

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Pet Circle

WHERE PETS FIND THEIR PEOPLE.



OUR MISSION

By advocating for animals & the community, we enhance lives on both ends of the leash.

OUR VISION

Creating pawstive outcomes in a partnership with the community.



Animal Friends & Supporters

Enhancing lives at both ends of the leash since 2024

As we reflect on 2025, I am incredibly proud of what the Pet Circle Regional Animal Center accomplished alongside our community. This year was defined by collaboration, compassion, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of animals and the people who love them. Together, we continued to strengthen our role as a regional leader in animal welfare while adapting to the evolving needs of our community.

Despite ongoing challenges facing animal shelters nationwide including rising intake, longer lengths of stay, and capacity pressures- our team remained focused on thoughtful, humane solutions. Through strategic programming and strong community engagement, we made meaningful progress in lifesaving outcomes while continuing to prioritize responsible animal care and public safety.

One of the most significant achievements of 2025 was the continued expansion of our lifesaving pathways. Adoptions, foster placements, rescue transfers, and reunifications each played a critical role in helping animals find positive outcomes. Our foster program grew once again, providing thousands of days of care in homes and allowing pets to thrive outside of a shelter environment. These temporary homes not only saved lives, but also strengthened the connection between our organization and the community we serve.

This work would not have been possible without the continued support and collaboration of our community and regional partners. Through these relationships, we were able to extend our impact beyond our facility walls and ensure animals received the medical care, behavioral support, and placement



opportunities best suited to their individual needs.

In 2025, we also deepened our focus on community-centered services. From accessible spay and neuter options to proactive outreach and education, we continued investing in programs designed to help keep pets with the families who love them. Reunification remained a priority, with lost pets finding their way home more quickly through microchipping, owner education, and improved return-to-owner strategies.

None of this work would be possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers. Their professionalism, compassion, and resilience are the foundation of everything we do. Whether providing daily care, supporting adopters and fosters, or responding to community needs, they show up each day with a shared purpose: to treat every animal with dignity and care.

As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to continuous improvement. We will build on the momentum of 2025 by strengthening preventive services, expanding lifesaving capacity, and finding new ways to support both animals and the people who care for them. Our vision remains clear- a community where pets are valued, supported, and able to remain safely in their homes whenever possible.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in making 2025 a successful year for Pet Circle Regional Animal Center. Your support, whether through adoption, fostering, volunteering, partnership, or advocacy, makes a measurable difference. We are honored to serve this community and look forward to what we can achieve together in the year ahead.

With gratitude,

Melissa Sheldon

Director, Pet Circle Regional Animal Center

Who We Are

Our Pet Circle team is proud to serve the majority of Central Texas. A dedicated staff of **40 employees**, including a shelter veterinarian, provides daily care, rain or shine, for thousands of animals each year.

Operational highlights:

- **3,697 animals cared for in 2025 (typically 3,500 to 4,000 annually)**
- **\$3.34 million annual operating budget beginning October 1, 2025**
- **Approximately \$900 per animal**

For that cost, every animal receives:

- **Nutritious food and safe housing**
- **Flea and heartworm prevention**
- **Core vaccinations and microchipping**
- **Spay/neuter surgery**
- **Veterinary care for illness or injury**
- **Transportation to rescue partners when needed**

Every day, regardless of weather or holidays, our team remains committed to providing compassionate, comprehensive care to animals in need.



The Pet Circle team and volunteers prepare to serve Thanksgiving dinner to our pups. November 2025

Budget & Operations

Partners in care make life-saving regional

The City of Waco partners with McLennan County and 11 cities of Beverly Hills, Hewitt, Lacy Lakeview, Lorena, Mart, McGregor, Moody, Riesel, Robinson, West, and Woodway, to support shelter operations.

Partnership highlights:

- **Contracts allow Animal Control Officers (ACOs) and residents from each partner city to bring animals to the shelter.**
- **City contributions are based on the percentage of ACO animals they intake, not a simple per-animal fee.**
- **Each city's payment provides full access to shelter services for both staff and residents.**
- **Residents in partner cities may bring in stray animals or owner surrenders.**

This collaborative model ensures shared responsibility and broad access to services across the region.



Save a life.
Adopt a pet.

