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by [Jenny Shank](#) on November 6, 2014

When the Poor and Elderly Can't Afford to Feed Their Pets, This Nonprofit Comes to the Rescue

An animal lover helps others keep their furry friends.



Sam's Hope has collected and distributed more than 44,000 pounds of pet food to the needy.

Read more: <http://nationswell.com/sams-hope-provides-food-vet-care-poor-elderly/#ixzz3lzUsX1IT>

As an owner of dogs, finches, cockatiels, guinea pigs, mice, tropical fish, a duck, a rabbit and more through the years, it's obvious that Marianne Iaquinto of Wyndmoor, Penn. has always been a pet lover.

When her beloved Shih Tzu, Sam, was dying in 2012, Iaquinto decided to let her grief fuel a vital service: Helping the poor and elderly keep their pets instead of turning them over to shelters when they can't afford them. So she started the nonprofit [Sam's Hope](#), which she runs out of her husband's restaurant, [Tony's Pizza City](#).

To date, Sam's Hope has collected and distributed more than 44,000 pounds of pet food to the needy.

In particular, laquinto is moved by the plight of impoverished elderly people who aren't able to pay for their pet's upkeep and are forced to put them in a shelter.

"The elderly, sometimes all they have in life is their pet, their only reason to get up in the morning," laquinto tells Len Lear of [Chestnut Hill Local](#). "In this case, they don't surrender their pets; they sacrifice their own health and well-being, sharing their food and forgoing medication to provide for the pet."

The Doris Day Animal Foundation has recognized Sam's Hope for its work, providing funding to the organization to start a new service: Meals for the Pets of the Homebound and Elderly. Just as their owners are given monthly meal deliveries, the pets receive food, too.

Besides distributing about 4,000 pounds of [pet food](#) and cat litter each month to both pet food pantries and directly to pet owners, Sam's Hope assists in a variety of ways — including [veterinary care](#) for pets whose owners can't afford it. Volunteers for the nonprofit once also captured and relocated a bunch of feral cats after their owner died and helped a sick pet owner find homes for eight of his cats.

laquinto plans to start two voucher programs: One giving the poor the ability to have their pets spayed and neutered, and the other, which will enable people to adopt older shelter pets who often are left behind in favor of puppies and kittens.

In 2013, laquinto left her job as the vice-president of McGruff Safe Kids' Total ID System and now volunteers 50 to 60 hours a week with Sam's Hope. "How do I do it? Well, I have found that there are things in life that are more important than money. I am happier than I have ever been before. Money doesn't buy that," she says.

Guaranteed the pet owners and their furry friends that have received assistance from Sam's Hope are happier than ever, too.