

Betty White challenge raises \$2,300 for Home Again Bancroft



BY MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Beloved actress and comedienne Betty White passed away on Dec. 31 at 99 years old, just a few weeks shy of her 100th birthday. While her acting and comedic talents were enormous, displayed on such shows as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Golden Girls* and *Hot in Cleveland* (to name a few), her love of animals was even more vast. A social media challenge was started after her death which helped raise millions of dollars for animal welfare groups around the world, including one locally, Home Again Bancroft, which saw \$2,300 in donations. After White passed on, in recognition of her love of animals, a movement began on social media asking that people donate money to their favourite animal welfare organization on what would have been White's 100th birthday on Jan. 17 in her honour. Over the years, White was an avid pet enthusiast and animal welfare advocate, working with a myriad of organizations like the Los Angeles Zoo Commission, The Morris Animal Foundation and the African Wildlife Foundation. Called the Betty White challenge, this social media movement really caught fire, showing just how loved and respected this "first lady of television" was around the world. All told, there was nearly \$13 million raised for a variety of animal welfare organizations globally. Her agent Jeff Witjas, a partner and the senior vice president of talent at the APA Agency had this to say about the success of the challenge; "Betty White dedicated her entire life to animal welfare and I just believe that Betty's heart would be full of love for those who embraced the Betty White challenge," he says. One of these organizations that benefitted from the Betty White challenge locally was Home Again Bancroft. According to Mary Freeman, who has volunteered there since 2013, they received \$2,300 from the challenge. She says that this money will go toward veterinary expenses, which can be on average \$5,000 per month. Home Again Bancroft, started back in 2009, offers Bancroft an alternate animal rescue organization to HART that also includes cats. It has been a registered charitable organization for over 10 years. They rescue surrendered, abandoned or homeless dogs and cats for people in the Bancroft area, foster them until they're ready to be adopted and subsidize the spay and neutering of

pets in the greater Bancroft area who may not be able to otherwise afford to do so. Through a McDougall Insurance grant procured in 2018, they also offer free microchipping for all their dogs and cats. Freeman explains that the money raised from the Betty White challenge will be used for Home Again's Trap-Neuter-Return program for feral cats, a program they've had since March, 2015. The program trains volunteers to humanely trap feral cats so they can be vaccinated and then spayed or neutered. According to the Home Again website, one un-spayed female cat and one unneutered male cat and their offspring can result in 420,000 kittens in seven years. This program works to preclude this type of population explosion of feral cats in Bancroft and the surrounding area as there area already too many cats that nobody wants. "Before we got that \$2,300 our cat manager had called a hiatus to treating feral cats until spring, because of lack of funds and cats who have no owners do not yield any revenue from adoption," she says. "Now, she can rethink that decision."