

## 2020 JMGBL Awards Application

<b>Submission Date</b>	2020-06-26 12:33:07
<b>This application is for:</b>	J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award
<b>Project Title</b>	The Pet Project
<b>County/Counties</b>	Pickens County
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Jamie Burns
<b>Job Title</b>	Community Relations Manager
<b>E-mail Address</b>	jburns@co.pickens.sc.us
<b>Phone Number</b>	864-898-2483
<b>Mailing Address</b>	222 McDaniel Ave. Pickens SC 29671

**Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.**

The Pickens County Animal Shelter transitioned from an animal control facility to save as many animals as possible and to enhance the quality of life for our citizens by matching them with pets who provide companionship, a sense of safety and security and/or promote better mental or physical health. This year, the project achieved a 100 percent save rate.

**Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:**

Name	Title	Email
Ken Roper	County Administrator	kenr@co.pickens.sc.us

**Please check boxes for attachments you will submit as part of your application**

CHECKED: A concise Project Description to explain the purpose and significance of the entry (up to eight pages). Please follow the prescribed naming convention for your Project Description file.  
CHECKED: Any additional materials needed to support your application (up to five pages).  
UNCHECKED: Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award applications must include letters of support from the chief administrative officers for each participating political subdivision.  
CHECKED: Submissions for The COVID-19 Response and Resiliency Showcase and the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award must include a letter of support from the county council chairman or the county chief administrative officer.

**To submit these attachments  
online, please upload  
Microsoft Word or PDF  
documents below.**

[ThePetProject.JMG2020.SupportLetter.pdf](#)  
[ThePetProject.JMG2020.pdf](#)

PICKENS COUNTY

# PET PROJECT

2020 J. MITCHELL GRAHAM  
MEMORIAL AWARD





## The Pet Project - Pickens County

### Project Description for J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award

#### **BENEFIT/IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT**

##### **Why was this project undertaken?**

Prior to 2017, the Pickens County Animal Shelter operated as an animal control facility whose sole purpose was to remove stray animals from the streets. We relied on outside rescue agencies to remove animals from the facility for adoption. If these agencies reached capacity, which was often the case, they were unable to accept animals gathered by animal control. There was a demand for pet ownership and pet adoption in Pickens County, but the County-operated facility was not authorized at the time to do pet adoptions, so sadly, many adoptable animals were euthanized. Recognizing that there was a solution to this problem, Pickens County Council passed an ordinance in 2017 allocating funds toward building a new county-operated pet adoption facility.

The first recorded adoption at the new Pickens County Animal Shelter took place on August 17, 2017. Since then, the shelter has grown to no-kill status, which means that 90 percent or more of animals are saved through pet adoption or other programs that benefit both our voiceless animal population as well as our citizens.

##### **What is the significance of your project to the community as a whole? How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community?**

Pet ownership is at an all-time high across the nation as more of our population begins to recognize the many benefits of owning a pet, whether it is for mental health, physical health, companionship or a sense of safety and protection. Pickens County is an area best known for its

mountains, lakes and outdoor recreation, which are suitable, if not ideal, for pet ownership. It only makes sense for us to facilitate in the process of obtaining a pet.

According to numbers released by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), Pickens County had the highest suicide rate in the state from 2012 to 2016. Pickens County Government has been looking at various ways to address this very serious problem. While it will not resolve this problem entirely, the companionship of a pet can be very therapeutic for those with mental illness, including those who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

**How much of the county's population is benefited by the project? In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?**

This program benefits Pickens County at large in that it removes stray animals from the streets our citizens live on, then cares for the animal before adopting it back into our own community, where the pet will often provide many years of companionship and protection.

The Pickens County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs brings some of the local special needs population to visit the shelter weekly. They spend time with the cats and dogs, which is enjoyable and beneficial to the citizens, as well as to the animals. Animals learn to be docile around those who are unable to keep up with their activity level, lying in the laps of elderly or wheelchair bound visitors. This often makes animals more adoptable for families who have concerns about how an animal will behave around members of their family with physical or mental disabilities.

The Pickens County Animal Shelter has also collaborated with Service Dogs for Veterans, a non-profit who trains dogs that meet certain criteria to be matched with veterans in need of a service animal. So far, the Pickens County Animal Shelter has been able to provide four service dogs for veterans.

A volunteer group for the shelter raises funds to provide pet food, cat litter, heartworm treatments and other items to assist pet owners who are financially unable to care for their pets. This helps to prevent pet owners from discarding their pets back onto the streets. The shelter also seeks to educate citizens about things like vaccinations, basic survival needs and how to prevent cat colonies from forming on their property in an attempt to ensure our citizens are responsible pet owners.

