

## MANATEE UNITED 4 PETS

The numbers are in and we are pleased to announce significant progress in our Community's quest to become No Kill. The year end figures for 2013 Manatee County puts us at a save rate of 88%. Compare that with the 2012's 79% and we can proudly see that many in Manatee County are not only talking the talking, but walking the walk.

The important thing to understand about No Kill status is that it is never permanently achieved. Each month is a start over and save rates depend upon the many members of the Manatee County Community to do their part in reducing the number of homeless pets.

We are proud that cities and counties around Florida and around the country are watching our progress and hoping to learn from what we do. What they will learn is that it takes a committed community to affect the kind of change we need.

We are so close, but still so far. The missing percentage represents real kittens, cats, puppies and dogs who have died. The missing percentage represents their sadness and suffering. The question before us is "How do we get to the point that our Animal population is truly under control and our shelters and rescues are not fighting an uphill battle?"

**The answer is that we do it TOGETHER, as a Community. This year, we must look to all the members of the Manatee Community to affect permanent change in our citizens' minds and hearts and become a true No Kill Community. We need all individuals, businesses and associations to ask themselves, "What can we do?"**

There are some simple things we can do that will make a huge impact on the homeless pet population and the solution is multi-pronged but completely feasible.

## ENFORCEMENT + EDUCATION + STERILIZATION + ADOPTIONS

In 2013, over 5,000 pets came through the Shelter. Only 13.2 percent were re-deemed. We must unite to stop the flood of unwanted pets into the Shelter and rescues. For every dog or cat that gets adopted, it seems 5 more take its place. We need to be sure that spay and neuter is encouraged and we are able to con-

tinue to offer affordable and timely sterilization to our citizens who may not be able to afford it otherwise. *Manatee United can do this.*

When pets do get lost, we can assure that they don't end up at the Shelter. The first step is to enforce the registration requirement already on the books. When your dog or cat has a County tag on, a simple phone call or online search will be their ticket home. Look for our upcoming project, "Free Ride," which will address this critical issue.

If they don't have their collar on, then an inexpensive micro chip will get them home as well. The enforcement Officers are all equipped with scanners for micro chips and will drive your pet home if he/she is lost. We need to encourage micro chipping and offer it to the public at an affordable price. With this easy and affordable program, we can spare pets the stress of being impounded and the owner the agony and expense impounding entails. As an added benefit, the County will save time and money if pets don't ever have to set foot in the Shelter. *Manatee United can do this.*

The final step towards our worthy goal of No Kill is to encourage adoptions from local Shelters and our various rescue groups. Spread the word and encourage others, "Don't Shop, Adopt" *Manatee United can do this too.*

The key to achieving No Kill through these simple programs is unity; many small efforts adding up to a very large one.

Throughout 2014, we will look to the Community to Unite under a giant umbrella called **Manatee United 4 Pets**. Animal Network invites all members of the Manatee Community to join us in this potentially game changing endeavor.

All social change requires unity to change hearts and minds and so behavior. Together, we can educate our citizens, young and old, and work towards a more compassionate Community.

To accomplish this, Manatee United for Pets will target **Education** and challenge our School System to reach out to those who are responsible for the abundance of unclaimed pets at the Shelter. County children will be invited to become "MU-Pets," and programming will be available for various age groups in public, private and charter schools. Teenagers will be encouraged to earn their volunteer hours helping homeless pets and become ambassadors for responsible pet ownership.

Education is not limited to schools however. **Manatee Community Leaders United** will call upon Public Influencers who can be found in Churches, Civic

Groups and various organizations, including Youth Centers. We welcome all Public Influencers who read this to step up and help us form a multi-pronged solution and help people make better decisions. Meet with us to discuss how your school, church or organization can help through education, special events or fundraising. We will gladly combine our resources with yours to facilitate your program, whether it be providing literature, guest speakers, pet visits or advertising.

Of course, once citizens understand their responsibilities, we must have resources available to them. The current programs operate on shoe-string budgets and sporadic grants and are not equipped to handle increased demand. We need **Manatee Vets United** to encourage local veterinarians to participate in spay/neuter efforts by donating their time and talents, as well as equipment for an in-house clinic. They will be invited to special events and urged to educate their clients on the importance of sterilization, immunizations, heart worm preventatives and micro chipping. Manatee Vets can make a huge difference by ensuring their clients comply with registration laws and let them know that a tagged pet that is lost can be brought home for free by Shelter Officers. This "Free Ride" program will save pets and owners agony and save the County the costs of impounding and housing.

**Manatee Rescues United** will encourage all the rescue groups to work together whenever possible to provide foster and permanent homes for homeless pets and to unite for adoption events.

**Manatee Non-Profits United** will facilitate joint programs and events between Animal Network, Animal Rescue Coalition, and the Manatee County Humane Society and other non-profits groups dedicated to No Kill.

**Businesses United** invites local businesses and government agencies to participate in a new program called the Adoptable Mascot Program. (AMP) Businesses and can play a large part in uniting the County and achieving our No Kill status by helping network our adoptable dogs and cats through their website and/or Facebook pages. Visit [AdoptableMascotProgram.com](http://AdoptableMascotProgram.com) to learn more about how you can help.

**Manatee County Government United** can play a large role in educating the public by using their existing resources to disseminate information through bills and other mailings as well as continuing to financially support No Kill efforts.

**Manatee Sports United** offers endless opportunities to contribute to the success of No Kill efforts. Imagine the difference youth and adult sports leagues and

semi-professional and professional sports teams could make together through individual or joint education programs, fundraising and special events. Our resources are available to guide any efforts that will help the Manatee homeless pet population. We urge the influencers in this arena to step up and talk to us about ways to help.

The possibilities are endless. You can unite as artists, performers, firefighters and on and on. Be creative, open up your hearts and put on your thinking caps! There is truly no problem that can't be solved when we work together. United as a Community, we can end the suffering, stop the senseless loss of life, value our pet population and show the rest of the world what a united **Manatee County** can accomplish.

If you have ideas and would like to step into a leadership role or participate in any of these efforts, we welcome you. There is so much to do and we are just starting. It will take a "care all year" attitude and we are counting on Manatee County Animal Lovers to make No Kill a sustainable reality. Please call 813-597-4116 or email us at [debra.starr1@gmail.com](mailto:debra.starr1@gmail.com) to participate in our United efforts.