

2025 **impact** **in action**

A recap of what we accomplished together in 2025.



The work is urgent. The outcomes are real. The impact is lasting.

In 2025, Ruff Start Rescue turned compassion into action, serving animals and families across Minnesota and surrounding areas with care, urgency, and heart. From lifesaving medical treatment and foster support to adoptions and community resources, this year's results reflect what's possible when people come together for animals.

Because of your support, Ruff Start Rescue was able to rescue more animals, strengthen the safety net for families, and expand the programs that help people and pets stay together.

Discover the impact we made in 2025

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animals rescued in 2025

3,737

Every intake represents a moment when help was needed and action was taken. In 2025, Ruff Start Rescue continued responding to shifting community needs while providing safety, care, and second chances to animals across our region.



mission

Ruff Start Rescue is dedicated to saving the lives of animals in need. We improve animal welfare in communities through adoption, education, and providing resources for people and pets.

We strive for a world where every companion animal has a safe and loving home and their family has the knowledge and resources needed to give them the life they deserve.

vision



values



compassion

We have a strong sense of empathy for companion animals that fuels our passion to prevent and alleviate suffering. We place the highest value on the animal/human connection and are driven to create positive outcomes even for the hardest of cases.



commitment

We strive to provide a high level of service for all animals, adopters, volunteers and donors through responsible communication and action. We maintain a results-focused perspective.



connection

We form relationships with the community to achieve common goals while providing access to resources and education.



