



# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –  
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## **Canine Costume Contest to Raise Awareness, Emergency Medical Funds**

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. – Dress your puppy as a pumpkin or your boxer as a bubble bee and join other pet owners for the “Howl-o-ween” costume contest on Saturday, Oct. 2 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in front of Kohl’s on Glensford Road.

Volunteers have organized the contest and party to raise awareness in the community about the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, as well as raise funds for the Cumberland County Animal Services Emergency Medical Fund and the Safe Havens Supervised Visitation Center.

The contest will have several different categories and great prizes will be awarded. Registration for the contest is \$10 for the first dog and \$5 for each additional dog. All proceeds will benefit the Animal Services Emergency Medical Fund and Safe Havens Supervised Visitation Center.

You can pre-register by calling 910-321-3818 or e-mailing [kels926@hotmail.com](mailto:kels926@hotmail.com).

Supported strictly by donations from the community, the Emergency Medical Fund allows Animal Services to perform medical procedures on animals they would otherwise have to euthanize. The fund provides life-saving medical care so the animals can be adopted. Animal Services Director Dr. John Lauby has used the fund three times in the last three months to cover surgeries for injured animals. Call 321-6852 for more information about the fund.

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Kelsi Durrence, a family court case coordinator for the 12th District Court, has organized the event and is trying to raise awareness about the link between domestic violence and animal cruelty, as well as establish a foster program for the pets of abuse victims.

“When a woman is being abused, one of the many fears she may have is that her abuser may vent his rage on other family members,” Durrence said. “Since pets are considered a member of the family in many households, they can become a target when there is violence in the home.”

Concern for a beloved pet’s welfare prevents or delays more than 50 percent of domestic violence victims from leaving the abusive relationship, according to Durrence.

“Some victims do leave, only to return to reclaim or protect their pets. Those who do escape with their pets often find themselves living in their cars or on the street because many domestic violence shelters are not equipped to house pets. This creates an issue of both human and animal safety,” she said.

The Safe Havens Supervised Visitation Center assists parents in maintaining contact with their children while the adults are separating, going through a divorce or other family transition. The center also assists the court system by providing supervised visitation and safe exchange services when the court feels that it is in the best interests of both children and parents.

The center is committed to helping parents establish and maintain positive relationships with their children, while minimizing the effects of conflict between parents and without putting children at risk for abuse or neglect.

Parties may choose to use the services of the center voluntarily or they may be referred through the court system. Cases may be referred to the center when there are allegations of domestic abuse, child abuse or neglect, emotional abuse, substance abuse by a parent, the threat of parental kidnapping or a variety of other reasons. For more information on Safe Havens, call 483-5936.

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