



## **2024** *Annual Report*



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**HEADQUARTERS:**  
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St. Petersburg, FL 33714

**CAT BOX:**  
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St. Petersburg, FL 33174

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[www.friendsofstrays.org](http://www.friendsofstrays.org)

**FOLLOW US:**



## Mission

Our mission is to inspire compassion for all animals, provide shelter and humane care to homeless animals, and promote adoptions and responsible pet guardianship in our community.

## Vision

Through our efforts, there will be a safe and loving home for every adoptable animal and humane treatment for all.



# 2024 BY THE NUMBERS



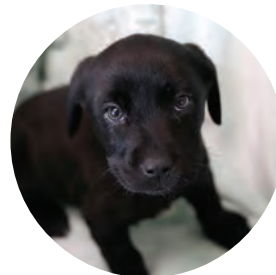
**1,865**  
**ADOPTIONS**  
1,504 CATS  
361 DOGS

**2,661**  
**COMMUNITY CATS**  
**VACCINATED AND ALTERED**  
1,007 ASSISTED TRAPPING  
1,654 SELF TRAPPING



**4,193**  
**VOLUNTEER**  
**HOURS**  
99 VOLUNTEERS

**856**  
**PETS SPENT TIME IN**  
**FOSTER HOMES**  
170 FOSTER HOMES



**36 TRANSFER**  
**PARTNERS**



**99% LIVE**  
**RELEASE RATE**



**222 PETS SERVED AT**  
**3 VACCINE/**  
**MICROCHIP CLINICS**



**OVER 3,000 LBS PET**  
**SUPPLIES DONATED**  
**FOR HURRICANE RELIEF**

# A Message from the CEO

Dear Friends,

2024 at Friends of Strays was marked by both growth and challenges. Last July, we opened the Cat Box Adoption Center, a transformational new adoption facility that provides safe and soothing spaces for kitties awaiting adoption. If you haven't been by to visit yet, please take some time to take a tour. This facility is truly innovative with both cage free rooms and rooms with cage banks, two kitten rooms, and two "Hair BnB" rooms for cats that need a little personal space. Truly, any cat that comes to our shelter will have a space in which they can thrive until they find their forever homes.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans for the Cat Box. During Milton, the facility had marked water intrusion, shutting the building down for over a month while we worked on water and mold remediation. The building is not in a flood zone so we were not expecting this turn of events. Thanks to friends like you as well as generous grantors like the Pinellas Community Foundation, Best Friends, and the Folke Peterson Foundation, we were able to make all of the necessary repairs and re-opened for adoptions on Black Friday.

Speaking of cats, our return to field and trap neuter vaccinate return programs merged under the MEOW Now umbrella last year. This change made it much easier for our community to understand the programs as we renamed them to self-trapping and assisted-trapping. Between both programs, we humanely stopped the reproduction of nearly 2,700 cats in 2024. These are cats that only a couple of years ago would have been euthanized at our county shelter for no other reason than that they lived outside. These programs not only save lives, but have helped Pinellas County Animal Services get closer to no-kill status than ever before.

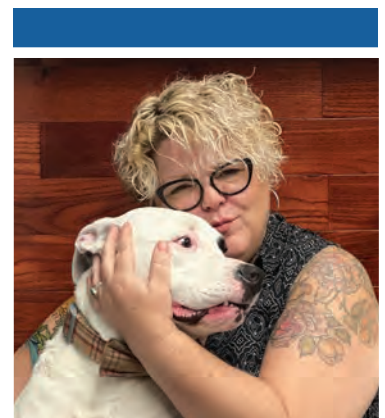
This year, we are working with architects to

design the Milky Bone Dog House. Like the Cat Box, this facility will be truly innovative and unlike anything seen in the Tampa Bay area. Instead of the typical rows of kennels, we are creating rooms for dogs allowing us to accept larger dogs, co-house dogs, provide a comfortable space for moms and babies, and generally just provide a safe, low-stress environment for dogs in need. We are so looking forward to seeing this dream come to fruition. We couldn't have gotten this far without our friends Kevin and Jeanne Milky who named the new facility. Keep an eye out for updates on this project!

Part of our challenges last year included fundraising. Unfortunately fundraising was down across the board in the nonprofit world due to national politics and the devastating hurricane season. While we did have to dip into our reserves to cover expenses last year, we were so grateful to our supporters who came through for us, especially during the Wags and Whiskers Gala that was held right between two major hurricanes. Almost 200 people came together on October 5 despite the stress that everyone had been under to help us raise nearly \$140,000 for our lifesaving work.

