

April 26, 2016

Mr. Jeff Atlas, President
Board of Directors, Humane Society of the Treasure Coast, Inc.
4100 SW Leighton Farm Avenue
Palm City, FL 34990

Dear Mr. Atlas:

It has been a distinct pleasure to work with the staff and board of the Humane Society of the Treasure Coast over the past week. We have found the group to be open to our presence and suggestions, transparent about their needs, and eager to learn of the latest research and best practices for animal shelters. Much of what we encountered in our time of observation and evaluation is similar to the challenges and opportunities we see at shelters all across the country, and furthermore, a good portion of these challenges and opportunities have resulted directly from the significant growth that HSTC has undergone in the past decade. We are confident through the continued hard work of the staff, the diligent efforts of the board and leadership, and the use of us as a resource for best practices, HSTC can achieve great things.

Enclosed you will find the brief, bulleted report where we share what we believe to be the key areas of focus for the organization. Our role, as you understand, is to evaluate all of the operations and administration, as well as the efforts within leadership and governance, and then provide these recommendations. Our intention is to give a framework for elevated success as you strive for your mission. As such, these are truly recommendations based on our work, knowledge of, and experience with animal shelters. It is the purview of the board, leadership, and staff to consider these recommendations, and implement as you see fit based on your mission and as may be practical within the scope of your strategic plan and finances.

We look forward to our continued work together and encourage questions along the way. Once you, the board, and the staff have had an opportunity to review the recommendations, we will be happy to begin discussions on how best to plan our next level of engagement together.

On behalf of Drs. Crawford and Garcia, we thank you for the opportunity to work together and we are grateful for such an open-minded, intelligent staff and caring board of directors.

Sincerely,



Deborah K. Turcott
Chief Operating Officer
Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program
College of Veterinary Medicine



Humane Society of the Treasure Coast

April 22, 2016

We would like to commend the staff for their clear commitment and concern for the animals in their care and their openness in sharing their daily routines and ideas with us, as well as their eagerness to learn about new techniques and skills.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to work with you. We are impressed and inspired by the life-saving accomplishments of HSTC. We are here to offer ongoing assistance and support and look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

Cynda Crawford, DVM, PhD
Maddie's® Clinical Assistant Professor of Shelter Medicine
crawfordc@ufl.edu
352-273-8723

Lawrence Garcia, MS, DVM
Maddie's® Clinical Assistant Professor of Shelter Medicine
garciln@ufl.edu
352-294-4449

Deborah Turcott
Chief Operating Officer, Maddie's® Shelter Medicine Program
dturcott@ufl.edu
352-273-8725



Maddie's Fund

Maddie's® Shelter Medicine Program
College of Veterinary Medicine
2015 SW 16th Avenue
PO Box 100126
Gainesville, FL 32610
352-273-8660
352-392-6125 Fax

Organizational Management

HSTC has undergone immense growth in the last several years and while that growth is a success, the organization has grown faster than the support structure that guides its operational efficiency and effectiveness. As such, there are key foundational elements to concentrate on at this time to build strength, capacity, commonality of purpose, and refocus the organization on its deliverables to the community.

1. Review and refine the mission and vision statements of the organization to align effort and use of resources.
 - Evaluate the current needs of the community and the true capacity of the organization.
 - Identify the gaps in service to the community and areas where HSTC is not needed to serve.
 - Adapt the mission statement to reflect these current needs and HSTC's commitment to the community in meeting these needs.
 - Consider transitioning out of services that the organization no longer needs to provide. An example of this transition is to discontinue the crematory service as there are other service providers in the area, it does not yield a financial gain for the organization, and it can be a distraction from other valuable efforts.
 - Infuse the new mission and vision in all meetings, decisions, and efforts to ensure alignment with the overall purpose of the organization.
2. Build an organizational structure to support the current size and service provision of the organization
 - Growth has yielded horizontal spread of positions and responsibilities. Take this opportunity to redefine the vertical delegation of duties to allow for optimum manager-employee mentoring, clarity of roles and performance, and more reasonable balancing of supervisory responsibility.
 - Develop a business calendar to facilitate long range planning of initiatives, changes to operational models, budget cycles, and community events.
 - Create systems that encourage the flow of information between and among teams, and encourage communication of organization values.
3. Develop a Philosophy of Care to complement the mission and vision. The Philosophy of Care is a statement that articulates the values the organization upholds in its day-to-day interactions with the animals and people it serves. This philosophy contributes to the achievement of the mission, grounds all staff in common understanding of approach to animals and people, and allows the organization to message its commitment to humane care without using industry jargon and avoiding potential confusing and divisive language often found in animal welfare communication tactics.
4. Invest in a strategic planning process to solidify goals, objectives, and metrics that will help the board, leadership, and staff achieve the mission and vision of the organization. The plan should help the organization remain focused on its core areas of function and not be tempted to add services or programs that may dilute the organizations effectiveness.
5. Formalize training programs and on-boarding processes to ensure that employees understand the purpose of the organization, how departments function in synchrony with one another to achieve the mission, and the policies and procedures that help employees be effective and feel fulfilled.

