

Table of Contents

Message from the Board Chair and Strategic Planning Committee Chair	1
Mission Statement	3
General Objectives	3
Vision Statement	3
The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies	
Today	4
In 2011	5
Environmental Scan	
Assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats	7
External and Internal Trends	9
Planning Assumptions	10
Primary Goals	
Animal Welfare	11
Member Services	12
Supporting Goals	13
Conclusion	15
Appendixes	
Member Survey Results	
Strategic Planning Committee	
VFHS Board	

Message from the Board Chair and Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Serving People Saving Animals, a five-year strategic plan for the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, is the outcome of a process whose origins date to the winter 2005 meeting of the VFHS Board of Directors. At that time, the board set four goals for itself:

- 1) Develop a strategic plan;
- 2) Develop and implement the organizational structure to carry out a strategic plan;
- 3) Encourage broader participation from and increased communications among (VFHS) members and potential members; and
- 4) Create greater awareness of the need for spay/neuter services and provide them at low-cost.

The strategic plan that follows reflects these goals and others, all of which ultimately focus on the realization of ambitious short-term (five-year) and longer term (10-year) visions for the federation and the larger community, respectively.

In addition to developing a vision of what the federation will look like by 2011, and painting a picture of the state of animal welfare in Virginia by 2016, the strategic plan presents goals that will move us toward realizing those desired futures.

These goals fall into two categories. The primary goals are the federation's "ends," that is, the goals that have a direct impact on the welfare of the animals (for example, number of animals spayed or neutered, rescued, placed in permanent homes, euthanized, etc.) and the goals that are directly related to member services.

Supporting goals are the means to the ends, that is, the means by which we will achieve the primary goals. These goals relate to leadership, membership, structure, financial management, fundraising and legislation.

The timing of the planning process that has just been completed could not have been more propitious, for the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies is truly at a crossroads. With membership declining in recent years, too few volunteers with less time available to carry out the work of the organization, a revenue base limited by the absence of an annual fundraising program and a lack of clear focus that has resulted in some programs not being fully implemented and others not being perceived as beneficial to the membership, the federation is facing a serious challenge to its ability to advance the cause of animal welfare throughout Virginia.

Nonetheless, all of us who have been involved in the planning process are optimistic about the future because the plan addresses most of the current issues and provides a clear picture of a future that we hope will inspire our members and galvanize their collective efforts.

Part of our optimism stems from the fact that you, our members, played a significant role in the development of the strategic plan. The input many of you provided through last fall's survey is reflected in our goals, so to a very great extent, this is your plan.

In addition to expressing our sincere thanks to all those who took the time to complete the surveys and offer specific comments and suggestions, we are indebted to the members of the Strategic Planning Committee, who gave countless hours of their time and wisdom to the process.

Peggy Allen, Board Chair

Denise Deisler, Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Mission Statement

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies provides counsel, support, education and direction for organizations, agencies and individuals dedicated to promoting and improving the welfare of animals in Virginia.

Comment: In its role as a professional association, comprised of animal welfare organizations throughout the state, the federation provides a variety of services to its members to assist them in furthering their own missions. In its other primary role, the federation seeks to provide visionary and decisive leadership in bringing together all Virginians who share a deep commitment to animal welfare.

General Objectives (from Article I of the VFHS Bylaws)

The general objectives of the federation are to assist and advise the member organizations of Virginia; to assist and encourage the establishment of animal welfare organizations; to combine the efforts of all member organizations to improve animal welfare; to address the issues of animal cruelty and pet overpopulation within the Commonwealth of Virginia and to foster humane attitudes through education, public relations activities and other activities.

Vision Statement

By 2011, the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies will be the leader in advancing the cause of animal welfare in the state. Ten years from now, no more healthy or treatable cats and dogs will be euthanized in Virginia.

Comment: The federation will work tirelessly to unite humane organizations, rescue groups, animal care and control agencies and veterinarians throughout the state behind this commitment to end the practice of euthanasia of healthy or treatable animals. This will require not only a unified effort but active support for a variety of programs directed at reducing pet overpopulation including low cost spay/neuter, trap/neuter/return, aggressive foster and adoption and widespread humane education.

