



The Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation's LEAP program provides much needed veterinary care, at no cost to animals belonging to economically disadvantaged community members.

*2020 Program Summary*

# HELPING THOSE IN NEED DURING A PANDEMIC

For many Texans, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has turned life upside down. Many of us have experienced profound changes in our personal and professional lives. Against this chaotic backdrop, the Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation continued to provide programs that positively impacted the lives of Texans and their animal companions.

Many of the senior neighbors we serve through the Lending Economic Assistance for Pets (LEAP) program live alone, which makes social distancing especially isolating for them. Now more than ever, their animal companions are vital providers of daily love, comfort, and companionship. To protect the health of this vulnerable population, veterinary visits in the spring of 2020 were limited to urgent needs only. Working closely with our partners, we gradually began scheduling wellness visits again in June, with the top priority always being the health and safety of the seniors we serve.

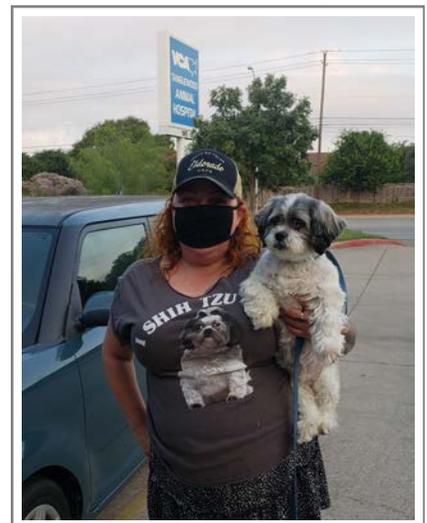
Each of our Meals on Wheels partners made it their top priority to protect the health and safety of those they serve, and their dedicated volunteers and hard-working staff while being mindful that many of their clients are also at risk for loneliness and depression - “viruses” that can pose a serious threat like COVID-19 does. In order to achieve that delicate balance, they restructured the ways in which they provide life-sustaining services to our homebound older Texans – while also keeping them socially connected.



Our LEAP partners at VNA Texas enlisted the help of 13 community partners like Operation Kindness and the SPCA of Texas to help with monthly pet food deliveries to nearly 500 pets belonging to the homebound clients they serve. In addition, when LEAP veterinary visits resumed, Dallas Animal Services stepped in to provide pet transports for veterinary visits.



Meals on Wheels Central Texas PALS placed annual veterinary care services on hold from mid-March through May in an abundance of caution for the safety of their clients and volunteers. Those services were resumed in June with safety protocols in place. All PALS volunteers wear masks and practice social distancing during the pick-up and drop off of pets at client homes. In addition, veterinary clinics implemented curbside pick-up of pets, allowing volunteers to wait in their cars while pets get their check-ups.



# KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

## *Eloise and Rocco*

Eighty-five-year-old Eloise P. and her five-year-old terrier mix, Rocco, have been quarantined at their north Austin home since COVID-19 hit Austin in mid-March 2020. Eloise lives in a cottage behind her daughter's house but says that she and her daughter have been practicing strict physical distancing. Due to her age and health issues, Eloise is considered high-risk if she should contract COVID-19, and her doctor and her daughter have both cautioned her to be as careful as possible. They speak frequently on the phone or talk through the door or from across the yard, but Eloise is still adjusting to the isolation. She has not left the property recently and misses the senior gatherings and services at her church.



Eloise is a client of Meals on Wheels Central Texas (MOWCTX). Prior to the pandemic, she received daily hot lunches, but recently MOWCTX has been delivering a two-week supply of shelf-stable food and canned goods. In addition,

Rocco is enrolled in the MOWCTX PALS (Pets Assisting the Lives of Seniors) program and receives a monthly delivery of dog food. Through the LEAP program, TVMF's partnership with PALS, Rocco also receives annual veterinary care, including flea and heartworm preventatives.



