



NEWS RELEASE

GEORGIAN TRIANGLE HUMANE SOCIETY TO ADDRESS LACK OF ACCESSIBLE VETERINARY CARE IN HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED COMMUNITY WITH SUPPORT FROM PETSMART CHARITIES OF CANADA

Support for Indigenous communities identified as focus of the initial cohort for the trailblazing grant program.

May 30, 2023— COLLINGWOOD, ON – The Georgian Triangle Humane Society (GTHS) has received a grant from [PetSmart Charities of Canada](#)[™] in the amount of \$60,000 to address challenges in accessing veterinary care in Saugeen First Nation, located in Southampton, ON.

Rising costs combined with geographical and cultural barriers have left many communities out of the veterinary care system altogether. This grant program supports innovative and culturally relevant veterinary programs focused on Indigenous communities, which have been historically excluded from veterinary care.

Early in 2023, PetSmart Charities of Canada, the top funder of animal welfare in the country, announced an \$18 million commitment over the next five years toward improving access to veterinary care. The “Incubator” grant program, focused on changing how to support veterinary care in historically excluded Indigenous communities, is a significant pillar of that commitment.

“Saugeen First Nation is identified as one of the closest Indigenous communities to our general catchment area and based on our initial conversations with the residents of this community, many pet owners have stated they are ‘in need’ of essentials, such as pet supplies, veterinary care and access to institutions or services that provide those things,” explains Sonya Reichel, GTHS executive director. “We believe that by increasing access to care for communities like Saugeen First Nation, the bar is raised for all animals. We are so appreciative of this grant from PetSmart Charities Canada, as it will help the GTHS support pet owning families and individuals in this community with the goal of keeping pets and people together, which we know has a profound positive effect on mental, physical, and emotional health.”

While nearly 60% of Canadian households include pets, access to basic veterinary services has not kept pace. This is particularly felt in Indigenous communities that have additional barriers beyond cost, including cultural barriers and a lack of veterinary services in the vicinity. In

Indigenous regions, pets play important roles in their communities, but accessing resources to keep animals healthy can be challenging.

With reconciliation considerations integrated into the approach, grantees will build relationships and assess specific needs before helping to design long-term veterinary services. This ensures that communities that have been left out are deliberately included in deciding how and when they will access the healthcare they need for their pets.

“Nearly 1 in 5 Canadians struggle to access even basic preventative care such as spay/neuter procedures, vaccinations and annual exams,” said Kate Atema, director of community grants & initiatives at PetSmart Charities of Canada. “While this issue affects families in nearly every community, those who have been historically excluded from human social services are most in need of pet services. We’re proud to support an innovative approach that meets the unique needs identified by those with lived experiences that have struggled to gain access to veterinary care themselves.”

To-Date, the GTHS has worked with Saugeen First Nation in a limited capacity, by delivering pet food to their community food bank through their Pet Pantry program, and providing spay/neuter surgeries, when possible, with the goal of assisting people to retain their pets when experiencing financial difficulties. Since receiving the incubator grant from PetSmart Charities of Canada, the GTHS has hosted a Community BBQ for residents of Saugeen First Nation to start building a relationship based on mutual respect, kindness, generosity, and trust. Residents were able to share their needs and barriers with respect to animal care, and the GTHS is currently planning a follow-up visit to assist in addressing some of those barriers through the implementation of a mini-wellness clinic.



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About The Georgian Triangle Humane Society

The Georgian Triangle Humane Society is a non-profit charity that operates an Animal Centre serving the south Georgian Bay region by providing shelter for homeless animals and adopting them to caring families. They offer innovative programs that enhance and support the human-animal bond. These programs include Lifelong Learning, Access to Care and Animal Transport for pets in underserved communities. To learn more, visit gths.ca.

About PetSmart Charities of Canada™

[PetSmart Charities of Canada](http://www.PetSmartCharities.ca) is committed to making the world a better place for pets and all who love them. Through its in-store adoption program in all PetSmart® stores across the country, PetSmart Charities of Canada helps thousands of pets connect with loving families each year. PetSmart Charities of Canada also provides grant funding to support organizations that advocate and care for the well-being of all pets and their families. Our grants and efforts connect pets with loving homes through adoption, improve access to affordable veterinary care and support families in times of crisis with access to food, shelter, and emergency relief. Each year, thousands of generous supporters help pets in need by donating to PetSmart Charities of Canada directly at PetSmartCharities.ca, while shopping at PetSmart.ca, and by using the PIN pads at checkout registers inside PetSmart stores. In turn, PetSmart Charities of Canada efficiently uses more than 90 cents of every dollar donated to fulfill its role as the leading funder of animal welfare in Canada, granting more than \$25 million since its inception in 1999. Independent from PetSmart LLC, PetSmart Charities of Canada is a registered Canadian charity. To learn more visit www.PetSmartCharities.ca.

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