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies TODAY

- Having been established in 1959 as a regional organization, the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies has expanded to encompass most areas of the state and currently represents more than fifty member organizations.
- The federation currently provides the following services to its members:
 - 1) A two-and-one-half-day annual conference featuring educational workshops, speakers representing national organizations and networking opportunities;
 - 2) A communications hotline, primarily through e-mail;
 - 3) An annual printed newsletter;
 - 4) A web site (www.vfhs.org);
 - 5) Packets of information mailed in the fall and spring; and
 - 6) Law books compiled annually to reflect legislation enacted in the most recent general assembly.
- In addition, to the extent possible and with the limited resources available, the federation furthers the cause of animal welfare in Virginia through the following projects and programs:
 - 1) Shelter and pound outreach
 - 2) Shelter mentoring
 - 3) Disaster preparedness
 - 4) Spay/neuter assistance, primarily through the Spay Virginia project
 - 5) Project Safety Net, a collaboration with the Richmond SPCA, whose goal is to reduce the number of dogs and cats relinquished to shelters
- The federation is governed by a nine-member board of directors, each of whom represents active member organizations.
- The federation also has two paid staff members, who are involved exclusively with Spay Virginia. Their salaries are funded out of the Spay Virginia budget, which this year totals approximately \$410,000. A combination of foundation grants, state income tax check-off funds and proceeds from the Beastie Bazaar provide Spay Virginia's operating revenues.
- The federation's non-Spay Virginia net operating revenues are approximately \$17,000 and derive primarily from membership dues and the annual conference.

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies IN 2011

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies has historically relied heavily on two or three volunteer leaders, who have, in effect, served as full-time, yet unpaid, executive directors. This dependence on a handful of volunteers serving in key staff roles has left the federation extremely vulnerable. Therefore, one of the principal outcomes of the strategic planning process has been a commitment to retain permanent management staff and, at the same time, to broaden the base of volunteer leadership and support.

The following description of VFHS five years from now reflects these much-needed additional human resources. It also reflects a similar diversification of and increase in the federation's financial resources. Finally, it acknowledges the need to sharpen its focus on the several programs and services that will have the greatest impact for the federation's members and the animals of Virginia.

- VFHS has grown to include 75 active members and 25 associate members. Its membership is more diverse and inclusive with the addition of 25 rescue organizations as members.
- The federation is governed by a 17-member board of directors that includes eight “community” members not otherwise affiliated with a member organization. These new directors bring a strong commitment to the federation's mission, as well as access to financial resources and expertise in such areas as financial management, public relations and marketing, human resources, communications, accounting and law.
- The volunteer leadership has also been strengthened by the addition of a regional structure, consisting of regional representatives and alternates who are accountable to the board of directors and assisted by the paid staff.
- The federation is capably managed by a full-time executive director who is supported by a part-time communications coordinator and an administrative assistant.
- The federation is operating on a break-even basis with a \$300,000 annual budget built on revenues from the following sources:
 - 1) State income tax check-off
 - 2) Fees from an exemplary annual conference and regional mini-conferences
 - 3) Increased membership dues
 - 4) Foundation grants
 - 5) Statewide corporate underwriting
 - 6) Major gifts program
 - 7) Direct mail program
 - 8) Board member contributions

- VFHS serves as an effective clearinghouse of information relying on both an up-to-date interactive web site and a vibrant listserv. The web site offers a well maintained resource directory including a current listing of VFHS members. The listserv provides a forum for networking, sharing best practices and seeking member input on legislative issues. Following the trend to electronic communications, the more time-intensive and costly print newsletter and fall and spring information packet mailings have been eliminated.
- Spay Virginia has implemented a statewide program of subsidizing low-cost spay/neuter services, forging partnerships among local shelters, rescue groups and veterinarians, who may then apply for VFHS funding. All regions now have active, self-sustaining, community-based low-cost spay/neuter programs in place. As a result, the number of animals euthanized has decreased from 104,000 in 2004 to 50,000 this year.
- Relying on its member network and a regional structure aligned with that of the Virginia Animal Care and Control Agencies (VACA), the federation facilitates training and sharing of best practices, as well as a reinvigorated shelter mentoring program.
- VFHS has been the catalyst in forming a statewide coalition to advocate with a single, unified voice in Richmond. While the federation doesn't have its own paid legislative advocate, it participates in the development of legislation and/or positions on animal issues, soliciting input from its members and strategizing with leaders from other statewide organizations.

Environmental Scan

ASSESSMENT OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

At its all-day planning retreat in October 2005, the VFHS Strategic Planning Committee identified the federation's current strengths and weaknesses, as well as potential opportunities and threats that it faces. This is commonly known in a strategic planning process as a SWOT analysis.

