

HUMANE SOCIETY
of South Mississippi

2013 ANNUAL REPORT



Humane Society of South Mississippi
2615 25th Ave
Gulfport, MS 39501
228-863-3354
www.hssm.org

The mission of the Humane Society of South Mississippi is to save and enhance the lives of pets through cooperative and innovative approaches to adoption, spay/neuter, sheltering and community engagement.



The Humane Society of South Mississippi (HSSM) prides itself on stewardship and our ability to offer a variety of high-quality programs and services aimed at saving the lives of homeless pets in our community. HSSM consistently provides more animal services than the national average.



2x

more animals housed and cared for



56%

more adoptions



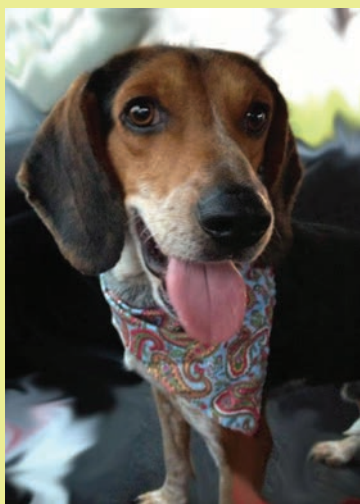
3x

more spay/neuter surgeries

*Compared to animal welfare organizations with similar budgets

About the Humane Society of South Mississippi

From humble beginnings in a World War II armory bunker, the Humane Society of South Mississippi has made great strides establishing itself as the largest animal welfare organization in Mississippi and a leader in the humane field nationwide.



“In 2012, no healthy, adoptable pet was euthanized at HSSM.”

***--Tara High,
HSSM Executive Director***

Ever since its founding in 1952, the Humane Society of South Mississippi (HSSM) has been an organization dedicated to bettering the welfare of the Mississippi Gulf Coast's pets.

We were then known as the Harrison County Humane Society and we were housed in an old World War II armory bunker with limited indoor space for housing pets.

We remained in that facility until 2006, when we moved into our 40,000 square foot, state-of-the-art facility.

Our current facility is home to 300 homeless and lost pets on any given day, as well as our Louise Fenner Claiborne Spay Neuter Clinic, BowWow Meow Boutique pet retail store, and Thrift Store.

Our facility was designed to present a friendly and welcoming environment for visitors and families looking for their new furry family member. Oversized sculptures and bright colors aid in creating an enjoyable environment in order to combat the perpetual image of the “pound.”

Back when we were housed in the “old shelter,” HSSM was only able to save 1 in every 4 pets that entered our care--meaning healthy and sick pets alike were facing untimely ends due to lack of space and resources.

However, just as our location has changed and improved, so has our ability to save lives.

“We are honored to say that in 2012, no healthy, adoptable pet was euthanized at HSSM,” said Executive Director, Tara High. “This is a first for our organization and a monumental achievement for anyone in animal welfare, but for a shelter in the Deep South, it is truly remarkable.”

HSSM is focused on growing our most effective life-saving programs and implementing new services, policies, and procedures in order to reach our goal of eliminating needless euthanasia of pets in South Mississippi by 2015.

We have made great strides already, but there is still work to be done. And HSSM is an organization devoted to achieving our goals.

Dear Valued Supporters,

This year, nearly 11,000 pets received high quality care and shelter thanks to you. Yes, YOU. Our dedicated staff and volunteers may have done the hands-on work, but your support is what enables us to do what we do here at HSSM.

We are not affiliated with any national or regional organization, so we have no "parent organization" to depend on. We do not receive government funding to support our lifesaving programs. So it is truly our supporters that fund our adoptions program, which placed over 5,000 pets in loving homes in 2012. It is you, our supporter who funds our life-saving Love Train program which saved over 1,100 lives by transporting them for adoption across the country. It is you who fund our low-cost spay/neuter program so that we can continue to see decreases in our unwanted, homeless pet population.

Thank you for helping us do what we do best--save lives. It means so much to me to work for an organization like HSSM, where every brick has been laid with the utmost care and every program or service offered exists for a life-saving reason.

I am touched when I walk down the halls and see our volunteers hard at work, knowing they are supporting us by donating their time and energy--without which we would be lost.

I am so glad you are reading this Annual Report, which will give you a brief glimpse of the progress achieved, the milestones reached, and the work yet to be done for the pets of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

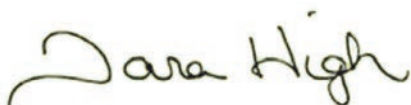
We reached a major milestone during 2012, one that has never before been done at HSSM--we did not euthanize a single healthy, adoptable pet for lack of space. And you made this possible.