Wabi Sabi



2025 Pet Circle Statistics

Dog kennels on-site	126
Cat kennels on-site	37
Animal intake	3,143
Live exits	2,948
Pet Food Pantry animals assisted	1,908
Vaccine clinic animals assisted	294
Safety Net in Found Finder's (SNIFF Program)	252
Shelter spay/neuter surgeries	1,921*

*Additional grant programming reduced surgical costs to \$22 per animal and represents a 99% increase in services provided from 2024.



Notable Accomplishments

Significant progress has been made in reducing our shelter population and improving outcomes for the animals in our care. By moving animals through the system more efficiently we create valuable space, are able to prioritize finding outcomes, and we expand our ability to care for future animals in need.

- Inventory decreased from nearly 800 animals in September 2024 to 271 by the end of 2025 (including foster care), and continues to decline.
- Our partnership with the Animal Birth Control Clinic provides \$214,000 annually to support spay/neuter access and preventative veterinary care.
- The average length of stay decreased by 8 days for dogs and 4 days for cats before adoption.
- Our return-to-owner rate increased by 4% in 2025.

Spotlight On

Animal Shelter Professional of the Year

Melissa Sheldon, Pet Circle Director, was named the 2025 Animal Shelter Professional of the Year.

This award comes from the National Animal Care & Control Association in recognition of Melissa's exceptional leadership, unwavering dedication, and lasting impact on her team and community. Her leadership at Pet Circle is rooted in compassion and progress, exactly what this field needs.

The City of Waco is proud of Melissa and her accomplishments, both at Pet Circle Waco and in the field of animal welfare in the communities she's served.



Animal Protection

A dedicated team managing more than just enforcement

Pet Circle's Animal Protection Officer (APO) team of just seven staff members managed and dispatched more than 21,600 calls within Waco city limits in 2025, responding to issues involving all animals, not just dogs and cats.

21,600
calls for
service

In 2025, the APO team:

- Managed and dispatched 21,600+ calls within Waco city limits
- Conducted 3,911 neglect investigations
- Issued 2,077 citations
- Investigated 300 animal bites
- Handled 31 aggressive dog cases
- Investigated 13 dangerous dog cases
- Responded to 1 serious bodily injury incident
- Assisted McLennan County with 51 animal transports

The addition of a new APO truck and transport van significantly improved response times and expanded operational capacity, helping resolve long-standing challenges caused by limited shared vehicles.



Pet Circle Vet Techs during Vet Tech Appreciation Week- May 2025

Veterinary Clinic

On-site for responsive life-saving & vital healthcare

The Shelter clinic team works around the clock to provide care for the shelter's most vulnerable populations. They respond to after-hours emergencies and maintain the health of all animals on-site or in foster.

In 2025, construction of a new medical clinic began to expand isolation areas for animals, as well as increase surgical capabilities for the shelter to help more animals.

Expected completion is fall of 2026.



Dr. Vallon performs surgery in the Vet Clinic.



Animal Protection Officers care for more than just dogs and cats

Promotions & Partnerships

THANK

The key to finding lasting forever homes

We are incredibly grateful for the strong community partnerships that help us connect more pets with loving homes and promote the importance of adoption. Your continued support, creativity, and community spirit make a lasting impact on the animals in our care.

80 events

In 2025:

- Participated in 80+ events statewide, from parades to pop-ups, showcasing Pet Circle and our adoptable animals
- Took part in numerous PSAs and continued partnership programs with Waco Fire, including promotion and microchipping scanning
- Produced award-winning videos highlighting Pet Circle's services and shelter pets
- Achieved 165% growth in social media engagement, improving how we share adoption stories and forever homes
- Received support through community-led fundraisers, including lemonade stands, birthday parties, and other grassroots efforts

These collaborations and community-driven efforts expand our reach, increase adoptions, and strengthen the bond between Pet Circle and

the people we serve. We truly couldn't do this work without you.



Lemonade stand donations & our supporters at Cane's meet a pup!



Kennel bed donations & Tractor Supply Adoption Event



Dia de Los Muertos Parade & Waco SWAT: Mission ImPAWsible



Tractor Supply Adoption Event & Harley Davidson Pup Cup Contest



Tales & Tales at the library & puppy yoga at the Birthday Bash!



YOU



Waco Fire poses with adoptable dogs for promotion on social media



Men in Black & Find Your Krypto PSA's - featuring all rescue pups



Honorary Pet Circle Road street naming ceremony

Pet Circle Celebrates One Year!

Coming together to celebrate one year of saving lives!

