



HSSC

THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF SARASOTA COUNTY

*Pictured:
Isaboo*

FUR THE RECORD | 2021 FALL NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S CUT | LETTER FROM ANNA

HERE AT HSSC, WE ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN A SHELTER. A shelter provides basic care— food, water, a clean kennel. Our commitment goes well beyond the essentials.

Our commitment to animals extends *Beyond Shelter*. We provide the very best in nutrition, veterinary care, enrichment, behavior support, and training. We are also committed to advancing programs and services that keep animals in their loving homes, remove barriers to placement, and promote empathy through humane education.

We rely on the dedicated efforts of hundreds of volunteers and a core staff to carry out our mission. Our values reflect a dedication to kindness and compassion for our shelter pets, but also to each other. In all that we do, we strive to maintain a positive, inclusive culture that embraces diversity and open, transparent communication with everyone who supports HSSC.

We work hard, every day, and we take our commitment to our animals seriously. (If only animals could feed themselves—it would be so easy!) We believe in celebrating our wins, saying a little prayer for our losses, and always caring. We believe that hard work can be fun, too.

Now that our renovation and expansion is complete, our focus is on maximizing our fantastic new space so we can help more animals than ever. We reach beyond our walls to support shelters across Florida and the Southeast— because our commitment to no-kill doesn't end at the county line. Fundamentally, we believe that all animals deserve an opportunity for a second chance. No matter where they live.

Beyond Shelter. That is what we do here at HSSC. Thank you for helping us reach above and beyond.
We couldn't do it without you.



Anna Gonce
Executive Director



SHELTER FROM THE STORM

More than 20 dogs— all survivors of Hurricane Ida— arrived at HSSC over Labor Day weekend. These animals were in shelters in Louisiana when Ida ravaged the area, cutting off electricity and running water. All 20 (including Gatsby, shown at left with Anna) were out of time in Louisiana and slated for euthanasia to make room for animals being rescued from flood zones. A network of transport partners and volunteers from organizations across the country banded together to move these animals to safety, and more are on their way. We expect to take in at least 50 cats and dogs total as recovery efforts continue.

P.S. We have completed more than 1,450 adoptions year to date, which is more than all of 2020!

BEYOND SHELTER | HSSC TO THE RESCUE

HSSC IS EXTREMELY FORTUNATE to have a beautiful, modern facility stocked with the supplies we need to care for more than 2,000 animals each year. Our supportive, animal-loving community is to thank for making that our reality. **Other places are not so lucky, as we are reminded frequently.**

A few weeks ago, HSSC received an urgent plea from the University of Florida's Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program on behalf of the animal control facility in a rural county just northeast of Sarasota.

This facility takes in more than 1,000 dogs and cats each year. Their shelter is located inside the county landfill and consists of a warehouse structure with 18 indoor/outdoor dog runs that are not climate controlled and a small trailer (also with no AC) for the cats. The cat cages are so small that they barely fit a tiny litter box, a food bowl, and a water dish. They are substandard cages with grate bottoms.

As a government-funded entity, the shelter is severely underfunded and under-resourced. For example, they only have access to dish soap and bleach for cleaning. They have exactly one pooper scooper for the entire shelter. They have no medical supplies. No beds for the dogs. No toys. No enrichment items. No carriers.

They have only three staff people, all of whom are new. These three people must perform all the duties of animal control for the county, plus care for the animals in the shelter, plus assist with adoption. They face a daunting task. **When the UF program director asked if anyone could help, HSSC did not hesitate to volunteer.**

Rebecca Gustafson, Senior Director of Operations, and Kerry Esparza, Admissions Supervisor, filled the HSSC Care-a-Van with supplies and set out to teach Shelter Management 101 how to do intake, clean, sanitize, and set up a feeding/care schedule to the skeleton crew.

The conditions were worse than expected: a falling-apart barn-type kennel overrun with roaches and rats. All the food and supplies were contaminated, so they had to salvage what they could. There was no mop bucket, so Gustafson and Esparza improvised with a 5-gallon pail, and no trash can for cleaning, so they left one of ours. They showed them how to clean kennels and brought toys, bedding, and basic supplies including another pooper scooper. They also lightened their care load slightly by taking 6 animals (like Bailey, *above*) back to HSSC.



Despite all the challenges they face, the staff at this shelter were eager to learn and focused on doing their best for the animals. This trip will likely be the first of many such trips, as we continue to guide their staff and give them the tools they need to succeed.