And thanks to so many friends who established planned gifts for Friends of Strays, our reserves are healthy and saw us through an unusual year. We couldn't continue to grow and save more lives each year without good friends like you. We are truly grateful for your continued support.

Thank you!



**Dara  
Worthington,  
CEO**

# Financial Report



## Revenue by Source

Source	Total
Adoptions	\$166,379
Donations (Cash/Card)	\$1,609,163
Events	\$176,315
Grants	\$104,612
Medical	\$9,437
Retail	\$14,446
Lease	\$14,088
Other	\$49,611
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,144,051</b>

## Expenses by Source

Source	Total
General Operating	\$115,581
Events	\$102,591
Fundraising	\$2,995
Insurance	\$72,459
Medical	\$226,151
Payroll	\$1,517,794
Retail	\$9,300
Shelter	\$229,859
Utilities	\$53,162
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,329,892</b>

*The 2024 budget year was supplemented by reserves.*



# Disaster Response & Recovery

**Sept. 24, 2024**

We transfer in 33 pets to safety from another shelter in the predicted landfall of Hurricane Helene.



**Sept. 27, 2024**

Hurricane Helene causes wide-spread storm surge destruction in Pinellas County. We partnered with Mike Braswell, Realtor, and 3 Daughters Brewing to collect and distribute supplies for people and pets.



**Oct. 5, 2024**

Despite Hurricane Helene, we raise nearly \$140,000 for pets in need at Wags & Whiskers: Nightmare Before Catmas.



**Oct. 9, 2024**

Hurricane Milton hits Florida just 45 minutes south of St. Petersburg. The Cat Box sustains damage from water intake.



**Oct. 11, 2024**

Due to the damage and recovery needed for the shelter, we transferred 43 animals to other no-kill rescues.



**Oct. 18 & 25, 2024**

While the shelter operated in a limited capacity during restoration, we hosted two free microchip/vaccine clinics for cats.



**Nov. 29, 2024**

After completion of repairs, we moved cats back to Cat Box and reopened our second building for adoptions.



**Dec. 7 & 21, 2024**

We hosted two free pet food & supply pantries to distribute the multitude of donations received after the hurricane.





**Karen Van De Putte**  
Development  
Director

# Fundraising Highlights

## Grand Opening

On July 1, Friends of Strays celebrated the grand opening of our new Cat Box Adoption Center, dedicated just for adoptable cats and kittens. Many people from the community came to show their support for Friends of Strays, and to check out our beautiful space and our awesome cats, too. Our capital campaign is ongoing, to help with the build-out of the Cat Box, and in 2025, we will begin work on the Milky Bone Dog House, a new dedicated dog adoption center. *See Page 14 for more photos!*

## Wags & Whiskers

Friends of Strays' annual gala, Wags & Whiskers: Nightmare Before Catmas, took place on Oct. 5. Even though our event was sandwiched between two major hurricanes, the evening was filled with magic and fun! CEO Dara Worthington invited our attendees to take a brief reprieve from all the stress we were all experiencing at that time and just enjoy a night of fun. Everyone had a wonderful time, and Friends of Strays was able to raise much-needed funding to help cover operating expenses and allow us to save the lives of homeless animals in our community and throughout Florida. *See Page 14 for more photos!*



## Hurricane Milton Repair

Friends of Strays' new Cat Box cat shelter took in several inches of water during Hurricane Milton, causing significant damage and disruption of our day-to-day activities. We are so very grateful to all those who came to our aid to help us rebuild. A huge thank you to Folke Peterson Animal Welfare Foundation, the Milky Family Foundation, the Stuart and Rebecca Sjouwerman Emergency Fund, Frankie's Friends Foundation, and all the individuals who donated funds, food, and other items to help us through that difficult time. The generosity of these supporters allowed us to reopen and restore the Cat Box back to the beautiful space it is, and get our shelter back to saving lives and finding forever homes for the pets in our care.



