



ANNUAL REPORT

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2020



## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Despite extreme challenges, it has been a wonderful year.

The pandemic caused hardships and heartaches. We had to adapt quickly in so many ways. We worried when volunteers became very sick with Covid-19. We anguished about how to modify our daily operations. We wondered how bad things could get.

But we never gave up. Despite unprecedented circumstances we persevered and safely continued our mission.

Against all odds, we successfully led a team of rescue groups around the country in an effort to rescue 102 dogs from China, an accomplishment that gained national media attention. (Seventeen of the dogs entered RAGOM's care; the rest went to our rescue partners.)

We rescued 84 dogs from commercial breeding and helped them adapt to life in a home with a loving family.

Many dogs arrived with extensive health issues. Some came to us because their families could no longer keep them.

Every dog that came to us was special and deserved a happy new beginning. No matter the circumstances, we made sure that happened.

We fretted, we adapted, we overcame. We smiled – and we celebrated. With you standing beside us, supporting us, we got through it all.

With gratitude,  
Laura Buck, Board Chair



LAURA, MILO (20-152) AND CLANCY

## LEADERSHIP

### Board of Directors

Laura Buck, Chair  
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Marti Jones  
Anne Kominek, Treasurer  
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Jane Nygaard, Founder  
Sheila Rawski  
Jordan Rozenfeld  
Missy Stanisz, Vice Chair  
Sheri Stover

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Suzie Downs, Foster Relations Manager  
Michele Hersom, Adoption Manager  
Amy Lake, Director of Development and Marketing  
Patty Larson, Intake Manager  
Carolyn Maset, Events Manager  
Jan Stone, Administrative Manager  
Dayle Stubbs, Veterinary Services Manager  
Nicole Stundzia, Director of Operations  
Sheila White, Behavior Services Manager

## OUR MISSION

RAGOM rescues, fosters, and finds forever homes for Golden Retrievers and Golden mixes in need.

RAGOM serves Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and western Wisconsin.

## LOOKING BACK AT 2020

PETER 20-169



**261**

dogs were in our care

**84**

dogs rescued from commercial breeding life

**1,241**

applications to adopt the dogs in our care

**196**

dogs were adopted

**\$820**

average veterinary cost per dog

**102**

dogs rescued from China by the coalition of rescue groups we led (17 of those entered RAGOM's care)

**9**

hospice dogs lived out their lives lovingly cared for by RAGOM foster families





SASHA 20-146 goes home with her new family

## ADAPTING TO THE PANDEMIC

Though we serve dogs in need, our work depends on people. On a day-to-day basis, our volunteers work together on transports, home visits, events, supply distribution, and so much more. All of that needed to change on short notice when Covid-19 hit, to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers and adopters.

Though the challenge seemed overwhelming, our skillful volunteers found a way to make everything happen. We changed our in-person home visits to video visits. We established new protocols for transports. Previously, when someone surrendered a dog, our transport volunteers sat down with them at their home to learn as much as possible. With our new processes, we interview the surrenderer over the phone so that our transport volunteers won't need to spend much time in the surrendering family's home. Nearly every aspect of our daily work was adapted.

Our Meet & Greet events were once a staple of our work, with adoptable dogs visiting local businesses, and special events to meet potential adopters. We put them on hold for months, and then found opportunities to host outdoor events that allowed for social distancing. Our beloved Goldzilla event went virtual.

In time, the changes we made became our new normal. We continue to prepare for how the changes in our world will impact us going forward. Over the last year, lifestyles changed dramatically as many people began to work from home. With most activities cancelled, many found joy in the companionship of their dogs.

We don't know what the future will bring, but we are preparing for an increase in the number of dogs surrendered to us in the year ahead. Since the pandemic, commercial breeders have churned out more puppies to meet the unprecedented demand for puppies. Those who purchased puppies might realize their new family member is a bigger commitment than expected. As children go back to school, workers return to the office, and activities resume, some families may find they no longer have enough time to devote to their dog. Though a lot has changed in the last year, one thing will never change: we will always be here for dogs in need.