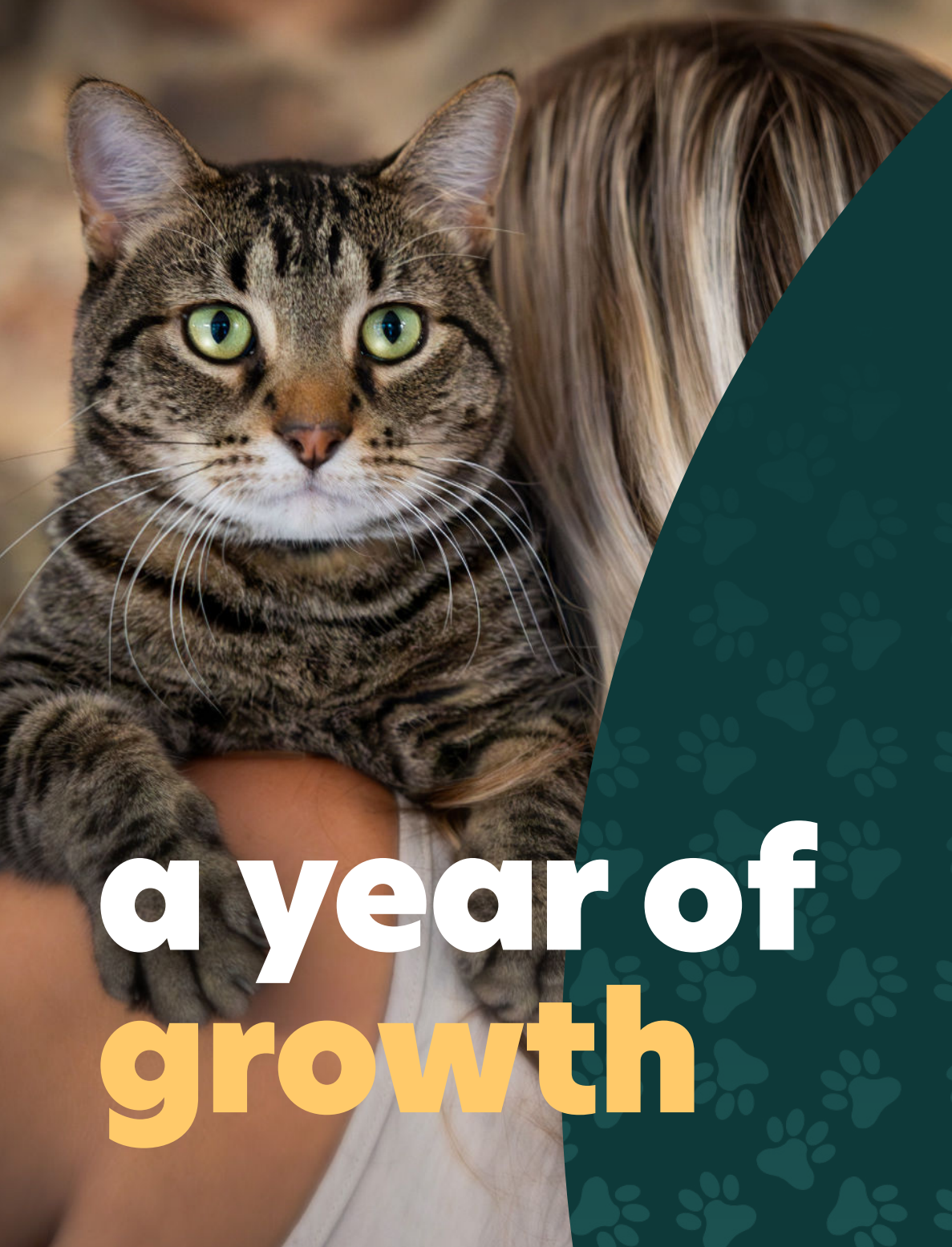
innovation

We listen and respond to community needs with flexibility while remaining on the cusp of trends in animal welfare while exploring new approaches.



authenticity

We communicate humbly, honestly and openly while striving for the utmost transparency with our supporters, volunteers, fosters, staff and beneficiaries.



a year of growth

Dear Ruff Start Rescue Community,

In 2025, compassion became action in ways we could see and feel every single day.

Across the communities we serve, the need for animal welfare support continued to grow. More families reached out for help. More animals arrived needing urgent medical care. More communities looked to Ruff Start for resources, education, and support. Because of you, we were ready to respond.

Compassion has always been at the heart of our mission, but action is what brings that mission to life. This year, that meant rescuing and caring for 3,737 animals, expanding access to veterinary services, strengthening community support programs, and investing in education that empowers the next generation of responsible pet owners. It also meant continuing to grow our in-house capabilities so every dollar entrusted to us stretches further toward lifesaving care.

