

Needless Euthanasia of Adoptable Pets in Manatee County **A White Paper Discussion on possible Solutions**

Background

The history of adoptable dog and cat euthanasia in America is a sad and despicable commentary about human beings. We domesticate wild animals to become house pets, but ignore the entire scope of the issue. Overpopulation of domesticated dogs and cats plagues not only the United States but is a world wide problem. It is finally being brought to light that it is the responsibility of all animal owners and non-owners alike to create and implement reasonable solutions to the needless destruction of these innocent animals.

Some not so pleasant facts:

Each day 10,000 humans are born in the U.S. - and each day 70,000 puppies and kittens are born. As long as these birth rates exist, there will never be enough homes for all the animals. *Source: Spay USA*

Despite campaigns to persuade prospective owners to adopt shelter pets, about 7 million dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters every year; and there's no evidence that adoptions will increase enough to close the gap, experts say.

The massive number of animals euthanized in shelters "*was the secret that no one wanted to talk about or hear about,*" even as recently as the 1990s, when 17 million animals were being destroyed annually, says Aimee St. Arnaud of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

Multi Level Solutions

Now those numbers are being broadcast and a major effort to spay or neuter is accelerating; additionally alternative multi level solutions are being implemented to address not only the over population but the need to look at a long term life solution for the animals. By providing more humane oversight to those pets/animals that need humans to look at the whole picture of the animal taking the following issues into consideration:

- ❖ Physical health
- ❖ Mental health
- ❖ Behavioral issues

In other words, some animals may not be best served being adopted but may fare better in a safe rescue sanctuary with constant oversight and care.

There are over 5500 animal shelters in the US but they are relatively unconnected; in other words there is not general oversight or standards they are obligated to perform under. Some may euthanize their own overpopulation or hard to place animals for kennel space to place more 'adoptable' animals. This is a shelter by shelter decision. But what do we do here in our own backyard?

Statistics illustrate the Need for the Honor Sanctuary

Incontrovertible population statistics shed light on the viability of animal rescue in Manatee County. There are two major organizations of over 40 years history and service in this county. Bishop Animal Shelter, a privately funded shelter and the Humane Society of Manatee County, a locally community funded organization. Additionally the county owned and operated Animal Services Center in Palmetto offers adoptions, animal abuse incident investigations, and animal lost and found services. All have and continue to serve this county with commitment and services, with compassion and caring. However, all of them are located in the western area of the county where the **6 incorporated municipalities of Manatee County reside**. Their locations provide needed services to a specific service area. Sadly, that service area does not extend to the central and east county area for a shelter facility to serve the massive and burgeoning population.

These **incorporated** municipalities represent approximately 25% of the population of Manatee County. The other 75% resides in the unincorporated areas of central, east, south and north in the county. This documented service area and statistics of population both historical and projected are taken from page 19 of the *Manatee County Consolidated Plan of 2007 – 2012* as published July 2007. The Manatee County government and planning body utilized US Census Bureau data for their planning – and other data sources such as HUD, etc.

The Census Bureau has always been a widely accepted data source with small margins of error. The population projections and conclusions that the County planners have arrived at seem quite logical and accurate. The growth of Manatee County will be in the eastern portions extending north and south in the unincorporated areas.

The incorporated municipalities of Anna Marie, Bradenton, Bradenton Beach, Holmes Beach, Longboat Key and Palmetto were 30% of the population in 1990 and diminished to 27% in 2000. The estimated population of 2006 is 313,298. Simply staying with a 27% population **NOT** in the unincorporated areas brings the population of the central, east and northeast areas of the county to 228,707 people.

East Manatee County Needs a Sanctuary

Clearly if there is need for a shelter or freestanding adoption center, or a sanctuary – it is in the eastern section of the county. Currently there are no facilities in this location and this is unfortunate. This community is the perfect area for large scale adoptions to the many families that currently reside here and the projected new homes and families that will be migrating here in future years. Projected population for this area will continue for many years, the incorporated areas will have minor to no growth. The growth is predominantly families. HUD data was used also to determine housing and families and family size.

This is the critical information for which the following programs and projects are based on.

Per the ASPCA website:

http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pro_so_fastfacts

- Twenty-five percent of dogs who enter local shelters are purebred. (Source: NCPPSP).
- Only 10 percent of the animals received by shelters have been spayed or neutered.
- About 75% of owned pets are neutered.
- The majority of pets are obtained from acquaintances and family members.
- About 15 to 20% of dogs are purchased from breeders, **and 10 to 20% of cats and dogs are adopted from shelters and rescues.** (Source: Ralston Purina and NCPPSP)
- More than 20 percent of people who leave dogs in shelters adopted them from a shelter. (Source: NCPPSP)
- Five out of ten dogs in shelters and seven out of ten cats in shelters are destroyed simply because there is no one to adopt them.

575 animals are euthanized hourly in this country because there are not enough homes for them.

