

FALL 2022



HSSC
THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF SARASOTA COUNTY



Achi, Future HSSC Alum

FUR THE RECORD

THE EXCLUSIVE NEWSLETTER OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Prioritizing People to Save Lives

LET'S GIVE A BIG "WOO HOO" TO OURSELVES

The Humane Society of Sarasota County (HSSC) is a successful *animal* organization because of the *people* who support our mission: the staff, board members, volunteers, fosters, adopters, advocates, and donors. We are in the business of saving animals and building more humane communities, but people who love animals are the heart of our work.

As nonprofits across the country are struggling to fulfill their mission in the face of unprecedented staffing shortages, HSSC is steadfastly focusing on creating a workplace culture that inspires individual best efforts while giving staff the work-life balance that modern families need.

Creating a positive workplace culture is an effort that successful organizations work at constantly, and HSSC's three-year strategic plan positions culture as one of our four main focus areas.

Since the beginning of 2022, we've made great strides:

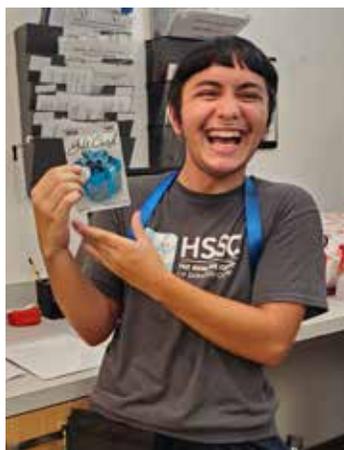
- We voluntarily adopted the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**, even though we are slightly below the 50-employee federal threshold, thereby giving our team job security for qualifying events, like maternity leave.
- We added **more paid time off** so our staff are able to recharge from our emotionally and physically demanding work. All staff start with 120 hours of PTO each year. After completing their second year of employment, that increases to 160 hours. We also give staff 10 paid holidays a year and offer 5 days of COVID sick pay annually. We offer an additional 3 days of bereavement leave and paid time off for voting and jury duty.
- One of the biggest benefits we offer is a **100%-employer-paid** medical plan for employee coverage, and 3 other affordable plan options. We also offer reasonably priced options for dental, vision, short-term and long-term disability, and life insurance.
- We offer a 401(k) and are slated to begin matching contributions next year.
- Perhaps our best effort, however, is the newly formed **Woo Hoo Crew**, which is a self-appointed team of staff members who devise ways to build a more cohesive, inclusive team across the organization. Sixteen members of our team participate on this committee, reminding me of something comedian Amy Poehler once said, "Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life."

That's what HSSC is about fundamentally. We are on a mission to change people's lives through a connection with animals. And it's the people who make those connections happen.

Thank you for your support!



Anna Gonce
Executive Director



EMPLOYEE & VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

We awarded our first-ever Employee of the Month in July to Tony Opio (*pictured*), one of our amazing Animal Care & Enrichment Specialists. The award was based on peer nominations. We also recognized long-time volunteer Vickie Grosvenor as our Volunteer of the Month. Their names were added to a new section of our "Humane at Heart" wall, along with a plaque recognizing our employees with 5 or more years of service.

Getting Our Priorities Straight

BEING A PREMIER NO-KILL SHELTER REQUIRES CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND RE-PRIORITIZATION.

This year has been filled with operational changes that are designed to save more animals and help more people.