The impact you will see throughout this report goes far beyond numbers. Each one represents an animal who received the care they needed, a family who found support during a difficult moment, and a community growing stronger through kindness and collaboration. None of this happens without the incredible dedication of our adopters, volunteers, fosters, donors, staff, and partners who come together each day because they believe, just as we do, that every animal deserves a chance.

As we look ahead, we are preparing for the next chapter of Ruff Start Rescue's growth so we can meet the rising need in the years ahead. Together, we will continue expanding services, strengthening partnerships, and building sustainable solutions that improve outcomes for animals and the people who love them.

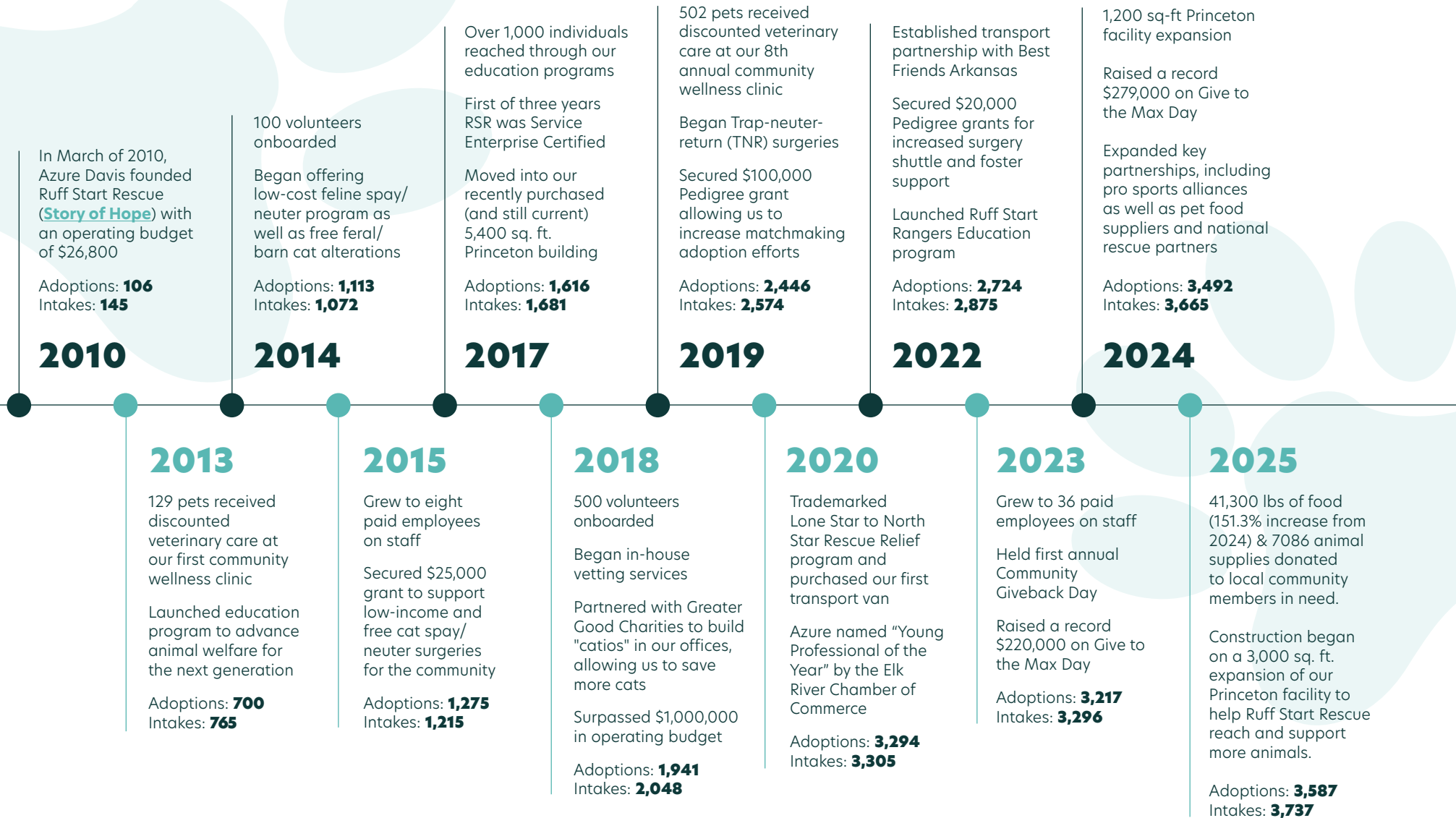
Thank you for standing with Ruff Start Rescue. Your compassion fuels this work, and together we are creating a brighter future for animals and the communities we serve.



