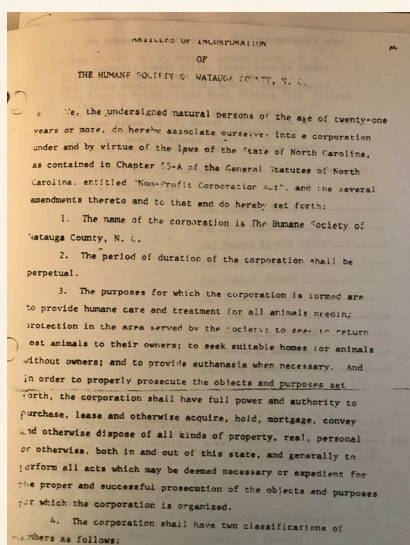


HISTORY of The Watauga Humane Society 1969-2019



1960's

- ❗ **1968-1969:** Rachel Rivers Coffey, Society Editor and later Editor of the Watauga Democrat, often found stray animals tied to the doorknob of her office because of her newspaper articles featuring the humane treatment of animals. Velma Burnley, Vice President of Northwestern Bank (now Wells Fargo), and later mayor of Boone, met often with Ms. Coffey to discuss the need for a local animal shelter.
- ❗ **1969:** Dr. John (Jack) Martin, a local veterinarian, along with Ms. Coffey and Ms. Burnley, requested help from Boone, Blowing Rock, and Watauga County and with their cooperation, the first animal shelter was built on the site next door to the Boone WasteWater Treatment Plant for \$1850, on land later leased to the Society for \$1.00 a year. Ten farsighted Boone community members formed a board, and Velma Burnley was elected the first president. Bylaws were written, a budget prepared, and an application for the Articles of Incorporation was submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State of North Carolina. In October, the Articles of Incorporation for "The Humane Society of Watauga County" were officially granted and signed by the Board of Directors.



1970's

- ❗ **1970:** The Society hired a part time staff member for the summer months. Up to this time, board members and water plant employees had cared for and arranged animal adoptions.
- ❗ **1971:** Irma Baker Lyons paid to move a vacant house from the Chapel Hills area of the county to the shelter location on Casey Lane to house the newly hired full time shelter manager. The structure also included a small room for an office and some housing for animals. The Society was granted non-profit status from the IRS, and the Board of Directors began a crusade encouraging Watauga County to establish an Office of Animal Control to manage the overwhelming number of homeless animals. The Society is the second oldest non-profit organization in Watauga County.
- ❗ **1973:** The Society, which had operated under the auspices of the United Way and thus was unable to raise funds, dissolved the relationship and became an independent entity.
- ❗ **1975:** Finally, recognizing the need, Watauga County constructed a facility for animal control and hired an officer.
- ❗ **1977:** Patricia and Michael Cade moved to Boone from New Orleans and brought with them new animal care ideas and expertise to the Society, including obedience classes, rabies clinics, Society membership, and most importantly, the launch of a spay/neuter campaign with the support of local veterinarians. This effort continued until the early 1990's, at which time the Society could no longer afford the cost. Patricia Cade recommended that the Society utilize the Humane Alliance in Asheville, an organization of eight veterinarians who performed nothing but low cost spay/neuter surgeries. Although under a different name, this relationship is ongoing to date.

1980's & 90's

- ❗ **1981:** The Society's non-profit status required continuous fundraising campaigns, with the first major effort being a Rummage Sale. From humble beginnings on the sidewalk in Blowing Rock, the rummage sale has been a yearly event currently held at the Boone National Guard Armory, and has become one of the largest sales of its kind in Western North Carolina.
- ❗ **1981- Early 1990's:** The Society continued to operate on Casey Lane, caring for a minimum of 1100 animals yearly, and finding loving homes for 94% of them.
- ❗ **1985:** Through careful fiscal management, savings, and the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Society was able to build adjoining rooms to the already existing shelter consisting of a "cat mall" and a larger office.
- ❗ **1997:** Discussions began about renovating the shelter, which was subject to multiple floodings and frantic animal evacuations. The town authorities determined that the site was not suitable for new construction, thus building permits would not be issued. Realizing the need for a new facility, Lillian and Bob Turchin issued the highly successful Turchin Challenge consisting of \$60,000, which resulted in a total of \$150,000 raised. The Society began a search for suitable property for a new facility.
- ❗ **1998:** The first Fur Ball was held at the Green Park Inn in Blowing Rock, raising approximately \$2000. This event is still held yearly as a major source of funding and in 2018 raised \$140,000.



