



## We're on the web!

Yes, little ol' Safe Haven Humane Society from little ol' Ionia, Michigan, is on the World Wide Web!

We wouldn't have believed we could be so lucky, but with a generous donation for this specific purpose, and the talents of someone who really knows her way around computer software, we made it!

Now tattoo this on your forehead, write it on the palm of your hand, whatever you



have to do to remember it: [www.shhspets.com](http://www.shhspets.com). That's the address where you'll find all the history of Safe Haven, how to adopt or foster a pet, a whole list of ways to help, and some great stories about our adopted fur kids with their new families.

We're also building a photo gallery of all the pets we've helped get into new homes. So if you've adopted

from us, please send us (by mail or email) photos and stories of your furry family member (no husbands please).

We hope to continually improve the site and make it fun and informative, so please let us know if you think of ways we can do that.

We'll also be archiving the newsletters on the site, so if you need to go back and look at past articles, it'll be a piece of cake!

## Saving Lives

*By Beth Wellman*

I hope those who read this article will better understand the difficult decisions that have to be made on a daily basis within an animal control environment.

I began volunteering at the Ionia County Animal Shelter when I was 14 years old. I have been a staff person for ten years and have been the shelter co-ordinator for the last five years.

For ten years, I have had to make the difficult decision of determining which animals live and which die. The stress and guilt of those decisions weigh on me with a pressure that I am unable to fully describe.

Every day someone says to me, "I could not work here; how can you do it?" A half smile, a nod, and a shrug is my typical response. A part of me does not know what the real answer is. I don't know how I do it. I just do. I feel that I have no choice but to help those I can and to end the suffering of those I can't help.

I remember those I longed to save but was unable to; and I remember the ones that, against all odds, *were* saved.

I cling to the saved ones, but am unable to push out the memories of those who were unable to be saved. I pray I did

not do them wrong when that difficult decision was made. Regardless of whether *I* failed them or *society* failed them, the least they deserve is to be remembered and missed — I do my best to give them at least that. Even if it would be easier to not remember, and just push them out of my heart and mind, for better or for worse, they live on inside of me.

Thankfully, over the course of my career, I have had Safe Haven Humane Society to rely on. Without their help, many more lives would have been needlessly

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lost. Safe Haven places dogs and cats into foster homes as space allows – unfortunately, there are never enough foster homes. I consider myself very fortunate to know that if a special dog or cat comes into the shelter, I can contact Safe Haven and, if at all possible, space will be made for that animal in their program.

Safe Haven funds are extremely limited right now, which I completely understand in these difficult economic times. Still, it is so hard to look at an animal who is beyond loving, beyond gentle, beyond perfect, to ever consider him beyond hope. Even with donations on the decline, two animals who came into the shelter within the last month owe their lives to Safe Haven.

Red is a ten month old Redbone Coonhound who came into the shelter as a stray. Immediately it was obvious that his eyelids were folded in instead of out, which is known as entropion. Poor Red would dig at his eyes with his paws; rub his face in the dirt and grass – anything to try to relieve the irritation of his eyelashes constantly rubbing against his eyes.

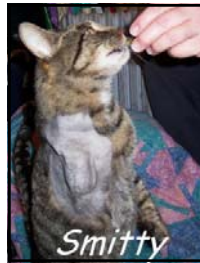
After a thorough temperament evaluation, which he passed with flying colors, I contacted Safe Haven. Not only were there no open foster homes at the time for him, but there just wasn't any funding available for his surgery.

We posted Red's story on petfinder.com begging for donations and a foster home in order to save his life. A wonderful family from Wisconsin donated the money for his surgery, but there still was no foster home available. So Red sat and waited for weeks. Eventually a foster home opened up, and Red had his surgery. He finally is ready to find his forever home.



Without Safe Haven's foster program, Red would never have had an opportunity to leave the shelter alive.

Smitty (the Hurt Kitty) is a Tiger cat that, again, came into the shelter as a stray. The people who found him reported that he had been hanging around their house for about a month. They didn't feed him or pay any attention to him, beyond noting his presence – he was a nuisance that just would not leave. After about three weeks, they noticed him dragging his front leg, apparently recently injured, and, after another week went by, they brought him into the shelter.



Now the cold hard truth is that any cat who is less than one hundred percent healthy just isn't given a chance at the shelter because of limited resources. But something about *this* cat called out to me. Maybe it was his affectionate nature, even though his front leg was scraped raw and bent at an odd angle. Or maybe it was because he had been neutered, so was obviously once part of a loving family, but somehow got tossed aside. The injustice of the situation was more than I could stand, so I contacted Safe Haven, and once again, they came through for me.

Smitty had to have his leg amputated, and even though Safe Haven had more than one hundred cats in its foster program and could not afford the cost of Smitty's surgery, they squeezed him in, and now he, too, can find his forever home.

These are just two of the hundreds of "special needs" animals that Safe Haven has saved over the years. So many dogs and cats would

not be alive without them. My fear is this: What would happen without Safe Haven? The numbers are not moving in Safe Haven's favor: fewer donations are coming in, fewer foster homes, higher medical costs, and yet the number of animals in need of assistance is increasing. I am grateful to have been able to share these two wonderful stories with you, and I hope that, as you read this, you will consider how you can help the homeless pets in our community. If there is anything you can do – donate or foster – please, please contact Safe Haven Humane Society. Without your help the next Red or Smitty may not get a second chance.



