

A Second Chance

Couple helps provide for shelter animals in Pennsylvania

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VFW Post 6753 life members Gerald Gaye and his wife, Helen, in Knoxville, Pennsylvania, started an annual benefit for shelter animals in 2014 that each October brings together a community of veterans and civilians for a noble cause.

The Gayes host dozens of local animal lovers each year, relying on volunteerism from Post members and Auxiliary to help manage an event that is free to the public and often headlined by local country and blues music bands. Donations and money raised often derive from the event's auctions, yard sales and raffles.

"I'm trying to do what I can to help dogs and cats that need homes and are in shelters in Tioga County," said Gaye, who serves Post 6753 as its junior vice commander and a service officer. "Each year, the benefit has become more popular with more people attending."

The origins of the benefit began at the beginning of 2014, when the Gayes first heard the story of Charlie, a local dog found dead in a locked plastic pet carrier in the woods that January. In a bout of rage and sadness prompted by the solemn story, the Gayes acted by hosting the first annual benefit in October of that year at Willie's Bar and Grill in Osceola Township, Pennsylvania, about six miles east of Knoxville.

With the size of the event gradually growing from year to year, the Gayes eventually transitioned from Willie's to Post 6753 to accommodate a larger crowd. Between 2014 and 2016, the event's proceeds went toward Animal Care Sanctuary in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, an animal shelter about 21 miles south of Knoxville.

Starting 2017 benefit, however, the proceeds have instead gone to Heading Home Center, which is operated by Second Chance Animal Sanctuaries Inc., a volunteer organization that was founded in 2001 in Tioga County.

"We went with Second Chance because they use the money to provide medical treatment for the animals in their shelter," Gaye added. "The Heading Home Center has guaranteed that

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100 percent of the funds we provide will benefit the animals.”

Through the Gayes’ benefit, the Heading Home Center often receives donations in cash, as well as in the form of cleaning supplies, pet foods and blankets for the animals. At the center, animals eat 200 pounds of dog and cat food a month, according to Gaye.

“That’s why people who attend the benefit can now donate money to help Second Chance, or they can just bring a bag of dog or cat food or cleaning supplies,” Gaye said. “One hundred percent of the funds we raise will be used to benefit the animals.”

The 2022 benefit event is scheduled for noon on Oct. 8 at Post 6753 in Knoxville.

“We are hoping this year’s benefit will be even bigger than last year’s,” Gaye said. “As more people are getting into it, it will continue to bring in more monetary donations and food or supplies for Second Chance to keep helping these animals.”

[Read more about Second Chance Animal Sanctuaries.](#)