



PAWS
CHICAGO®

Philanthropy Officer

Chicago, IL

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Founder + CEO

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Chicago | Cincinnati | Columbus | New York | Los Angeles | Washington, DC

About PAWS Chicago

When PAWS Chicago (PAWS) embarked on its journey in 1997, a promise was made to Chicago's homeless pets: PAWS would tirelessly strive to bring an end to the unnecessary killing of tens of thousands of helpless cats and dogs each year.

Since the first event outside the storefronts of Michigan Avenue, PAWS has relied on innovation and business practices to develop and scale their programs—like opening the city's first high-volume spay/neuter clinic in 2000 and the Lincoln Park Adoption Center and the first cageless No Kill shelter in the Midwest in 2007—to raise awareness of their No Kill mission, address the underlying cause of overpopulation, and find loving families for homeless pets. The recently expanded, state-of-the-art Medical Center is the essential next step in the PAWS No Kill mission to save all treatable pets. Tripled in size after a multi-year construction project, PAWS can now treat thousands of sick and injured homeless animals who would not otherwise get a second chance.

PAWS' goal is a No Kill Equilibrium, where the number of homeless and unwanted animals in Chicago is in balance with the community's capacity to save, heal, and care for them. Everything PAWS does is with that mission in mind. The foundation of their No Kill Model is Community Engagement. PAWS knows that it is people who both create and solve the problems that pets face. PAWS' role is working hand-in-hand with the community, keeping their finger on the pulse of what's happening with homeless pets, staying nimble and responsive to address the evolving need, and inspiring and mobilizing animal lovers to take lifesaving action. PAWS Chicago's No Kill pillars sit atop this foundation as the programs needed to directly impact animals: robust Prevention, Animal Health + Behavior, Adoption, and Volunteer programs are the necessary ingredients to reach and then sustain a No Kill Equilibrium, where every healthy and treatable pet not only survives but thrives!

PAWS' approach, centered on practical solutions, has spearheaded a remarkable 92.5% decrease in euthanasia citywide since its establishment in 1997 when more than 42,000 homeless pets were killed in Chicago. In the time since, PAWS has performed more than 300,000 spay/neuter surgeries, offered either for free or at a low cost for families who could not otherwise afford it. Over 79,000 pets have found loving homes, and an industry-leading 98% of the vulnerable animals entering PAWS' facilities are saved each year. These achievements, while outstanding, mark only the beginning of PAWS Chicago's ongoing and ambitious mission.

As PAWS looks ahead to the future, the organization's focus is continuing to raise the standards in animal welfare by addressing the ever-evolving challenges faced by homeless pets. Recognizing that animals depend on each of us to be their advocates and protectors, PAWS Chicago vows to continue its unwavering commitment in 2023 and beyond.

MISSION STATEMENT

PAWS Chicago is on a mission to build "No Kill" communities - starting with Chicago - that respect and value the life of every cat and dog. This involves addressing and ending the issue of overpopulation of homeless animals through various solutions, practices, and educational initiatives. PAWS aims to not only save lives but to transform animal welfare by setting higher standards in the way animals are treated and developing a sustainable, solutions-based model.

PAWS' VALUES IN ACTION

Respect for each and every life.

Community of people and organizations committed to helping homeless pets.

Innovation to constantly improve best practices and seek out new ideas and strategies to save more lives. To be a Learning Center that evolves and grows.

Pro-activity to solve difficult problems and to be prepared to offer emergency and crisis support.

Transparency that informs the public about the fate of homeless animals.

Education that raises awareness about the realities that homeless animals face in the community and across the nation, providing a forum for people to get involved in effecting change. Promotes and supports reasonable pet ownership.

Sustainability through financial management practices that maximize the impact and reach of our resources and ensure that PAWS Chicago will always be a resource for homeless animals.

Compassion towards all people and animals.

Position Summary

The Philanthropy Officer will serve as a key frontline fundraiser, responsible for cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding individual donors and family foundations with the capacity to make gifts of \$10,000 and above. This position will drive growth in major and leadership giving, support campaign initiatives, and strengthen donor relationships through thoughtful engagement and stewardship. The Philanthropy Officer will co-manage the Emergency Fund Council alongside the Director of Philanthropy + Community Engagement, oversee naming opportunities ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000, and partner with organizational leadership to secure transformative gifts. The successful candidate will bring a proven track record of increasing year-over-year giving, expertise in moves management, and the ability to execute strategic initiatives independently while working collaboratively within a small, founder-led nonprofit team.

