the Harrisburg trip, the HAP team didn't solely focus on accolades but also seized the opportunity to engage with key legislators. Beyond the glitz of the award ceremony, HAP staff strategically scheduled meetings to foster relationships and impart crucial insights on their legislative priorities. Through these interactions, the team aimed to bridge gaps in understanding, advocating for comprehensive reforms that would positively impact the welfare of animals across the state.
In September, HAP embarked on an exciting journey to Washington, D.C., marking a pivotal moment in our involvement with the Endangered Species Coalition (ESC). The primary purpose of this trip was to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, a significant milestone in biodiversity conservation. HAP’s participation was particularly special as Executive Director Natalie Ahwesh co-chaired the committee organizing the commemorative event. Natalie, alongside other ESC members, meticulously planned an event that brought together influential figures, including congressional speakers. Notably, Senator Cory Booker was among the distinguished speakers, contributing to the acknowledgment of the crucial role played by the Endangered Species Act in preserving our planet’s diverse ecosystems.

While there, we seized the opportunity to engage with key members of Congress from Western Pennsylvania, including Senator Fetterman, Senator Casey, and Representative Reschenthaler, where discussions focused on pressing animal welfare bills.
Animal Policy Alliance Summit

HAP was thrilled to be invited for the second year to participate in the annual Animal Policy Alliance (APA) Summit hosted by The Humane League. As a founding member of the APA, HAP is pivotal in advocating for humane policies and fostering collaboration within the animal protection community. Natalie Ahwesh, our Executive Director, further underscores the organization's dedication to the cause as a founding member of the APA. The summit provided a unique platform for HAP to engage with grassroots organizations nationwide, all dedicated to advancing farm animal protection initiatives. Through networking and shared insights, HAP strengthened its ties with like-minded advocates, reinforcing its position as a prominent force in pursuing a more compassionate and ethical treatment of animals.

Spring Point Partners Puppy Mill Conference

We are delighted to highlight our significant presence at the Life of Riley at Spring Point Partners' annual conference. This event provided a unique platform for HAP to engage with and learn from organizations nationwide dedicated to ending the distressing realities of puppy mills. The invaluable networking opportunities allowed us to share insights, strategies, and collaborative efforts in our collective mission. HAP deeply appreciates Spring Point Partners' steadfast support over the years, particularly the crucial funding that empowers our organization to maintain a dedicated and impactful team of paid staff.
Communications Overview

In 2023, communications played a crucial role in driving our mission to new heights. Through a dynamic array of channels, including our newsletter, blogs, podcasts, letters to the editor, op-eds, petitions, and social media, we effectively engaged with our audience and amplified our advocacy efforts. Regular and informative emails kept supporters updated on critical initiatives, while compelling blog posts and op-eds shared in-depth insights on humane action issues. The podcast provided an immersive platform to delve into relevant topics and connect with a broader audience. Letters to the editor served as powerful tools for shaping public discourse, and strategic social media campaigns amplified our organization's message, fostering community involvement and awareness. This integrated communication approach strengthened HAP's visibility and facilitated meaningful conversations, ultimately contributing to positive change and a more compassionate community.

Podcast

The Humane Action Pittsburgh podcast provided enlightening conversations highlighting our nonprofit's dedication to animal welfare and community advocacy while giving others a platform to discuss their work in the field.

In the News

From letters to the editor and op-eds to news coverage on a variety of our campaigns and victories, see all of our In the News highlights right on our website.

Blog

Our blog was filled with informative stories and impactful initiatives in 2023. Follow along and stay current on important animal and environmental issues in our region and beyond.
Education

Youth Steering Committee

We are proud to highlight the impactful strides made by our Youth Steering Committee, a dynamic program designed for high school students with a profound passion for animals and a keen interest in policy and campaign strategy surrounding animal welfare and the environment. Starting in September and meeting throughout the 2023–2024 school year, HAP successfully initiated and nurtured a Youth Steering Committee, providing a platform for students in grades 10–12 to develop crucial speaking and advocacy skills. This engaging program fosters a sense of community among like-minded teens, connecting them to the intricacies of executing campaigns focused on animal welfare and environmental preservation.

HAP’s commitment to empowering the next generation of advocates is evident in these remarkable students’ collaborative efforts and tangible impact. From policy discussions to hands-on initiatives, the Youth Steering Committee serves as a beacon of inspiration, showcasing the potential of young minds in driving positive change for the welfare of animals and the preservation of our environment.

Action Team Trainings

As we continue to grow our network, we’ve brought our Action Team Trainings nationwide! In collaboration with national groups such as The Humane League and Animal Wellness Action, these trainings provide essential tools for effective communication with legislators and empowering advocates with the skills to champion legislation safeguarding animal welfare. Notably, our sessions have welcomed esteemed legislators, offering attendees unique opportunities for in-depth Q&A sessions and fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas and insights.