Being a premier no-kill shelter means leading by example and being a resource for other organizations doing lifesaving work. We are proud to be in a position to help other shelters, and we thank our supporters for getting us here.

EXTRAORDINARY KIDS | HONORING RILEE

OUR PETS ARE OUR BEST FRIENDS, OUR FUR BABIES, OUR FAMILIES. If they're sick, scared, or in danger, we rush to their aid. That's the heart agreement we make when bring a pet into our lives, and children take this contract as seriously as adults. When 11-year-old Rilee Beisler's home caught fire on May 5, 2021, she did not hesitate to run inside to rescue her four-legged best friends, Dobby and Luna. She never emerged from the flames, nor did the pups.

Rilee's tragic death—and the incredible courage she showed in those final moments—deeply affected the Sarasota community, including us here at HSSC. Rilee's huge heart for animals is an inspiration and a testament to the strength of the human-animal bond. We knew we wanted to honor her in a meaningful way while also encouraging other animal-loving young people, so we created the Rilee Beisler Humane-i-tarian Award.

On Saturday, September 18, we celebrated Rilee's life and presented the first-ever Humane-i-tarian award to a Sarasota County child who exemplifies compassion, love, and respect for animals. **The ceremony took place at Sun N Fun RV Resort.** Together with Rilee's family, we plan to make this an annual award.

"Because of the COVID monster, our attentions have gravitated to smaller, more withdrawn personal contacts, but we sometimes forget other things around us, like our animals. They give us joy and inner peace we also take for granted."

As a child, my dog was one of the most important parts of my life. Rilee was the same way. The puppies she cared for were two pitbull pups her mother's friend left behind. Rilee started training them to walk on a leash, to sit, and to become potty trained. She loved them both, and they became an important part of her life. They gave Rilee joy, and she repaid that affection with caring and love back. She never gave entering a burning building to save them a second thought, even if she should have known better. She didn't understand the dynamics of a confined-but-powerful fire, and it cost her life. Her only thought was to rescue those two pups, and her bravery set terrible circumstances into motion. It's that bravery and awareness of the value of two simple dogs that we wish to celebrate and remember, annually.

For kids her age, pets are a sanctuary in today's confused and uncertain times. We sincerely hope to contribute, in Rilee's memory, a sense of responsibility and caring among kids her age, and others, of course, that will guide them toward their adult years, to be passed down for generations to come."

—Pete Beisler, Rilee's Grandfather



THE RILEE BEISLER

HUMANE-I-TARIAN
AWARD



PETS & VETS | FIVE-STAR FRIENDS

SERVICE MEMBERS WHO COME TO HSSC TO ADOPT WILL FIND THE FEE HAS BEEN WAIVED, all courtesy of Sun N Fun RV Resort.

As the official 2021-2022 sponsor of HSSC's Military Adoptions Program, Sun N Fun helps HSSC animals find permanent homes with some very special adopters: active-duty and veteran members of the U.S. Armed Forces.



"We are extremely excited for this new partnership and humbled by the ability to give back to the service men and women in our community," said Anthony Herzog of Sun N Fun. **"Together with HSSC, we hope to provide many of our local heroes with a new family member that could have a great impact on their lives.** We hope that this opportunity will encourage those in need to look into adoption."



The cause is personal for Herzog, an Army veteran himself, who finds comfort in his own rescue dog.

For many brave members of our nation's armed forces, coming home as a civilian is only the beginning of another daunting battle. The invisible wounds of war, including Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), can cause debilitating symptoms in veterans, leading to depression, social isolation, and, far too often, suicide.

HSSC believes in harnessing the healing powers of the human-animal bond to help veterans. Scores of research studies prove that pet ownership has profound health benefits. Companion animals can reduce stress and anxiety levels, mitigate depression, ease social reintegration, provide comfort, and restore confidence in affected veterans. While HSSC animals are not trained service animals, they are guaranteed to provide love and support and be a true friend.

Sun N Fun's contribution will cover approximately 100 adoptions over 12 months, and that's just the beginning.

Herzog plans to organize regular donation drives at Sun N Fun where many of the guests and residents also have armed services ties to collect food and other supplies for military adopters.

Pictured is HSSC Alum Snow and her military adopter. Not only was her adoption covered by HSSC's military adoptions program, the nonprofit organization Paws for Warriors is now training Snow to become a full-fledged service dog for her new owner.

Visit www.hssc.org/pets/pet-adoptions for a real-time list of adoptable dogs and cats. Service members simply need to mention the program and show proof of military service at the time of adoption.