**THANK YOU  
TO OUR  
POST-MILTON  
RECOVERY  
DONORS:**

**John and Stephanie Doran**  
**Folke Peterson Animal**  
**Welfare Foundation**  
**Frankie's Friends**  
**Cathy Hwang**  
**Debra DeBerry Long**

**Lynn McGraw**  
**Milkey Family Foundation**  
**Penny and Dennis Peek**  
**Delores Zweiten Rapp**  
**Rebecca Sjouerman**  
**Emergency Fund - PCF**

# Intake & Adoptions Program



**Krista Loveless**  
Assistant Shelter  
Director

**Adoption Counselors**



**Aspen Bailey**



**Kim Newsome**

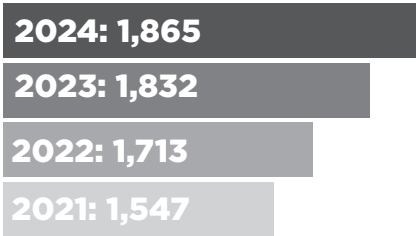


**Liz Stogner**



**Olivia Gasparoni**

**1,865**  
ADOPTIONS



**Adoptions**



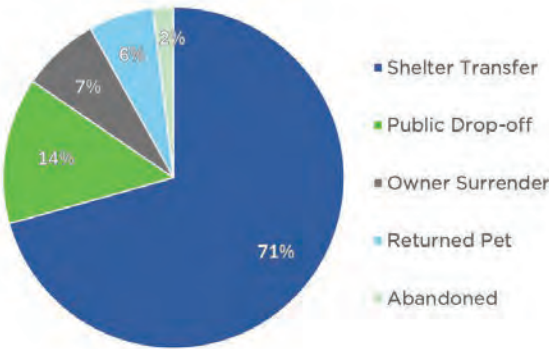
**Cats: 1,504 cats**  
**Dogs: 361 dogs**

**Average length of stay**



**Cats: 12.2 days**  
**Dogs: 13 days**

**How these pets come into our care:**



**IN 2024, EVERY ANIMAL IN OUR CARE  
CAME FROM A FLORIDA COMMUNITY.**



By partnering with low-resource and overcapacity shelters throughout Florida, we are able to save animals who may have otherwise been euthanized. In 2024, we partnered with over 30 different organizations across Florida.



# Adoption Updates



## Robbie (Hiccup)

Robbie came to us from another shelter with a broken leg and positive for Feline Leukemia Virus.

*Robbie, who I renamed **Hiccup**, has had more of an impact on my life than I could have ever anticipated.*

*When the time came for me to pick my first furry friend, I knew I wanted to adopt and provide a home for a pet who really needed it. After looking at multiple shelters, I came across Hiccup at Friends of Strays and immediately knew he was the perfect pet for me. I work with individuals with limb loss and with Hiccup missing a limb, his story quickly became something I could share and talk about with my patients. At home, Hiccup is more active and loving as ever. When he doesn't have the zoomies, he is snuggling up next to me. The adoption process was smooth at Friends of Strays and they provided me with all the information I needed for Hiccup. When I went to Friends of Strays, I went to find a pet, but came home with a family member.*

**- Katie**



## Monarch (Bella)

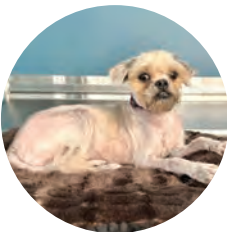
Monarch spent days running loose in the hot summer sun before she came to us.

*We adopted **Bella** (fka Monarch) 6 months ago. She has settled in and is a very playful girl. We had a DNA test done and she is 90% German shepherd. Bella loves puzzle toys, stuffed toys and her treat ball. She loves going on walks and is friendly toward others. Everyone says she is so beautiful and we would have to agree. We have been working with*

*her on some obedience training and she learns very quickly. Her favorite places to chill are our bed and the recliner.*

*Bella also enjoys going on car rides with us and did an amazing job when we had to evacuate for Hurricane Milton. We both work from home so she gets lots of attention throughout the day. We are so glad we adopted her because she brings joy to us every day.*

**-Roselle & Barton**



## Maple

Maple had been severely neglected and unsocialized when she came to us. We had to cut away pounds of matted fur.

*I never was a dog person until I took care of my friend's Shih Tzu. When their mom passed, I had Bandit for 2 years before he passed away of old age three years ago. I had always wanted another dog but I had never found the right little furball for me. Nothing clicked until I saw **Maple** in a picture and I believe*



*I was at the doorway when you guys opened up that next day to be able to go in and see her. I just knew she was my forever ride or die. She was so timid and scared and cowering and now she's just playful, delightful, and smart. She's just an adorable little fur ball and I love her so much. I just couldn't ask for a better dog, a better adoption. She's everything I hoped she would be and more. She just needed somebody to love her and I do.*

**- Natalie**



## Sophie

Sophie was a senior cat with a big personality who was skipped over because of her age.