Join the Action Team!

Youth Steering Committee
Junior Animal Advocate Program

In a collaborative effort between HAP and Hope Haven Farm Sanctuary, the Junior Animal Advocate Program hoped to foster a compassionate and informed generation. Tailored for youths aged 12 to 18, this engaging and educational initiative has successfully bridged the gap between farm animal protection, planetary health, and human well-being. The program imparts knowledge on effective advocacy for animal welfare and creates a dynamic learning environment through games, vegan snacks, and hands-on interaction with the sanctuary's animals. As participants successfully completed the session, they earned the esteemed title of "Junior Animal Advocate" and a program certificate, solidifying their commitment to being planet protectors and champions of animal well-being. The program is a beacon of hope for a future where compassion and understanding intersect to create positive change.

Saint Vincent College Internships

We were thrilled to begin a partnership with an Environmental Literature class at St. Vincent College aimed at fostering civic engagement and environmental awareness. This innovative initiative involves a dedicated team of interns who contribute their skills and passion to create impactful educational materials for the public, including compelling letters to the editor and practical social media tools, amplifying our mission to advocate for humane and sustainable practices. The partnership enriches the student's educational experience at St. Vincent College and empowers them to contribute to positive change within their community actively, bridging the gap between academia and real-world advocacy. Together, Humane Action Pittsburgh and St. Vincent's College are inspiring a new generation of environmentally conscious leaders.
Heroes Award Reception

The gala, held at the elegant J Verno Studios, was an enchanting blend of sophistication and purpose. Attendees were treated to a delectable feast of vegan delights, a testament to our commitment to cruelty-free practices. The air was filled with the rich melodies of live jazz music performed by Tony Campbell’s band, adding a harmonious touch to an evening dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the heroes among us. The Heroes Award Reception not only acknowledged the outstanding achievements of the honorees but also served as a powerful reminder of the positive impact that individuals can make when united by a shared vision of compassion and change.

Thank you to our sponsors:

- Hauser’s Furniture
- The Humane League
- EmMedia
- General Rental, Inc.
- Ertel Photography
- Howard Hanna Real Estate Services
- Hill’s Cookie Tables and Sweet Treats
- Neely House Design
- Resilient Rise Media
- Pittsburgh Regional Transit
- Table Magazine
- Tito’s Handmade Vodka
- Wrangler Land Services Inc.
- Curly Tail Coffee

Our 2023 Honorees

State Representative Abigail Salisbury
Habitat Regeneration Award
Presented by HAP President and Founder Dr. Brian Bonsteel

State Representative Jason Ortitay
Legislator of the Year
Presented by Sam DeMarco, Allegheny County Councilman At Large

Howard and Carole Baskin
Senator Roy Afflerbach Monumental Achievement Award
Presented by the Honorable Roy Afflerbach
Humane Communities Breakfast

Collaborating with Bob Fragasso of Fragasso Financial Advisors for a special event in August was an honor. Legislators from across the region convened to glean insights from HAP representatives and community partners on making their communities more humane through legislation, training, and free resources offered by Humane Action Pittsburgh. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Fragasso for generously sponsoring and hosting this event and for his unwavering dedication to the welfare of animals.

Biscuits Bingo

We had an incredible time again participating in the Pittsburgh Police’s 25th Annual Biscuits Bingo in March 2023. Spearheaded by our dear friend and Advisory Council member, Officer Christine Luffey, Biscuits Bingo features 16 bingo games, raffles, and delicious food, raising thousands of dollars for animal advocacy organizations across Pittsburgh. We are proud to recognize Biscuits Bingo as a Silver Compassionate Events partner, with the event being entirely vegetarian for the third consecutive year. We are thrilled to announce that we raised $6,739 through this event, and we eagerly anticipate participating next year in 2024!

Wild Beauty: Mustang Spirit of the West Screening

We were pleased to have the opportunity to shed light on the inhumane wild horse round-ups occurring in the western United States through our screening of the documentary “Wild Beauty: Mustang Spirit of the West” in April. A special thanks to our guest, Marty Irby, longtime horse advocate and one of DC’s top lobbyists, for providing invaluable insights into horse legislation and engaging with viewers during a Q&A session. We also thank The Wild Beauty Foundation for permitting us to showcase this critical documentary.
Best Vegan Soup in the ‘Burgh

We hosted a sold-out 2nd Annual Best Vegan Soup in the ‘Burgh Cook-Off in March 2023! A fan favorite, this event features a tasting of vegan soups from restaurants across Pittsburgh, live music, and a competitive trivia competition. Watch a recap of the event [here](#)!

