Pets are special to us all, and Rehoboth Beach has a long history as a community devoted to animal rescue, adoption facilities and doggie foster homes to save our best friends.

And here’s a pet story with not just one but two happy endings.

First, a new animal rehab and rescue facility in the Rehoboth area had a recent earlier-than-planned opening just to help shelter animals displaced by Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas.

While the rehab center, run by Brandywine Valley SPCA, was not supposed to open until January 2019, the organization moved into high gear to open in time to house the hurricane’s animal victims. The group transported and housed more than 200 shelter animals from North Carolina and adopted out many of them. The rest are safe at the facility to continue their journey toward forever homes.
But the happy ending for the hurricane victims was only the good news, following an old story of heartbreak and dashed hopes.

The tale started in 2002, when a group of animal advocates got together to raise money for a new no-kill animal shelter near Rehoboth Beach. The group called its dream facility Safe Haven, and the fundraising campaign caught the imagination of just about everyone in the area.

With collection containers in hundreds of beach-community shops and restaurants and glitzy fundraising galas, the money came rolling in. So did the volunteer energy and hopes of helping the area’s homeless and neglected animals.

By 2011, the building of the state-of-the-art facility was underway outside Rehoboth Beach, near Georgetown, Del., and in 2012, it opened its doors to the first four-legged residents.

But way too soon came the bad news. Nobody’s quite sure how it happened, but less than two years later, Safe Haven had to file for bankruptcy and abandon the facility.

After all the energy and money, not to mention the hopes and dreams people invested in the project, the result was a devastating blow to coastal animal lovers.

But this is where the Brandywine Valley SPCA, active in West Chester and Malvern, as well as in Delaware, stepped in. They rescued both the abandoned facility and the animals the community once hoped to serve.

Thanks to a $200,000 matching grant from the Longwood Foundation, along with its own extensive fundraising efforts, BVSPCA was able to purchase and reopen the abandoned shelter as a rescue and rehab facility capable of housing more than 2,000 animals each year.

Once the facility officially opens in January, it will not be an adoption center, as was the previous shelter. Instead, it will take care of the estimated 4 percent of animals that are too sick or otherwise unable to be adopted. It will rehab the animals with hopes of being able to place them in the future.

The shelter will work with cruelty survivors, disaster victims, newborn animals at risk in other shelters and those who need training to make them good candidates for adoption.

With the new facility, BVSPCA will surpass its 2018 record of caring for more than 15,000 stray, owner-surrendered and abused and neglected animals, placing at least 9,000 animals into forever homes and spaying or neutering more 10,000 animals.

The group, founded in 1929, was the first open-admission no-kill shelter in Delaware, and now in Pennsylvania. The mission is to put the “human” back in humane animal treatment and advocate on animals’ behalf.
Donations and pledges in support of the BVSPCA Rescue & Rehab Center can be made at www.bvspca.org/rescue-rehab or by mail to: Brandywine Valley SPCA, 22918 DuPont Blvd., Georgetown, Del. 19947.