Volunteer Carolyn Maset with PANG PANG 20-205C

“  
Nearly every  
aspect of our  
daily work was  
adapted.”



## BEHAVIOR PROGRAM HELPS US REHABILITATE MORE DOGS

Our Behavior Services program is unique to RAGOM. When dogs come into RAGOM with concerning behaviors like anxiety, fear, or poor manners, the Behavior Services team steps in to offer training and advice to their foster family.

Rocky was found abandoned on the streets of Shanghai, dehydrated and malnourished. His energy was off the charts. He inhaled his food and greeted people by plowing into them, and he was reactive to other dogs and some people he encountered on walks.

After evaluating Rocky, a behavioral modification plan was created for him. His meals were served in a variety of feeding toys that forced him to eat more slowly while also engaging his brain, which helped calm him.

On walks, Rocky's foster would cross the street to give Rocky plenty of space when another dog or person came into sight. Then she would scatter Rocky's favorite treats on the ground.

Eventually Rocky learned that encountering new dogs and people led to yummy treats, which lessened his anxiety and reactivity.

Rocky's progress made him more desirable to adopters, but he would need a family willing to continue to work with him. Rocky was adopted by a loving, patient family who was undeterred by his behavioral needs. They have continued his behavioral training with a positive reinforcement-based trainer, and Rocky has made huge behavioral improvements thanks to their commitment and hard work.



ROCKY 19-169C

## WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP MORE DOGS

Changing the lives of dogs in need is what matters most, no matter who gets the credit. One of RAGOM's strengths is the strong partnerships we've built with other rescue groups. We know we can help more dogs if we work together.

In 2020, RAGOM and China Rescue Dogs co-led a coalition of ten rescue groups with a bold goal: rescue 100 dogs in need, during a global pandemic, from China. We all worked together to plan the complicated and ever-changing logistics, fundraise, and take in the rescued dogs. It was an accomplishment that gained national attention.

RAGOM also collaborates with other rescue groups to help dogs at commercial breeding auctions. We take turns attending, bidding on dogs, and transporting the dogs to their awaiting foster homes.

We've built relationships with veterinary clinics throughout the Midwest. They call RAGOM when a client has a Golden they can no longer keep, or plans to euthanize a dog that can be rehabilitated.

We help each other when one rescue is short on foster homes, or has a dog that's been waiting a long time for an adopter. Cross-promoting each other's harder-to-place dogs helps everyone, especially the dog who's hoping for a family.





# A UNITED EFFORT TO SAVE DOGS IN CHINA

In the United States, the pandemic brought good news for rescue dogs. Interest in adopting from shelters and rescue groups soared to an all-time high, and RAGOM was flooded with adoption applications. But for dogs in China, the pandemic could not have been more devastating.

There are thousands – maybe millions – of dogs in need in China. Before Covid, many of them were helped by international rescue. But the pandemic brought that to a halt.

Additionally, when the coronavirus broke out in China, there was misinformation about dogs spreading the virus. As a result, many dogs were abandoned by their owners or confiscated by local authorities. Chinese rescuers were in crisis. Private shelters and foster homes were over capacity and dogs were stuck in cramped conditions, potentially for years.

To make matters worse, the popular Yulin dog meat festival was approaching. It is common for dogs to be stolen and loaded onto extremely cramped trucks for ten or more hours, headed for certain death. Chinese rescuers wanted to save some of these dogs from slaughter, but could only do so if space was freed up at the overcrowded shelters.

When the borders closed the dogs stood no chance. **Unless we could help them.**

RAGOM reached out to other rescue groups throughout America, and nine signed on to join our efforts.

We knew a challenge awaited us. The logistics of this effort were by far the most difficult we have ever encountered.

The first heart-wrenching challenge was to choose which dogs we would rescue, and which of the thousands we would leave behind. Our team poured over the photos sent to us by Chinese rescuers and considered their age and ability to make the trip. Some pictured dogs with hopeful faces, others forlorn. Realizing how many we would leave behind was devastating.