For the second year in a row, the winner of the Best Vegan Soup was Chef Stanley at Bistro to Go, this time with his Impossible Stuffed Pepper Soup! We are grateful to all of our participating restaurants in this fun event.

**Participating Restaurants**

- HOUSE OF SOUL CATERING
- ANTONIO’S PIZZERIA
- FORTUITEA
- NOOCH
- SIA
- BISTRO TO GO
- CAFFÉ D’AMORE
- FARMER X BAKER
- ALLEGRO HEARTH BAKERY

Blessing of the Animals

During their Blessing of the Animals event in September, we had a wonderful time at Zion’s First Lutheran & United Presbyterian Church in Ambridge. Our favorite guest was Tony, seen here with volunteer Ashley Macik, who brought his turtle companion to be blessed and even dressed up for the occasion!

Pups & Pints

In September 2023, we co-hosted a happy hour in collaboration with Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh, offering animal advocates a chance to connect and socialize with fellow animal community members. Thank you to our friend, Tim Vitullo, for providing the fantastic live music and our friends at Humane Animal Rescue of Pittsburgh for hosting the event.

Vegan Expo

The Pittsburgh Vegan Expo/The Original Pittsburgh Vegan Festival is Pittsburgh’s original, largest, and longest-running vegan event, founded in the late 1990s by our friend, Amy Cottrill. This year, we were privileged to be one of the event’s beneficiaries and to engage in multiple events hosted by the Pittsburgh Vegan Expo throughout the year!
HAP has undertaken a significant initiative to pass PA HB1210. This crucial bill seeks to empower domestic violence victims by allowing companion animals to be included in Protection From Abuse orders. Pennsylvania currently lags as one of the few states not allowing judges the discretion to include pets in such protective measures. Over the past two years, Humane Action Pittsburgh has diligently cultivated a diverse coalition of supporters, bringing together animal welfare groups, organizations dedicated to serving domestic violence victims, and law enforcement agencies, including influential endorsements from the PA Sheriffs' Association and the Attorney General's Office. The collective efforts bore fruit in 2023 when the bill was passed through the PA House. We are now firmly focused on steering it through the Senate, with the ultimate goal of enacting this critical legislation into law by the end of 2024, providing a comprehensive and compassionate approach to safeguarding human and animal lives.

Humane Action Pittsburgh is ambitiously setting its sights on hosting another year of the Youth Steering Committee in the 2024-25 school year, building on the success of its inaugural year in 2023. The students who have participated have demonstrated a deep understanding of the significance of advocating for animals and have also acquired invaluable real-world skills to champion this cause effectively. As the organization endeavors to broaden its impact, the goal for 2024 is to extend this transformative opportunity to a new cohort of high schoolers from diverse backgrounds across the region. The Youth Steering Committee's expansion underscores Humane Action Pittsburgh's commitment to empower the next generation of advocates, provided that sufficient funding can be secured to make this vision a reality.
Serving Up Sustainability

HAP is gearing up for an impactful event in April 2024 with our initiative, "Serving Up Sustainability." This free, one-day workshop aims to empower attendees with the knowledge and tools needed to positively impact the environment and achieve climate action goals within food service. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from experts affiliated with esteemed organizations such as Humane Action Pittsburgh, Sustainable Pittsburgh, New Roots Institute, and Greener by Default on diverse topics, including reducing single-use plastic, effective composting practices, and strategies for marketing plant-based food options.

In collaboration with UPMC, the event underscores HAP’s commitment to environmental protection and serves as a platform to advocate for farm animal protection. "Serving Up Sustainability" is a valuable opportunity for individuals and businesses to align their practices with sustainable principles and contribute to a healthier planet.

Expansion of the Plastics Collaborative

In 2024, HAP is poised for significant strides in our commitment to environmental sustainability through the expansion of the Plastics Collaborative, spearheaded by the dedicated leadership of Dr. Darrell Payne. After devoting much of the preceding year to securing a capable leader and establishing the collaborative's operational framework, the organization is shifting its focus towards refining strategic objectives and translating them into actionable initiatives. Dr. Payne’s guidance ensures a comprehensive approach to reducing single-use plastic consumption throughout the region, marking a crucial step forward in the collective effort to foster a more sustainable and eco-conscious community. As Humane Action Pittsburgh moves into the implementation phase, 2024 promises to be a pivotal year in advancing the PC’s mission to mitigate the environmental impact of plastic waste.
Wildlife Training

HAP is organizing a comprehensive training program that fosters effective and humane approaches to address wildlife conflicts. Aligned with the principles of our successful "Love Your Wild Neighbor" campaign, which educates residents on coexisting with local wildlife, this specialized training targets professionals in wildlife management and pest control companies. In collaboration with wildlife experts, the program aims to equip participants with the latest insights and techniques for managing wildlife encounters ethically. This initiative underscores HAP's commitment to promoting harmonious cohabitation between humans and wildlife while ensuring the well-being of all species in the Pittsburgh region.