2000's

- ❗ **2003:** The Society purchased 13.822 acres on Don Hayes Road near Rutherford Baptist Church. An existing house was designated as the Bare Bones Boutique, with the remaining 13.322 acreage designated as the Adoption and Education Center, a 3 acre Dog Park, and hiking trails for dog walking.
- ❗ **2005:** The bylaws were amended to re-name the organization "The Watauga Humane Society."
- ❗ **2006:** The Arko Dog Park was dedicated and opened to the public. The Society was accepted as a charity in the North Carolina State Employees Combined Campaign.
- ❗ **2008:** The Board of Directors of the Watauga Humane Society began negotiations with Watauga County, proposing to become an "open admission" facility, assuming responsibility for all animal care and housing, assisted by two county-paid Animal Control Officers who would work out of offices in the county courthouse. Additionally, the county was to appropriate \$400,000 toward the new facility, along with a minimum yearly disbursement of \$75,000+ toward support of WHS operations. Pet "Meals on Wheels" began in coordination with Watauga County "Meals on Wheels" so that recipients would not have to share meals with their pets. The first Executive Director was hired.
- ❗ **2009:** The ground breaking ceremony for the new Adoption and Education Center was held. Architects Walter Robb Callahan & Pierce were responsible for planning the facility, and Enterline and Russell were hired for construction. The Board of Directors voted to name the Center "The Irma Baker Lyons Adoption and Education Center" because of Ms. Lyons' many years of volunteer service and financial support. Additionally, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to recognize S.N.I.P.S. (Spay Neuter is a Positive Solution) as the official Spay/ Neuter committee.

2010's

- 🐾 **2011:** All animals were removed from the original shelter and the Watauga County Animal Control facility, and moved to their new home to await adoption.
- 🐾 **2012:** The official Grand Opening and Dedication for the Society's "Irma Baker Lyons Adoption and Education Center" was held. The second Executive Director was hired. Hannah Nicole Reed created the "Kitty Korner" in the Turchin Room for her Girl Scout Gold Award project, which included a children's library and reading nook.
- 🐾 **2013 - 2018:** The Watauga Humane Society continued to save lives, shelter, care for, and find loving homes for neglected and stray animals, and approximately 7,000 animals were adopted during this five year time period, with an average adoption rate of 94%. Multiple volunteer committees worked diligently to spread the word of "Adopt Don't Shop," encouraging pet parents to prevent unwanted litters by spaying and neutering, and reaching the children with the message of humane treatment of animals.
- 🐾 **2019:** The Watauga Humane Society is now a thriving model facility which many animal welfare organizations strive to emulate. The staff and multiple volunteers give of their time and talents to care for, love, socialize, and re-home the animals, including dogs, cats, rabbits, and various other small creatures. The organization is managed by a volunteer working Board of Directors, a volunteer program featuring multiple outreach and fundraising events, a spay/neuter committee (SNIPS) which works to raise funding for needy families for low cost surgery through a variety of methods, including selling handmade crafts, restaurant event fund-raisers, private donations, and grants. Since 2015, a total of 2,100 animals have benefitted from the S.N.I.P.S. low cost spay/neuter surgery, and local veterinarians are generously assisting with this effort. An active all volunteer "Team Educate" is responsible for teaching children about humane treatment of animals during school and Adoption Center visits, and the summer programs "Reading for Paws" and "Camp Cats and Canines."

Today

- 🐾 The Watauga Humane Society's 50th Anniversary is a time to look back, to reflect, and to celebrate the progress, the thousands of animal lives saved, the people who worked and supported the mission over the last 50 years with their time, talents, and resources, and to look forward to an even brighter future for the animals. The generosity and support of the local communities have made this possible, and as the mission continues to provide care, love, and shelter for homeless animals, to find loving families to adopt them, to address animal overpopulation and suffering through spay/neuter services, and to educate the community on humane treatment of animals, the goal and hope for the future is that every animal will be a wanted and loved pet.



Presidents-1969-2019:

Velma Burnley

Eleanor (Dee) Dundon

Ash Kearney

Dr. Judy A. Clarke

Lisa Van Arnam

Shaun Lundy

Rachel Jolly (Acting President)

Dr. Jan C. Watson

Dr. Charles Duke

Dr. Alice Roess

50th Anniversary History compiled by:

Dr. Carole M. Cheek

Patricia H. Dale

Eleanor (Dee) Dundon

Dr. Carol Truett

Dr. Jan C. Watson

For more information, to donate, or to visit, contact us at
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or on FB, messenger, instagram and twitter.



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