

One Tail at a Time: Learning Partnership Plan

One Tail at a Time will offer senior dog families living in Chicago's most underserved communities a "Silver Ticket" for their pet's health and wellness. Families of senior dogs who have not visited a licensed vet recently will receive a voucher (their senior dog's "Silver Ticket") for a complimentary senior dog exam, blood panel, vaccines, round of prescription medication, and (when needed) follow-up treatment. Silver Ticket recipients can redeem their voucher at One Tail at a Time's Ellis Veterinary Clinic.

The Silver Ticket program itself will be brand new, but the program will be integrated into OTAT's existing (and evolving) community outreach program to efficiently reach senior dog owners in the communities that most need these services.

Silver Tickets will be distributed onsite at a designated senior pet section of One Tail at a Time's pet and people food pantries, which are organized in collaboration with top Chicago human service organizations. Our people and pet food pantries started last year in response to COVID-19's disproportionate impact on communities that were already underserved (and in some of these communities, pet and/or human resource deserts).

We'll maximize conversion rates for Silver Tickets by pairing them with attractive educational pamphlets on senior dog care, providing services directly onsite when available via our mobile adoption truck, and making sure that a Spanish-fluent staff or volunteer is available to answer questions about senior dog wellness. Spanish-speaking volunteers and/or staff are always present at our pet and people pantries so that we may effectively, and respectfully, be of service to our community. Written materials are also available in Spanish (as will be our Silver Tickets and senior pet care pamphlets, if funded). After many years of bringing resources to Chicago's diverse community of loving pet families, we have found this to be one of the most critical steps to successful outreach.

When needed following their Silver Ticket exam and bloodwork, more extensive follow-up treatment can be offered to senior dog owners on a sliding scale through One Tail at a Time's existing owner support program CRISP (the Chicagoland Rescue Intervention and Support Program).

Our Silver Ticket program will break down barriers to keeping senior dogs healthy and in their homes by making diagnostics and basic wellness care more accessible to underserved Chicago communities. The foundation for the program is built on Grey Muzzle's 'Saving Seniors' finding that addressing minor issues before they become costly and unmanageable is one of the greatest ways to save more senior dogs. We see evidence of this finding throughout Chicago via our owner support program CRISP. Now the first point of contact for any Chicago resident that contacts Chicago Animal Care and Control to surrender their pet, CRISP offers families struggling to make ends meet an alternative to pet surrender by asking one simple question:

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“How can we help you keep your pet today?” Over half the dogs that CRISP kept with their families last year were seniors, and many of their medical needs could have been avoided or lessened in severity had options for accessible early intervention been available and shared. Most of the pet families seeking help for their senior dog need assistance with pyometra, growths, diabetes, dental disease, kidney, Cushing’s, and thyroid disease.

While Chicago Animal Care and Control has made great progress in increasing positive outcomes for shelter pets, Chicago as a city has much work to do to keep senior dogs out of its shelter system.