For Immediate Release **January 11, 2021**

Innovative GTHS Humane Education Program for Youth Goes Digital

Collingwood, ON – The Georgian Triangle Humane Society (GTHS) has launched innovative online Humane Education courses for youth aged 10-17. The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges in how youth in the Southern Georgian Bay area can access existing GTHS programs. The online Humane Education courses are the first of their kind in Canada and will provide hours of learning about everything from what to know before selecting the right pet to creating a pet sitter business.

The GTHS launched a groundbreaking initiative for youth in the Southern Georgian Bay community in November 2017. Since then, the GTHS Humane Education program has proven to increase social and emotional skills in children facing barriers through strengthening the human-animal bond. The GTHS is grateful to be the recipient of a grow grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) which will fund the program over a three-year period. The GTHS has partnered with the Ontario SPCA to develop program and deliver new and innovative courses to the youth in our community. The Humane Education program aligns itself with countless academic studies across international boundaries that suggest developing empathy for animals will result in increased caring for all human beings; empathy has been shown to be a building block for pro-social behaviour.

Based on a successful pilot project of school-based classroom visits, group workshops/after school and summer programs and one-to-one mentorships, this program has now moved online. This online platform consists of two engaging courses for youth (the Pet Sitter Certificate and Responsible Pet Ownership courses), and one course specifically designed for educators (the Animal Wellness Certificate program).

Recently, the GTHS has secured approval from several school boards for secondary students to complete two specific online courses to fulfill their community service involvement hours. Students in Simcoe, Simcoe Muskoka and Peel are encouraged to visit our website for further information or email education@gths.ca directly.

Pet Sitter Certificate Course

The Pet Sitter Certificate Course is made up of a series of eight modules and takes 8-10 hours to complete. It is designed for youth who love learning about animals and caring for them. This course is targeted to students want to turn that passion into a job. Participants will learn how to: feed, water and exercise pets, identify and handle emergency situations, practice dog and cat care basics, and create a business and marketing plan. The fee for this course is $39.00. Registrants who complete the course will receive a certificate of completion, which they can use to market their business.

Responsible Pet Ownership Course

This course is for anyone thinking about bringing a new pet into their home and for all existing pet parents. Topics include guidelines for responsible pet ownership: why we have pets and the health

benefits of pet ownership, the five freedoms that pet owners must provide for their companions and the ten responsibilities that go with those freedoms. This course is recommended for youth but is open to all ages. There is no fee for this course thanks to the grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Registrants who complete the course will receive a certificate of completion.

Junior Animal Wellness Certificate Program

GTHS also offers another innovative online program, the Animal Wellness Certificate Course to Grade 6+ teachers and home school parents in the Simcoe/York regions. This program is taught online to youth through the direction of an educator. It replaces the in-class, in-shelter course that was offered before the COVID-19 pandemic. Registrants who complete the program will receive a certificate of completion.

"The GTHS Humane Education courses are uniquely designed to teach youth the skills they need to take their love of animals to the next level. By focusing on the bond between animals and children, education is key to empowering youth to become a more informed, respectful and a compassionate generation. This program and these courses are the first of their kind in Canada and we at the GTHS are extremely proud of delivering them to our community and possibly beyond," said Sonya Reichel, GTHS Executive Director.

"We are excited about the excellent job the Georgian Triangle Humane Society has done to create an in-depth, easy-to-understand series of online programs for youth and adults. These creatively executed, engaging courses are professional and will make learning about animal care and the importance of empathy a fun learning experience," said Daryl Vaillancourt, Ontario SPCA.

For more information on the GTHS Humane Education program, please visit www.gths.ca/services/humane-education/ or contact Karen Marsh, Humane Education Coordinator at 705-445-5204, Ext. 213

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The Georgian Triangle Humane Society

The GTHS 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 humane education, pet retention, access to veterinary medicine and animal transport for pets in need.