

Founded in 1971 by Gertrude Decker and a courageous group of volunteers dedicated to the humane treatment of animals in Manatee County, the Humane Society of Manatee County first operated as a foster-based organization without a facility. On April 7, 1973, the organization received non-profit 501 (c)(3) status.

After many fund-raisers and a couple of “angels,” the humane society acquired its first facility (the Decker House) in 1978—what we now call the Cat Cottage. In 1986, the organization purchased the two-story Nautilus Shell Shop property next door. The kennels were added downstairs, and the upstairs remained an apartment that was rented out to help defray costs.

The Humane Society of Manatee County was now off and running! The adoption program was thriving, and the board of directors began looking outside their walls. In 2007, a fundamental shift occurred when the humane society evolved from being simply a no-kill shelter to adopting the mission “to lead Manatee County in creating a No-Kill Community.”

After some much-needed renovations, including a new roof, windows and air conditioning, the Humane Society of

Manatee County opened a Humane Alliance Model Spay/Neuter Clinic in 2009. The low-cost, high-quality spay/neuter clinic has performed more than 28,000 low-cost or free surgeries to date, drastically reducing the number of unplanned litters in our community.

Euthanasia rates at the county shelter began to drop. In 2011, the Humane Society of Manatee County entered into an agreement with Manatee County Animal Services and Gulf Shore Animal League to sterilize, vaccinate and microchip free-roaming cats. The TNR program has drastically reduced the euthanasia rate for cats in Manatee County.

Dogs and cats of all ages, shapes and sizes are accepted into the Humane Society of Manatee County’s Second Chance Adoption Program.

Going strong with the addition of on-site medical care, the Second Chance Adoption Program began taking in sick and injured animals, including heartworm positive dogs. The clinic began offering a heartworm prevention and treatment program at this time.

In November 2013, the purchase of the former Salvation Army store next door to the existing campus signaled the next big step. Effectively doubling the size of the organization’s facilities, the dream of opening of a newly expanded clinic became a reality on September 9, 2015.

The Humane Society of Manatee County is committed to leading Manatee County in fostering compassion and respect for animals through care, education and collaboration. The Humane Society of Manatee County actively collaborates with other animal welfare groups in our community to reduce euthanasia of animals as a means of population control.

The high-volume spay and neuter clinic performs more

than 6,000 surgeries per year, which continues to reduce the number of animals entering the shelters in Manatee County. Low cost/no cost spay and neuter surgeries and free vaccine clinics continue to be a core program in our veterinary clinic.

The shelter/Second Chance Adoption program places 1,000 animals in new homes each year.

Many of these animals had faced medical challenges, including much-needed surgeries, heartworm treatment or extraordinary medical care.

Our Pet Food Pantry continues to distribute in excess of 2,500 pounds of cat and dog food each year to financially challenged pet owners in Manatee County. The Humane Society of Manatee County and Turning Points also collaborate on stocking a pet food pantry at the Turning Points facility.

In addition to the many low cost or no cost services available at the



Rick Yocum, Executive Director of the Humane Society of Manatee County. Photo by Ezekiel Photography

Past - Present - Future

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veterinary clinic, the clinic is open to the general public, offering low-to-moderate cost veterinary services. The wellness program continues to grow and expand. A second veterinarian was added to the medical team in September 2016. The clinic has also added dental procedures and x-ray equipment to its services, meaning more animals can receive the quality medical care they deserve.

The increased demand for high quality, low-to-moderate cost veterinary care for cats and dogs in the community and the increasing animal population dictate that adding a third veterinarian to the medical team and expanding services are needed.

In 2017, 13,892 animals were served in the veterinary clinic, including 6,344 spay and neuter surgeries.

In 2019, for the third straight year, the Humane Society of Manatee County was chosen as a finalist in the non-profit segment of the Manatee County Chamber of Commerce Small Business Awards.

In October 2018, the Humane Society of Manatee County was selected as the Manatee Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Non-Profit. Two months earlier, in August 2018, Humane Society of Manatee County was again rated by Charity Navigator and received a coveted four-star rating for the fourth consecutive year. This rating clearly demonstrates Humane Society of Manatee County’s strong financial health and its commitment to accountability and transparency to the community and donor base. 🐾

The Humane Society of Manatee County is located at 2515 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8808. The Adoption Center is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.humanemanatee.org, or send an e-mail to info@humanesocietymanatee.org.

Open to the public, the Humane Society of Manatee County Veterinary Clinic is located at 2415 14th Street West in Bradenton and can be reached by calling 941-747-8808, Option #1. The veterinary clinic is open by appointment Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For additional information about the clinic, visit www.humanemanatee.org.

**By Rick Yocum, Executive Director,
Humane Society of Manatee County**