Kincaid St Garden

We are thrilled to announce an exciting partnership with the Kincaid St Community Garden for a special project this spring! Together, we will install a vibrant pollinator garden, fostering a love for nature and environmental stewardship among our Youth Steering Committee participants. Kincaid St Community Garden representative Vania’s (pictured here with HAP staff) expertise and passion for community gardening align seamlessly with our commitment to creating educational and sustainable initiatives.
Meet Our Leadership

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Director of Development

Darrell Payne, PhD  
Plastics Collaborative Program Manager

Advisory Council

Richard Butler

Katie Cruger, PhD

Marita Garrett

Christine Luffey

John Weinstein
Meet Our Volunteers

Cheers to Our 2023 Volunteers

Janice Bahary
Derek Bennett
Alexa Bradley
Dan Buczynski
Emma Cannon
Christopher D’Addario
Aimee Douglass
Jared Feldman
Carol Fryday

Morgan Kohler
Hannah Lewis
Ashley Macik
Abhi Nadendla
Dominique Green
Annelie Gustafsson
Jason Hinkledire
Jessica Ho
Mohit Kirange

Kaxandra Novales
Walt Orange
Jessica Pendrick
Natalia Rosario Zapata
Akanksha Satyarthy
Robel Tesfay
Nicole Toney
Nina Wiebalk
Irina Zambrano

OUR 2023 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Morgan Kohler, HAP web designer, for being awarded Volunteer of the Year, 2023
2023 Contributions

Grants
We are grateful to all of the Foundations who awarded us grants in 2023 and entrusted us to make meaningful progress toward protecting animals, the environment, and the people in our communities:

- Spring Point Partners
- Whole Foods
- PNC Charitable Trusts
- Lush
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- A Well-Fed World

Sponsors
A special thank you to our sponsors this year who made our animal protection dreams come true:

- Hauser's Furniture
- The Humane League
- Em-Media
- General Rental, Inc.
- Table Magazine
- Pittsburgh Regional Transit
- Tito’s Handmade Vodka
- Wrangler Land Services
- Resilient Rise Media
- Howard Hanna Real Estate Services
- Curly Tail Coffee
- Neely House Design
- Cioliinn Ertel Photography
- Jill’s Cookie Tables and Sweet Treats

Members
Acknowledging those who steadfastly support HAP and make all of our work in animal advocacy possible:

Champion Members
- Brian Bonsteel
- Michael Labos
- Kevin McCluskey
- Oleg Tovpeko

Guardian Members
- Natalie Ahwesh
- Sam Ahwesh
- Dr. Karen Phillips

Supporter Members
- Mario Costanzo
- Chris Mathyssek
- Elizabeth Perkins

Advocate Members
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- Bec Deutsch
- Shannon Dickerson
- Aimee Douglass
- Caiolinn Ertel
- Jenny Fuga
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- Marty Hauser
- Hannah Lewis
- Ashley Macik
- Shelley Meyers
- Walt Orange
- Diane Sadowski
- Kayla Seifert
- Ryan Walker

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- Janice Bahary
- Laura Bonucchi
- Nicholas Casacchia
- Carole Cohen
- Tria Dickerson
- Julie Domineck
- Kylie Lichtenstein
- Brigitte Masone
- Mary Ann Mulkerin
- Beverly McKinney
- Ed Powers
- Susan Powers
- Maddy Rice
- Elizabeth Ringler
- Barbara Talerico
- Nicole Toney
- Anthony Turo
Dear Supporters and Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the collective efforts that have impacted the lives of animals locally and globally. Working together on something bigger than ourselves is the honor of a lifetime, and your unwavering support has been instrumental in achieving our goals.

Throughout the year, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to addressing the most pressing problems animals face today. We are proud to present viable solutions, take decisive action, and be good stewards of your contributions and trust. Your belief in our mission has fueled our determination to create a world where animals are protected, valued, and given the respect they deserve.

Our actions on a local level continue to resonate on a global scale. Your support enables us to implement meaningful initiatives that have a far-reaching impact, ensuring the well-being of animals across borders.

As we look to the future, we are inspired by the progress we have made together. Your commitment to the cause has strengthened our resolve to push forward, and we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. Together, we can create a world where animals thrive, protected by the collective efforts of compassionate individuals like you. We extend our heartfelt gratitude on behalf of all of us at Humane Action Pittsburgh and the animals we protect. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey and positively impacting countless animals' lives.

Sincerely,

Humane Action Pittsburgh