During this time, Eloise says that Rocco really is her companion. Eloise sometimes worries he's not getting enough exercise being cooped up with her in the cottage and backyard. "I'll take my rollator down the little path, and then I'll turn suddenly and he runs off and we play that game," she said. "And then we have a thing where he'll stand at the door, and I'll say, 'Are you the jumper dog?' And he jumps really high, like two feet." Eloise says she tries to get outside with Rocco every day and is passing the time as comfortably as she can until it is safe for her to get out more. TVMF is committed to ensuring that Rocco receives the care he needs to continue to be Eloise's companion for years to come.

# KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

*Megan*

The importance of these animals to their owners cannot be overstated, and many clients have stated that they would willingly give up their own food or medication to care for their beloved pet. By caring for the pets of our disadvantaged community members, the LEAP program is promoting and preserving these important human-animal bonds, enhancing the quality of life for these vulnerable adults and ensuring that none of our LEAP clients have to choose between caring for their pet and their own necessities.

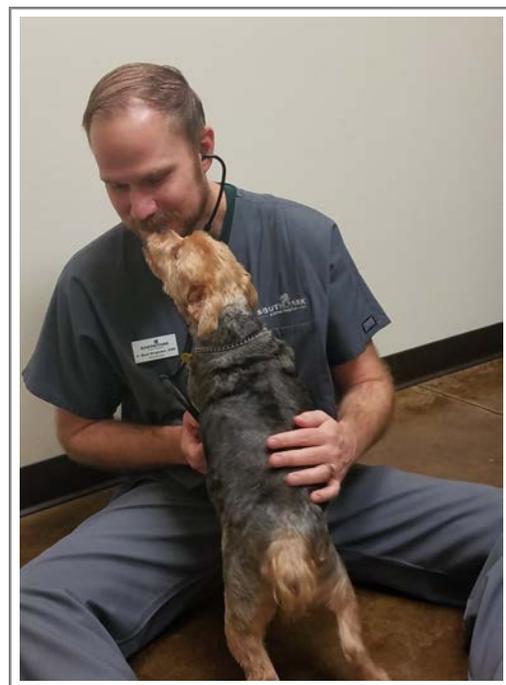
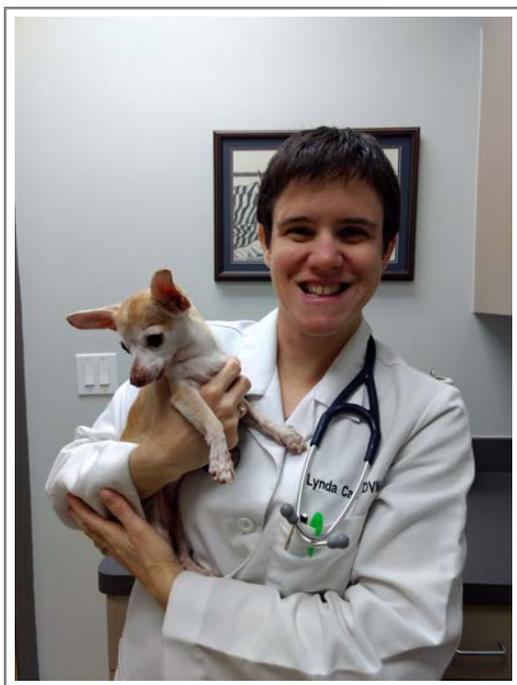


For pets like Megan (shown here with Dr. Tracy McAdoo of Washington Heights Veterinary Clinic), the LEAP program can be the difference between receiving veterinary care or not. Megan is a beloved companion to her owner, who receives services from Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston aniMeals. Many of the seniors served through Meals on Wheels programs live alone, and for many, their pets are their primary daily companions. By keeping pets like Megan healthy, the LEAP program is removing a significant source of potential stress for their owners, giving them the comfort of knowing their furry companions will receive the veterinary care they need.

The LEAP program continues to provide services in partnership with Meals on Wheels organizations serving Bastrop, Brazos, Collin, Hays, Travis, Williamson, Dallas, Harris and Taylor counties. Again, what started as a small pilot program with 40 pets in 2012 is now serving more than 500 pets per year! We hope to continue growing and expanding this important program.