*I adopted **Sophie** earlier in 2024 after inquiring about adopting an older cat. She was listed as 18 years old and I had noticed she was posted a few times on the Instagram over the course of a few months. She was kept in a separate room and was very timid and even tinier than I had anticipated in person but I knew I had to have her. The adoption process was quick, seamless and everyone involved was so friendly!*

*Since coming home with me, Sophie has been such an angel, she's the perfect mix of social and playful despite her older age. Anytime I leave the house I can't wait to come back home to see her. She loves looking out the window, sitting in on car rides, and drinking from the sink. She truly was the best thing to come out of 2024 and I can't imagine a world where Sophie and I don't coexist.*

**- Diana**

# MEOW Now Community Cats



**Corinna Powers**  
Assisted Trapping  
Manager



**Betsy VanderVoort**  
Self Trapping  
Manager



**Mia Shields**  
MEOW Now  
Specialist

In 2024, we streamlined our TNVR (Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return) services for community cats under the MEOW Now name, to simplify our offerings to the public and to honor the work MEOW Now did independently and now as a program of Friends of Strays.

We recategorized the former Pinellas Cats Alive! name to be the “Self Trapping” option under MEOW Now. Our direct work with caregivers to target entire colonies is now called “Assisted Trapping.” We are the only shelter in Pinellas County offering both of these options to the community!

**2,661**  
**Community Cats**  
altered, eartipped, vaccinated and returned



**1,007**  
Cats through  
Assisted Trapping



**415**  
Appointments  
with caregivers



**1,654**  
Cats through  
Self Trapping



**12**  
Cats reunited  
with owners





# Foster Program

In 2024, 856 pets spent the night in a foster home! Our foster families are vitally important to helping us save lives.



**170**  
Foster  
Homes



**103**  
Dogs or puppies  
stayed in foster



**753**  
Cats or kittens  
stayed in foster



**Zee Lewis-Harper**  
Foster Manager

# Medical Program



**4,223**  
Spay/neuter  
surgeries



**99%**  
Live release rate



**116**

Kitten Heroes  
participants



**27**

Dentals



**15**

Eye enucleations



**8**

Amputations

**Dr. Erik Pindar**  
Medical Director



**Jesse McCarrick**  
Medical Manager



## X-Ray Room

In 2024, we received an incredible gift: Cheryl Morris, a Friends of Strays supporter, funded a new X-Ray machine for our medical suite! After we moved to the Cat Box, one of our former “Almost Home” rooms at our original location was converted to house the equipment. This has made a huge impact on our medical resources, as we are able to do all needed x-rays “in-house!”



# Volunteer Program



**Mary Vretas**  
Volunteer Manager

From events to isolation care, doggy bath days to rescue transport, our volunteers play a critical role in helping us save lives each and every day. In 2024 we saw an uptick in people joining, and staying, with our volunteer program as well as more people interested in getting their Fear Free certification and joining our Happy Cats team for our fearful, anxious, or stressed cats!



**99**  
Volunteers



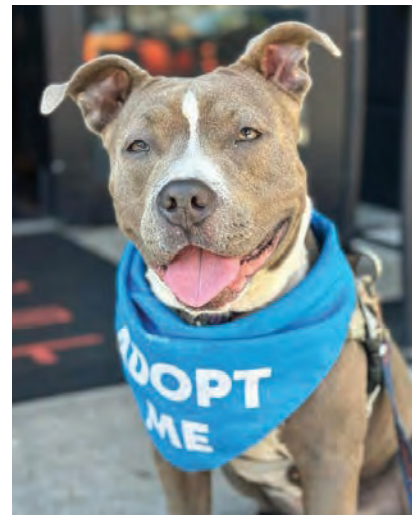
**4,193**  
hours



## Doggy Day Out

Our Doggy Day Out program is a popular opportunity for our community to help eligible dogs get a little break from the shelter for a few hours, and to see what their personalities are like outside the shelter environment!

Pictured here: Xena, Delilah, and Petunia, all who got to go on Doggy Day Out in 2024!



# Happy Cats



**Jax Barrett**  
**ACE Supervisor**

The Happy Cats program helps our shy or stressed cats feel more secure and learn to trust people. It is lead by Jax, Animal Care & Enrichment Supervisor, and includes a group of specially-trained volunteers who go through Fear Free certification, an educational course to help reduce fear, anxiety, and stress in our shelter pets while they stay with us. We had an increase of volunteers who joined the Happy Cats team last year. They do amazing work!

