



HSSC

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF SARASOTA COUNTY

FUR THE RECORD

2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER



Smiley,
HSSC Alum

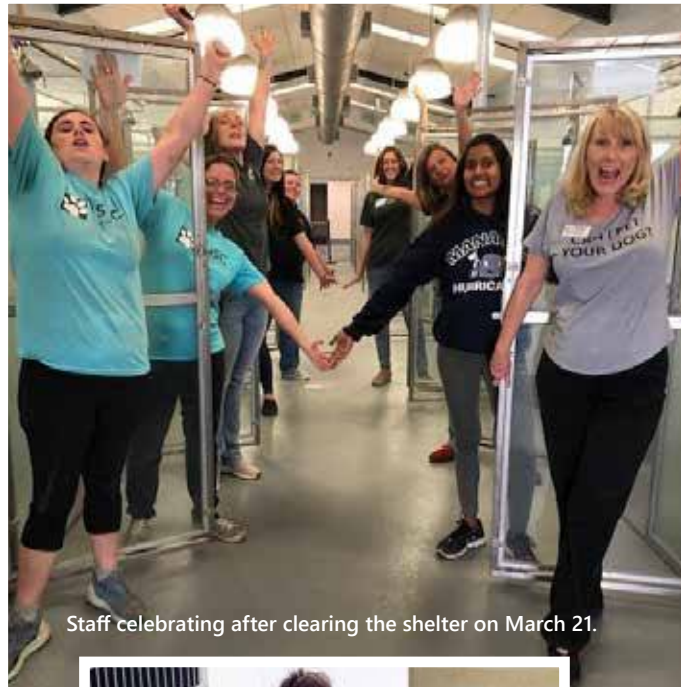
Sheltering in Place: How HSSC Responded to COVID-19

Just a few months ago, 2020 was shaping up to be HSSC's best year ever. We were regularly having double-digit adoption days. The Animal Clinic was thriving. Construction on our shelter renovation and expansion project was progressing rapidly. Our phone was ringing off the hook with requests for Pet Therapy visits. We were readying our Collars & Scholars Program for launch at a second Sarasota elementary school. We were thrilled about having raised more than ever before at our revamped Paws on the Catwalk Luncheon. Volunteer applications and K-9 Obedience Course registrations were arriving steadily. People were even starting to inquire about Fur Fun Summer Camp.

Then COVID-19 changed everything.

Our immediate, number-one priority was keeping our animals safe and getting them into permanent or foster homes as soon as possible. Even in the best shelter environments (and we take great pains to make our shelter a great environment for our animals), it is still a shelter. It is stressful and potentially traumatic for animals. The longer animals stay with us, the more likely they will develop behavior issues or become withdrawn. That's why we work so hard to get them adopted into loving homes. By mid-March, when it became increasingly likely we would have to close to the public, we worked that much harder to find homes for our animals. We would not condemn them to an indefinite stay. Ultimately, it took five whirlwind days of activity and promotion, but we did it: 48 animals were adopted into permanent homes and 52 more were placed in foster care. **We cleared the shelter!** Our staff, exhausted and ecstatic, stood inside the completely empty dog wing and posed for a photo.

That week showcased what a team can do when it pulls together, and what a community can make possible. We were floored by the generosity of you—our community. By the unflinching way you stepped up to foster. By the way you took a chance on animals that needed one desperately. By your patience and cooperation. By your willingness to give. **You inspired us to keep going.**



Staff celebrating after clearing the shelter on March 21.



Staffer Morgan with adoptable dog Nova.



Clinic Front Office Manager, Kassie, safely handling a patient.

And keep going we did.

We could not stay empty forever. Animal homelessness does not stop just because there is a pandemic. We wanted to do everything we could to keep caring for animals who needed us and to avoid staff layoffs. We called our approach *Humanely Possible*, as in:

“We know that we cannot do everything, but we are doing everything Humanely Possible.”

Now we are over the hump of the curve, and the light at the end of the tunnel is growing brighter. Just like everyone, we are braced for the aftershocks, including a potential uptick in animal surrenders, but we are confident that HSSC will be okay. We have survived a few storms (literal and figurative) in our 68-year history, and this one, though unprecedented, will be survived too.

As we get back up to full speed, we want to thank our community. Despite the uncertainty of the past few months, your faith in us and your support never wavered. When we were unsure if people would adopt, you adopted. When we were unsure if people would foster, you fostered. When we were absolutely sure no one would donate, you donated. We are so fortunate to be part of a community that loves animals and believes in our mission.

Thank you for everything you make possible!



