

For Immediate Release

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**Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)[™] Program Launched by
Doorways and the American Humane Association
*Shelter Protecting Homeless Families' Animals is First in Northern Virginia***

Arlington, VA—[Doorways for Women and Families](#), Arlington's leading provider and advocate for victims of homelessness, violence and abuse, recently opened a safe shelter for the pets of women who are fleeing violence—the first of its kind in Northern Virginia and one of nine nationwide. Doorways' animal shelter is part of the Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS) program, a project of the [American Humane Association](#).

“By starting this pet sanctuary, we are removing another obstacle to women and children leaving abusive homes. Women do not want to leave their beloved pets behind in a violent home, and therefore often don't leave themselves,” explained Doorways Executive Director Linda Dunphy. “Now that pets have a place to go, more women in our community will get the help they need for themselves and their families.

Up to 85 percent of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that a partner had threatened, injured or killed the family pet, according to a national study done in 1997. And more often than not, because of few options for safely housing pets from abusive homes, victims feel they have little choice but to stay and subject themselves, their children and their pets to further violence.

Dunphy added: “With AHA's funding and model, we were able to get this important program off the ground. This innovative effort will save lives—women, children and pets. In fact, we've already started receiving calls from abused women who are relating terrible acts of torture against their cats and dogs as well.”

American Humane is leading a national program to guide domestic and family violence emergency housing shelters toward permitting residents to bring their pets with them. Doorways joins the small but growing number of participating shelters at a time when economic and family stress is leading to more domestic violence.

In their lifetimes, approximately one in three women will be victims of domestic violence. Given that more than 71 million U.S. households include companion animals as pets, inevitably many of those households will experience domestic

violence and animal abuse. In fact, in a study of intentional animal abuse cases, 13 percent involved incidents of domestic violence.

With 30 years experience, Doorways has three core programs that help homeless women and their families and victims of domestic abuse, including an 11-bed Safehouse for women and families in imminent danger; the Freddie Mac Foundation Family Home, which houses 21 homeless adults and children in a state-of-the art residential facility; and the HomeStart Supportive Housing Program, that offers prevention, rapid re-housing and long-term supportive housing for families in crisis. Doorways' pet shelter is located at the Safehouse.

Donors can support the Doorways pet program by sending a [PetSmart e-gift certificate](#) addressed to clopez@doorwaysva.org or through the Doorways [website](#). Interested volunteers should call 703-522-8858.

Note: Photos as well as site visits available to press upon request.

ABOUT DOORWAYS FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

For 30 years, Doorways for Women and Families, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, strives to end homelessness and family and intimate partner violence by offering safe shelter and housing, life changing support services and community advocacy. Recognized as a well-managed leader and innovator, Doorways has received numerous accolades, including Charity Navigator's Four Stars for financial responsibility and *Washingtonian Magazine's* Great Charities list.
www.doorwaysva.org