But, there is still work to be done and lives to be saved. Although we saved every healthy pet, we lost the lives of 1,286 treatable pets. These are the pets that we are working so hard to save between now and 2015 in our Countdown to Zero initiative.

So, thank you for your support. And I hope you enjoy perusing some of HSSM's successes from 2012, which YOU made possible.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

--Mahatma Gandhi



Tara High, Certified Animal Welfare Administrator
HSSM Executive Director



2013 Board of Directors

Year Started	Officer	Director	Employer/Position (Business Affiliation)
2005	Executive Director	Tara High	HSSM Executive Director
2012	President	Ben Hunter	Marketing Consultant/The Focus Group
2012	Vice President	Jonathan Jones	Senior Vice President/Grand Biloxi
2012	Treasurer	Ann Phillips	AVP/Loss Share Manager/Han- cock Bank
2011	Secretary	Lori West	Youth Build Gulf Coast/Café Climb
2013		Victoria Chambers	Southeast Commercial
2010		Melanie Clark	Community Leader
2011		Phil Frisby	Pitcher Point Development
2012		Ellis Branch	Ellis Branch Realtor/Owner/ Broker
2012		Robyn Smith	Hard Rock Casino/Director of Entertainment
2010		Alan Jones	Financial Consultant/Vice Presi- dent at Merrill Lynch.
2013		Sunita Sailor	Director of Marketing/Boom- town Casino
2013		Jim Pitts	Community Leader
2013		Jeff Bertucci	Associate/Schwartz,Orgler and Jordan, PLLC
2013		Johnny Walton	Fox Everett/ Commercial Insur- ance Executive
2013		Jenny Elmore	K & J Elmore Properties
	Board Attorney	Mark Orgler	

2012: Countdown to Zero In Action

"Countdown to Zero: saving every healthy and treatable pet that enters our care by 2015"

The Humane Society of South Mississippi (HSSM) uses a lot of numbers to determine our success. We track outcomes, we watch trends, and we analyze statistics to ensure that our organization is running efficiently.

Why? Because every number that we crunch has an impact on the lives of the animals we serve. As we count the animals in our care or the number of spay/neuter surgeries performed, we remind ourselves of the true goal of our organization: to save more lives.

Our favorite number? Zero. In 2012, after 60 years of service to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, HSSM got our first taste of zero. We successfully eliminated the euthanasia of

healthy, adoptable pets in our care—for the first time ZERO pets lost their lives because of overcrowding and lack of space in the shelter.

That is why we spend so much time on the numbers. The more numbers we crunch and monitor, the better we can focus our most effective programs. It's all about reaching what we call our "Countdown to Zero" goal—saving every healthy and treatable pet that enters our care—and we are on our way to achieving this goal by 2015.

So here are some numbers—and you still may look at them and think "BORING!" But remember, every number represents a pet's life saved or impacted for the better.



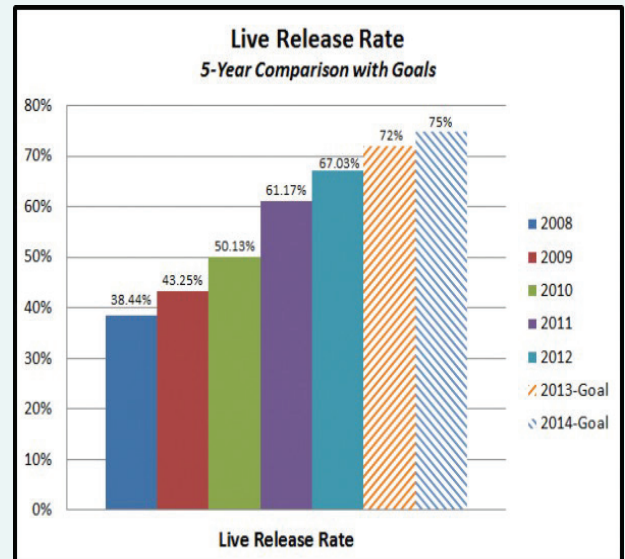
Live Release Rate

The best measure of our overall success as a lifesaving organization is just that—of the pets that come to us, just how many do we save? And the industry term for this measure is Live Release Rate (LRR).

As an open admission shelter (one which takes in all pets regardless of health and behavioral status), HSSM can accept that 25% of the pet population we serve will not be candidates for re-homing due to major medical issues or unsocial/aggressive temperaments. Therefore, HSSM's Countdown to Zero goal is to get to 75% LRR or better, saving all healthy and treatable pets.