The shelter utilizes inmate labor to care for pets, which is not only a savings to the taxpayers of Pickens County, but proves beneficial to the inmates in many cases as well.

In 2018, the Shelter added a Barn Cat program. Feral cats can be adopted from the shelter at no charge once they have been spayed or neutered, and they can be used in outdoor spaces for pest control.

**What degree of success did the project attain? What major objectives were achieved?**

The Pickens County Animal Shelter had an animal save rate of just 26.3 percent at its inception in August 2017. Since then, the shelter has grown to achieve no-kill status. In May of this year, the save rate had reached 100 percent.

**PROJECT EFFORT/DIFFICULTY**

**What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives? If your county worked with another local government or consultant, how was the work divided?**

Pickens County Government and its animal control staff was not authorized to oversee pet adoptions in the past. County Ordinance 317 stated, “The animal control officer shall be prohibited from placing for adoption animals impounded by him.” Animals with identification were detained for 10 days and animal control attempted to contact the owner. Animals without identification were held for 5 days. If no owner came forward to claim the animal, and the animal was deemed adoptable, local rescues were contacted to determine if there was space in their facility. Unfortunately, without the ability to facilitate adoptions from the County facility, many adoptable animals were euthanized. County Council recognized this problem, discussed revisions to the wording of the previous ordinance, and approved Ordinance #533 on April 3, 2017, allowing for pet adoptions to begin from the Pickens County Animal Shelter. County Council stepped in to authorize the allocation of funds that would allow the animal control facility to transition to a pet adoption facility. This paved the way for the many programs that exist through the Pickens County Animal Shelter today that have resulted in achieving a 100 percent save rate.

**What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?**

The major challenge in maintaining no-kill status is that the Pickens County Animal Shelter, like any facility, has a maximum capacity. Because new animals are constantly being brought to the facility, it is critical to keep animals’ stay at the shelter as short as possible.

**What were the nature and extent of the county government’s efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project’s goals and/or objectives?**

The shelter participates in several high-traffic pet adoption events throughout the year at Petco, Harley Davidson of Greenville and the Adopt Me SC statewide adoption event to give pets exposure and the best chance of adoption. If pets cannot be adopted locally, the shelter works

with other rescue organizations as far away as Vermont to match those seeking pets with the perfect pet for them.

Shelter staff also monitors local Facebook groups for lost pets to help return pets brought to the shelter to their owners, and they have their own social media accounts to post pictures of pets who are brought in so that they can be returned to their owners, and they communicate with law enforcement when they hear of lost pets so that they can be looking for them while on patrol.

**Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?**

Because funds were already being utilized to operate the animal control facility, the funds were able to be re-allocated toward the establishment of the Pickens County Animal Shelter.

**Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project? Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits?**

The partnerships with other agencies like Service Dogs for Veterans, Pickens County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs and other rescue organizations is paramount to the success and survival of animals in Pickens County. Facing COVID-19 and adhering to social distancing guidelines has posed some challenges because we are not able to have frequent contact with other groups, but this is an issue that all of us are facing, and we are finding innovative ways to continue with our mission.

**Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?**

Although the shelter achieved a 100 percent save rate in May, there is never a guarantee that we will be able to maintain this permanently. Many factors can impact the shelter's save rate, including an animal's health, temperament or, in some cases, overcrowding. As a result, the challenges we face are ongoing, and we are always looking for new, creative ways to ensure pets are placed into homes that are a good match as quickly as possible.

## **PROJECT ORIGINALITY/INNOVATION**

**Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?**

The Pickens County Animal Shelter goes beyond what is required or expected of a typical pet adoption facility by providing numerous programs to make animals adoptable who might otherwise be unadoptable. The barn cat program, for example, is the only way in which feral

cats would be adoptable for citizens. The Pickens County Animal Shelter has also had the pleasure of having a local photographer come and snap some creative, individual photos of pets available for adoption as a unique way to show off the animal's personality and facilitate finding homes for the cats and dogs in the care of the Animal Shelter.

**Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?**

There is no known County-operated animal adoption facility in South Carolina that goes to the lengths our staff does to match pets with owners through adoption events, partnerships with other non-profits, monitoring social media, etc.

**What innovations were required in accomplishing your objective?**

Those involved in this project have had to be highly adaptable. Since inception, they have recognized some of the issues that may prevent an animal from being adopted, and they work to find citizens whose pet ownership needs meet that of the pet. New programs are constantly being added to enhance the project and address new challenges as they are posed.

