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celebrating the relationship
between pets and their people

By Kelsey Duckett



Local Hero

LOW COST VET MOBILE HELPS PETS AND PEOPLE STAY TOGETHER

One man's vision of bringing veterinary services to people in need makes a positive impact in the community.

For years, Garo Alexanian had a vision to start a mobile veterinary clinic for New York residents who are struggling to keep their pets healthy. In 2009, Alexanian found a fully-equipped vehicle he could afford and a staff of volunteers, and his vision became a reality.

The "Low Cost Vet Mobile" is a mobile veterinary clinic created to help low-income people who are on the verge of having to give up their companion animals because they can no longer afford their veterinary care.

"This is not a program for every New Yorker, nor it is a program for people who just want to save a few bucks," Alexanian explains. "This is for people who are struggling, this is for pet [guardians] who are on the brink of giving up their pets."

A lifetime volunteer and animal rescue proponent, Alexanian knew a program like this was necessary and urgent.

"The economy is taking its toll on people," he says. "The number of pet surrenders was

on the rise, and I knew something needed to be done fast to give pet [guardian] another option—to give them an opportunity to not only save, but keep, their animal."

The Vet Mobile is available in Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and just recently was introduced to residents in the Bronx. This innovative program is the first of its kind in the nation and Alexanian said he receives phone calls and e-mails on a regular basis about expanding to other cities.

"We don't advertise the Vet Mobile, yet we have been inundated with phone calls and e-mails about our services," Alexanian says. "We underestimated the speed of how fast word travels."

The vehicle, which is suited for all digital imaging and has full surgical capability, services over 9,000 pets in a year. Each day the volunteer veterinary staff can see anywhere between 15 and 45 patients, and on average the Vet Mobile serves 450 animals a week.

Alexanian predicted on July 25, 2009, the day the Vet Mobile first went out for service that "the program would prevent approximately 5,000 surrenders over the course of a year." Which translated to a 12-15 percent reduction in shelter intakes.

He was right.

"After the first full year of service, surrenders of dogs and cats at New York Animal Care and Control was reduced by 6,040," he reports. "That is approximately a 15 percent reduction in animal surrenders. This is outstanding."

Alexanian, who is a self-proclaimed workaholic, believes that for the first time in his life, he is finally making a difference.

"A lot of times in this business, the business of rescuing, we never feel that we are getting the action we deserve. We always know that for every one we rescue, there are more that we couldn't save," he said. "But now we are dealing with animals on such a large scale and everyday, that I finally can go home and know that this is making a difference. It is incredible." ☐

To learn more about the Low Cost Vet Mobile please visit: [Facebook/Low-Cost-Pet-Mobile](https://www.facebook.com/Low-Cost-Pet-Mobile).

Know a local hero?

Email: hero@TailsInc.com and let us know about someone making a difference for the animals in your community.