Live Release Rate =
of pets saved / # of pets taken in

In 2012, HSSM continued on its 6-year stair-step increase in Live Release Rate, reaching our highest level yet at 67%*.



*LRR is calculated for dogs and cats only.

Number of Animals Cared For

10,805 lost and homeless pets entered HSSM's care in 2012. The majority of these were dogs and cats, but HSSM also cared for other species including birds, rabbits, guinea pigs, and more.

Our intake is much higher than it should be. Based on Harrison County's human population, HSSM should be taking in approximately 7,500 homeless and lost pets each year—but we have consistently taken in more than that.

You may be wondering, "Well, where do they all come from?" Half of HSSM's intake comes in from their owners who can no longer care for them for one reason or another, and the other half are stray or abandoned pets brought in through Animal Control or the public.

It is easy to see that South Mississippi has a pet overpopulation epidemic—but we are working to fix this (See Spay/Neuter Services and Low-Cost Pet Identification).

Adoptions

In 2012, HSSM found loving homes for **5,039** homeless pets in our community. HSSM prides ourselves in making quality matches and employs fun, creative and innovative adoption specials, events, and promotions in order to bring more people in to adopt pets.

Adoption is one of HSSM's most well-known programs, but it is not a stand-alone solution. As you can see, our community absorbs only half of the animals entering our care through adoptions, so HSSM has to be very creative in our alternative placements of pets who are not going to be able to find their homes here in South Mississippi (See Love Train).



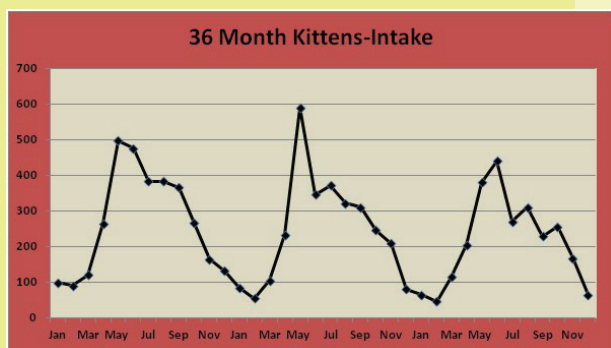
Spay/Neuter

One of the most effective means of reducing a disproportionately high pet population is spay/neuter. HSSM has been a long-time supporter and provider of affordable spay/neuter in South Mississippi.

HSSM's Louise Fenner Claiborne Spay Neuter Clinic performed **10,670** spay/neuter surgeries in 2012, bringing our grand total of surgeries performed to 70,000 since our clinic opened its current location in 2006.

In 2012, HSSM was the proud recipient of a \$48,200 grant from PetSmart Charities which allowed us to expand our FREE Trap-Neuter-Return services for feral/free-roaming/"Community" cats. With the support of this grant, HSSM doubled the number of Community cats fixed in 2011, with a total of 1,966 cats spayed/neutered, rabies vaccinated and returned to live out their lives naturally.

The effects of our spay/neuter efforts, particularly of Community cats, can easily be seen in the chart to the left which tracks cat/kitten intake over time.



Love Train

Taking more pets in than we should expect has forced HSSM to come up with alternative means to save lives. Love Train is one of HSSM's most unique and innovative programs for placement of excess adoptable pets. Love Train is a large-scale transport program, which takes 30-60 pets at a time to shelters across the country where they are all but guaranteed homes.

HSSM selects our partner shelters strategically—we have more difficulty adopting out large dogs so we seek out partner shelters who do not face this difficulty in order to find more of our large dogs loving homes.

An easy way to look at Love Train is using the economic model of supply and demand. Here, we have a surplus of adoptable pets—and a lack of demand for this surplus. However, believe it or not, there ARE communities along the East Coast or in the Midwest where spay/neuter ordinances and a culture of responsible pet ownership has created a shortage in adoptable pets. This is a golden opportunity for HSSM to save our pets by moving them to shelters where adoptive families are waiting for them.

Love Train saved **1,117** lives in 2012 alone using this simple model by taking our pets to communities where the demand for them exists.