Each of the dogs were vetted to ensure they were healthy enough to travel, and screened for contagious diseases. Every needed permit and permission was secured.

Then there were even bigger obstacles – raising the funds needed for the dogs' rescue and finding a way to fly them here when flights were at a standstill.

Additionally, we needed to secure permission from the USDA, determine how to get the dogs to each of our rescue partners once they landed in America, ensure each dog had not only an awaiting foster home among their rescue group but also a way to get there from the airport on a date that was a moving target.

We celebrated our first big victory. Against all odds, we were able to secure a private charter plane at below cost.

Generous supporters donated to fund the mission, and we raised the funds needed for the rescue.

A date was chosen, and plans were finalized for the dogs to fly out of Shanghai. But before the dogs' travel date, unexpected new requirements were put in place in China which prohibited our flight.

We changed plans and made arrangements to fly out of another Chinese city. All of the additional permissions were secured. We eagerly awaited the dogs' arrival.

Hours before the plane was scheduled to depart to China to pick up the dogs, we received devastating news. Twenty minutes after our final permit was issued, the Chinese government suspended all flights containing animals. Their order was put in place because a passenger on an unrelated flight had submitted questionable documentation for their dog.

We had worked so hard, for so long, to make this happen. These dogs were counting on us. And although the odds were stacked against us, we were not going to give up. We went back to the drawing board.

We worked with agents in China to find a way to fly the dogs in climate-controlled cargo planes.

Although we'd only be able to transport the dogs a few at a time, we believed we could

make it happen. This new plan created a whole new set of logistical challenges, and added to the cost of the rescue mission. But it was the only way to save the dogs.

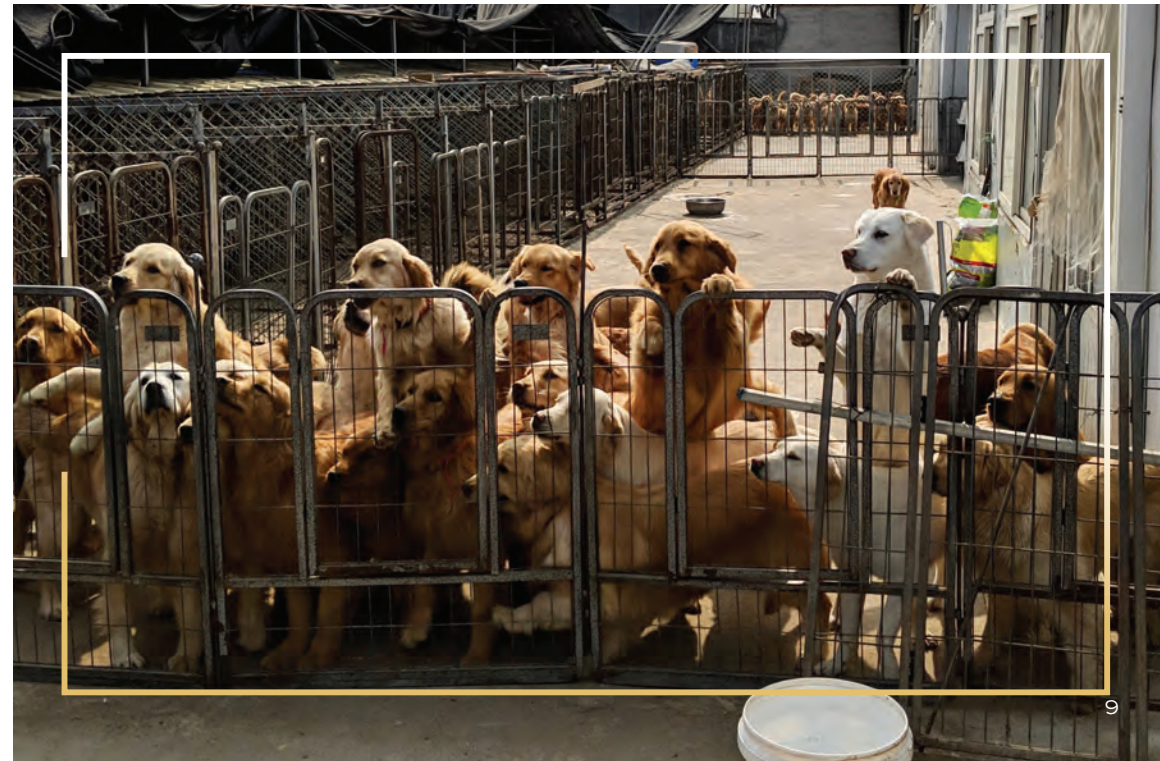
Weeks later, our dream began to come true, as the first five dogs arrived safely. It took a couple months, but eventually we were able to bring over all 99 dogs – plus three extra we managed to fit on a plane.

