



Animal Companionship in Homeless Communities

By Nicole Arcieri

People who are homeless oftentimes may not get support from their local communities. They might feel isolated, ostracized and alone. However, some people that are homeless find companionship in their pets. Animals offer emotional support to their owners when no one else does. Unfortunately, having a pet can prove challenging for people that are homeless for several reasons. Is there a way local communities can support both people that are homeless and the pets they look after?

According to the article “Homeless People With Pets” by Chris Kingsley, there are several factors that cause homelessness. “The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimated that the average wage needed to be able to afford a house in 2017 was \$21.21 an hour, which is

far beyond most, if not all, states' minimum wage. In addition, there has been a lack in available public assistance and affordable health care. Domestic violence, mental illness and the current opioid crisis are also large contributing factors," the article reads.

According to the *Animal People Forum* article, "Homeless People and Their Pets," "Pets provide constant companionship, emotional support and security for individuals who are homeless." Furthermore, about ten percent of homeless people have one or more pets. Despite this, many homeless shelters do not allow people that are homeless to bring pets with them.

According to *Pets of the Homeless*, "Animals can provide the homeless with security from...those that discriminate against the homeless with beatings or from others who may steal their modest possessions." Fortunately, more and more organizations are taking action to ensure that people who are homeless do not have to choose between their pets and accessing food and shelter.

Some organizations, like Pets of the Homeless, provide veterinary care and food to pets of people who are homeless. Shelterlist.com provides a database of homeless shelters for people who have pets. More organizations are seeing the necessity in offering services to not only people who are homeless, but to their furry friends as well. Pets are as just as much a part of their lives as anything else. A person who is homeless should not have to choose between getting access to shelter and resources over their animal companions.