

By NANCY HASSEL



Helping Hands— Financial Assistance for Dog Parents



Laurie Kaplan created the Magic Bullet Fund after Bullet died from cancer.

Did you know there are different organizations that offer financial assistance to pet owners who can't afford veterinary treatment, as well as nonprofits that offer low-cost spay and neuter services, vaccines and wellness checks, and even pet-food pantries if you have a hard time feeding your pets? Today's pet parents are fortunate to have so many different options — you just have to do some research and know where to look.

Magic Bullet Fund

One organization that offers financial assistance for dogs who have been diagnosed with cancer is the **Magic Bullet Fund**, which was created by Laurie Kaplan in 2005. One year to the date after her dog, Bullet, a beautiful Husky passed away, Laurie took on her first financial assistance case. The nonprofit organization helps pet parents who

cannot afford to pay for their dog's cancer treatments. Owners must go through an application process and provide financials showing they need the assistance, veterinary records and so forth.

The Magic Bullet Fund takes on each dog case by case. Once the owner fills out an application, it usually takes a week or two to get approved for financial assistance if

they qualify. If approved, the owner is assigned a case manager from the Magic Bullet Fund, who works directly with the veterinarian for each dog's case, making the payments for their care or even requesting that the dog gets a second opinion from another veterinarian for the best course of treatment.

To date, the Magic Bullet Fund has helped 611 dogs, which is quite amazing in my book.

The organization is comprised of 25 volunteers located throughout the United States, and Laurie says she is always looking for volunteers to help with the cause. Laurie is based in Briarcliff Manor, New

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York; however, the organization helps dogs diagnosed with cancer across the country. Now funded by donations and grants, Laurie paid for those first few cases back in 2005 herself. In the beginning, they helped four to five dogs a year but now average anywhere from 40 to 50. To learn more, visit themagicbulletfund.org or you can find the organization on Facebook at [facebook.com/MagicBulletFund](https://www.facebook.com/MagicBulletFund).

Low-cost medical care

If you're looking for low-cost spay and neuter or low-cost veterinary care for your dog, nearly every town, city and state has multiple organizations you can contact for help. I can think of about a dozen places off the top of my head in my local area, which was not the case just 10 years ago. If you're not sure where to look, contact your local humane society or animal shelter — they often offer lower cost services or will be able to direct to you places that offer low-cost vaccinations, wellness checks and so forth. There are usually low-cost clinics at larger big-box pet stores you can bring your dog to every weekend.

Many human-food pantries have pet food pantries or offer pet food if you need financial help purchasing food for your dog. If you find yourself in need, remember that there are many ways you can get assistance and, when you are able, give back and paw it forward.

Lucy Pet Foundation

Founded by Joey Herrick, former president and co-founder of

#pawsforthiscause

- ❖ Look for an organization near you or nationally where you can volunteer your services. Volunteers are always needed, and you might just have the skills organizations are searching for.
- ❖ Make a donation to your favorite local or national organization that offers financial assistance to pet parents. Every little bit helps.
- ❖ If there is a pet-food pantry near you, donate pet food. If there isn't, consider starting one yourself.



- ❖ Make a list of organizations in your town or city that help with different areas of need for dog parents, and share this information in any local social media groups.

Natural Balance Foods, **The Lucy Pet Foundation** was launched in October 2013 with its first mobile unit. The mobile unit is equipped for spay and neuter surgeries, which Lucy Pet offers for free to low-income pet parents and senior citizens 62 and older. The mobile unit is based in Los Angeles, and Lucy Pet has a contract with the city of Los Angeles but soon will be launching a second mobile unit in Houston, Texas, to offer services there.

Lucy Pet is partnering with Houston Astros pitcher Lance McCullers, who is helping launch the fundraising efforts and awareness around the new mobile unit in Houston. So far, the foundation has also received grants from the Dow Corporation (\$50,000) and Petco Foundation (\$100,000). However, Lucy Pet needs to continually raise funds for both locations, as it costs around \$500,000 annually to perform 5,000 spay/neuter surgeries.

Lucy Pet's chief veterinary officer, Karen "Doc" Halligan tells me, "Our mobile unit is a state-of-the-art unit, offering high-quality surgery

to low-income pet parents for free. We have a high standard of care and provide a complete physical, pain medication after the surgery, e-collar and follow up with a phone call the next day to check in on how the pet is doing. To date, we have performed 17,000 surgeries and are on track for 6,000 in 2018." An impressive number to say the least, helping pet parents who otherwise couldn't afford to spay and neuter their pets.

Dr. Halligan adds, "In addition, at all spay/neuter days we offer a low-cost vaccine clinic, deworming and microchipping for people who come that day, and there is no appointment necessary." The calendar of where they will be is on the website.

To qualify for the free services, pet parents must be low income, live in the city of Los Angeles or be 62 or older. To apply for services for your own pet, call 855-499-5829, email your contact information and phone number to fix@lucypetfoundation.org, or visit lucypetfoundation.org to learn more. 🐾



Nancy Hassel is the pet parent of Pit Bull Cody and the president of American Pet Professionals, an award-winning business networking and educational organization for the pet industry since 2009. Nancy travels the country as a speaker, media and public relations specialist, working with pet companies in many aspects including event planning and training for pet professionals. Find her on Instagram and Twitter at @AmericanPetPros.