Many of the dogs were underweight and malnourished. All were starved for attention. But they made it, and they were safe, and their new lives were about to begin.

Of the 102 dogs rescued, seventeen of them were taken in by RAGOM. The remaining dogs were taken in by our nine rescue partners throughout the country.

People from all over the world donated, volunteered, and provided expertise to make the rescue a success.

**Together we changed the lives of 102 special souls.**



## A SURPRISING CHALLENGE

2020 was a year of many challenges for RAGOM. Most of them were pandemic-related. But one of our biggest challenges might surprise you.

Supply and demand – in the business world, mastering it is a requirement to be successful. But what if you are a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping dogs in need?

Unfortunately for RAGOM, many of the dogs who are most in need of rescue are those that are least desired by our adopters. It leads to several challenges.

Bandit 20-043A was rescued from a commercial breeding auction in March. Just two years old, he was one of the most shut-down dogs we've rescued. Helping dogs like Bandit is at the core of our mission. He deserved a second chance, and the idea of leaving him behind was heartbreaking. But from a business standpoint, rescuing him was a poor choice.

Bandit was terrified of nearly everything. Months after his rescue, he would still slink away in fear of his foster family. As of this writing, Bandit is still in our care. We are honored to be giving him the second chance he deserves, but the reality is that Bandit is taking up a much-needed foster home, and his care requires RAGOM's financial resources.

Bandit is making progress but still has a long way to go, and he hasn't had anyone interested in adopting him. It's understandable – he will need to be adopted by a family with another confident dog for companionship and mentoring, and he will likely never be a dog who enjoys cuddling with people or greeting strangers.

Conversely, RAGOM received 1,241 applications to adopt the 261 dogs we had in our care. The majority of those applications were for the more desirable dogs – those that are younger and lack

ongoing medical or behavior challenges. It is not uncommon for those types of dogs to receive 50 qualified applications.

This challenge leads to nearly 1,000 disappointed people who feel slighted they weren't chosen, and volunteer burnout – telling a wonderful applicant they weren't chosen is not a fun job. But, of course, we can only have one adopter for each dog. Most of the time, those who aren't chosen are not interested in taking on a dog that's older, has medical issues, or is unsocial – dogs like Bandit.

“

*Just two years old, he was one of the most shut-down dogs we've rescued.*

## GOLDEN LEGACY CIRCLE MEMBERS

The Golden Legacy Circle is a special group of supporters who have included RAGOM in their estate plans - such as through their will, insurance policy, or retirement account. The support of members ensures that each dog will be welcomed and taken care of, well into the future.