Essential Job Functions

Individual Giving + Family Foundations

- » Identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward individual donors and family foundations with the capacity to make gifts of \$10,000 and above.
- » Develop and implement personalized cultivation and solicitation strategies to increase year-over-year giving per donor.
- » Prepare compelling proposals, stewardship reports, and other written materials for individual donors and family foundations.
- » Conduct donor research, including wealth screening and review of IRS Form 990s for family foundations, to inform strategy and outreach.

Campaigns + Special Initiatives

- » Support the Hawthorn Woods campaign by touring donors, preparing proposals, stewarding campaign gifts, and providing strategic support to leadership in securing major capital gifts.
- » Oversee and steward naming opportunities ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000, maintaining an updated and accurate list of opportunities.
- » Provide board liaison support related to the Emergency Fund Council.

Donor Engagement + Stewardship

- » Implement and track moves management strategies across the donor lifecycle (cultivation, solicitation, stewardship).
- » Collaborate with the Director of Philanthropy + Community Engagement to manage and grow the Emergency Fund Council by planning and executing informational and motivational meeting content and providing thoughtful stewardship to strengthen donor loyalty.
- » Develop innovative donor interactions that do not depend on traditional budgets for travel, dining, or entertainment.
- » Ensure accurate and timely donor recognition, acknowledgments, and stewardship plans.

Collaboration + Administration

- » Maintain accurate records and donor tracking through Raiser's Edge.
- » Partner closely with colleagues across departments to ensure a coordinated donor experience.
- » Work collaboratively within a founder-led, entrepreneurial nonprofit environment while independently executing strategic initiatives.
- » Demonstrate a strong team mindset and apply project management skills to advance key development initiatives.

Qualifications

- » Minimum of five years in nonprofit development or comparable fundraising role; direct experience in annual fund and institutional giving preferred.
- » Proven track record in cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding gifts of \$10,000+, with demonstrated year-over-year growth per donor.
- » Experience with moves management, proposal writing, donor reporting, and campaign support.
- » Experience with donor research, including wealth screenings.
- » Proficiency with donor databases; Raiser's Edge experience preferred.
- » Skilled communicator—written and verbal—with the ability to convey complex ideas clearly.
- » Strong project and team management skills; highly organized and detail-oriented.
- » Ability to work occasional evenings or weekends for donor events or campaign needs.
- » Creative problem solver with a growth mindset and collaborative spirit.
- » Strong attention to detail, hyper-organized, proactive planner, ability to manage multiple projects and complete tasks in a timely manner.

- » Strong project management and collaboration skills, able to prioritize appropriately, work collaboratively across departments, and manage up to VP to keep projects on track.
- » Knowledge of Chicago individual and institutional funders, research tools, and tactics.
- » Knowledgeable in Microsoft Office products (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, etc.).
- » Able to process, protect, and exercise discretion in handling confidential information and materials.
- » Demonstrates growth mindset and ability to think creatively and problem solve; willing and eager to learn from others; takes an active role in one's own professional development and stays informed of changes in the funding landscape; interested in researching and learning more about key stakeholders and prospects.
- » Commitment to animal welfare, the mission of PAWS Chicago, and helping the organization grow and serve more animals and pet owners in need.

Leadership + Key Colleagues *(Please do not contact the organization or its leaders directly)*

Denise Ashurst *(hiring manager)*

Director, Philanthropy + Community Engagement

With more than a decade of nonprofit fundraising experience, Denise brings a deep commitment to relationship-based philanthropy, strategic donor engagement, and impact-driven storytelling.

Before joining PAWS Chicago, Denise served as Director of Individual + Community Giving at IWS Family Health, a Federally Qualified Health Center serving over 12,000 low-income children and families across Chicago. There, she led the organization's individual giving strategy, reimagined its planned giving program, and revitalized donor communications. She also guided a strategic board development initiative that resulted in the successful recruitment and onboarding of three new members who brought lived experience, community ties, and professional expertise to the board. Under her leadership, the annual appeal increased by more than 610% in a single year.

Previously, Denise was a Philanthropy Officer at the Archdiocese of Chicago, where she managed a portfolio of 135 major donors. She renewed over \$1 million in annual appeal gifts with an average 74% year-over-year increase and raised an additional \$1.6 million in major gifts through customized proposals. She also managed \$10 million in pledged assets for a capital campaign and stewarded more than 450 planned gift donors.