Strengths

- Longevity
- Dedicated board of directors
- Some effective programs and activities: legislation; support for and work with shelters; Spay Virginia
- Maintenance of a focus on the mission and membership
- Great relationship with state animal control association
- OK relationship with state veterinary association
- Wide network of contacts with national animal groups, legislators, animal control agencies, veterinarians, etc.
- Excellent annual conference
- Credibility with state legislators
- Is recognized as a national model for its strong outreach projects and programs and its support of legislation enacted to improve care and treatment of animals in Virginia
- Ability, through mentoring program, to connect shelters that have more (resources, training, experience, etc.) with shelters that have less
- Provides strong support for its member organizations and start-up groups seeking guidance in establishing an organization and prioritizing goals

Weaknesses

- VFHS is a volunteer organization whose leadership and progress are dependent on people with additional occupations, including full-time jobs
- The board is comprised of individuals whose primary commitment/loyalty is to their own humane organizations
- Limited number of people actually involved and limited time of those involved
- Current internal issues interfering with VFHS's ongoing mission
- Poor relationship with fairly large number of animal welfare activists, especially rescue—lack of inclusivity
- Not always responsive to members regarding legislation
- Lack of clear focus as to what VFHS wants to be and for whom
- Too much trying to be all things for all people
- Lack of organizational and procedural documents, such as internal controls, position descriptions and evaluation procedures
- Current structure, which is informal with few official protocols in writing
- Too preoccupied with minutiae, which has resulted in the loss of good board members
- Failure of Spay Virginia to benefit more areas in Virginia
- Insufficient financial resources to offer needed assistance to members
- Limited membership—many local groups are not members
- Insufficient communication with members

Opportunities

- Potential for animal welfare grant funding
- Potential for corporate sponsorship/underwriting
- Bringing more animal organizations in as members, especially rescue groups
- Refining VFHS's focus and goals through strategic planning process
- Having more information/resources to offer members
- Innovative shelter designs and programs (e.g. Project Safety Net and Meet Your Match), which offer new avenues of increasing the rehoming of healthy adoptable animals
- Affordable spay/neuter resources and incentives through projects such as Spay Virginia and allocations of the state tax check-offs for spay/neuter programs, which provide the means to reduce the overpopulation of companion and feral animals
- Collaborative shelter mentoring program involving animal control and humane organizations working together
- Potential leadership role as convener of organizations with shared values
- Potential to create regional structure analogous to VACA's structure, in order to encourage collaborative effort

Threats

- Competition for philanthropic dollars
- Posturing and competitiveness among national animal welfare organizations, which negatively impacts the message of the Asilomar Accords
- Financial challenges/long-term stability
- Lack of involvement of member organizations—members are too few and too passive
- Negative perception of VFHS by some organizations/groups
- Internal board conflicts leading to alienation of board members

Environmental Scan

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL TRENDS

The Strategic Planning Committee also looked at trends in the animal welfare field as well as those operating within VFHS itself.

External Trends (in the Animal Welfare Field)

- Sheltered nonprofit organizations are working toward the no-kill option whenever possible
- Increased emphasis on offering low cost spay/neuter services
- Increased cooperation between nonprofit organizations and local jurisdictions with respect to animal-related issues and sheltering
- Growth of fostering and rescue groups
- Increased professionalism in nonprofit organizations and animal control agencies
- Limited admission shelters
- Vegetarianism
- Less restrictive/judgmental adoptions
- Outreach/training wheels programs
- EBI (euthanasia by injection)
- Cruelty as a felony
- Better animal housing in shelters (fewer cages, more multiple animal rooms, etc.)
- Animal control facilities (pounds) becoming more like animal shelters
- Anti-chaining law for dogs
- Licensing of cats
- Awareness of compassion fatigue in shelter workers
- Awareness of hoarder mentality
- Use of marketing tools/media to draw attention to animal issues (eg., spay/neuter)
- Use of technology to identify and track animals (e.g., microchipping, computer programs)
- Asilomar Accords concept—all groups gather consistent types of data
- Inclusiveness/respect among various types of animal groups

Internal Trends (within VFHS)

- The general trend in VFHS is growth;
 - Growth in size and number of activities (longer conference, Spay Virginia project, enhanced shelter outreach, inclusion of disaster planning)
 - Expanded presence with membership (enhanced member information packet, larger newsletter, web site)
 - Expanded funding sources (grants in addition to conference revenues)
 - On the down side, legislative activity and VFHS membership have both decreased
- Attempt to communicate more with members
- Attempt to recruit board members from all parts of Virginia and who represent the various faces of animal welfare—open admission shelters, limited admission shelters, non-sheltered, rescue groups, etc.
- Willingness to question past ideas

Planning Assumptions

- 1) The federation will hire paid staff in order to provide management of day-to-day operations, to oversee and direct Spay Virginia, to initiate and lead an ongoing fundraising program, to develop and manage the annual budget, to coordinate and facilitate internal and external communications and to support and leverage the work of the volunteer leadership.
- 2) The income tax check-off and animal friendly license plate programs will provide increased funding for the federation's programs, especially Spay Virginia.
- 3) The level of interest and involvement of the general public in animal issues will continue to increase.
- 4) The rate of inflation will remain modest during the next five years and the economy will avoid a serious recession.
- 5) There will be no major hurricanes, terrorist attacks or other catastrophic occurrences that could otherwise impact the federation's ability to fulfill its mission.