In September 2025, the community came together to celebrate a year of lifesaving work and enjoy a fun-filled day of activities – from puppy yoga and story time to touch-a-truck with Waco first responders, a dunking booth, face painting, and so much more! The free adoptions all day helped so many deserving animals find their forever homes!

In just one year since the animal shelter reopened, we installed signage highlighting our Capacity of Care to show our inventory numbers in real time. We also celebrated the renaming of Circle Road to the honorary title of Pet Circle Road. We continue to be proud to be located off the circle in Waco as we see countless success stories – big thanks to our staff, adopters, fosters, volunteers, and supporters. Happy one-year to us!



Moe

Building Families & Forever Homes

Celebrating success with happy homes

At Pet Circle Regional Animal Center, every adoption represents hope, healing, and a new beginning for both animals and the families who welcome them home. From shy first meetings to joyful “gotcha days,” each match is a celebration of compassion and community support.

In 2025:

- Adoption returns decreased by 20%, reflecting thoughtful, lasting placement decisions by staff
- 1,846 animals were adopted into new homes
- 1,608 animals experienced other outcomes, including transfers to rescue partners and reunification with owners
- Return-to-owner rates increased by 4% compared to 2024

These milestones highlight our continued commitment to successful placements and positive outcomes for animals in our community.

1,846 adoptions

NEW



“ Hi! I adopted a dog from Waco and just wanted to say thank you so much for your work! Her name is JJ and she was owner-surrendered. She’s the best dog ever and I’m so thankful for her and you all.

I live in Washington and she’s the queen of our house, living her best life. ”



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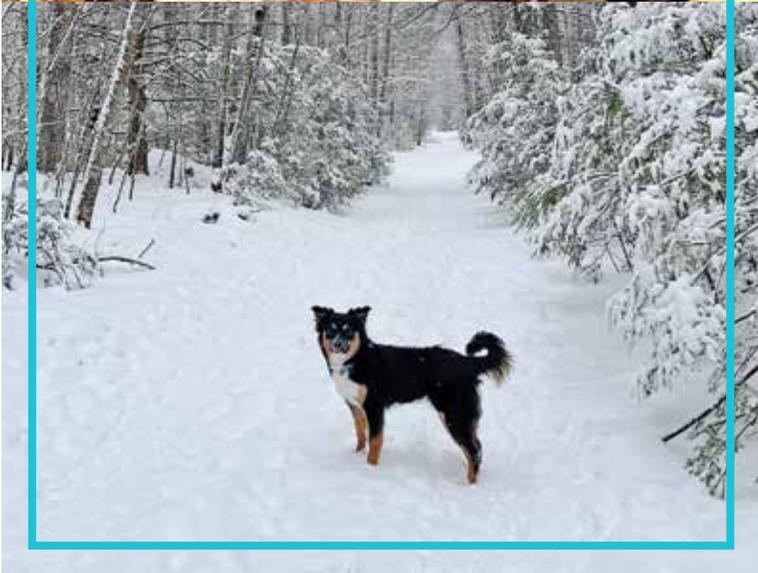
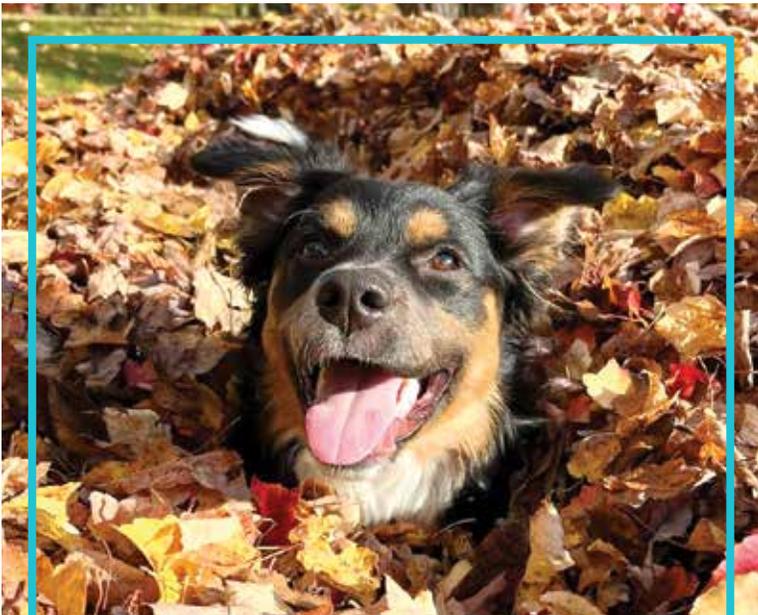
BEGINNINGS

“ Sammy loves watching football, carrying around his toys with him everywhere, chasing dad outside, and his bed. He also is very well behaved in the bath, and is polite to our two cats (even though they are sassy).