- Previously, all strays found in Sarasota County automatically went to Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services (SCAS). Now, provided we have the space, SCAS allows us to keep these animals for their hold period and adopt them out if no owner comes forward. See strays at hssc.org/pet-resource-hub/lost-found-pets
- We prioritize "rehome" applications from owners in Sarasota and Manatee Counties, and we accept walk-ins when there are dire circumstances (the death of the owner, for example). And while we no longer charge a surrender fee, donations are always welcome.
- We have partnered with Feline Friends of Southwest Florida to provide trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) services. We have helped **more than 150 cats** so far this year, and we hope to keep expanding this program.
- We launched a **Working Cat Adoption** program to provide alternatives for cats that may not do well as indoor-only cats. This option is reserved for cats that are healthy and capable of surviving in a colony or an indoor/outdoor lifestyle.
- We used to not adopt cats with **feline leukemia virus (FeLV)** and **feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)**. Now we will place them in suitable homes where they can expect to have good quality of life.
- We have expanded our **canine behavior and training program** and are focusing on at-risk dogs from high-volume shelters in Florida. On a typical day, more than half our shelter dogs are "bully breeds." Through daily playgroups, dedicated kennel enrichment, structured twice-daily walks, and individualized training programs, we are helping these dogs get the fair chances they deserve.
- Florida is one of the lowest-ranking states in the nation for animal save rates. To do our part, we are prioritizing transports from local and in-state shelters. However, we still consider it important to take transfers from out-of-state to support disaster relief efforts or cruelty cases.
- We will always take back an animal previously adopted from HSSC, regardless of the reason for return. This is part of the lifelong commitment we make to every animal.
- Historically, we found homes for about twice as many dogs as cats each year. Our numbers started to equalize last year, and now cat adoptions are outpacing dogs. This shift is due to our expanded facilities (we can house more cats now) and increased kitten intakes. Kudos to our fosters for helping us care for all those kittens.
- Mislabeling an animal's breed can hurt their chances of adoption, and since determining an animal's exact breed is best left to DNA testing, we have started using generic terms like "mixed breed." We feel this is the most accurate description and helps the animal be adopted for who they are, not who they might be.
- We consider animals "long-stay" after they've been adoptable for 30 days. To make sure no pet gets overlooked, we started a **Length of Stay Task Force** to encourage staff and volunteers to advocate for a long-stay cat or dog. The result has been more animals going on outings and staycations, and staff from all departments (not just Animal Care) spending time with shelter animals and feeling closer to the mission.



Max (above)
and Bridget (below) were our
first Working Cat adoptions



ANIMAL CLINIC PIVOTS TO PREVENTION

Due to a national shortage of veterinarians and vet techs, our public Animal Clinic of HSSC has shifted to a preventative care focus. Our ultimate goal is to keep pets safe, disease-free, and out of shelters. Preventative services include annual core vaccines, microchipping, flea, tick, and heartworm prevention, dentistry, and spay/neuter. We offer a range of technician-only appointments, too, including cold laser therapy, nail trims, teeth brushing, and wellness education. We have also updated our hours to stay open later during the week. One thing that has not changed, though, is our affordable prices. **For complete details, visit hsscclinic.org or call 941.364.3605.**

MISSION WORK

It Takes a Village to Save a State

THE EMAIL BEGINS WITH A THANK YOU TO HSSC FOR RESCUING 11 DOGS ON TUESDAY. NOW IT'S FRIDAY, AND THEY HAVE ANOTHER REQUEST...

The exchange between Highlands County Animal Services (HCAS), located in Sebring, Florida, and HSSC's Shelter Manager, Emory Groeneveld, is one of gratitude, familiarity, and "let me see what we can do."

HSSC *had* just taken in 11 dogs from HCAS, a move that we hoped would give them some breathing room. Instead, HCAS got in 8 dogs that day, 7 the next, and more kept coming. Five dogs had come from the same household, given to HCAS because the owner was hospitalized and the relatives were overwhelmed. And, the email continues, someone dumped a momma dog and her (3) 6-month-old puppies. "For the sake of the dogs, I have to ask...if you end up with any open kennels, will you please let me know?" Emory's response: "We will have open kennels tomorrow, if that's not too short notice!" The reply: "OMG!!! You are wonderful!"

With a click of the send button, the gears of lifesaving started turning at HCAS and HSSC: transport volunteers were lined up, fundraising pleas went out, and kennels were prepared. Less than 24 hours later, 9 dogs—including mom and puppies and the 5 dogs from the same household—were safely at HSSC (*photos at right*). They have all since been adopted into loving homes.

This is how lifesaving works. Much like a fire-fighting bucket brigade, it's a process of collaboration and constant communication. In their follow-up email, HCAS called the rescue "a true miracle for our dogs," and commented, "**It was wonderful to see a village work together quickly to save 9 lives**, and you set it all in motion. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for pulling these dogs and helping HCAS."

A cynical person might read this as a drop in the metaphorical bucket. *Only* 9 dogs when nearly 318,000 cats and dogs entered Florida shelters last year, and more than 22,000 never left. However, in the no-kill movement, lifesaving is measured in noses, in individual lives saved, and for that reason, 9 dogs *is* something to celebrate.

