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\*\*For Immediate Release (Photo cutline: Samantha Scott.)

## GCHS undergoing preparations to forge through COVID-19 crisis

During these times of uncertainty with the COVID-19 crisis, Gulf Coast Humane Society is working full time to ensure the shelter animals do not miss any of the quality care it has become to be known for throughout the area.

But such as the case with everyone who has been impacted by COVID-19, GCHS is undergoing changes to try and stay ahead of the fluid times which we are all undergoing.

Being a 501c3 Non-Profit organization, GCHS will be relying on donations more than ever over the course of the next few months. Everything from adoption rates, increased intakes and trying to stay afloat amidst of all the postponed fundraising events and decrease in donations are just a few of the challenges which lay ahead for the shelter.

"These will be some challenging times for GCHS, but we are confident and appreciative of how the community responds towards the shelter animals," said GCHS Executive Director Jennifer Galloway. "There are several areas we are really focusing on through this crisis and that includes increasing our fostering rate, donations and adoptions. We have always maintained a steadfast regiment of cleaning in the shelter and is something I am very proud of. Our normal cleaner we use throughout the facility does kill the Coronavirus. But the GCHS staff has been instructed to be continually cleaning all day, every day."

Fostering will be a very important tool moving on. With many people staying at home to telecommute for their work, fostering a shelter animal is a terrific option. The reason fostering is so important during a time like this, Galloway said, is it helps open kennels up for the expected uptick of owner surrenders, due to people losing their income and no longer being able to care for their pets.

"We do have certain shelter animals who we have prioritized to go out in foster and that includes either medical issue or an animal which has been here long term," Galloway said. "The great thing about fostering is the time flexibility because if the foster has to leave town or cannot care for the animal, they can bring them back. We also provide the food, bedding and medical supplies/medicines for the foster pet, as well."

If interested in fostering a GCHS shelter animal, please call 239-332-0364 or visit the GCHS webpage at <https://www.gulfcoasthumanesociety.org/foster-information.html> or email [outreach@gulfcoasthumanesociety.org](mailto:outreach@gulfcoasthumanesociety.org).

During anxious times, non-profits are one of the hardest hit areas in the business sector. Galloway is anticipating a drop in both monetary and donated items, but hopes people still will have the shelter animals in the forefront of their minds.

"We survive off of donations, albeit monetary or donated items, and we are happy to accept any type of donation," Galloway said. "Donating items such pet food will also be very important because it will be one of our directives during this time, to help pet owners who are struggling to keep their pets due to financial constraints with food so they are not forced to owner-surrender their pet to a shelter. It is one of the hardest things to do if you are a pet owner, so we want to help as much as we can so it does not have to happen.

"Every donation will be helping either our shelter animals or someone else in need."

GCHS' events have all been postponed, including: The Fast and the Furriest (April 5), Drag Queen Bingo (March 22), Rockin' 4 Paws (April 25) and the monthly brewery nights, Goldenfest (March 29), Everblades fundraising night (March 14), all Senior to Senior visitations at senior homes and a host of other fundraising events.

As of March 19, all GCHS branches will working normal business hours, including the Adoption Center (seven days a week), Spay-Neuter Clinic (five days a week) and the Veterinarian Clinic (six days a week, located at 2685 Swamp Cabbage Court in Fort Myers.

"This of course is fluid, anything can change any minute," Galloway said. "We want people to take advantage of our low-cost veterinarian clinic to refill any heartworm prevention treatments, update any vaccinations for your pet and medical care. We also have many shelter animals still up for adoption and it would be a great time, if you are stuck at home, to help acclimate your new family member."

GCHS has created its own COVID-19 webpage as a resource for the public regarding pet care during this crisis. It can be found at: <https://www.gulfcoasthumanesociety.org/covid-19-resources.html>

Here are some ways you can help the GCHS' shelter animals:

- The health and safety of our pets and the community is our top priority. According to the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that companion animals have been infected or could spread coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- Foster homes are needed now! We are requesting foster homes which can keep pets for any amount of time. The goal is to increase our foster base in case we are forced

to close. If you're interested in fostering a pet, email us at [outreach@gulfcoasthumanesociety.org](mailto:outreach@gulfcoasthumanesociety.org) or call 239-332-0364.

- To donate, visit our website at [www.gulfcoasthumansociety.org](http://www.gulfcoasthumansociety.org) or drop off donations, or deliver Amazon orders to: 2010 Arcadia Street, Fort Myers, Fla. 33916.

### **About Gulf Coast Humane Society:**

Gulf Coast Humane Society is a regional organization dedicated to helping companion pets find their forever homes, no matter how long it takes. GCHS provides an adoption center, spay-neuter and veterinary clinic, as well as education and awareness to the public about the welfare of homeless pets.

GCHS' mission is to care for companion pets in need by offering safe refuge, providing medical care and facilitating adoptions. GCHS promotes the concept the "Adopt, Don't Shop" and help educate the community about proper and responsible animal care, while providing quality, affordable veterinary care.

GCHS Veterinary Clinic: 2685 Swamp Cabbage Court, Fort Myers, 33901; Phone: 239-332-2719

GCHS Spay/Neuter Clinic: 2010 Arcadia Street, Fort Myers, 33916; Phone: 239-332-1573

GCHS Adoption Center: 2010 Arcadia Street, Fort Myers, 33916; Phone: 239-332-0364