With gratitude,
Azure Davis
Founder and Executive Director

32,174 lives saved since 2010

A mission driven by people who turn compassion into meaningful impact.



impact by the numbers

a snapshot of what we
accomplished in 2025



animals rescued in 2025

3,737

1% Strays

5% Born in Rescue

11% Reservation Partners

19% Out of State Transports

22% Local MN Impounds

41% Owner Surrenders

▲ 311

Average intakes
per month

animals adopted in 2025

3,587



144 critters



1,938 cats



1,505 dogs

Other outcomes: 116

41 euthanized (8 behavioral, 33 medical)

47 passed away • 12 return to owner

10 rescue transfer • 5 lost/stolen • 1 released

veterinary care

Access to veterinary care changes outcomes. In 2025, our in-house veterinary team provided critical procedures that supported healing, comfort, and long-term health for animals in our care.



2,370

Spay/Neuter Surgeries



42

Heartworm Treatments



56

Special Medical Cases



131

Dental Procedures



46

Trap-Neuter-Return Surgeries





community support

Helping animals also means supporting the people who care for them. In 2025, Ruff Start Rescue expanded access to essential resources that help families navigate challenges, reduce barriers to pet care, and keep pets safe at home.

In 2025, we were able to submit 10 mini grants, totaling over **\$3,900**

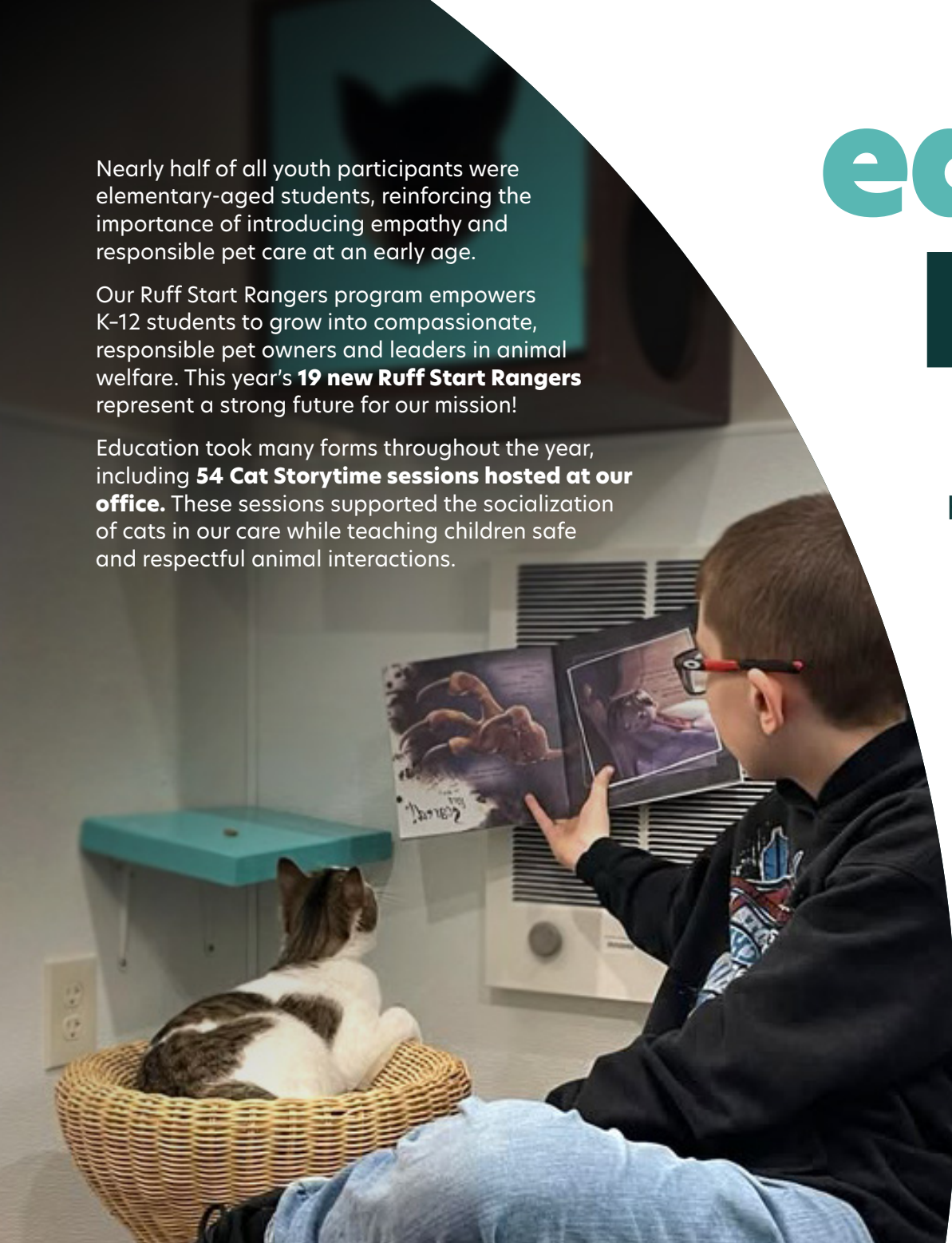
▲ 7,086

Animal supplies donated to the community

▲ 41,300

Pounds of pet food donated to the community

Through our **Owner Surrender Prevention Program**, Ruff Start Rescue provides targeted mini-grants to families facing temporary financial hardship to help them keep their pets safely at home. These grants are designed to address urgent, short-term needs such as veterinary care that, if unmet, could result in surrender. By intervening early with modest financial assistance, we prevent unnecessary relinquishment, reduce strain on the shelter system, and preserve the human-animal bond. These mini-grants not only keep pets with the families who love them, but also support long-term stability for both animals and caregivers, reinforcing our commitment to compassionate, community-centered solutions.



Nearly half of all youth participants were elementary-aged students, reinforcing the importance of introducing empathy and responsible pet care at an early age.

Our Ruff Start Rangers program empowers K-12 students to grow into compassionate, responsible pet owners and leaders in animal welfare. This year's **19 new Ruff Start Rangers** represent a strong future for our mission!

Education took many forms throughout the year, including **54 Cat Storytime sessions hosted at our office**. These sessions supported the socialization of cats in our care while teaching children safe and respectful animal interactions.

education program

Education strengthens communities.

Education creates lasting change. Through hands-on programs and outreach, Ruff Start Rescue builds understanding, responsibility, and compassion that improve outcomes for animals and the families who love them.

In 2025, our education program continued shaping the next generation of animal welfare advocates while engaging families across Minnesota in meaningful learning experiences.

65 educational programs were delivered statewide, reaching:

▲ **1,678** Youth ▲ **556** Adults

growing impact

Since launching the education program, Ruff Start Rescue has:



Delivered **263 total programs**



Reached **12,475 people**



Served communities in **35 cities** across Minnesota

Each program strengthens the connection people have with animals while equipping families with the knowledge and confidence to provide safe, responsible care.

Through classrooms, community events, storytimes, and the Ruff Start Rangers program, education remains a powerful part of our mission. Together, we are building compassionate communities that support animals for years to come!

Discover a wide variety of events and activities by exploring our [events](#) page.



volunteers make the difference

▲ **28,572**

Volunteer hours logged

▲ **650**

Active volunteers

▲ **2,194**

Approved foster homes

▲ **302**

NEW volunteers

▲ **482**

NEW foster homes





mission in the spotlight

Every story shared helps connect animals with adopters, bring attention to urgent needs, and strengthen community awareness around animal welfare and responsible pet care.