**CHRISTEN BENSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Christen with Duke, an HSSC Alum

A TIME LIKE NO OTHER

- Even though the shelter was closed to the public, we still did adoptions by appointment. In just one month, we had **66 adoptions**.
- We transferred in animals from county facilities in need.
- We were floored by the outpouring of foster support. We received **over 170 foster applications**. Over 90 animals were able to ride out the pandemic in a home environment, and we bolstered the ranks of our foster program for the long term.
- Our Animal Clinic never closed. We limited appointments to only the most necessary services. Then we went curbside, asking clients to remain in their vehicles while their pet was examined in the facility. Through it all, we saw over **1,000 appointments** and made sure no pet went without the care it needed.
- With more people under economic strain, we knew we could not cancel our weekly pet food pantry for people struggling to feed their pets. So we turned it into a **grab-and-go station** to eliminate person-to-person contact, and we added supplies like beds and bowls.
- Staff used the extra time to give lots of **attention and enrichment** to our in-house animals, and to catch up on projects. They even hosted a 15-second [socially distant] dance party to relieve a little stress. {See the video on our Facebook page!}
- **Construction never stopped** on our shelter renovation and expansion project. In fact, it ramped up, as you will read about on the next few pages.
- We managed to stay **fiscally strong**—despite a drastic reduction in our revenue due to reduced and canceled services—thanks to savvy management by our Board and Executive Director and through the generous support of our donors.

Digging In: Construction on Campus

PROJECT TIMELINE

- **March 2019:** Beginning of Preconstruction Phase (upgrades to existing dog building)
- **January 2020:** Beginning of Phase 1 (construction of fourth dog pod; addition of a liner building to support kennel operations; renovation and expansion of in-house clinic)
- **April 2020:** Beginning of Phase 2 (demolition of existing adoption center and education center; construction of new multipurpose center for adoptions, cat housing, animal receiving, administration, education, and training)
- **June 2021:** Project Completed

The gears of the world seem to have ground to a halt due to the pandemic, but not at HSSC. If you listen carefully amid the barks and yips of our shelter residents, you can hear drilling, digging, and demolishing. Those are the sweet sounds of progress being made by our contractors, who are hard at work on the future of HSSC.

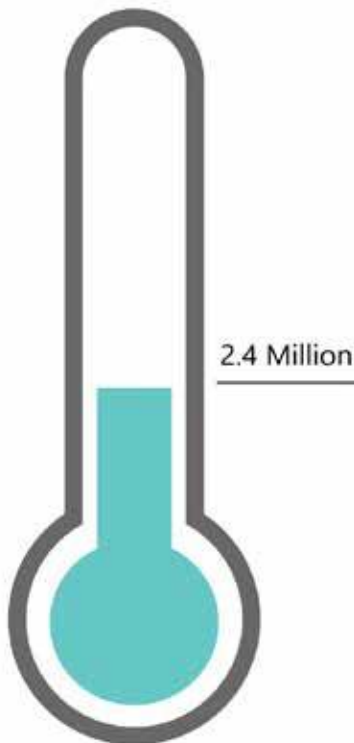
This multi-year, multi-million-dollar project is the largest undertaking in HSSC's history. Our campus is transforming right before our eyes. We are well into Phase 1 and just starting Phase 2. The first shoots are poking out in the new memorial garden between Pod 1 and 2. Further down, the previously unused space between Pod 2 and 3 is now subdivided into four turfed play yards for heartworm positive dogs, complete with an all-weather awning.

We still have a long way to go before the project is finished, but we are heartened by the progress and the dedication of our team. To date, we have raised \$2.4M of the \$8.5M needed.

Thank you to the generous donors who have led the way.

If you would like to leave a lasting impact on HSSC, please consider making a capital campaign gift. All gifts of \$1,000 or more are eligible for naming opportunities. You can find all naming opportunities, plus additional renderings and construction updates, at www.hssc.org/give/capital-campaign.

\$8.5 Million





Farewell to the Adoption Center

One positive side effect of COVID-19 was the forced closure dovetailed with our planned timeline to move the contents of our Adoption Center—administrative offices, animal receiving, retail, and cats—to their temporary homes around campus. Makeshift walls were erected in the Education Center to create cat housing spaces and a new adoptions area. Trailers were brought in to create additional office space. Six decades' worth of accumulated stuff was given the “Marie Kondo” treatment and joyfully purged. In the process, we discovered treasures like long-lost photos and funky wallpaper hiding behind shelving.

The endless trips carting boxes between buildings gave us time to reflect on what the Adoption Center had meant to us and the community over the past 70 years. How many thousands of animals had been sheltered there? How many happy families had posed for their first photo with their new pet on the benches in the lobby? How many special moments had taken place inside?

Then, on April 29, staff gathered to watch the demolition begin. It was a bittersweet moment, and there were tears alongside the cheers. Eventually the Education Center turned Adoption Center will be demolished as well. In their place will rise a comprehensive new building for adoptions, administration, retail, training, events, animal receiving, and—of course—cats. We are ushering in a new era for HSSC operations. But we will never forget our roots and what has driven us to success since 1952: the belief that every animal deserves safe shelter and the chance for a loving home. Farewell, Adoption Center. Thank you for your service!

Note: HSSC is not planning to close during construction (except for mandatory COVID-19 closures). We will still be taking in animals, doing adoptions, and holding our many programs and services on campus. Please visit us during normal adoption hours, Tuesday–Friday 10am–6pm and Saturday 10am–4pm.



