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MOCK SHELTER PREPARES ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM FOR WORST

Volunteers participate in a mock shelter exercise October 27 & 28 to practice and refine how to run a shelter for housing needy animals at the Enumclaw Expo Center in Enumclaw, WA.

Sometimes animals need to have a place to go: a hoarder has his dogs seized and an understaffed and underfunded county needs to board them as evidence. A fire forces evacuation, leaving families seeking shelters that don't accept pets or livestock.

One of WASART's main missions is to set up and run shelters. The training arm of the organization holds a set of trainings throughout the year, culminating in a mock shelter exercise, complete with borrowed animals large and small, so that volunteers can refine their skills in a safe environment.

This year, WASART expects thirty volunteers to attend on Saturday, October 27 and twenty-four on Sunday, October 28. To make the experience more realistic, thirteen people are planning on spending the night and the Red Cross will be providing dinner on Saturday.

ABOUT WASART

Washington State Animal Response Team is an all-volunteer, all-donation supported 501(c)(3) non-profit organization facilitating the rescue of animals in emergency situations such as floods, fires, and earthquakes as well as one-off rescues such as a horse trapped in a well, or a dog stranded halfway down a cliff.

Members train in some of the more difficult rescue areas. Skills honed by many of the group members include swift water rescue, rope work and the use of pulleys and rappelling, animal assessment and handling, and long-term sheltering. Some members have even completed courses put on by Homeland Security.

Gretchen McCallum, J.D. and Greta Cook originally conceived of WASART in response to Hurricane Katrina. "A third of the people in New Orleans wouldn't leave their homes when Katrina approached. A third of those people wouldn't leave because they weren't allowed to bring their pets with them," said McCallum, currently serving as Past President of WASART. "We were determined not to let that happen here. Not in our state."

Contact: <http://www.washingtonsart.org/>

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