Population Management

The key to operating within the shelter's capacity for care is a robust overarching population management strategy. A solid population management plan constantly seeks to keep the population within the shelter's capacity for care, to eliminate wasted animal care days, and to move animals through the shelter system to the best outcome as quickly as possible. Animals should not languish in the shelter because an outcome plan does not exist or is otherwise prevented from being implemented.

The result of effective population management and animal flow-through is reduction in length of stay, leading to:

- Marked decrease in total number of animals in the shelter
 - Adequate staffing capacity to care for the smaller population
 - Reduced spread of infectious diseases
 - Reduced animal stress and behavioral deterioration
1. Designate a skilled staff member to serve as the Pathway Planner to oversee timely movement of animals to an outcome with the primary goal of minimizing length of stay.
 - Identifies and initiates a best outcome pathway for each animal starting at admission and ensures efficient movement along the pathway.
 - Performs daily review of the current status of each animal to promptly recognize and remediate barriers to flow along the pathway.
 - Utilizes population data in Pet Point to track length of stay to different outcomes.
 2. Fast track highly desirable animals to adoption. This typically includes puppies, kittens, small dogs, purebreds, owner surrenders that are already spayed/neutered, UTD, etc.
 - Goal is to turnover housing rapidly to increase flow of animals through to adoptions while preserving physical and behavioral health.
 - Expect adoption within 7 days.
 3. Implement an "open selection" policy for adoption and transfer to rescue groups or foster. This means that all animals (except legal custody cases) are available for selection by potential adopters and transfer partners, regardless of location in the shelter. A virtual format can be used for viewing animals in areas other than Adoption.
 4. Invest in progressive changes to adoption policy making the process to adopt an animal seamless for the customer and thereby continuing to decrease length of stay. Progressive adoption strategy includes fee-waived adoptions, open-viewing of available animals, limited information gathering of adopters, eliminating reference/landlord verification, and accepting all forms of payment.
 5. Adapt a process for behavioral determinations based on history provided by owners and in-shelter observations.
 6. Develop a euthanasia policy that clearly defines the criteria assessed for decision making, outlines a team based approach to evaluation of those criteria, and allows for a clear understanding of how the decision making process aligns with the Philosophy of Care.

7. Revisit the facility redesign and additions to ensure changes made are in the effort to create more appropriate animal housing (but not necessarily more animal housing), improve animal flow through the shelter, and keep biosecurity of the animal traffic in mind. The improved animal housing for all animals is important but the cat population would benefit immensely from more free-roaming rooms, cages with portholes for added space and privacy when needed, and outdoor accommodations such as a catio. The other recommendations in this report will decrease length of stay and reduce intakes therefore shrinking the daily census of animals in the shelter in positive ways.
8. Initiate a return-to-field program.
 - Healthy adult stray cats that are not suitable for placement in a home are candidates for a return-to-field program.
 - Cats that are feral or determined to have low adoptability should be scheduled for spay/neuter surgery and vaccination (rabies and FVRCP) within 24 hours and returned to the location where found.
 - By providing this timely alternative outcome for healthy stray cats, shelters with limited capacity can reserve their resources for the animals that are in most need of the shelter's care.

Medical Leadership

While there are many reasons that shelter medicine trained staff veterinarians add value to an animal welfare organization, in particular we recommend medical leadership for HSTC to enhance life-saving capacity, reduce length of stay, and provide a dedicated leader for the medical staff in their daily work.

1. Hire two full time veterinarians with shelter medicine knowledge to oversee care of the shelter animals.
 - One veterinarian serves as the veterinary director. The veterinary director serves as the leader of the medical team and a member of the senior leadership team for the organization
 - The veterinarians divide daily responsibilities for surgical and medical care.
 - The veterinarians develop all health care policies and protocols.
 - The veterinarians train and supervise the medical staff.
2. Schedule owner requested euthanasia by appointment during specified time periods.
 - The shelter should be commended for providing this service for owners of pets for medical conditions that cannot be managed to alleviate pain and suffering.
 - Allocate the service to hours and days amenable to staff work flow.