Florida has the dubious honor of being the fourth-worst state in the nation for animals leaving shelters alive, according to data compiled by Best Friends Animal Society. While that is decidedly *not* the case at HSSC (our organizational save rate is 98.4%), our state is populous, vast, and resources and attitudes vary drastically from county to county. Even affluent Sarasota County narrowly missed the 90% save rate threshold last year: a mere 49 animals away from being a true no-kill county.

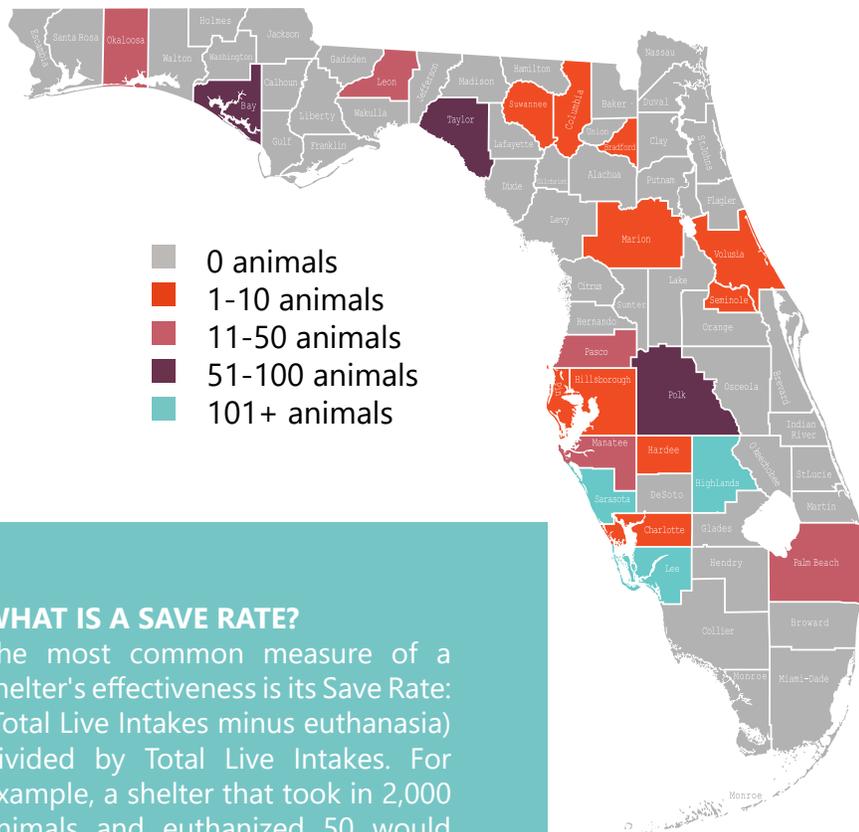
That's why HSSC's intake strategy focuses first on Sarasota County. We receive animals three ways: transferred from other shelters, surrendered by their owners, and as strays. When looking to bring animals into our facility, our first call is always to Sarasota County Sheriff's Office Animal Services, colloquially called SCAS. As the county-funded law-enforcement arm, SCAS handles animal cruelty cases, seizures, and strays. They have a hard-working staff and adopt animals directly, but they do not have a dedicated medical team and cannot care for the more challenging/long-term cases. That's where HSSC comes in. We take their medical cases, their long-term animals, their litters of puppies and kittens. And we are always ready to assist when they have large-scale seizures or an unprecedented influx.

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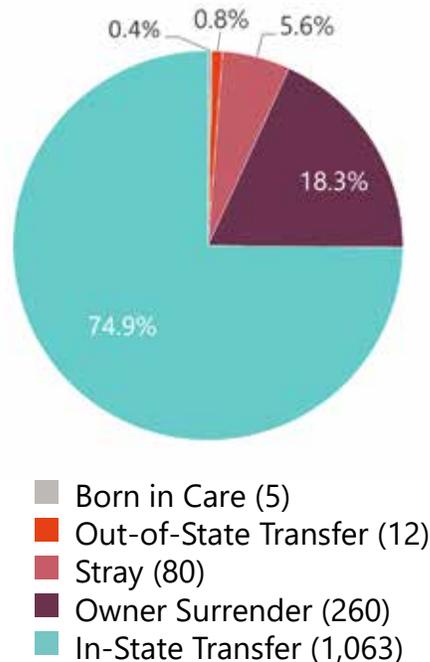


Once we know we have taken care of home, we move outward. Oftentimes, shelters in need contact us directly, as in the HCAS story. We field inquiries from counties as close as Charlotte and as far away as Okaloosa, and we help whenever and wherever we can. As the graphics below demonstrate, HSSC has brought in 1,420 animals from 1/1/2022 to 8/19/2022. Of those, all but 12 were from Florida, and 418 were from Sarasota County alone.

