



A beautiful Maine Coon awaits adoption at the Valenti Adoption Event in Mystic. The Groton Animal Foundation joined with others to help find homes for animals displaced by Hurricane Sandy.

Guaranteeing safe refuge for Groton's animals

When she died in 2006, Josephine Sacco left a \$300,000 bequest to provide for the care and comfort of animals in Groton. Her generosity led the Community Foundation to establish the P.A.W. (People for Animals and Wildlife) Fund to encourage others to share their concerns for humane care.

One beneficiary of the Sacco Fund – the Groton Animal Foundation – has now established an endowment of its own.

It seemed fitting that President Mary Kelly was “pup-sitting” when the Community Foundation called to ask how the Groton Animal Foundation [www.grotonanimalfoundation.org] was doing. After all, she and other volunteers spend nearly every week thinking about how to make life better for the town’s animals.

A lifelong animal lover, she first got seriously involved in late 2006 as Groton’s Animal Control Facility steadily deteriorated.

“It was in terrible shape, period. Plus, there was just room for dogs. Donna [Duso, the animal control officer], had to keep the cats in her office and in the food storage area,” Kelly remembers.

“Another woman and I decided to call a meeting to ‘rattle the cages,’ so to speak.”

One meeting led to another. Within six months, GAF was incorporated and a tax exempt nonprofit. By November, the new group had successfully convinced Groton voters to approve a \$1.7 million bond to build an exciting new facility.

GAF’s work didn’t end there

Kelly and the other GAF-ers didn’t consider their job over with the new building. First they furnished the town-owned facility with everything from appliances and examining tables to dog and cat bowls. They also built outside dog and cat runs.

Five years later, they are helping low-income families keep their pets, covering extraordinary medical bills that the town can’t afford, paying for necessary grooming services, running children’s programs, supplying a “pet food pantry”, aiding bite prevention seminars, and helping control the feral cat population.

“If I need something, they make it happen,” a grateful Donna Duso marvels. “They are a huge safety net. They love animals and they love this community. Without the foundation, the Animal Control Facility would not be what it is today.”

Kelly returns the admiration.

“Donna goes through heroic efforts to care for and then place the animals. We help her make them adoptable.”

Groton residents support GAF

While GAF depends on volunteers, the medical care, food, grooming services and other activities cost money. Kelly reports a generous community.

“First, I think we’re a town that loves our animals. Second, we’re a local group and people can see exactly how their donations go out.

“That said,” Kelly continues, “people’s generosity has been phenomenal.” She points not only to last fall’s well-

Five years after helping pass a town bond to build a new animal control facility – and furnishing it – the Groton Animal Foundation is helping low-income families keep their pets, covering medical bills, running children’s programs, supplying a “pet food pantry”, aiding bite prevention seminars, and helping control the feral cat population.

attended “Cause for Paws” fundraiser at the Shennecossett Yacht Club, but also to the children of the community.

“We had a group of kids who did a play on their front porch and gave us the proceeds. We have other children who will contribute their birthday money. It happens routinely,” she says.

Plus a new endowment at the Community Foundation

In 2012, GAF also established the Groton Animal Foundation Fund, an agency endowment.

“We’ve seen the good the Sacco Fund for Animals has done for Groton; GAF has

received grants,” Kelly notes.

“We’re looking for the same benefits for our endowment at the Community Foundation: a stable and secure investment for a key part of our savings, additional credibility for our organization and our work from prospective donors, and a chance to network.”

So they can care for Groton’s animals forever.