**Thank you to Happy Cats volunteers who spent 206 hours with our cats:**

**Tara Dankel, Steve Freeman, Vivian Gizowski, Cheryl Odonnell, Jacquie Ott, Elizabeth Purcell, Bobbi Siebold, Gail Stanfield, and Lisa Tuetken!**

## Cat Box Behavior Transformation



In 2024, we opened our Cat Box Adoption Center — a peaceful, thoughtfully designed space that transformed the experience for our adoptable cats. Previously, cats faced the stress of barking dogs, unfamiliar smells, and cramped quarters, often taking weeks to adjust, hiding or hissing, which made finding homes harder. The Cat Box changed everything. With quiet calm, larger roaming areas, and big windows to offer views, natural light, and sunbeams to bask in, our cats now relax, play, and confidently greet visitors. Adult cats are being adopted more quickly. Visitors love when our older kittens have the run of the room in the Purrfect Playcorner.

## Happy Cats Success Story: Ser Criston & Daemon



Ser Criston and Daemon endured a heartbreaking journey before finding their forever home. After their owner passed away, they spent months isolated in a condo with little human interaction, leaving them grieving and shut down when they arrived at Friends of Strays. With patience and compassion, the Happy Cats team provided gentle companionship, helping the boys slowly emerge from their shells. Their story took a joyful turn when an understanding adopter welcomed them both, committed to continuing their healing journey. Now, Ser Criston has blossomed into an affectionate love bug who can't get enough pets and snuggles in bed most nights, while Daemon, though still cautious, is making steady progress — and his adopter, Jean, is confident she'll win his heart in time. She sent us an update: "Ser Criston is a love bug. It took a couple days of hiding for him to come out to me for pets but now he can't get enough and sleeps most of the night in my bed. Daemon is still very shy. He has two favorite spots where I leave him alone and hope he's eventually going to warm up to me. I have started giving him treats at night and hope this will help but I believe in time I will win him over. Thank you for these babies."



# PHOTOS FROM 2024

## Alley Cats Bowling Tournament



Best Bowler Dave Segler, Jr. Miss & Miss Manatee with Dara Worthington



Oakhurst Veterinary Hospital Bowling Team



Alley Cats Bowling Tournament Awards



Dara announces raffle basket winners

## Cat Box Adoption Center Grand Opening



Donor Barbara Smith in her named room with Razzzy



Ribbon Cutting with St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce



Bonnie Schwartz and Dara



Dara with donor wall muralist Laura Thomas



Cat Box Adoption Center



Buddy Boy sunbathing



Cat Box Entrance

## Wags & Whiskers: Nightmare Before Catmas



Lance Eppley with FOS Board Chair Mo



Guests of honor Spots & Breanne & Zach Neely



FOS Donors Joe Beaulieu & Joan Hutchinson



Dara speaks on our lifesaving work during the gala



# Staff

## Leadership

Dara Worthington, CEO  
Dr. Erik Pindar, DVM Medical Director  
Mari Salls, Shelter Director  
Karen Van De Putte, Development Director

## Administrative

Sandra Oliva, Office Manager  
Jessica Salmond, Communications & Marketing Manager

## Fundraising

Claire Wray, Donor Relations Manager  
Jon Ziegler, Events Manager

## Programs

Krista Loveless, Assistant Shelter Director  
Adoption Counselors  
Aspen Bailey  
Olivia Gasparoni  
Kim Newsome  
Liz Stogner  
Zee Lewis-Harper, Foster Manager  
Corinna Powers, TNVR Manager  
Mia Shields, TNVR Specialist  
Mary Vretas, Volunteer Manager

## Medical

Jessica McCarrick, Medical Manager  
Destiny Moye, Lead Veterinary Technician  
Veterinary Technicians  
Joel Cooper  
Kristen Henderson  
Alexis Hiles  
Hayden Roskey, Surgery Technician

## Animal Care & Enrichment Team

Jax Barrett, ACE Supervisor  
ACE Specialists:  
Bella Halley  
Shannon Janus  
Jayden McMullen  
Ayreanna Muse  
Anna Randolph  
Neida Santana

# Board of Directors

Mo Eppley, Chair  
Benjamin J. Kirby, Vice Chair  
Alison Barlow, Secretary  
Sarah Penner, Treasurer  
Directors:  
Arin Greenwood  
Michael McKenny  
Eve Epstein-Ortiz  
Rosa Lopez  
Barry Rubin  
Cathy Unruh





**Friends of Strays Animal Shelter**  
2911 47th Ave. N  
St. Petersburg, FL 33714