Animals Transferred to HSSC (By County)



HSSC Intakes YTD By Type (1/1/22-8/19/22)



WHAT IS A SAVE RATE?

The most common measure of a shelter's effectiveness is its Save Rate: (Total Live Intakes minus euthanasia) divided by Total Live Intakes. For example, a shelter that took in 2,000 animals and euthanized 50 would have a save rate of $(2000-50)/2000 = 1950/2000 = 97.5\%$ Save Rate.

A shelter must achieve a 90% save rate to be considered no-kill. The 90% benchmark is well-established within the animal welfare community and reflects the reality that not every animal can be saved (some have irreparable medical or behavioral issues that compromise their quality of life), but that less than 10% of all cats and dogs entering a shelter fall into that category.

HSSC has been a no-kill shelter since 2009, and we report data to various national databases and organizations, including Shelter Animals Count and Best Friends Animal Society.

Our localized approach does not mean we will not help other states (especially other high-priority states like Texas, Alabama, and Georgia). We pitch in during disaster-relief efforts and for large-scale rescues, like the 4,000 beagles seized from a Virginia testing laboratory. We just want to make sure we are doing everything we can to move the needle in Florida.

Ultimately, the best way to save lives is to keep animals from entering shelters in the first place. That's why affordable spay/neuter services, microchipping, preventative medical care, Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR) programs, and owner education are all priorities for HSSC. We are also part of the Florida Leaders in Lifesaving Initiative.

HSSC's goal is to save 2,700 animals this year, and we are well on our way. By extension, we also want Sarasota County to achieve a 90% save rate, and we want to see Florida move up in the rankings. Life saved by life saved, we are getting there.

LEARN MORE

- Best Friends No-Kill 2025: bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025
- Florida Leaders in Lifesaving: floridaleadersinlifesaving.org
- Shelter Animals Count: shelteranimalscount.org

VOLUNTEERS

Kitten Fostering is 'Heart' Work

KITTEN FOSTERING IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART. There will be sleepless nights and frustrating moments. There may be illness and loss. But there will always be joy. And it's the joy that fills Caryn Wilbraham's heart with happiness and keeps her signing up for another litter. Caryn has fostered more than 17 kittens over the past year, all under the age of 4 weeks.

Fostering may not have been on her mind when she joined the HSSC Board of Directors, but she has always been an energetic pet parent. Retired and eager to help, she rose to the challenge when we asked if she would consider fostering.

Her first foster was Caymus, a 10-day-old kitten who came to HSSC all alone. "We had just lost our eldest cat, Milly, and Caymus melted our hearts," Caryn says. Somewhat predictably, Caryn and her husband, Ian, "foster failed," our term of endearment for people who adopt their fosters. Caymus has not only filled a gap in their family, he also helps with the fostering: "He's our milk taster, and he loves to listen outside the door where the foster kittens in our home reside...purring and kneading his paws."

Caryn believes Caymus's affectionate nature is due to the bond they formed when he was bottle-fed, and she continues that approach with all her fosters. "Loving them and caring for them is the greatest gift I can provide to help them develop into healthy, happy cats. I have learned the importance of talking to them and touching them to show I care. I truly love them all."

Caryn and Ian have had their share of challenging cases. Sailor had been attacked by a dog when she was only a few days old. Her abdomen was full of sutures, so they had to wrap her in a crochet blanket like a burrito to protect her wound. After a few weeks in their loving care, Sailor was healthy enough to go on outings. Caryn fashioned a carrier, complete with a travel-friendly litter box in a plastic tub, and brought her to the HSSC holiday party, where Sailor's eventual adopter met and fell in love with her.