We are thrilled to share 2020 program achievements:

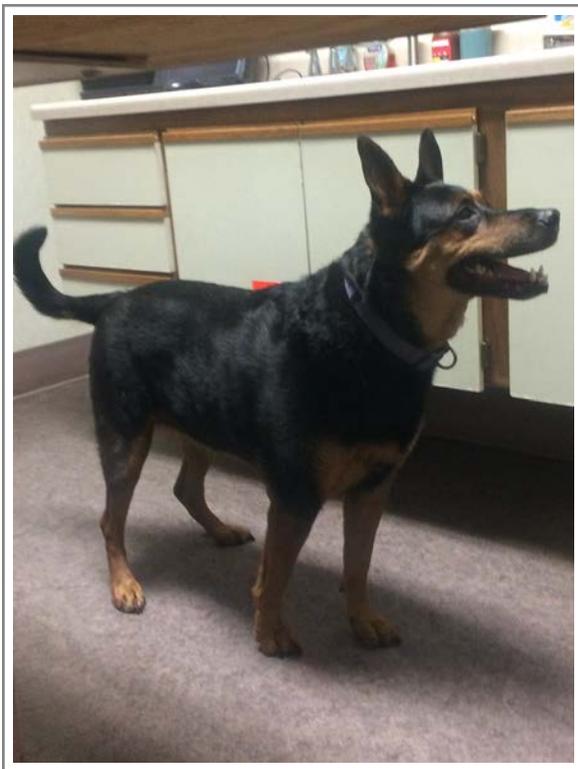
- 536 pets belonging to 385 Meals on Wheels clients have received annual wellness exams, vaccinations and a year's supply of flea and heartworm preventative;
- 28 Texas Veterinary Medical Association member clinics and the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Small Animal Hospital have volunteered their services to help homebound neighbors in Brazos, Bastrop, Collin, Hays, Travis, Williamson, Dallas, Harris and Taylor Counties;
- Numerous pets were seen for follow-up care to address issues identified in the annual wellness exam, including 17 dental surgeries, four tumor removals and one eye enucleation.
- Treatment protocols were developed for several pets to aid in the management of conditions such as diabetes and thyroid issues.



# VETERINARIANS COME TOGETHER TO HELP LEAP PET

*Anita & Kara*

When Anita Cabrera’s son passed away in 2012, she took comfort in knowing that his dog, Kara, was still by her side. Kara had been found as a bedraggled and emaciated stray her son took in, cleaned up and brought up-to-date on veterinary care. When he became ill, Ms. Cabrera cared for him and for Kara until he passed away. Since then, her dogs Kara and Aiko have provided her with a sense of purpose and helped her grieve for her son.



“It was his gift to me after he left,” she said. “He was my only child, and it was Aiko and Kara that are the reason why I got up in the morning. They helped me so much. I still grieve for him—that never goes away—but I think I’m here because of them.”

Ms. Cabrera has been a Meals on Wheels Central Texas (MOWCTX) client for several years, receiving daily hot nutritious lunches, and her dogs Aiko and Kara also have received monthly deliveries of dog food through the MOWCTX PALS (Pets Assisting the Lives of Seniors) program. Through the LEAP program, TVMF's partnership with PALS, they also have received annual veterinary care, including flea and heartworm preventative. When Aiko had to be put down this spring due to complications from diabetes, the LEAP program helped pay for her euthanasia cost.



At an annual veterinarian visit last spring, Kara was diagnosed with a mass on or near her liver. A follow-up ultrasound confirmed the mass was on her liver and that there was another nodule on her spleen as well. The radiologist reviewing her case gave a preliminary diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma for the liver mass and was hopeful that the nodule on the spleen was benign. Due to the complicated nature of the proposed surgery to excise the masses, Kara's veterinarians Dr. Jon Brandes of Austin Vet Care Metric and Dr. Chad Harris of North Austin Animal Hospital consulted with a surgical specialist, Dr. Kelly Might of Mobile Veterinary Specialist in Austin. After reviewing Kara's case and speaking with Ms. Cabrera, Dr. Might

offered to perform the surgery at North Austin Animal Hospital free of charge. Kara was booked for surgery, and Dr. Might and Dr. Harris excised the mass on her liver and removed her spleen.