BUSINESS SAVVY | PARTNERS & SPONSORS

LET'S MAKE OUR RELATIONSHIP OFFICIAL. As HSSC partners and sponsors, organizations can showcase their good corporate social responsibility and endear themselves to their customers and the public alike.

We would like to thank these organizations for their commitment as 2021-2022 Partners & Sponsors:



- Sun N Fun RV Resort
- Couture Real Estate
- Netiquette Ads
- Alan Jay Automotive Network
- Synovus
- Eldridge Body Shop
- Fifth Third Bank
- Purmort & Martin Insurance Agency
- Norton, Hammersley, Lopez & Skokos, P.A.
- SpeedPro Affinity Solutions

*There's still time to partner for 2021-2022.
Visit www.hssc.org/give/partner-program for details.*

LET'S DO LUNCH AND LEARN

When something touches your heart, you want to tell people. That's the simple idea behind the HSSC Ambassador Program. Kind-hearted, passionate people from around the community have been attending our monthly 90-minute Lunch and Learns, where they enjoy networking and lunch (courtesy of HSSC) and find out how HSSC saves and changes lives. The behind-the-scenes tour, complete with stops in the cat wing and dog pods, is always a hit. Then these newly minted Ambassadors walk away with a better understanding of all that happens at HSSC, and a simple follow-up task: spread the word.

So often we hear things like: "I had no idea you had that program..." or "Wow, this place is huge..." or "I always thought you were part of a national humane society." In an organization with as many programs and services as HSSC, it's certainly understandable that people would not know the full extent of what we do here. But once people see for themselves, or hear it from a trusted friend, there's a ripple effect of awareness building that can dramatically impact the lives of animals and the people who love them.

Plus, it's fun to be an Ambassador.

You get to give back to the community, develop advocacy skills, practice public speaking, and meet like-minded business, government, and social service leaders.

If you would like to attend a future Lunch and Learn, typically held the final Thursday of each month at 11:30am, please contact Autumn Steiner at asteiner@hssc.org or 941.955.4131 x121.



BOARD MINUTES | LEADERSHIP MATTERS



THANK YOU, TERESA!

Whether she's leading a board meeting, opening her home for a fundraising event, or rounding up donations, HSSC Board President Teresa Jones does everything with determination and flair. Since assuming the role of Board President in 2019, Teresa has steered HSSC through a capital campaign, a major renovation, and a pandemic. Teresa is always the first one to "raise her paw:" putting up matching funds for the 2020 Giving Challenge, making a lead-off gift for the capital campaign, or sponsoring a "student child" for summer camp. She is not afraid to get her hands dirty, as evidenced by the bang-up job she did vacuuming the HSSC hallways on the staff appreciation day in August. And she has a great sense of humor, especially at our annual golf tournament, where she took home the Bogey Fever Award three years in a row. We never asked her to take a pie to the face or sit atop a dunk tank, but she probably would have risen to the challenge with grace and bejeweled swim goggles.

In short, there is not much Teresa would not do to help HSSC, and we are so grateful for her leadership over the years. Countless dogs and cats are safer and healthier thanks to her efforts, and our shelter has never been stronger. At the end of 2021, Teresa will pass the presidential torch into the very capable hands of current Vice President, Jennifer Steube. We have no doubt that Teresa will continue to go to bat for HSSC and lead by example. Thank you for everything, Teresa!

Pictured above: Teresa Jones with two of her personal dogs, including HSSC alum Lola. Below: Board member Julia Montei cleaning the dog kennels, and Teresa vacuuming the hallways.

WORKING LIKE A DOG

Caring for more than 200 dogs and cats at a time is a tremendous, never-ending, and often thankless task. There's always an animal to feed, a mess to clean, a load of laundry to do, a dog to walk, and on and on it goes.

To give the animal care staff a break, the Board of Directors offered to pick up the leash, scrub brush, and pooper scooper for a day. On August 10, Board members and the rest of the staff spent a sweaty morning deep-cleaning the shelter and caring for all the shelter animals. We rewarded our hard work with a celebratory cook-out afterwards.



THE TAIL END | 'PAW'TING WORDS



UPCOMING EVENTS

Faux Paws on the Catwalk

Friday, November 12, 2021

2-4pm at HSSC

Tickets \$100 each

Wine, fashion, and fun

www.hssc.org/faux-paws

Planned Giving Info Session

Wednesday, November 17, 2021

4-6pm at HSSC

No cost to attend

Estate-planning insight from a panel of experts

www.hssc.org/give/planned-giving/2021-info



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