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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **HUMANE SOCIETY BREAKS GROUND ON \$7.2M ANIMAL CARE CENTER**

#### **New 32,000 sq. ft. Facility will be Transformative to Region's Animal Care and Protection Efforts**

**Menands, NY** - "A better future begins today." That was the promise conveyed by Mohawk Hudson Humane Society leaders and advocates at a groundbreaking ceremony held today on the site of a former dog play area at the organization's 3 Oakland Avenue location in Menands. Dozens of community members, volunteers and staff members, along with a few of the shelter's canine residents, gathered to mark the start of the \$7.2M building project which will be "transformative" for the care and protection of animals in the greater Capital Region, according to President and CEO, Brad Shear.

"Our extraordinarily dedicated staff and volunteers do phenomenal work every single day – in a facility that works against them every single day. With a new building that provides them with the tools and environment they need to keep animals safe, happy and healthy, the sky is the limit for the quality and breadth of programs and services that we will provide," said Shear.

Founded in 1887, parts of the Society's current shelter facility are more than a century old. Over the years there have been additions and renovations, but none have come close to addressing the need for a much higher standard of care that is essential to the animals' physical and psychological wellbeing.

The new 32,000 sq. ft. facility will increase physical size by 67%, with 27,000 sq. ft. devoted directly to animal care. A sophisticated system for optimal clean air exchange, as well as plumbing and drainage that will enable the staff to thoroughly and reliably clean and sanitize animal care and holding areas, will underlie maintenance of a clean and healthy environment.

Cat housing capacity will double and dog capacity will increase by 30% – that will translate to housing for more than 150 additional animals. But more importantly, those kenneling spaces will be significantly larger and more comfortable for the animals, and that will mean less stress.

"Stress plays a significant part in illness," said Shear. "By providing larger, more comfortable, quieter and for some pets a more homelike and cage-free environment, our animals will be happier and consequently healthier while awaiting their new homes."

The Center will include twice as much treatment space, which will allow for isolation of contagious illnesses. Rates of common illnesses, such as upper respiratory infections and kennel cough, are projected to decrease by 50% within the first year of operation. Expansion of surgical space will enable staff to perform an additional 3,000 surgical procedures per year and dramatically increase the Society's low-cost or free spay and neuter programs for pet owners who are income-qualified.

A cleaner, brighter and more welcoming environment will add to a better experience for visitors. Many people are reluctant to visit a shelter for fear of the sad surroundings they expect to encounter. With welcoming spaces and the ability to offer other opportunities for engagement, such as through dog training classes and humane education programs for all ages, the Society hopes to dispel that fear and make the center a community destination.

According to Steve Caporizzo, a well-known Capital Region animal advocate who serves as honorary chair for the Society's building campaign, "This is an exciting time for the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society and so long overdue, after almost 130 years. A new shelter and everything that goes along with it will allow for even more pets to be given a second chance at life. This will be a special place where people will want to come and visit with their pets, enjoy the grounds and the new facility, and perhaps meet their new forever friend."

A capital campaign to raise the needed \$7.2M for construction began over the summer.

"During the silent phase of our campaign we've raised more than half of the needed funds for this project," said the Society's board president, Miguel Berger. "Now that we've broken ground, I encourage all members of our community to bring this important project to fruition and support it with a financial gift. Large or small, every gift brings us closer to a better community for the animals and those who love them."

While construction takes place, the current facilities will continue to operate. As sections are completed, transitions will be made to the new building and eventually the old buildings will be torn down. The projected completion is summer of 2017.

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#### **About Mohawk Hudson Humane Society**

Founded in 1887, the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society is the largest animal protection agency in the Capital Region and serves as the SPCA for Albany and Rensselaer Counties, investigating and prosecuting cases of animal cruelty. The Society is funded primarily by donations, receives no ongoing local, state or federal government funding, nor does it receive funding from any national humane groups. The Society is located at 3 Oakland Avenue in Menands. For more information, contact (518) 434-8128 or visit [www.mohawkhumane.org](http://www.mohawkhumane.org).