Thanks for helping us find the missing piece to our family! ”



“ I rescued my dog Kenny from y'all. He was 75 lbs. when I got him! I put him into training and he is a healthy 115 lbs. now! Wanted to give an update! ”



“ It's been four months since Brilla came to live with us, and what an adventure it's been! Pet Circle went above and beyond in every step of Brilla's big journey from Waco to her forever home in New Hampshire.

We've loved watching Brilla experience her trip to the ocean, leaf piles, and cozy naps by the fire. We are so thankful to Pet Circle for finding our Brilla—we're excited for all that life has in store for us! ”



Volunteers & Fosters are the Shining Light

Countless valuable hours & homes given to make second chances

There is no efficient way for an animal shelter to care for every animal who comes through our doors without the incredible support of volunteers and foster families. Their dedication makes lifesaving work possible every day.

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting animals throughout the shelter. Whether walking dogs, socializing cats, or providing enrichment activities, their time and care ensure animals receive exercise, fresh air, mental stimulation, and one-on-one attention. These efforts reduce stress, build confidence, and improve overall well-being while animals wait for adoption.

In 2025:

- Over 2,200 foster families opened their homes to animals in need, caring for puppies, kittens, medical cases, and pets needing a break from the shelter
- More than 720 Bark Breaks gave dogs time away from the shelter to decompress, reducing stress and often increasing adoption interest

From supporting adoption events and assisting potential adopters to cleaning kennels, preparing meals, laundering bedding, and helping with daily care, volunteers and fosters are woven into every part of our mission. Their compassion and commitment directly impact the lives of the animals we serve, simply could not do this work without them.

SECOND CHANCES

Ed spends many mornings socializing dogs



2025's AMAZING TOP 4

Karen Eghotz:
1,033 hours

Kelley Gerdes:
788 hours

Julianne Parker:
351 hours

Edward Brown:
345 hours

5,672
HOURS
GIVEN BY
380
VOLUNTEERS



Julianne has logged hundreds of play dates this year!



Karen is a volunteer powerhouse giving hours of socialization to our animals.



Petunia

Foster highlight: Petunia

Petunia came into foster care as a hospice case. She was heartworm positive, with hip issues, and a history that suggested she had known far more hardship than love. Her foster family gave her patience, safety, and the space to simply learn how to be a dog. In ten months, she blossomed into a joyful, affectionate, toy-loving girl who is gentle with children, wonderful with other animals, and full of personality. She didn't just heal physically, she healed emotionally.

Because one family said yes to fostering, Petunia got her second chance. Her forever family will get the destination, but her foster was the bridge that made it possible. If you've ever wondered whether fostering makes a difference, it does.



Looking to Our Future

Expanding possibilities & capacity for care

While 2025 marked a record year for Pet Circle Regional Animal Center, our work is far from finished. We remain committed to evolving alongside our community—expanding access to lifesaving resources, strengthening partnerships, and prioritizing humane, proactive solutions.

With the continued support of residents, volunteers, and community partners, we look forward to building an even stronger future—one where every animal and every family has the opportunity to thrive.

Veterinary Clinic construction is underway

The new 4,775-square-foot clinic will significantly expand our shelter’s capacity and level of care, creating a more efficient and supportive environment for animals and staff.

The expansion includes:

- **13 indoor/outdoor isolation kennels**
- **Two fully equipped surgery suites**
- **An X-ray room and spacious treatment area**
- **An animal recovery room**
- **Dedicated cat and puppy isolation rooms**
- **A welcoming lobby, three offices, and staff support spaces**

Relocating medical and isolation areas to the new clinic will free up adoption kennels, improve shelter flow, better separate medical and adoption spaces, and reduce stress on animals—creating a smoother experience for staff, volunteers, and adopters.

Additionally, a new adoption trailer will expand outreach by allowing

us to safely and comfortably transport animals to community events, increasing adoption opportunities and strengthening connections with residents.

Together, these investments reflect our commitment to innovation, compassion, and responsible growth—ensuring a welcoming, efficient shelter centered on the well-being of both animals and our community.



Vet Clinic construction from the air, January 2026



Kelley is an admin task guru helping in the office and keeping us moving.



Porchie

