



## **Immediate Release**

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## **Media Contacts**

### **Pet partnership points to positive trends**

LARGO, FLORIDA (March 29, 2017) -- After five years of collecting data on a collaborative basis, Pinellas County Animal Services, SPCA Tampa Bay, Friends of Strays, Humane Society of Pinellas and Pet Pal Animal Shelter provided the countywide highlights during a press conference on Wednesday, March 29, at Pinellas County Animal Services.

The trends are positive.

“As a community, we have seen a decrease in intakes and shelter euthanasia and an increase in dog and cat adoptions and live releases overall,” said Doug Brightwell, director of Pinellas County Animal Services. “All of these are key indicators that we are going in the right direction.”

Possible causes for the positive trends include the collaboration with partners, the priority on adoption promotions, an improved economy and good alternatives to bringing pets to shelters.

“We are so excited by the positive trends in our community,” said Stacey Efaw, executive director of the Humane Society of Pinellas. “Increasing adoptions and reducing euthanasia has been a focus of this countywide collaboration. These positive trends show that our collaborative programs are having an impact.”

In July, the Pinellas Pet Partnership implemented a new intake model, which instructed people who find stray dogs and cats to transport the animal to Animal Services and any other species found or injured wildlife should be taken to SPCA Tampa Bay. Pet owners who need to surrender their pet should contact SPCA Tampa Bay, Humane Society of Pinellas or Pet Pal Animal Shelter.

Furthermore, Animal Services and SPCA Tampa Bay made changes to create a central housing system for stray dogs and cats in Pinellas County, and standardized information stored about lost or found pets.

“While we’re seeing less pets entering local shelters, the percentage of lost pets being returned to their owners has not really improved, which is why we implemented the new intake model last year,” said Martha Boden, CEO of SPCA Tampa Bay. “Helping more lost pets be reunited with their owners will remain a focus this year and we will use the 2016 numbers a baseline to measure our efforts moving forward.”

It was also announced at the press conference that Friends of Strays Animal Shelter will join the collaborative reporting for 2017.

“It’s a great opportunity to partner with well-established organizations that provide support to our homeless animals,” said Dara Eckart, the executive director of Friends of Strays.

The trends are based on data collected by the four participating animal welfare agencies in Pinellas County from January 2012 to December 2016. Each organization compiles its data using the same reporting matrix, so information from several shelters is comparable and together can show patterns that more accurately reflect animal welfare conditions throughout the county.

“We all know we can do so much more when we are working together,” said Boden. “And the encouraging trends we have seen over the past five years are proof of that.”

**ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS:** All five agencies shelter and care for Pinellas County’s unwanted animal population.

*Pinellas County Animal Services* is a countywide facility that accepts all dogs and cats, shelters them and seeks to provide good homes to all adoptable shelter animals. The organization cares for more than 11,000 animals that are admitted each year. The shelter runs spay and neuter programs, and provide rabies control and vaccination of dogs and cats. As the administrator of county pet licenses and tracking system, Animal Services helps reunite pets and owners. Animal Services provides code enforcement and assistance to residents with animal-related issues. It encourages responsible pet ownership and provides many opportunities for the community to adopt, donate and volunteer. [www.pinellascounty.org/animalservices](http://www.pinellascounty.org/animalservices)

*The Humane Society of Pinellas, Inc.* is Pinellas County’s largest no-kill animal shelter, rescuing approximately 3,000 animals each year. Located in Clearwater, the Humane Society of Pinellas is a 501(c)3 organization that has been caring for the community’s homeless pets for 65 years. The Humane Society of Pinellas Inc. is committed to helping keep pets and people together through a variety of programs, including: affordable wellness and spay/neuter clinic, mobile spay/neuter clinic targeting at-risk zip codes, behavioral training, humane education, and a Pet Food Pantry, including a mobile food pantry that delivers food to needy seniors and disabled individuals. When pet surrender is the only option, the No Time Limit policy offers an opportunity for every adoptable pet to have a second chance success story. One hundred percent of contributions are retained by the organization. [humanesocietyofpinellas.org](http://humanesocietyofpinellas.org)

*Pet Pal Animal Shelter*, formerly known as Pet Pal Rescue, built a low cost spay/neuter clinic and in 2009, expanded its services and changed the clinic's name to Pet Pal Veterinary Clinic. Under the direction of executive director Scott Daly, Pet Pal has stayed true to its mission and the number of animals that are saved increases each year. The organization educates the public about the importance of spaying and neutering pets and responsible pet ownership. [petpalanimalshelter.com](http://petpalanimalshelter.com)

*SPCA Tampa Bay* accepts all pets surrendered by their owners, injured wildlife, and livestock. The organization cares for more than 8,000 animals that are admitted each year. SPCA Tampa Bay's mission is to "*improve the community by promoting humane care, preventing animal cruelty and reducing pet overpopulation.*" Community services include: animal cruelty investigation, lost/found pet assistance, animal admission and animal transport. SPCA programs include pet adoption, free pet behavior help, Sniff University training for dogs and cats, Veterinary Center for full-service veterinary care for dogs and cats, children's summer camps and more. Founded in 1940, SPCA Tampa Bay is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that operates an animal shelter located on 10 acres in Largo and a full-service Veterinary Center in St. Petersburg. [SPCATampaBay.org](http://SPCATampaBay.org).

*Friends of Strays* is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 in St. Petersburg, FL, dedicated to the care and adoption of homeless pets. The organization is funded by individual contributions, wills, bequests and business partner programs. Friends of Strays provide services to the neediest section of our pet population, the homeless animals of Pinellas County. These services include sterilization, medical treatment, socialization and daily care until each animal is adopted. The primary goal of Friends of Strays is to find loving homes for the homeless cats and dogs who are abandoned and left to roam, unable to care for themselves. The organization is active in programs that educate the public about humane treatment and care of animals. [www.friendsofstrays.com](http://www.friendsofstrays.com)

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Photo Courtesy: Pinellas County Marketing and Communications

Dara Eckart, executive director of Friends of Strays, Stacey Efaw, executive director of the Humane Society of Pinellas, Doug Brightwell, director of Pinellas County Animal Services and Martha Boden, CEO of SPCA Tampa Bay announce the highlights of a five-year collaborative data collection a press conference at Pinellas County Animal Services on Wednesday, March 29, 2017.

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