

The HART Adoption Wing — A Place of Their Own



Written by: **Paula Yudelevit**
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Riley O'Brien holding one of the recently adopted dogs from the HART Adoption Wing.

In the spring of this year, HART for Animals cut its final ribbon at the opening of their coveted goal: the Adoption Wing at the HART Animal Center in Accident, Maryland.

Happy and healthy adoptable dogs and puppies are wagging their tails in the Wing's Dogtown, in anticipation of finding that one person who will be their new best friend. The cats and kittens in The Cattery are climbing the cat towers and showing off their agility skills to every new guest that enters their domain. This is the HART Adoption Wing – and these adorable animals are waiting for their forever homes.

The story behind the Adoption Wing is as heartwarming as the adoptable pets that temporarily reside here.

The founders of HART for Animals set out to build a state-of-the-art facility to house homeless cats and dogs until they could be adopted into permanent homes. Fundraising for the project began in 2006 and involved hundreds of donors, foundations; local, state, and federal programs; multiple events; and the determination of a group of dedicated people who felt that animals deserved better.

And in February of 2014, HART completed the first phase of its goal: The Patricia Kirwan Center. This phase contains The Bed 'n Bark Inn, the Bredel Veterinary Clinic, and MuttWorks Grooming. These revenue-generating services support the basic expenses of the HART Center.

The operations of the Adoption Wing and all charitable activities are completely dependent on donations and grants. HART's Development Director, Mercedes Pellet, explains, "We built the HART Center with money we raised ourselves, thanks to the generosity of many people. To make our charitable functions as impressive as our facility, we need the public's help in the form of donations of money, items, and volunteering. We also have



Top: The Chrostowski Family Wing houses homeless animals waiting to be adopted.

Middle (left to right): Volunteers, Evelyn George, Bill Grant, and Laurie Grant are caring and compassionate with all of the animals.

Bottom: Cats have their own condos and also separate larger rooms for colonies of kittens.



permanent commemorative opportunities, such as inscribed brick pavers and plaques to honor or memorialize a loved one.”

The HART Adoption Wing, officially named the Chrostowski Family Wing, is the place where homeless animals will be housed while waiting to be adopted. Dog dens of varying sizes open onto a shiny epoxied floor, where dogs sit behind glass doors that allow them to smell visitors through a bottom grid. They can lounge atop Kuranda beds, donated by kind souls, or they can, if they choose, go outside to their patios through their own doggie doors. The cats have their own condos, where there are multiple levels to sleep and play and for when nature calls. The Cattery also features separate larger rooms for colonies of kittens and a communal area where social cats may interact with others.

HART works with the Garrett County Animal Shelter, where all adoptable animals start their journey to their final goal of adoption. With the guidance of Intake and Rescue Manager, Caroline Robison, and the assessment and socializing of Behaviorist and Adoption Manager, Debbie Snyder, the animals, many who fear people and deal with anxiety, are transported to HART, where they are lovingly socialized and start learning how to be happy pets.

The Adoption Wing has room for 60 cats and 40 dogs, multiple litters of kittens and puppies, and four individual colonies that have a view of the outside world. The common areas include an exercise room to help socialize animals prior to adoption, separate food preparation areas for cats and dogs, as well as a laundry area. There are also dog and cat “Meet and Greet” rooms for adopters to play and interact with potential pets.

“In addition to an amazing and passionate staff, the Adoption Wing ‘employs’ a host of volunteers, from all walks of life, who like our staff, are passionate about the mission of saving the lives of homeless animals,” says Paula Yudelevit, Executive Director. “These dedicated people, ranging from high schoolers to retired executives, work tirelessly to help the cause, whether it’s cleaning a den, walking, playing and socializing the future adoptees, or providing administrative relief, including working at Pick of the Litter, our thrift shop!”

For the homeless animals, the HART Adoption Wing is a sanctuary where they can find comfort, care, food, and love. For Garrett County, the entire HART Center is an asset that attracts visitors from other counties and other states, and provides jobs and career opportunities for local residents. For visitors and residents, it is a chance to adopt a “bit of love with four legs” and have a wonderful experience.

The Adoption Wing is open to the public every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and every Wednesday,



A recent Open House for the HART Adoption Wing included Mascot Sunny with Karen Bonzer (top).

Volunteers, Beverly Haines (above left) and Tia DeGiovanni (above right) showcase a couple of the adoptable dogs during the Open House. Both were later adopted.

from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Wing is closed on Sundays & Mondays.

HART for Animals, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations are tax deductible. For more information about HART, its charitable programs or its animal-related services, visit its web site at www.hartforanimals.org. For additional information on naming opportunities, write to mercedes@hartforanimals.org.