42+

Media
Appearances

▲146

RSR events held in 2025

▲12.7%

Social media growth in 2025

▲33.11%

Email subscriber growth in 2025

looking ahead

Building on what we accomplished in 2025, Ruff Start Rescue is focused on strengthening support for people and pets across Minnesota and surrounding areas. In the year ahead, we plan to:



Grow strategic partnerships and collaborate with local and national influencers, public figures, and animal advocates to elevate Ruff Start Rescue's impact.



Expand veterinary services and lifesaving care



Move forward with building expansion plans



Update our website and improve animal reporting systems



Grow community support services, including two wellness clinics



financials

income

Contributions	\$1,404,775
In-kind contributions	\$616,237
Adoption fees & program revenue	\$1,226,034
Fundraising & events	\$172,705
Other income	\$64,266
Total income	\$3,484,017

expenses

Programs (vetting, transports, etc.)	\$2,652,314
Fundraising & events	\$272,591
General & administrative	\$254,080
Total expense	\$3,178,985
Net ordinary income	\$305,032

**unaudited*



our team

Ruff Start Rescue is proud to be powered by a dedicated team of over 40 professionals across programs, veterinary services, operations, development, and marketing – each driven by passion and commitment to our mission.

programs

Caroleann Refshaw Application Manager
Holly Skalak Senior Placement Manager
Juli Olson Adoption Manager
Madelyn Markulics Application Manager
Meaghan Dubbs
Transport Partnership Specialist
Megan Larson Intake Manager
Steffani Patrick Foster Manager
Chandra Sukhram Practice Manager

operations

Angela Klaverkamp Financial Controller
Becky Valencia
Financial Administrative Assistant
Brenda Smith Office Manager
Emily Scharrer Executive Assistant
Jordyn O'Gara Volunteer & Education Manager
LeRoy Smith Shuttle Driver

veterinary

Amber Wiesender Vet Tech Coordinator
Dr. Julinee Kratcha Veterinarian
Dr. Kathryn Orr Veterinarian
Dr. Emilee Alms Veterinarian
Dr. Leigh Wilder Veterinarian
Dr. Leslie Reed Relief Veterinarian
Dr. Nicole Kizer Relief Veterinarian
Katie Corns Lead Vet Tech
Mindy Carstensen Vet Tech
Samantha Buie Vet Tech
Paige Graffunder Vet Tech
Erica Juszczak Medical Foster Manager
Jackie Hoeschen Surgery Vet Tech
Rosely Suess Veterinary Assistant
Shalene Krogsveen Relief Vet Tech
Nadine Krenik On-Call Emergency Coordinator
Tori Reichstadt On-Call Emergency Coordinator

leadership team

Azure Davis Founder & Executive Director
Julie Lessard Director of Programs
Samantha Bistodeau Director of Operations
Crystal Bowen Director of Advancement
Dr. Jeremy Riddle Medical Director

advancement

Kendra Plaschko Development Officer
Brittany Murnan Events Manager
Taylor Pearson
Development and Grants Administrator
Kelli Hanson
Marketing & Communications Manager
Julia Sidelinger
Social Media Marketing Specialist
Jonathan Winter Web Specialist

board of directors



Visit the [careers](#) section of our website to explore opportunities.

Azure Davis Director/Executive Director

Valerie McCullough Director/Board Chair/Governance Committee/Executive Committee/Facility Committee

Michelle Coleman Director/Board Vice Chair/ Executive Committee/Governance Committee/Facility Committee

Samuel Lee Director/Treasurer/Executive Committee/ Finance Committee/Facility Committee

Andrew Willman Director/Board Secretary/Executive Committee/Governance Committee

Julie Lessard Director of Programs (non-voting)

Allyson Beffel Director/Finance Committee

Amy Harnden Director/Marketing Committee/ Governance Committee

Kristine Mitteness Director/Governance Committee/ Nominating Committee/Facility Committee

Danielle Napravnik Director/Finance Committee

Dr. Jeremy Riddle Director/Medical Director

John Check Director/Finance Committee

Morgan Graby Director/Advancement Committee

Pamela Harris Director/Governance Committee

thank you

In 2025, Ruff Start Rescue took meaningful steps forward, rescuing animals in need while strengthening the support systems that help families keep their pets. Every adoption, every foster placement, every supply donation, and every hour volunteered added up to a year of real, measurable outcomes.

Thank you for being part of this mission and making impact possible in 2025!