Then there were the panleukopenia kittens. Roxie, Gus, and Penny all showed signs of this highly contagious illness, but Gus was the only one to test positive. Caryn and Ian agreed to keep fostering all three because bringing them back to HSSC posed a grave risk to the rest of the shelter population. It was stressful and required constant vigilance and sanitation, but all three survived and have been adopted.

Even the act of returning them to the shelter once they're old enough to be spayed/neutered and adopted can be emotionally gutting. It's no small thing to open your lives to these tiny creatures, and we are so grateful to volunteers like Caryn and Ian who agree to this "heart" work time and time again. "When I look into the eyes of the sweet little kittens I am fortunate enough to foster, I realize how proud I am to be part of HSSC. Fostering is the most rewarding thing that I can possibly do."



Caryn & Caymus

TEEN VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE GRADE

Our teen volunteers work alongside staff, performing all the daily activities that keep our shelter running. We are so impressed with all of them. However, one young lady has really impressed us with her tenacity. Ashlyn takes on responsibilities with a skillfulness that rivals tenured staff. She sends notes and videos documenting her hours spent reinforcing positive behavior with our shy or anxious dogs, and she never hesitates to show new volunteers the ropes. As a result, staff unanimously voted to make Ashlyn a full-fledged Canine Companion—a volunteer role typically reserved for adults. Way to go, Ashlyn, and all our tremendous teens. **Teens can sign up to volunteer at hssc.org/volunteer**

2022–2023 Special Events Preview

VETS PETS & JETS 5K & FUN RUN AT SRQ

Saturday, November 12, 2022 – Sarasota Bradenton International Airport (SRQ)

This one-time-only event is sure to add some spring to your step. Go *inside* the gates of Sarasota Bradenton International Airport (SRQ) for a competitive 5K and a 1-mile fun run/walk like no other. The course will be safely nestled along an active runway on the north airfield of SRQ. We'll also have food, music, vendors, activities, and prizes, so bring the entire family—even the four-legged members. And since it coincides with Veterans Day weekend, we'll be doing a special salute to our military service members.

PAWS ON THE RED CARPET

Friday, April 14, 2023 – Art Ovation Hotel

Everyone LOVES Paws. For nearly two decades, Paws has set the standard for fundraising luncheons. Combining high-energy entertainment, exclusive shopping, fabulous raffle prizes, certified Hot Guys, bundles of adoptable animals, and signature cocktails, Paws is *the* spring event. In years past, the main attraction has been a fashion show, an artwalk, and a dance party. For the 2023 edition, we're adding a dose of Hollywood movie magic. Think red carpets, awards, and all-out glamour.

For complete details, visit hssc.org/get-involved/events

Thank You!

A TREMENDOUS ROUND OF A-PAWS FOR OUR 2021-2022 PARTNERS & SPONSORS

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- Mercedes Scientific
- Observer Media Group
- Sarasota Scene Magazine
- Siesta Key Book Club
- Synovus
- Eldridge Body Shop
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- Gulf Coast Community Foundation
- Healthy Paws Foundation
- James & Ellen White Family Foundation
- James & Brenda Hoyt Foundation
- Justice & Loveday Family Foundation



2022–2023 PARTNER & SPONSOR OPPORTUNITIES

Visit hssc.org/give/partner-program for details

*Total gifts of \$5,000+ 8/1/21-7/31/22

Stella's Happy Tail

"We adopted Estelle, now known as Stella, in March. We took her home, and she hid in the bedroom for 2.5 months. One day we were discussing whether to adopt a kitten, thinking maybe that would help Stella come out of her shell. Well, Stella walked out of the bedroom and into the living room and has completely changed into a happy, loving, outgoing kitty. I think she heard us talking about getting a second cat and wanted to be the only cat in the house! She loves playing with her toys and knocking everything off all the coffee tables. She's the queen of the house!" —Stella's adopter



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Queen Stella surveys her kingdom



Sible,
HSSC Alum

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE

Planned giving is an incredibly powerful act of generosity. These "ultimate gifts" are transformed into immediate care, capital improvements, and future programming.

Please join us for a Planned Giving Info Session on **Wednesday, November 16, 2022, from 4-6pm at HSSC**. We will have a panel of experts to answer your estate-planning questions and provide valuable insight. There is no cost to attend and no obligation to make a gift of any kind. This presentation is suitable for people of all ages and lifestyles.

RSVP at hssc.org/give/planned-giving/2022-info

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