**Lou Ambrose**  
**Mark and Peggy Berg**  
**Lisa Anne Bishop**  
**Kelly Burns**  
**Randall Cottingham**  
**Paddy Dunder**  
**Bev Foster**  
**Susan Giloy**  
**Richard Grigos and Lauren Segal**  
**Michele and son Andrew Hamilton**  
**Kevin and Michele Hersom**  
**Ruth A. Hinnenkamp**  
**Mary Horton**  
**Kristi Husted**  
**Martha Jones Sichko**  
**Regina and Brandon Keith**  
**Wendy Knox**  
**Amy and Bryan Lake**  
**Judy Lander**  
**Jayne Larson**  
**Linda and Chuck Lee**  
**Jim Lehnen**  
**Tom and Diane Lentz**  
**Al and Jo Lineberry**

**Dan McGowan\***  
**Mary McGowan and Family**  
**Barb Metcalf**  
**Forrest Meyeraan**  
**Robert and Julie Natz**  
**Jane Nygaard**  
**Krista and Gregg Okerman**  
**Bob and Phyllis Porter**  
**Dave Powell and Marla Stack**  
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**Fred Page and Elayne Sexsmith**  
**Stacie Shaw**  
**Peggy and Neil Spofford**  
**Kathleen Sprank**  
**Dayle Stubbs**  
**Nicole Stundzia**  
**Mark and Ruth Valgemae**  
**Jake and Cathy\* Wagenaar**  
**Dr. Joe Zandlo**  
**Joe and Janice Zumbrunnen**  
**Anonymous (3)**

\*in remembrance





## RESCUING DOGS USED FOR COMMERCIAL BREEDING

Commercial breeding is the practice of farming dogs to produce puppies which are sold for large profits. Dogs at commercial facilities typically live their lives in outdoor cages, enduring harsh weather elements, very little medical care, and no opportunities to run and play or experience the love of a family.

Auctions are commonly held for breeders to sell the dogs they no longer want.

One of RAGOM's core programs is to rescue and rehabilitate dogs used for commercial breeding. When possible, we travel to the auctions in Missouri and bid on dogs. It's a delicate challenge. While we want to rescue every dog, we have limited funds to work with, and overbidding rewards commercial breeders and drives up prices for other dogs. Knowing we will leave some dogs behind is heartbreaking.

Despite our feelings about commercial breeding, we have made a strong effort to build relationships with these breeders. While we won't persuade them to close their business, we can at least rescue some of the dogs.

Sometimes, we are able to negotiate a deal for dogs they would otherwise bring to auction. The breeder avoids the time and hassle of attending, and the fees charged by the auction house.

Breeders will sometimes allow us to take the dogs they plan to "dispose of" – dogs who are too old to produce puppies or have health conditions that prevent them from breeding.

Rescuing these dogs is just the beginning. The dogs are usually very fearful and unsocialized. Many are terrified of humans. They often have health issues to be addressed, such as painful ear infections they may have suffered from for years.

These dogs deserve love. They deserve to experience good food, soft beds, the joy of running freely, and the kindness of a family who values them. So while the endeavors to rescue and rehabilitate them are challenging and costly, the work exemplifies our mission to rescue, rehabilitate, and re-home dogs in need.

“

*Many are  
terrified  
of humans.*





# 2020 FINANCIAL REPORT

RAGOM's 2020 Financials look much different than other years because we led a coalition of nine rescue groups to rescue 102 dogs from China (see page 8). RAGOM was the fiscal agent, and all funds raised for the effort were received and managed by us.



