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RICHMOND COUNTY

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**District Attorney Donovan joins Animal Care & Control of NYC and  
Veterinary Centers of America to announce a  
first-of-its-kind Animal Neglect Prevention Program and hotline**

*\*\*\* Individuals facing financial hardship will be able to seek assistance paying for animal care \*\*\**

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr., Lisa Hara Levin, D.V.M., of Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C), and Dr. Irwin Ruderman, medical director at Staten Island Animal Hospital, a member of the Veterinary Centers of America (VCA), announced today the creation of an Animal Neglect Prevention Program which will aim to provide financially struggling pet owners with affordable medical services for their animal companion. The goal of this collaborative effort is to help animal guardians, who might otherwise be criminally charged with animal neglect, properly care for their pets.

“I want to thank my partners at the AC&C and VCA for joining with me in developing this first-of-its-kind program that will provide top-notch veterinary medical coverage to cash-strapped pet owners. Living with financial hardship can be tough enough; there is no reason for the health of the guardian’s animal to suffer as well. I foresee this as a way to stem animal abuse and for pet owners to avoid potential arrest for neglect. But make no mistake, this is not a free pass for those who harm animals. Those cruel individuals will still be vigorously prosecuted by my office,” said DA Donovan. “I am honored that RCDA will be the host agency for the hotline that Staten Island residents can call for more information. I also want to commend ADA Jane Grinberg for spearheading this unique partnership on behalf of my office. She is a dedicated ADA and fervent animal lover whose expertise in prosecuting animal abuse cases was indispensable in establishing this initiative.”

“In my years as a practicing veterinarian, it’s become clear to me that animal neglect, as socially detestable as we regard it, may not result from the actions of purely uncaring individuals,” said Dr. Lisa Hara Levin, Medical Director at AC&C. “A person’s deep love for their animals may be frustrated by their financial inability to assist them in both times of small and greater need and could result in possible charges of animal neglect. I am so gratified that our three groups – the Staten Island District Attorney’s Office, VCA Hospitals, and AC&C – have joined to produce such a meaningful veterinary healthcare avenue for animals who would otherwise be unattended, and whose guardians might otherwise be charged with animal neglect. As a native Staten Islander, I am additionally proud that this program will not only serve the Island’s animals, but that it can be used as a template for the rest of the city, state, and country.”

“We are proud of our long-term relationship with Animal Care & Control of NYC. We also thank Mr. Donovan and the staff of the Richmond County District Attorney’s Office for this opportunity. VCA is excited to be part of this collaborative effort to help pet owners on Staten Island and surrounding areas care for their pets, especially those pet owners facing financial challenges,” said Dr. Irwin Ruderman, Medical Director at Staten Island Animal Hospital. “Since its founding more than two decades ago, VCA has been committed to providing exceptional health care for all pets. At every one of our more than 600 animal hospitals nationwide, our doctors and staff work tirelessly to give top-notch medical care, with the compassion all pets and their owners deserve. Health care doesn’t stop with medical care; educating clients is also key and happens at every visit. As pet lovers ourselves, this innovative program ensures the most at-risk pets have hope they will enjoy the healthiest life possible. It’s the peace of mind we can all feel good about.”

Medical care will include, but not be limited to, low-to-mid cost services such as the treatment of ear/eye infections, uncomplicated lameness, and flea allergy dermatitis. More advanced (and, expensive) care, if required, will be offered to the animal guardian, but

it will be the individual VCA hospital's decision to offer a payment plan achievable for the animal guardian. Further financial consideration, if needed, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

In order to be eligible for the assistance provided by this program, a pet owner must provide proof of need such as, but not limited to: public assistance; Medicaid; SSI, PAAD; and they must have no other source of income OR a family member/friend/Good Samaritan willing and able to pay for veterinary services.

It will be the responsibility of the ANPP participant to provide proof of this qualifying information, both when making the appointment and at the time of the appointment. Given that this program has been co-founded with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office, fraudulent representation by an ANPP participant will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

The Richmond County District Attorney's Office will host the Animal Neglect Prevention Program hotline, which is **718-876-6300**. Callers will be prompted to press **option #2** and the hotline will provide a brief summary of information regarding the affordable medical services that are available to financially-struggling pet owners. It will also direct the caller to contact one of the four VCA Animal Hospitals on Staten Island that are participating in the program to set up an appointment. The hospitals are:

- Staten Island Animal Hospital at 640 Willowbrook Road. Phone: 718-698-1400.
- South Shore Animal Hospital at 125 New Dorp Lane. Phone: 718-980-2600.
- Rosebank Animal Hospital at 1230 Bay Street. Phone: 718-273-9800.
- Gateway Animal Hospital at 4236 Hylan Boulevard. Phone: 718-984-1000.

It should be noted that this is not an animal abuse hotline. Concerned citizens wishing to report animal cruelty are still directed to call either 911 or 311.

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The Office of the Richmond County District Attorney (RCDA) investigates and prosecutes criminal matters pursuant to the New York State Constitution and various New York State and New York City statutes and regulations.

Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C) is one of the largest animal welfare organizations in the country, taking in approximately 30,000 animals each year. AC&C is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that rescues, cares for and finds loving homes for animals throughout the five boroughs. AC&C has a contract with the City of New York to be an open-admissions organization, which means it never turns away any homeless, abandoned, injured or sick animal in need of help, including cats, dogs, rabbits, small mammals, reptiles, birds, farm animals and wildlife. It is the only organization in NYC with this unique responsibility. Visit [www.nycacc.org](http://www.nycacc.org) for more information, and follow AC&C at [facebook.com/NYCACC](https://www.facebook.com/NYCACC) and [@NYCACC](https://twitter.com/NYCACC).

Veterinary Centers of America (VCA) provides a full range of general medicine and surgical services, as well as specialized treatments. The company operates more than 600 animal hospitals in 42 states across the United States and in four Canadian provinces. VCA hospitals are staffed by more than 3,300 fully qualified, dedicated and compassionate veterinarians who strive to give animals the very best in medical care, more than 400 of whom are board certified specialists.

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