Kara recovered well from her surgery, so much so that Ms. Cabrera was having a hard time restricting her activity until the stitches came out. Unfortunately, while the liver tumor was successfully removed and would have been curative, the mass on her spleen came back as hemangiosarcoma. Despite this diagnosis, Ms. Cabrera remains so thankful of the care that Kara has received through the LEAP program.

“We couldn’t have gone this far without the help that we’ve had,” Ms. Cabrera said. “Right now, I feel like we’re in a good place. Kara seems to be happy and well.”

While she knows that her time with Kara is limited, Ms. Cabrera is taking things one day at a time, and is thankful for all that she has received.

“My family is in New York, and they know I have this relationship with my dogs so they don’t really worry as much about me,” she said. “I also have amazing people around me. I’m so fortunate and grateful.”



TVMF is deeply grateful for the generosity of the donors and supporters who make the LEAP program possible and especially to our corporate sponsors: Boehringer-Ingelheim Animal Health for donating vaccines, Frontline Gold flea and Heartgard heartworm preventatives; and IDEXX and Antech for donating diagnostic services. We are also sincerely thankful to Dr. Kelly Might for donating his advice and expertise to this case, which is giving Ms. Cabrera several more months of quality time with her beloved Kara.

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We remain deeply grateful for all of our partnerships, which allow us to offer a high level of care for these pets. By addressing not only the need for basic care but also issues that effect the long-term health of these pets, we are ensuring they will remain with their families for years to come, providing love, companionship and all the many benefits of the human-animal bond.



In surveys conducted by our various Meals on Wheels partners, clients had the following to say about the program:

*99% of LEAP Clients say that their pet makes them feel less lonely*

- “The help I get from [LEAP] keeps my babies with me and helps me feel less depressed and alone, with less anxiety and paranoia.”—A. Rodriguez
- “It allows me to keep my therapy cats who are major in relieving my anxiety and depression.” —M. DaPonte

*94% of LEAP Clients say that their pets helps them stay active*

- “It makes me feel good that someone besides me cares about my dog. I feel more connected with the world.” –J. Johnson

*98% of LEAP Clients say that they could not afford annual veterinary care*

- “[LEAP] keeps my pets with me. My pets are extremely important in my life. PALS is there for you when you need them. They care.” –Anon Client
- “[LEAP] allowed me to keep my dignity. You reached out to a stranger and provided the things needed, overwhelming me with gratitude. I feel blessed and happy when I’m greeted with a big smile and “Hello” at my door.” – S. Anyon

*98% Feel that the health of their pets is better*

- “It’s a wonderful caring program that is allowing me to keep my dog without wondering where his next meal or health care is coming from.” –Anon Client