Low-Cost Pet Identification

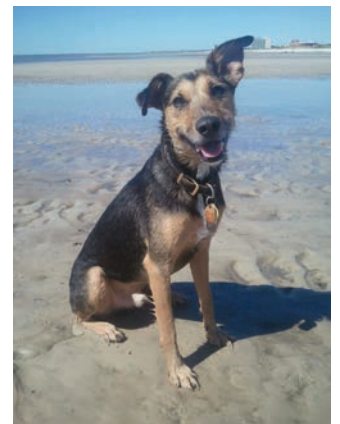
As mentioned earlier, half of the nearly 11,000 pets that entered HSSM's care in 2012 were strays picked up by animal control or members of the community. Many of these pets were obviously well cared for and most likely slipped out without their owners realizing it.

HSSM's return-to-owner services are effective, surpassing the national average of 12% with a return-to-owner rate of **25%**—meaning one out of every four stray pets entering our care is successfully reunited with their owners.

But imagine what HSSM could do if all—or even the majority—of these stray pets never even came to HSSM, or were much more easily returned to their owners? The time and money spent to

care for these stray pets could be instead devoted to treating more sick pets or increasing our Love Train efforts.

This is the reason for HSSM's "Tag 'Em!" South Mississippi" low-cost pet identification campaign. In 2012, owners could bring their pets and get a microchip and engraved ID tag for just \$7. The effects have already been felt.



Treating the Sick

HSSM is truly at a crossroads for the animals in our care. With nearly 11,000 animals temporarily calling HSSM home, illness is inevitable. Highly contagious, but easily treatable illnesses like Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) are spread easily from one animal to another, especially in a concentrated environment like HSSM's kennels.

Due to a lack of isolation space in HSSM's current facility, pets with URI constitute **1/3** of the total pets euthanized at HSSM—and the single biggest cause of euthanasia for shelter pets nationwide.

HSSM also encounters many litters of puppies and kittens too young for adoption. Both of these populations depend on the generosity and kindness of temporary foster families. These foster families provide housing, care and treatment so that sick pets and pets too young for placement can become ready for adoption into their forever homes.

HSSM's foster program is integral in raising our Live Release Rate (LRR), but it cannot tackle the issue of highly contagious but easily treatable illnesses alone. HSSM is in dire need of more and better isolation space for sick pets. This need is the basis for our efforts to build a Second Chance Ward which will house 51 additional sick pets, in a completely separate building specifically designed to aid in the treatment and recovery of sick pets.

1,471 lucky pets have their foster parents to thank for their second chances in 2012.



Volunteers

Of course, HSSM could not do all that we do without help from our wonderful volunteers. HSSM has an impressive volunteer database, filled with the names of 1,032 people able and willing to give their time to assist in HSSM's lifesaving mission.

Volunteers are an integral part of the HSSM team, assisting with day-to-day operations as well as giving an extra hands-on touch to the animals in our care. Volunteer opportunities are not limited to just walking dogs and socializing cats, however—volunteers can and do help with adoptions, animal care activities, office work, fundraising, and special events.

In 2012, HSSM's volunteers logged **16,316** hours of service.



Shopping to Support Our Mission

Our beautiful, 41,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility is not only home to 300 homeless and lost pets on any given day, it also plays home to two stores whose sales support HSSM's lifesaving mission.

HSSM's Thrift Store accepts donations of gently used clothing, household items, furniture, toys, and more. In turn, these items are sold to financially support HSSM.

In 2012, HSSM's Thrift Store generated **\$150,794.38** in revenue. This amount essentially pays for HSSM's cost of operations (power, water, etc.) and helps us ensure that any direct monetary donations have a direct lifesaving impact.

HSSM's Thrift Store also directly helps pet owners in the community by offering low-cost food and pet supplies, giving struggling families an opportunity and a resource to keep their

pets when they fall on hard times, rather than surrendering them to HSSM.

HSSM's BowWow Meow Boutique is our retail pet supply store. The BowWow Meow Boutique offers the latest in collars, leashes, bowls, apparel and more for the pampered pet. Sale proceeds support HSSM's programs, but the bigger goal for the BowWow Meow Boutique is in building stronger pet-owner bonds. Adopters receive 10% off their entire purchase on the day of adoption and spending time with their new pet shopping for just the right collar, leash and toy can really help lay the foundation for a strong relationship.

The BowWow Meow Boutique's sales totaled **\$119,553** in 2012.



2012: Milestones & Memories

In 2011, HSSM finished second in the nation in the ASPCA \$100K Challenge—bringing home over \$50,000 in prizes by saving 2,183 lives in three months. The Challenge taught us to push our boundaries, to make adoption fun, and to invite the community in to help make a difference in the lives of homeless pets.

In 2012, we did not compete in a national contest, but we did take what we learned in those three months and we built on it in order to save more lives. Here are a few of the highlights from an amazing year.