**Who provided the creativity and imagination for your project?**

The staff and volunteers of the Pickens County Animal Shelter, formally animal control, recognized that adoptable animals were being euthanized far too often under the previous system, hampered by the wording of an Ordinance that no longer fit the needs of the community. With unanimous support from County Council to pass Ordinance 533, revising the language prohibiting the County from facilitating adoptions of animals, the project was brought to life.





South Carolina Association of Counties  
PO Box 8207  
Columbia SC 29201

To whom it may concern:

Pickens County SC has always been known for its breathtaking mountains, lakes and of course The Clemson Tigers. In 2017 big changes came to the county when they decided to take over the daily operations of the animal shelter. This is when Pickens County SC Animal Shelter was born. Many counties struggle with running an animal shelter. It is unfamiliar territory and often comes along with a very emotional and enthusiastic group of "volunteers".

When I first stepped foot inside the shelter I knew that Pickens County had their hands full. The shelter was packed with dogs and cats, staff was stressed out and there was no solid plan in place. It didn't take long for them to realize that everything had to change. They implemented a barn cat program which allowed feral (unsocialized) cats to be adopted into working homes, they allowed people to foster animals until they were ready to be adopted, they purchased an adoption trailer so that they could go out to special events and network animals needing homes. The shelter networked every adoptable animal and partnered with rescue groups near and far to save fragile or medically injured animals. The public began noticing the changes and have come together to foster animals and even donated a new dog park for the shelter animals. Pickens County has recently donated a building that will be used as a spay/neuter clinic. This clinic is crucial to keeping the population under control and to helping low income families keep their animals healthy.

Pickens County Animal Shelter implemented a program that swaps dogs that have been in the shelter for a longer period of time with other shelters. This allows those dogs to be seen by a new population of people and they are adopted quickly. These creative programs lead to an efficient use of tax money and greatly increases not only the quality of life for the animals in Pickens County but also for the citizens. It doesn't cost the county any more money to save lives but now the money is being used in a fiscally responsible way. Under new leadership Pickens County SC Animal Shelter went from saving 47% of the animals in the shelter in 2017 to saving over 90% of the animals in 2019! Pickens County is now also known for having one of the most successful animal shelters in the upstate and they are a role model for other shelters. There is no more deserving group that is dedicated to saving lives and taking care of their citizens.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kim Sanders  
Director and Veterinarian  
Anderson County Paws

Please find the attached photo of Kam one of the service dogs from Pickens County Animal Shelter and his Veteran Travis. Kam came to us extremely malnourished barely able to hold his head up. After getting Kam back on track to becoming healthy we placed him with one of our trusted fosters who cared for him until Service dogs for veterans could match him with a veteran. This is what success looks like.

*Stacey Kelley*  
**Pickens County  
Animal Shelter Director**  
864-898-5936



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

### Cats are sleeping in my porch, shed, etc.?

Reason:

- They are looking for a dry warm shelter.

Easy Solutions:

- Block open areas with lattice or chicken wire (be sure to search for anyone hiding first).
- Provide a shelter, like a small dog house, hidden away.

### I smell cat urine.

Reason:

- Tomcats spray to mark their territory

Easy Solution:

- Practice TNR! Neutered cats have less of an urge to mark their territory and their urine is less pungent

### Feeding cats attract wildlife and insects.

Reason:

- Food is left out too long or at inappropriate times.

Easy Solutions:

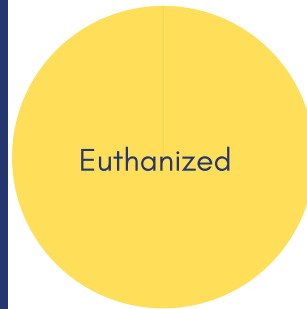
- Keep the cat feeding area neat to avoid insects.
- Feed cats at a designated time during daylight hours.
- Only provide enough food to finish in one sitting. Remaining food should be taken in before dark

## TRAP, NEUTER, RETURN

There are at least 8,000 feral and community cats in Pickens County. Trap, neuter, and returning feral and community cats effectively reduces overpopulation and costs taxpayers 35% less than current methods of trapping, sheltering, and euthanizing.