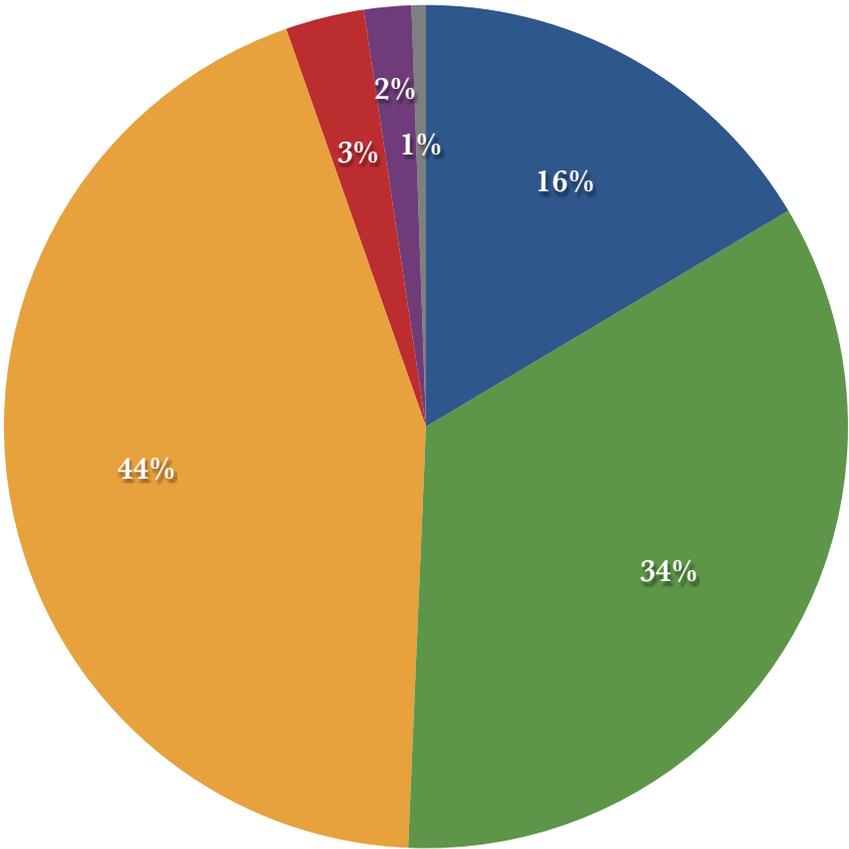
*87% of Clients say that they would sacrifice other important budget items to care for their pet*

- Food for themselves
- Bills and utilities
- Their own prescription medications
- Health insurance

Meals on Wheels clients continue to receive these services at no cost to them. Veterinary partners continue to donate their time and expertise, while vaccines, Frontline and Heartgard are donated by [Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health](#) and wellness blood profiles are donated by [IDEXX](#) and [Antech](#). TVMF continues its financial commitment to cover gaps in donated products and services including additional testing, medications and surgeries as determined by the needs of the individual pet.

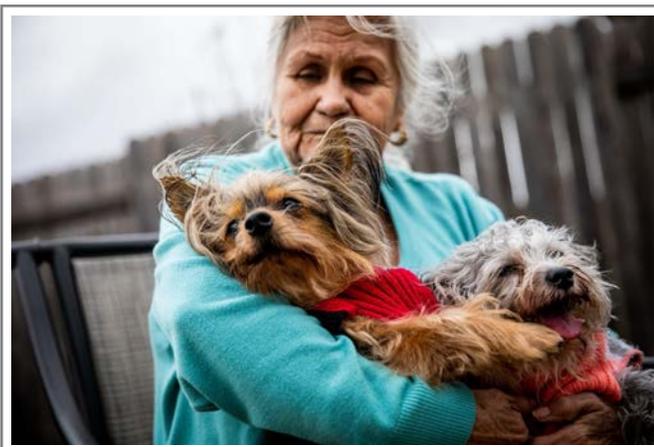
DVM Contribution Estimate i.e. time, discounted medications	\$35,910
Private Foundation & Individual Donors	\$74,775
Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health (based on avg costs)	\$96,000
IDEXX (based on avg costs)	\$6,600
Antech (based on avg costs)	\$3,950
The Pet Loss Center	\$1,200
Total Contributions:	\$242,215

- DVM Contributions
  - Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health
  - Antech
- Private Foundation & Individual Donors
  - IDEXX
  - The Pet Loss Center



While the numbers are impressive, the real accomplishment is seen in the everyday lives impacted through this much-needed program—lives of community members like Ms. Alcantar and her dogs Spanky and Lillie.

Ms. Alcantar and her adult son who has an intellectual disability became Meals on Wheels clients in 2013. Ms. Alcantar had been trying to take care of the family on her own and had put her own health at risk to do so. Soon after they started receiving hot, nutritious meals for lunch, her Yorkie mixes Spanky and Lillie also started to receive a monthly delivery of dog food and annual veterinary care through the LEAP program. The dogs are truly the light of this family's life, providing much needed laughter!



