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For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

New Organization To Help Pets of the Temporarily Homeless

(Topeka, KS) The plight of pets belonging to people who are temporarily homeless or fleeing from a battering situation has never been easy. But that has now changed, thanks to the Pet Assistance Network of Topeka, Inc. (PANT), a new non-profit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to finding shelter for those animals during a difficult time.

During a kick-off press conference today, PANT Chairman Ruth Maus explained the organization was founded when concerned citizens decided to help the pets of homeless people coming to the Topeka Rescue Mission. “We heard about homeless people arriving at the Mission with dogs, cats, parakeets, hamsters, and even a goat in tow, only to find out that their pets could not be admitted,” stated Maus. “Sometimes people would even place their children in jeopardy by continuing to live in a car or under a bridge, rather than have to give up their family pet.

“Then we learned that many clients of the YWCA Battered Women Task Force are afraid to leave an abusive situation because their pets become targets of the abuser. Both of these situations involve pet owners who, due to some temporary tough times, are forced to seek shelter for themselves. They want to keep their pets as well, but if the shelters that house people can’t accept animals the owners still want to reunite with their pets when they get back on their feet. We wanted to insure that that can happen.”

PANT’s solution is to raise funds to pay for licensed temporary shelter for these pets, until such time as their owners are in a position to reclaim them. Service providers include veterinary clinics, animal “day care” establishments, and other licensed animal shelters who sign an agreement with PANT to maintain confidentiality and other security measures. PANT services are only available to clients of PANT’s partnering social service agencies.

“We are funded 100% by donations” explained Maus. “We are asking for the public’s help in being able to perform this ongoing service for these deserving animals. PANT is incorporated in the state of Kansas as an independent organization, but operates under the umbrella of the Topeka Community Foundation, which means that all donations are tax-deductible.”

Tax deductible donations to PANT may be made online at www.topekapant.org or by mail to The PANT Fund at the Topeka Community Foundation, 5431 SW 29th, Topeka, Kansas, 66614.

According to Barry Feaker, Executive Director of the Topeka Rescue Mission, "There are many pets needing this kind of temporary shelter in Topeka each year. Without PANT they will likely be abandoned and/or euthanized. Not only is this devastating to the animal's owner, who loses perhaps his or her only friend, but it adds a burden to the community, because then our Animal Control officers have to seize the pet, often after it's been badly neglected or abused. Nobody wants to see that happen."

"This is part of being a compassionate Topeka community," added Eileen Doran, Director of the YWCA Battered Women Task Force. "When we assist the homeless and the battered, we need to make certain that we help them retain their pets who have been a source of security and comfort. It's just the right thing to do."

Many of PANT's startup expenses have been generously underwritten by Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc. Stated Bob Wheeler, Hill's CEO, "PANT is addressing a need in the community that Hill's is proud to support. The organization's efforts are aligned with Hill's mission to help enrich and lengthen the special relationships between people and their pets."

PANT organizers include most of the City's public and private animal welfare groups, representatives from The Topeka Rescue Mission and Battered Women's Task Force, and other concerned volunteers.

For more information about PANT contact Ruth Maus at 270-8104.

If you or someone you know could benefit from PANT's services, please call the Topeka Rescue Mission at 354-1744, ext. 350 or YWCA Battered Women Task Force at 354-7927, or call PANT at 270-8104.

PET ASSISTANCE NETWORK of TOPEKA VOLUNTEERS

Board Members:

Ruth Maus, Chairman/President
Volunteer

Art Palmer, Vice-President
Goodell, Stratton, Edmonds & Palmer, LLP

Francis Warden, CPA, Treasurer
Cummins & Coffman CPA's P.A.

Stacy Lowe, Secretary
Volunteer

Jeannie Blanck-Griffith
Cat Association of Topeka

Linda Halford
City of Topeka
Animal Control/Police

Bruce Reynolds
Volunteer

Advisory Members:

Barry Feaker and
David Proffit
Topeka Rescue Mission

Mary Prewitt
The Humane Society of the U.S.

Nicole MacMillan
YWCA Battered Women Task Force

Deb Duncan
Kansas Animal Health Dept.

Carol Stubbs
Helping Hands Humane Society

Joseph L. Cook, DVM
Family Pet Hospital

Julie Castaneda
Dog Day Afternoon

Vicki Hamilton
Shawnee County Animal Control