This is astounding information and again, clearly articulates that large scale adoption could save many animals from needless euthanasia. **Over 400+ adoptable animals are being euthanized in Manatee County every month due to not enough adoptions happening – and of course, the greater issue...spaying and neutering of all animals - that is desperately necessary.** Every animal must be spayed and neutered *before* adoption. Various spay / neuter voucher programs need to be widely implemented across the county for pet owners in a free or low cost option.

Various educational advertising campaigns to encourage adoptions and spaying/neutering along with responsible and caring/compassionate pet ownership need to be developed and shared through all types of media outlets and education programs.

What a Sanctuary Offers

Building a sanctuary in the east county would offer many pet owners the peace of mind for their beloved animals should the animals survive them. Many of these animals may be adoptable and should be placed in forever homes as appropriate. By the same token, there will be animals that cannot be adopted for a host of reasons, and they are deserving of a caring and safe home also. The Honor Sanctuary will offer such a haven.

Main Focus of the Honor Sanctuary

- ❖ Large scale saving of animals from euthanasia for local adoptions
- ❖ High volume spay and neutering in partnership and collaboration with other organizations offering similar services
- ❖ Widespread education programs

Over population will only stop when:

- Large scale spay and neutering is an accepted norm of pet ownership and made available to all socio economic levels at reduced rates.
- Adoptable animals are offered in 'destination' venues and events along with education and responsible ownership.

Adopting is an immediate small fix for a huge problem. Spaying and neutering is the key. Beyond these issues are a haven and sanctuary for those animals who need to be taken in and cared for.

Much like a hospital provides specific services for the surrounding areas it serves, so should the sanctuary. While a haven for some, it is also a place of knowledge. A place that provides a multitude of solutions for pet owners from care and feeding to behavior issues and more.

The Honor Sanctuary will be a local fixture for adoptions. It will become an important part of the community and will offer best practice operations and over population solutions.

"The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step."

We need you to help us. We will build a sanctuary in the east county with help from 'golden angel donors' – people who donate land, facilities, services and money to get this shelter off the ground. The time is now.

The 501c3 incorporation is underway along with the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. The Steering Committee is adding new people and the Board of Directors is to be named soon.

There is hope that an interim location can be used until we have a state of the art facility that provides a 'destination' event for adopting. Education will be a strong component and animals being placed in their new families will be celebrated. For those animals that cannot be placed, for whatever reasons, we plan to offer a safe environment for them to live out their lives with us where appropriate. Spaying and neutering is the key to stopping animal euthanasia and overpopulation.

Our Mission statement is simple:

Our Mission is to assure compassionate and humane treatment of all animals in our community; to help animals and owners in need of our assistance; to speak for animals with love, compassion and justice.

Our Vision clear:

- We are founded on the belief that no animal should have to go hungry, be homeless or live in fear or pain.
- The Sanctuary believes that all animals deserve to be treated with dignity, kindness, respect and provided with care that increases their opportunity for a safe and healthy life.
- Our Mission is to offer care and a peaceful living environment for abused, physically handicapped, aged or homeless animals; and to always find and encourage a forever home for all animals that come to us.
- We believe in community collaboration in the true spirit of saving as many healthy adoptable animals as possible.

We know that euthanasia ends when spayed/neutered animals are not reproducing - a major tenet of all shelters and animal rescue. Needed medical care, vaccines, micro chipping, tattooing and spaying/neutering will be necessary for every animal. We plan on partnering with the veterinarians in our communities to ensure the stray and dropped off animals meet appropriate criteria and that we are always in partnership with those who will care for these same animals once they leave us. It is our plan to set up referral programs for new adoptees to be seen by our veterinarian network throughout the county.

This is a long and arduous plan, fraught with challenges. It starts now with this first step to publicly ask **you** to help **us**.

We need:

- business people
- planners
- financial professionals
- educators
- construction experts

- architects
- fundraisers
- volunteers
- graphic art work
- website creation
- temporary facilities until the *state of the art* facility is completed in the east county area
- land
- donations of any denomination
- Your support.

If these animals are to be saved, and we know the existing shelters and animal rescue groups are doing the best they can...then this overpopulation must be contained through a well thought out Adoption process and a high volume Spay/Neuter program. We will support and collaborate with all who choose to step up and help the animals in our community. It is time for new plans and people to help out. Our colleagues in animal rescue have done and continue to do excellent programs with much success. We hope to reinforce high standards and serve not only the Manatee area but Sarasota also.

The Honor Sanctuary will be open to all who are in need of our help. The only way to help is to be a very efficient business with sound decisions and constant feedback and communication with the communities we serve.

The Honor Sanctuary will honor and care for the animals that come to us; we will honor and respect all who are in need with their animal and help as we can; we will do the right and sensible thing; we will find a way when there is not a way.

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June Dudley

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Steering Committee for The Honor Sanctuary