Denise's connection to PAWS Chicago's mission is both professional and deeply personal. A proud PAWS adopter, she lives in Lakeview with her 14-year-old rescue cat, Splash. Her two grown children, both living in Chicago with their own rescue pets, make animal welfare a shared family passion. When she's not fundraising, Denise enjoys sailing on Lake Michigan, exploring hidden culinary gems, and spending time with loved ones.

Her work is grounded in the belief that creating a more compassionate world for animals also builds stronger, more connected communities for people. With a lifelong love for animals and a passion for donor-centered fundraising, Denise is honored to join the PAWS Chicago team and looks forward to advancing its mission to end pet homelessness and foster a more humane Chicago.

Katie Law

VP, Development + Community Engagement

Katie Law is a seasoned nonprofit leader with over two decades of experience in fundraising, community engagement, and strategic development. At PAWS, Katie oversees a dynamic team responsible for driving philanthropic partnerships, volunteer engagement, and events that support the organization's mission to build a No Kill community.

Katie is known for her collaborative and inclusive leadership style, clear communication, and ability to foster strong relationships both internally and externally. She brings a thoughtful, mission-driven approach to her work and is deeply committed to mentoring and supporting her team's professional growth. Katie earned her degree from the University of Iowa and continues to be a passionate advocate for animal welfare and community impact. Candidates joining her team can expect a high-energy, supportive environment where innovation is encouraged and every contribution matters.

Alexis Fasseas

Co-Founder + Executive Director

Alexis Fasseas is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of PAWS Chicago, a leading no-kill animal welfare organization. In 1997, Alexis co-founded PAWS Chicago with her mother, Paula Fasseas, in response to the high euthanasia rates of homeless pets in the city. Since its inception, PAWS Chicago has been instrumental in reducing the number of homeless pets killed in the city by 91%.

As Executive Director, Alexis oversees strategic initiatives and operational management, driving the organization's mission to build a no-kill community. Her leadership has been pivotal in the development of PAWS Chicago's comprehensive programs, including high-volume spay/neuter clinics and state-of-the-art adoption centers. Alexis's dedication to animal welfare and her strategic vision continue to guide PAWS Chicago's efforts in creating a compassionate community for homeless pets.

Reporting Relationships

The Philanthropy Officer reports to the Director, Philanthropy + Community Engagement and has no direct reports.

Location

This position is based in Chicago, IL, and given the place-based nature of the organization and its multiple facilities, full-time work onsite and in the field is expected.

Compensation + Benefits

The salary range for this position is approximately \$85,000-\$105,000. PAWS Chicago offers a generous benefits package that includes:

- » Medical Insurance (eligible following 60 days of employment).
- » Voluntary Dental and Vision Insurance.
- » Basic and Voluntary Term Life and AD+D.
- » Voluntary Short- and Long-Term Disability Insurance.
- » Voluntary Accident, Critical Illness, and Hospital Indemnity Insurance options.
- » 403(b) Retirement Plan with employer match.
- » Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- » Time Off: Ten days of accrued PTO, Five days of sick leave, and Event Flex Days for each signature and athletic event.
- » Six Observed Holidays.

As a reflection of our firm's commitment to equity and equal pay for all, Cooper Coleman requires that salary ranges or salary starting points be published for every search we conduct. The practice of not posting salaries perpetuates the gender and racial wage gap and discriminates against women, people of color, and other historically excluded populations by causing individuals to negotiate from a disadvantaged starting point.

Submission Instructions *(read carefully)*

[Cooper Coleman](#) is leading this search on behalf of the PAWS Chicago. To apply, please [visit this link](#) (www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches). **ALL expressions of interest should be made through the online application.** Please send nominations of qualified candidates directly to **Kiratiana Freelon at kiratiana.freelon@coopercoleman.com**. Kindly use the position title as the subject line of your email. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

A cover letter is not required with your initial application but is welcomed to help us understand your fitness for and interest in this role during our initial evaluation. Candidates invited for interviews will be asked to provide a thoughtful letter of interest indicating their specific qualifications for the opportunity, desire to join the PAWS Chicago, and connection to its mission.

Cooper Coleman LLC is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates and will refer candidates without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, ability, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis.

Background Checks + Credentials Verification

Before sending your resume for this position, please read it over for accuracy. Cooper Coleman verifies its candidates' employment and academic credentials at the time of offer, and our clients frequently conduct background checks before finalizing an offer.

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