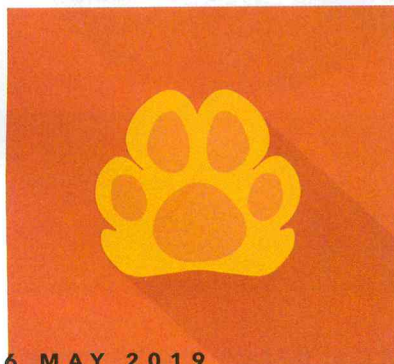


HEALING HEARTS
OF THE BLACK HILLS

ONE
PAW
AT A
TIME

Written By: Whitnee Pearce



Anatole France, renowned poet, journalist, and pet lover once penned, "Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." Anyone lucky enough to love a pet - whether it be a four-legged furball, beautifully scaled creature, or feathered friend - knows a pet can add new meaning to life, companionship, and acceptance. But what happens if your beloved pet becomes sick? Treating your pet can be costly, and between emergency procedures, medications and tests, medical bills can add up quickly. Luckily, with programs such as Hobo's Healing Heart, a local nonprofit organization, pet owners in the Black Hills don't have to decide between helping their pets and succumbing to financial burdens.

Hobo's Healing began from humble beginnings when founder Kelly Harnett struggled with finding funds for a foster dog's expensive ACL-repair surgery. After speaking with her veterinarian, Kelly learned that many families struggle with meeting the medical needs of their pets due to the high cost that procedures can carry. Kelly knew things could be better and took it upon herself to make a change in her community. After many nights of reading policies and laws and countless times reaching out for help, Hobo's Healing Heart became an official chartered nonprofit organization. The organization aids pet owners residing in Butte, Custer, Lawrence, and Meade Counties in South Dakota, as well as Crook County in Wyoming who are experiencing a temporary financial hardship with emergency veterinary care and diagnostic testing costs.

"Costs are an inevitable part of the responsibility of owning companion and work animals; however, emergencies and illness can happen, and the costs associated can be quite expensive for animal owners," explains Kelly. "This often results in animals being euthanized, needlessly suffering, or surrendered. We consider companion and work animals to be family; as such, Hobo's Healing Heart seeks to help relieve the burden of the financial and emotional hardships of caring for a sick or injured companion or work animal. We hope that by doing so, we will also reduce the number of animals with medical issues being surrendered to already overburdened shelters or needlessly euthanized."

The inspiration for the name, Hobo's Healing Heart, comes from Kelly's "once-in-a-lifetime dog," Hobo. Hobo was always a fan favorite among people and other pets alike. He was a special dog who touched the lives of many and served as an inspiration to the other pets who Kelly brought home to foster. Unfortunately, at the tender age of six, Hobo became sick, and after costly diagnostic testing, he was found to be in the pre-stages of congestive heart failure. Luckily, with multiple medications daily, Hobo was able to live another six years and bring joy to not only Kelly's life, but everyone's who met him.

Since 2014, Hobo's Healing Heart has assisted 57 families and has donated over \$16,000 for emergency veterinary costs, diagnostic testings, and cremations with the majority of funds allocated to emergency care. For Hobo's Healing Heart to continue to help folks and grow to meet needs of families and their pets, it is imperative that those who support their cause donate funds and volunteer to work at their local fundraising events.

Past fundraising events include a Wag'N'Walk, a 5K Fun Run/Walk and an annual fundraiser called Responsible Dog Owner Day (RDOD). Last year's RDOD event raised nearly \$8,000 for the organization. But for events like this to be a success, it takes those willing to volunteer their time, donate door prizes, and work vendor stands and community support.

Hobo's Healing Heart aims to help all families and pets in need. Through donations and active volunteerism, this organization will be able to continue serving those who need it most in the Black Hills. To learn more about what you can do to help, contact Hobo's Healing Heart by email at hoboshealingheart@gmail.com or by calling 605-569-6919.



www.hoboshealingheart.org
605-569-6919