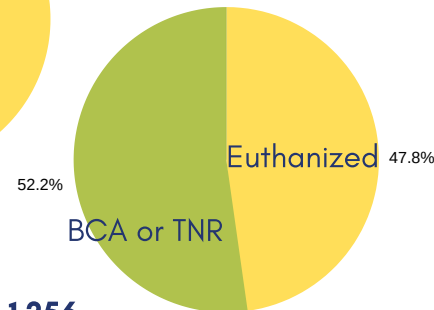
**2017**

**Total Intake: 728**



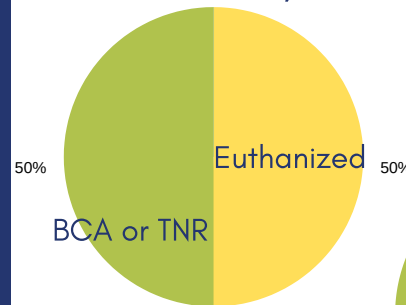
**2018**

**Total Intake: 1,581**



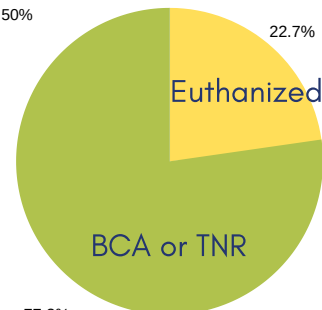
**2019**

**Total Intake: 1,256**



**\*2020**

**Total Intake: 216**



\*Data Impacted by COVID and only includes through May



Pickens County Animal Shelter  
 193 County Farm Road  
 Pickens, SC 29671  
 Phone: (864) 898-5936  
 Office Hours:  
 Monday - Friday 8:00AM - 4:00PM

## FAQ

### What is a community cat?

A community cat is a cat that lives outdoors and does not have a particular home or owner. They may be friendly or, in some cases not socialized with people. These cats typically depend on humans for their food, whether it is a neighborhood caretaker, dumpster, or other source.

### What is Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)?

Trap-Neuter-Return, commonly referred to as "TNR," is humane and is the most effective method for controlling feral cat population growth. TNR benefits the cats and the community. Using this technique, community cats living outside are trapped, neutered, ear tipped (the universal symbol of a sterilized cat), and then returned to their outdoor home.

### Why not trap and remove?

If you begin to trap and remove, other cats will move into the territory and will fill the space left behind by the removed cats. This is called the "Vacuum Effect." The new cats integrate into the area and produce more kittens. This leads to renewed calls for trapping and removal and the cycle continues to repeat.

## WHY SHOULD I TNR?

Whether you love or loathe community cats, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is the answer to effectively reducing the number of these cats. TNR reduces most cat-related nuisances and is a benefit to public health and safety.

### Advantages of TNR:

- It immediately stabilizes the size of the colony by eliminating new litters.
- The nuisance behavior often associated with feral cats is dramatically reduced, including the yowling and fighting that come with mating activity and the odor of unneutered males spraying to mark their territory.
- The returned colony guards its territory, preventing unsterilized cats from moving in and beginning the cycle of overpopulation and problem behavior.
- To reduce the number of kittens and cats flowing into local shelters. This results in lower euthanasia rates and the increased adoption of cats already in shelters.

By helping community cats in need, you will be part of the solution to the overpopulation crisis. You will also lessen the burden on overcrowded shelters and rescue groups.

## TNR STOPS THE CYCLE!

### Who qualifies as a community cat?

- Unwanted or abandoned cats living outdoors full-time
- Kittens should weigh at least 2 pounds and be healthy enough to undergo spay/neuter surgery
- House pets DO NOT qualify, as they rely solely on humans for their survival

### What should I do if I find kittens?

- The best place for kittens younger than eight weeks old is with their mother, if at all possible
- Community kittens should be trapped, spayed/neutered, and returned to their home territory.
- Friendly kittens can be adopted into loving homes after they are fixed.



# PCAS reaches “no kill” status

September 20, 2018 Pickens Sentinel Top Stories 0

By: By Kasie Strickland - kstrickland@championcarolinas.com



PICKENS COUNTY — A year after Pickens County Council passed a new ordinance allocating money toward building a county-operated animal adoption facility, the Pickens County Animal Shelter has achieved its goal of operating as a “no-kill” shelter, according to Community Relations Manager Jamie Burns.

However, what should be a time to celebrate is marred by a harsh reality — shelter intake is currently at all-time high and public assistance is needed, she said.

is hosting “Pumpkins” on Oct. 20.



average intake for the summer was more than 15 animals a day.

also working with the shelter in Anderson County to obtain a grant for a spay and neuter program to limit the number of stray animals in Pickens County.

According to Burns, the average intake for the 2018 Summer has equated to more than ten animals per day.

Animals are often bred by other stray animals or are abandoned by pet owners who were unable to care for the litter of their non-spayed pet,” she said. “The public is asked to do their part by having their pets spayed or neutered.”