Helping neighbors like Ms. Alcantar is the heart behind the LEAP program, and we remain humbled and thankful for your continued belief in our mission. The truth is that partnerships like ours are making a difference and providing direct impact for elderly, low-income, homebound community members who struggle to care for their companion animals. Words sometimes seem inadequate to convey the depth of our gratitude for your support.

# VETERINARY PARTNERS

## **Austin Partners**

Meals on Wheels Central Texas  
PALS

VCA Tanglewood Animal  
Hospital

Austin Vet Care Central and  
Metric

North Austin Animal Hospital

Austin Vet Hospital

AM/PM Animal Hospital

Lago Vista Animal Clinic

VCA Elgin Family Pet Center

VCA Lakeline Animal Hospital

HousePaws Austin

Vet Around Town

South Park Animal Hospital

Whitestone Animal Hospital

Bluebonnet Animal Hospital

## **Dallas Partners**

Visiting Nurse Association of  
Texas

Metro Paws Oak Cliff

Holt Veterinary Clinic

Rutherford Veterinary Hospital

Animal Clinic of Grand Prairie

Vickery Place Animal Hospital

White Rock Animal Hospital

Rutherford Veterinary Hospital

Animal Clinic of Grand Prairie

Vickery Place Animal Hospital

White Rock Animal Hospital

## **Bryan/College Station Partners**

Brazos Valley Community Action  
Programs Meals on Wheels  
Program

Texas A&M College of  
Veterinary Medicine and  
Biomedical Sciences Small  
Animal Hospital

## **Houston Partners**

Interfaith Ministries for Greater  
Houston aniMeals

Washington Heights Veterinary  
Clinic

Meyerland Animal Clinic

Bayside Animal Hospital

Rollin' Vets

## **Abilene Partners**

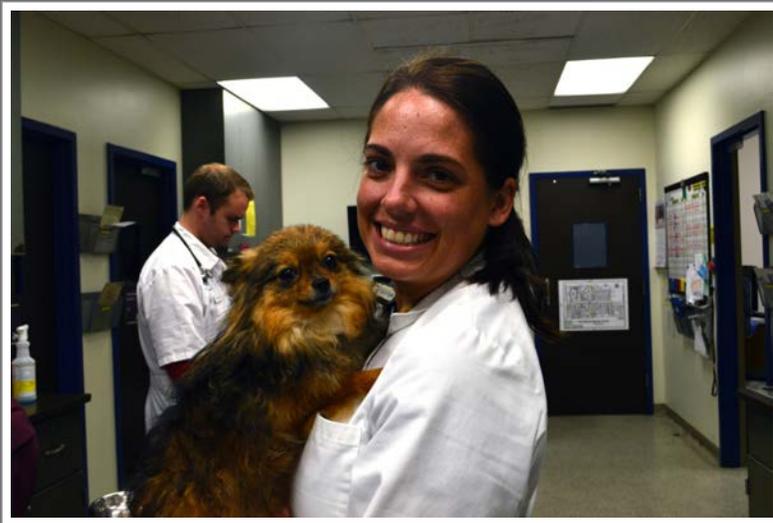
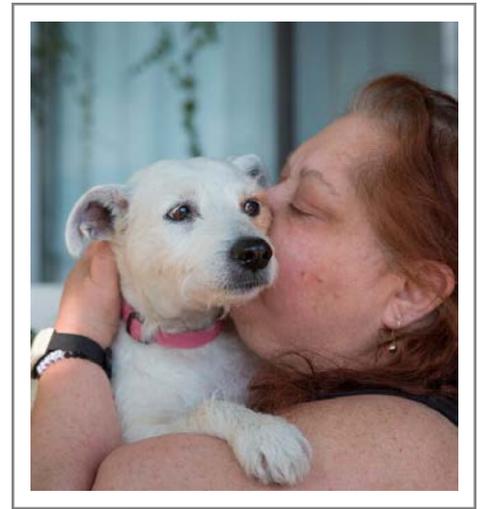
Meals on Wheels Plus, Inc.

Big Country Veterinary Clinic

## **Collin County Partners**

Meals on Wheels Collin County

ReadiVet



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