**Dr. Bruce Langlois of the Animal Hospital of Lowell** will have a mobile surgical unit in operation in January and will be regularly visiting areas in Ionia, Montcalm, Kent, and Muskegon Counties, as well as other areas. The Spay/Neuter Express offers low-cost spay and neuter surgeries for dogs and cats, in addition to other limited options.

The targeted population of the mobile clinic are pets of low-income owners, barn cats, ferals, and rescue and shelter animals. For more information call 616-897-8865 or check out the details at [www.spayneuterexpress.com](http://www.spayneuterexpress.com).

## Pet Holiday Reminders

Everyone hears about these pet cautions each year, but with all that's happening around the holidays, it's a good idea to put this list where you can regularly see it. Many normal aspects of the holiday season can be stressful and harmful to our pets. Here are a few things to keep in mind as we scurry through the next couple of months:

- 🐾 Rich, fatty foods, like turkey skin or gravy, can cause inflammation of the pancreas in pets, a painful and serious condition requiring emergency veterinary treatment.
- 🐾 Cooked bones can splinter and tear or block pet's digestive tract.
- 🐾 Baking-string can cause blockage if ingested.



- 🐾 The list of foods harmful to pets includes grapes and raisins (can cause kidney failure), onions (can cause anemia), and caffeine, alcohol and chocolate. Just remember to feed your pets their normal food and keep all other food and treats out of reach. Ask guests to do the same.



- 🐾 Needles from your Christmas tree can become lodged in your pet's throat and even drinking the water from the tree stand can cause vomiting, mouth sores and diarrhea.
- 🐾 Mistletoe, holly and poinsettias all contain toxins which, if ingested, can cause a drop in blood pressure, swollen throat, stomach problems and, even in the case of ingesting Yew, death.

- 🐾 Decorative lights and candles pose obvious threats to pets. These should be placed totally out of your pet's reach.

- 🐾 Tinsel and ribbon can turn into an intestinal blockage.

- 🐾 Wintertime means the presence of antifreeze. Antifreeze contains ethylene glycol which causes rapid and permanent kidney damage to your pet, even if only a small amount is ingested. Spills or leaks should be cleaned up immediately.

Checking this list occasionally and keeping your pet's natural curiosity in mind will help prevent many potential problems. Have a happy, healthy and safe holiday season.

## Help us help them

During the upcoming holiday season, we hope many of our supporters will be able to help the pets in our care with even a small donation. Whether you give \$5 or \$50, every penny is used for the care of the animals and our constant search for permanent homes for them.

For the past couple of years, our finances have been severely strained, not only because of rising costs of medical care, but also because of larger numbers of heartworm positive dogs and numerous unusual surgical procedures, including tumor



removals, amputations due to injury and infection, and countless other medical treatments for both dogs and cats.

We will never give up on these animals, but our ability to reach out and help those who are ill or injured has really been curtailed this year. At times, we've had to make very difficult choices.

Our volunteers work very hard and constantly try to come up with new ideas for raising money. We hope we can count on your help too.

You can either mail your donation to Safe Haven at P.O. Box 55, Ionia, MI 48846, or donate using your credit card at our new website: [www.shhspets.com](http://www.shhspets.com). Just go to the Donate page. While you're there, we hope you'll browse the site and let us know what you think. We could never do what we do without the help of loyal supporters like you.



Remember, we are not affiliated with any national or state humane society or any government entity, and we do not receive funds from any of them. If you normally donate to any of those larger groups thinking a portion of the funds trickle down to us, that is not the case.

The money to pay for our programs comes from fundraising events like bake sales, rummage sales and from the generous support of people like you.

Please help us help the animals. Their lives depend on all of us.

If you would like to become a member of Safe Haven, or would like to foster a pet or volunteer in some other way, please call us at 616-522-1611 or email us at [shhspets@hotmail.com](mailto:shhspets@hotmail.com).

# Daisy's Story

When I first saw Daisy in the shelter, she was trembling and miserable, with fleas running over her nearly hairless body. Her skin looked like an elephant's—it was hard and tough. She smelled bad and had goop in the corners of her eyes. She stared at the floor and wouldn't look up at me.

Daisy was scheduled for euthanasia due to lack of funds for her treatment. When I said I would take her to the vet, the shelter manager asked if I would be willing to foster Daisy until she was adoptable. I agreed, and she arranged a meeting for me with Safe Haven.

When I took Daisy to the vet for her first visit, they thought there was little hope of her ever getting hair back, because of the condition of her skin. The vet seemed to think the best



option was to put her out of her misery. But after the vet consulted with Safe Haven, a preliminary course of treatment was agreed upon, which included giving her steroids, antibiotics, medicated shampoo, and eye ointment, to give Daisy a chance at recovery.

The first few days at my house, Daisy was confused and scared, yet grateful for any attention from me. I bathed her every third day. In little more than a week, I noticed a white film over her body. I thought it was residue from the shampoo. I tried to rub it off with a wet cloth, but it wouldn't come off. It was a fine layer of new hair growing in.

When I took Daisy back to the vet in three weeks, she had short hair over most of her body. The office staff was

so surprised at her appearance they asked to take a picture of her.

Over the next several months, Daisy's self-confidence emerged; she became playful and well-adjusted and turned out to be a long-haired, thick-coated spaniel!

For Christmas, Daisy found her forever mom, Nancy. When they met for the first time, there was an almost immediate bonding between the two.

After a two-hour drive, during which Daisy slept, Nancy pulled into her driveway and said, "We're home!" Daisy sat right up. She went into the house with Nancy and made herself right at home, as though she had always lived there.

Nancy still gives thanks to Safe Haven for a match made in heaven.



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*"Where Happy Endings Begin!"*

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