

STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT

USDA Rural Development Partners with DOJ to Invest \$2.2 Million to Empower Those Trapped in Domestic Violence by Giving Them Tools to Keep Pets Safe

WASHINGTON, Sept. 28, 2020 – United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Bette Brand today announced that USDA has partnered with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to invest \$2.2 million in grants to support the construction of and operating expenses for domestic violence shelters that allow individuals to bring their pets with them when escaping dangerous situations.

Funding is being provided to organizations in six states: Arizona, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. Projects being funded include:

- The SAFE Alliance (SAFE | Stop Abuse For Everyone) in Austin, Texas, will use a \$312,483 grant to refurbish shelter/transitional housing units at SAFE's Grove Boulevard campus. Funds will make the units more pet friendly and help to provide shelter, transitional housing and supportive services to domestic violence victims and their companion animals. The grant will also provide preventative, non-emergency and emergency medical care, and facilitate transport to and from appointments for companion animals of domestic violence victims living on campus.
- The Rose Brooks Center in Kansas City, Mo., will use a \$400,000 grant to expand housing and supportive resources for domestic violence victims with companion animals and increase the levels of training and advocacy in order to improve the community's response to the co-occurrence of domestic violence and pet abuse.

BACKGROUND:

The funding was made possible through the Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act, which was included in the 2018 Farm Bill. The PAWS Act amends the previous federal domestic violence laws to prohibit an abuser from killing, injuring, harassing, stalking or engaging in conduct that places a victim in reasonable fear of death, or that serious bodily injury may be done to their pet.

The grant program supports short-term shelter and housing assistance, such as expenses incurred for the temporary shelter, housing, boarding or fostering of the pets of domestic violence victims. Some shelters provide onsite housing for animals where clients can stay with pets, or they will help clients find foster homes or safe havens during their stay to help ensure their pets are safe.

The Act authorizes \$3 million per year for Fiscal Year 2019 through Fiscal Year 2023 to allow more shelters to make accommodations for pets.

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