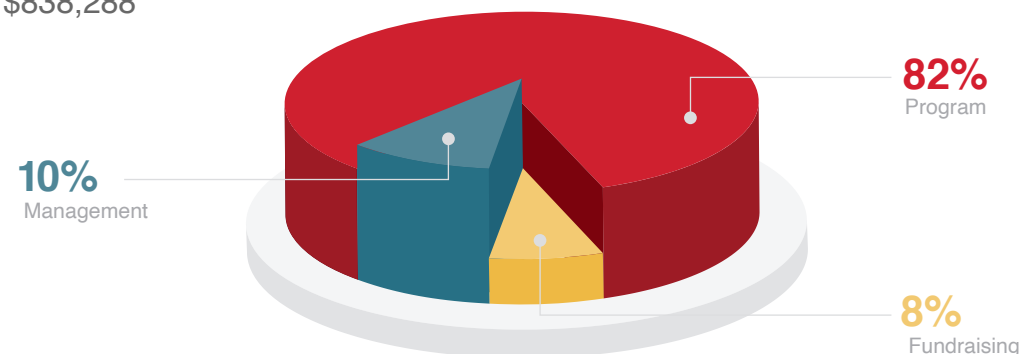
## 2020 BALANCE SHEET

TOTAL ASSETS .....	\$767,339
TOTAL LIABILITIES .....	\$21,854
NET ASSETS .....	\$745,485

## 2020 INCOME STATEMENT

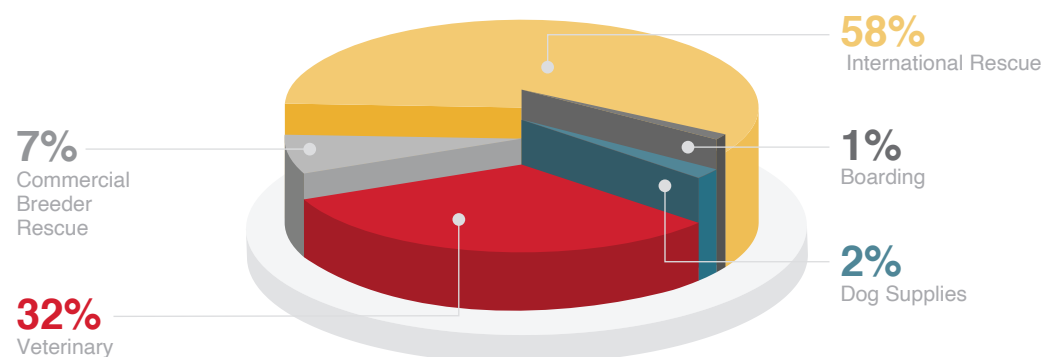
### TOTAL EXPENSE

\$838,288



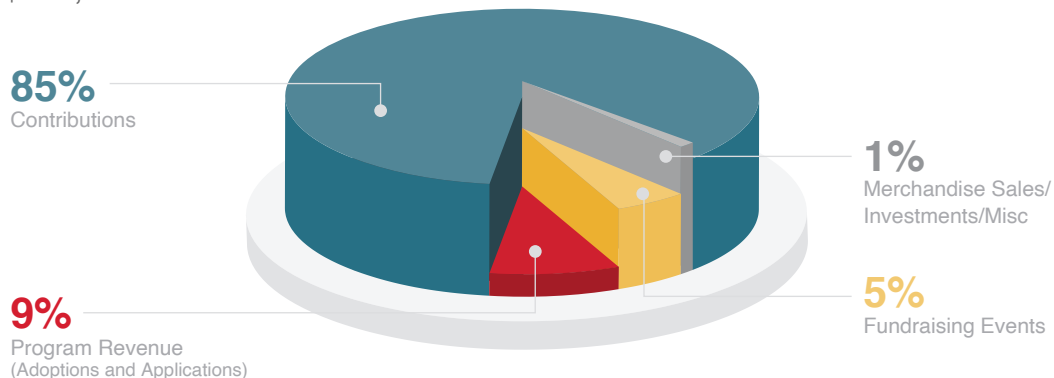
### PROGRAM EXPENSE

\$690,035



### REVENUE

\$923,914







CASTLE 20-097



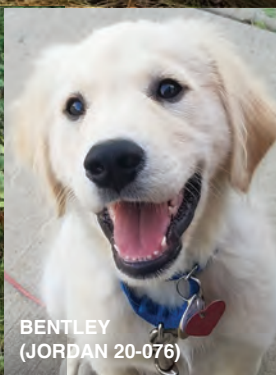
DOUDOU 20-154C



MEG 20-166



ANGUS (ALEX) 20-007



BENTLEY  
(JORDAN 20-076)



INDY (DUMBO) 20-108C



HENRY 20-167



BUDDY 20-086

Cover: Rosie 20-118C (formerly Nadia) was one of the dogs RAGOM rescued from China.

Design by Kristin Howlett

Cover photo by volunteer Bill McMichael.

Page 2 photo thanks to Leah Fontaine Photography



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