

Hobo's Healing Heart to offer financial help for sick pets

BY SARAH PRIDGEON

Families who find themselves unable to afford the cost of emergency veterinary care for their sick or injured pets will soon be able to request help from a newly established charity called Hobo's Healing Heart. Named for the beloved dog who inspired its mission, the nonprofit aims to help families avoid the hard decision to euthanize or surrender a pet due to the financial burden of care.

"[Hobo] was my once-in-a-lifetime dog. He was abused and it took me four years to get him socialized to the point where he would walk right up to any stranger and want to make friends," says founder and president, Kelly Hayworth.

"He helped me rehabilitate over 100 dogs that had been severely abused and neglected. He taught them so many things I couldn't and every single one remained in the forever home I placed them in - he is a hero in my mind."

In Hobo's memory, Hayworth founded the charity to aid pet owners in Butte, Meade and Lawrence Counties in South Dakota, as well as in Crook County. She is assisted by board members J.K. Dooley, Eva Baries and Natalie Johnson.

Hobo's Healing Heart is currently in the fundraising stage and not yet able to accept applications. The organization will offer sponsorship once it has raised a financial cushion of \$7500, says Hayworth, which it aims to achieve through both grants and fundraising efforts.

"Each year, hundreds of animals are surrendered or put down due to health issues that their families cannot afford to manage. This increases the burden on local animal shelters and humane societies," says Hayworth.

"I hope that, with our program, families will be able to keep their pets at home and alleviate some of that burden and the heartache of an untimely crossing over."

No stranger to veterinary costs herself, Hayworth found herself faced with a \$3000 bill for diagnostic testing and \$130 per month in treatment costs when Hobo developed a cough at six years of age. He was found to be in the pre-stages of congestive heart failure.

Though she did not have the funds readily available, euthanizing Hobo was not an option Hayworth was prepared to consider. She took a side job to help pay the bills and, with treatment, Hobo lived a full and happy life for an additional six years.

Hayworth spends her days working at Sundance State Bank and her free time helping animals. Over the years, she has so far helped to rehabilitate around 150 dogs, cats and horses.

"My pets are my family; when I decided to adopt them, I promised to do everything humanly possible to care for them the best way I could. I promised them my home was their final stop until they crossed over," she says.

"I don't want to see anyone have to make the decision to surrender their family member or, worse, put them to sleep because they cannot afford the cost of care."

Once the organization is able to begin sponsoring pets, it will look at each individual case and work with the veterinarian responsible

for the pet's care to determine eligibility, also bearing in mind the financial needs of the family. Funding will be limited to \$1500 per family, per year, paid directly to the veterinary clinic along with a 25 percent contribution from the family.

"Eventually, we will also have a way for a family pet to be sponsored," says Hayworth.

With help from Blackhills.com of Spearfish, Deb Walter with Black Tie and Tails of Rapid City and Bennett, Main and Gubbrud of Belle Fourche, the organization now has a website, logos and tax exempt status and is prepared to begin fundraising with vigor. Visit www.hoboshealingheart.org to find links to sponsorship and donation opportunities and to find out more about the organization.

All donations are 100% tax deductible unless otherwise stated. Large or reoccurring donations earn a link to your business or your name listed as a special contributor on the website.

Donations may also be made to: Hobo's Healing Heart, PO Box 833, Belle Fourche, SD 57717.

"We are applying for grants and, if there is anyone out there with experience applying for grants that is willing to help, we would gladly take the assistance. In the future, we plan to have an annual fundraising event on top of accepting donations year-round and applying for grants," says Hayworth.

The organization will shortly begin contacting veterinary clinics in the area to see if they will be willing to work with Hobo's Healing Heart and perhaps offer a discount to the families who receive grants.

"It is my hope that we will grow to a point where we can extend our services to the entire Black Hills Region and perhaps one day become national," Hayworth says.

"This is a huge challenge we are taking on, but I am confident we will be successful. It just may take time."



Kelly Hayworth along with some of her animal friends.

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Christmas

Chapel of Faith - 6 p.m.
Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
and Holy Eucharist.
St. Matthew's Catholic Church
St. Paul's Catholic Church -

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For weeks, people have been pouring into the small western town of Deadwood for the biggest poker tournament this side of the Mississippi. From outlaws to marshals to saloon girls, the vast array of visitors and residents of Deadwood have made this small western frontier town the place to be. As the festivities of the poker tournament conclude, a celebration party is planned to award the prize money - with a smattering of bandits, bank owners, saloon girls, gamblers and east coast debutantes, and a few of the locals, this is guaranteed to make for a very interesting evening indeed.

The mystery dinner event is a fundraiser for the Crook County Library Foundation and tickets are being sold for \$50 each. It will be held at the Longhorn Saloon & Grill on Saturday, January 24, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Once you have purchased a ticket, contact the Sundance Library to reserve your character and start planning your costume - a prize will be awarded for the best costume!

For more information please contact Jill Mackey at 283-1006 or crook-countylib@rangeweb.net. For tickets, please contact the Sundance Library, Jill