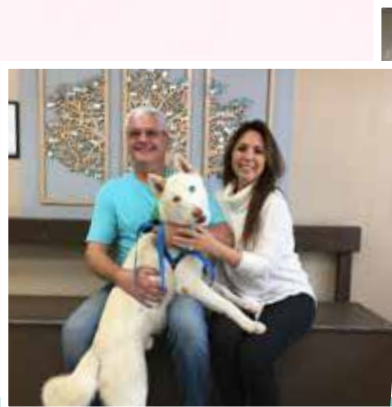
Old Adoption Center Before Demolition



Partially Demolished Adoption Center

What You Made Possible in 2019

Is it just us or does 2019 already feel like a lifetime ago? Even though 2020 has pulled focus, we would be remiss not to recap what **YOU**—our donors, adopters, volunteers, and clients—made possible in 2019.



- 1,636 adoptions (431 cats and 1,205 dogs)
- 1,256 animals transferred in from high-kill shelters in Florida
- 74 cases of heartworm disease treated
- 28 days, on average, that an animal spent at HSSC before adoption
- 3,276 hours of enrichment provided to shelter animals by staff and volunteers
- 5,655lbs of pet food distributed to the public through our weekly food bank
- 112 happy Fur Fun Summer Campers, including 13 scholarship students
- 24 children participated in the inaugural Collars & Scholars Program
- 40 Teen Club members learned the value of volunteering
- 13,865 appointments held at our affordable Animal Clinic
- 23,000 hours worked by our 418 active volunteers
- 93 animals adopted at 52 community and special events
- 46 animals from Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services received complimentary medical care at our Animal Clinic
- 12,475lbs of cat and dog food and 11,214lbs of litter bagged and distributed to the pets of Meals on Wheels of Sarasota's clients
- 95 Pet Therapy Teams certified through our in-house training programs
- 391 animals fostered by 124 foster volunteers
- 194 K-9 Obedience Course graduates



2019 Annual Giving

January 1, 2019–December 31, 2019

LUMINARY (\$50,000+)

Raymond & Nancy Swart
Sipperley Family Trust

HERO (\$10,000–\$24,999)

ASPCA
Bob & Lynne Huff
Community Foundation of Sarasota County:
Bernard & Ilona Stein Fund
Robert Parker Fund
Thelma B. Merker Charitable Fund
Ernest A. & Kristin E. Brown
Fidelity Charitable:
Bain Family Foundation
Stephen Kaufmann Gift Fund
Gary C. Butler Family Foundation
Glen & Jackie Tilton
Gulf Coast Community Foundation:
Andrew & Audrey Belomyzy Charitable Trust Fund
Hank & Melinda Foster
Robert A. Buzzelli Charitable Foundation
Samowitz Foundation

VISIONARY (\$25,000+)

ADP Foundation
Community Foundation of Sarasota County:
Helen C. Schwieder Fund
Frank J & Lenora Dupuis Foundation
Teresa D. Jones

GUARDIAN (\$5,000–\$9,999)

Amicus Foundation
Arthur S. Karp Family Foundation
Community Foundation of Sarasota County:
Collinsworth Family Foundation
David & Candice Miller
Eldridge Body Shop
Friends of David-Mian Foundation
Gretchen L. Rimmer
J. E. Charlotte Construction Corp.
Jeannine G. McGee
Joyce A. Serrano
Nancy E. DeLong & David Jemison
Old Venice Pub
Peggy C. Allen & Steven C. Dixon
Swart Family Foundation
Synovus

To learn more about HSSC's Partner Program and other ways to make a gift, please visit www.hssc.org/give/donate.

Thank you for your support!

Charitable Giving in 2020

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress includes provisions for charitable giving, to the mutual benefit of taxpayers and nonprofits.

Key Points:

- A new \$300 above-the-line deduction for charitable contributions. This is available to all taxpayers, not just those who itemize deductions. So keep those tax letters you receive after donating in 2020 because you'll be able to deduct up to \$300 on your 2020 income taxes.
- Individuals who itemize previously were only able to contribute up to 60% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) to qualified nonprofits. That cap has been eliminated for 2020, meaning donors can contribute 100% of their AGI.
- Likewise, the charitable giving limit for corporations has been increased from 10% to 25% of taxable income for 2020.

Be sure to touch base with your wealth and tax professionals on the specifics of how these legislative changes will affect you so you can meet your financial objectives and maximize the impact of your charitable giving. Please reach out to **Christen Benson** (cbenson@hssc.org / 941.955.4131 x102) or **Autumn Steiner** (asteiner@hssc.org / 941.955.4131 x121) to learn more about how your contributions are used to fulfill HSSC's lifesaving mission.

Thank you to our Board of Directors!

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Happy Tails



When Sparks Fly

"I have to say, Smudge is doing wonderfully! He and my other rescue, Cuja, bonded almost immediately. Smudge is out of his shell and now likes to chase squirrels. Squeaky toys do not bother him, and he loves coming back from a walk to get a treat! He also likes sneaking socks into his bed while I am doing laundry. He is a wonderful guard dog, a very sweet dog, and smart boy as well! So happy I adopted him!"

Cuddle Bugs

"Logan is amazing. So loving and crazy fun to play with. He has been the perfect emotional support kitty for my daughter, who was in a bad car accident and is bed bound for a couple of months. We just adore him!"



CONTACT US