

Straybusting Adventures with Baark!

By Hope Nevins & Emily Watson

For our St Andrews School vocational experience we had the amazing opportunity to work with Shelley and Baark (Bahamas Alliance for Animal Rights and Kindness) to help spay or neuter dogs. This is a free service for strays and pet owners who cannot afford to pay for it themselves. Throughout the course of three days we have gained new knowledge and understanding of this amazing non-profit organization and the treatment of animals in this country.

On the first day of the vocational we went straybusting with Shelley in the South Beach community. We met lots of new faces, both dogs and humans. To begin, we visited a location with five potcakes that had to be spayed and neutered to avoid unwanted litters of puppies. Trapping the dogs humanely and lifting them in the van was a challenging but we were able to get the job done. We then continued down the street and met Ricardo, the interesting yet loving owner of two beautiful potcake puppies. We were able to take the pups for their first vaccinations and worming, another service Baark provides in addition to spaying, to prevent the spread of fatal puppy diseases. In the same neighbourhood we met 4 additional dogs that required Baark's assistance.

The following day we collected the dogs from the vet after their surgery. The dogs were all given wormer and vaccinations. Unfortunately, one puppy was suffering from jaundice caused by leptospirosis and had to be euthanized as he was going downhill rapidly. The dog was contaminated from the urine and feces of rats, this disease results in the yellowing of the skin and gums. This personally affects us both, and highlighted the importance of puppy shots!

During the course of our days we observed some poor conditions that dogs are kept in, including being chained, not fed properly, or having adequate shelter. We were not expecting to see this. However it was a surprise to see that these dogs can still be friendly despite what humans have done to them. It is heartbreaking to witness the human neglect that these poor dogs go through. However thanks to Baark and the Bahamas Humane Society, a lot of these dogs get the help that they need, whether it's rescue or working with their owners to improve their situation.

The last three days have been extremely fun even though we've been through a lot. Some aspects have truly broken our hearts, but thanks to Shelley and the BAARK team we know there is hope for other dogs. Shelley and other Baark volunteers give a new meaning to the term "dog lovers". We owe them a lot for what they spend their days doing without getting paid, it's truly inspiring and we hope one day we can be as empathic and caring as they are.