Primary Goals

ANIMAL WELFARE

The achievement of these goals will positively impact the welfare of Virginia's animals.

- 1) Through the Spay Virginia program, we will ensure that affordable, accessible spay/neuter services are available throughout the state by 2011.
- 2) Euthanasia of healthy or treatable cats and dogs will decrease 50% by 2011.
- 3) Spay/neuter surgeries will double by 2011.
- 4) VFHS will actively promote and subsidize TNR programs by member organizations, resulting in a 50% decrease in the number of stray cats taken in by humane organizations and animal control agencies.
- 5) The number of cats and dogs relinquished to shelters and animal control agencies will decrease by 25%.
- 6) Adoptions of cats and dogs will increase by 25%.
- 7) VFHS will effectively advocate at the state level for legislation on behalf of Virginia's animals.
- 8) All VFHS member organizations will adopt the terminology, definitions and reporting guidelines embraced in the Asilomar Accords.

Primary Goals

MEMBER SERVICES

The achievement of these goals will enable VFHS member organizations to further their missions and accomplish their own goals. In this way, VFHS will leverage the resources of its members to help achieve the primary goals related to animal welfare.

- 1) Enhance the VFHS web site in 2006 to make it more timely and interactive.
- 2) By 2007, provide in an easily accessible format such materials as recent legislation, an online resource directory and a list of VFHS members with up-to-date contact information.
- 3) Implement a listserv in 2006 for all VFHS members, in order to facilitate regional collaborations, networking among members and sharing of best practices.
- 4) Continue conducting the annual conference, with attendance increasing by 10% annually through 2011.
- 5) Conduct one-day mini-conferences and/or training workshops in each region annually, beginning in 2007. Customize the agenda for each conference according to the needs of each region.
- 6) Resume the shelter mentoring program relying on regional representatives to coordinate the efforts of volunteer mentors on a regional basis.

Supporting Goals

As the term implies, supporting goals are a means to the accomplishment of the primary goals.

1) Leadership

Governance

- Amend the bylaws to permit a larger board of directors, as well as directors not affiliated with member organizations. Subsequent recruitment efforts will result in the addition of eight such “community” members. (2006)
- Establish the following board committees: Nominating, Finance, Spay Virginia, Membership and Legislative. Each committee will be chaired by a board member, but may include non board members. (2007)

Management

- Hire a full-time executive director, a part-time communications coordinator and, budget permitting, a part-time administrative assistant. (2006)
- Develop job descriptions for each staff position. (2006)
- Implement a formal performance review process. (2007)

2) Membership

- Initiate a membership recruitment campaign. Develop a list of privileges of membership and promote them to current and potential members. (2006)
- Achieve a net increase of 10 members each year.
- Modify the dues structure and increase annual dues based on a sliding scale according to size of the member organization’s budget. (2007)

3) Structure

- Establish a regional structure based on the regional boundaries designated by VACA. (2006)
- Enlist a representative and an alternate for each region in order to facilitate communications, networking and regional collaborations. (2007)

4) Financial Management

- Develop and operate within a break-even annual budget. (2006)

- Implement policies and procedures to ensure appropriate internal financial controls. (2006)
- Produce and distribute an annual financial report, including the current year budget, to VFHS member organizations prior to the annual conference. (2007)

5) Fundraising

- Implement an annual giving program to include direct mail, major gifts, foundation grants, corporate sponsorships and 100% board participation. (2007)
- Raise \$100,000 on an annual basis. (2011)

6) Legislative Advocacy

- Initiate the effort to form a coalition with other state organizations to speak with one voice in Richmond.
- Use the listserv to solicit input from the VFHS membership regarding legislative issues and to keep them apprised of pending and recently enacted legislation.

Conclusion

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies Board of Directors has approved an ambitious strategic plan, one that reflects the clear priorities of its members. The next step is to translate the strategic goals into tactical action plans. This year, 2006, will be one of transition in which the infrastructure will be put in place to prepare for the execution of the plan. Full-scale implementation will occur in 2007.

The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies has both the opportunity and the responsibility to unite Virginia's humane organizations, rescue groups, veterinarians and animal care and control agencies behind a commitment to end the euthanasia of healthy or treatable dogs and cats within the next 10 years. We invite everyone concerned about the welfare of animals in Virginia to embrace our vision and work together to achieve the goals that will bring us closer to realizing that vision.