According to the ASPCA, by spaying or neutering your pet, you'll help control the pet homelessness which results in millions of healthy dogs and cats being euthanized in the United States each year.

There are also medical and behavioral benefits to spaying (female pets) and neutering (male pets) your pet, they said.

Female pets are more likely to live a longer, healthier life as spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast tumors, which are malignant or cancerous in about 50 percent of dogs and 90 percent of

female cats. Spaying your pet before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases, they said.

It's not just for the girls ...

Spaying your male companion prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems, the ASPCA

notes. Additionally, spayed female pets won't go into heat. While cycles can vary, female felines usually go into heat for five days every three weeks during breeding season and a neutered male dog will be less

Since the establishment of the shelter, the percentage rate for euthanized pets has dwindled to less than ten percent, Burns said.

“The Pickens County Animal Shelter has had a survival rate of more than 90 percent for four consecutive months, which meets the common designation of a no-kill shelter,” she said. “But between June and August, the shelter received more than 300 animals each month.”

In July alone, the shelter received 17 dogs that were seized from an alleged puppy mill in Clemson.

County Attorney Ken Roper met with the defendant in the case and was able to reach an agreement to have him surrender 15 of the 17 seized animals, most of which have since been adopted, placed with outside volunteers, or transferred to rescue organizations.

# **COUNTY OF PICKENS**

**[www.co.pickens.sc.us](http://www.co.pickens.sc.us)**



**ACTING COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Ken Roper  
**CLERK TO COUNCIL**  
Meagan Nations

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**ROY COSTNER, CHAIRMAN**  
**CHRIS BOWERS, VICE CHAIRMAN**  
**WES HENDRICKS, VICE CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM**  
**TREY WHITEHURST**  
**R. ENSLEY FEEMSTER**  
**CARL HUDSON**

Ken Roper, Pickens County Administrator  
Marion C. Owens Governmental Complex  
222 McDaniel Ave, B-2  
Pickens, SC 29671

June 25, 2020

South Carolina Association of Counties  
PO Box 8207  
Columbia, SC 29201

RE: J. Mitchell Graham Award

Dear Sir of Madam:

Before the creation of the Pickens County Animal Shelter, animals picked up by the Pickens County Sheriff Office's Animal Control Unit only had a slim chance of being rescued. A previous County ordinance did not provide for adoptions of animals acquired by animal control officers, and if not picked up by their owners within the allotted 10 day time frame, those animals were euthanized. County Council recognized this problem and had the vision to pass Ordinance #533 on April 3, 2017, allowing for pet adoptions to begin from the Pickens County Animal Shelter. The program started with a save rate of only 26.3%, but as the program grew, more and more cats and dogs found their forever homes with caring citizens of our County. Over the years, the save rate has steadily increased as the shelter staff has worked diligently to encourage Pickens County citizens to make a rescue animal their pet companion. At long last, the shelter recorded their first ever 100% save rate in May of 2020!

In addition to saving the lives of these dogs and cats, the shelter provides a great service to the community as a whole, and certain groups in particular. Several inmates in the Pickens County Detention Center work at the shelter and benefit from the interaction with the animals in addition to providing needed maintenance of the facility. Several dogs from the shelter have been identified by a non-profit as a good match to serve as service dogs for veterans. The Barn Cat program has proved beneficial in finding homes for feral cats, which would otherwise not be adoptable. These outdoor cats have been spayed or neutered and are adopted at no cost to the citizen. Through the "Waggin' Wednesday" program, the shelter offered County employees the opportunity to walk a shelter dog on their lunch break. I can say that I personally benefitted from the opportunity to walk an enthusiastic dog around the Administration facility, and the socialization helps the dog become more adoptable.

Through the revision of our Code of Ordinances related to animal control, our County Council completely changed how this function of the county operated and seized an opportunity to save the lives of animals and better the lives of our citizens who choose to welcome a rescued cat or dog into their home. Through cooperation between the County Council, the Sheriff's Office Animal Enforcement Unit, and the County

staff, operational improvements have been implemented and the manner in which the County approaches the challenge of animal control has shifted to provide a much better end result for our citizens and our animal population. I am thrilled with the progress our Pickens County Animal Shelter has made over the years, and I am encouraged by the recent save rates to know that we are meeting a very important need in our community. This is why I am pleased to recommend the Pickens County Animal Shelter for the 2020 J. Mitchell Graham Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Roper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" and last name "Roper" clearly distinguishable.

Ken Roper