January 2012: Countdown to Zero Adopted

HSSM finished 2011 with a Live Release Rate of 61%—an achievement so inspiring, it spurred an entire initiative. HSSM's Board of Directors voted to adopt the Countdown to Zero initiative, which aims to eliminate the needless euthanasia of healthy and treatable pets in South Mississippi by 2015.

March 23, 2012: Peanut Reunited

Peanut was a little scruffy dog adopted from HSSM in 2006. On one tragic day in 2008, little Peanut escaped from his home. His family had looked for him tirelessly for two years before giving up—until he found his way to HSSM and through the magic of Microchipping, was able to be reunited with his loving family!

March 30-31, 2012: MEGA Results

HSSM was honored to be one of 224 animal shelters nationwide to participate in the ASPCA's first-ever Mega Match-A-Thon adoption weekend! A line formed at HSSM's doors on March 30 and 31 at 10am as we stayed open until midnight to SAVE MORE LIVES! In the end, HSSM made 146 great matches!

April 12, 2012: Karaoke for A Cause

HSSM worked with local bars and restaurants to host a series of karaoke fundraisers! Fun was had by all as friends donated to force their friends to sing, all to raise money to save homeless pets!

April 19, 2012: Sierra Found Her Forever Home

In a letter circulated hundreds of times on Facebook, (see Sierra's Story p. 14), Executive Director Tara High sought a special home for a special dog.

May 10, 2012: Double Cat-Pacity at HSSM

In the middle of what we call "Kitten Season," we found ourselves at double capacity for cats and kittens. Our board room was converted into housing for kittens and we called for help from the community to place at least 80 cats into foster or forever homes—and the public responded wonderfully, coming out of the woodwork to save lives!

Peanut-reunited after 2 years thanks to his microchip



June 20, 2012: A Dozen Chihuahuas

HSSM took in 14 Chihuahuas pups rescued from less-than-ideal conditions in a George County, MS home.

July 6, 2012: 4 Hours for FREEdom

We found ourselves over capacity again, so we hosted a 4-hour fee-waived adoption event in honor of our country's birthday! Media outlets from all over picked up the story and resulted in 112 adoptions...in JUST four hours!

July 10, 2012: Stone County Puppy Mill Bust

HSSM cooperated in the rescue of nearly 60 Shih Tzus, Poodles, Chinese Cresteds, and Yorkies from deplorable conditions in a Stone County puppy mill. These dogs were being kept on concrete slabs in the blazing heat with barrels as their only shelter. They were bred repeatedly so their puppies could be sold at a local flea market.

July 20, 2012: Adoption Day for the Stone County Rescues

It took HSSM staff and volunteers just 10 days to provide necessary medical treatment and hands-on care to the dogs rescued from the Stone County puppy mill. A line formed starting at 6pm the day before adoptions began and 60 dogs found homes—including many of HSSM's other adoptable pets!

August 25-26: Hurricane Isaac

HSSM staff members receive FEMA training in order to be able to appropriately respond when a tropical threat enters the Gulf. Upon Hurricane Isaac's approach, HSSM staff flew into automatic emergency mode, executing effectively and efficiently. All 179 adoptable pets in HSSM's care were transported out of harm's way. HSSM held a public microchip and rabies clinic to ready owned pets for the storm. 450 pets were vaccinated and microchipped during the two day clinic.

September 6, 2012: Helping Our Neighbors

Because of our successful transport prior to Hurricane Isaac, HSSM had an abundance of empty kennels. Meanwhile, our neighboring shelter in Jackson County was struggling. So HSSM extended an invitation to take some of their adoptable pets. This is what we hope is the beginning of a wonderful friendship between our organizations!



September 10, 2012: The NEW hssm.org

HSSM's website had been in dire need of a makeover, as browsing adoptable pets online has become a more common source for people looking for pets. With funds won in the ASPCA \$100K Challenge, hssm.org got a complete makeover and now features a real-time online kitty play cam, viewer-friendly features and design, and a Pet Alert program to help adopters find the perfect pet for them!

November 2012: Food & Adoption Drive

HSSM partnered with local Soup Kitchen, Feed My Sheep to host "Help Homeless People. Help Homeless Pets" food and adoption drive. Adopters could pick their price to adopt with any donation from Feed My Sheep's needs list.

December 14-December 25: 12 Strays of Christmas

HSSM hosted our first interactive adoption special in order to get to our goal of 67% Live Release Rate. Each day featured a different special centered on saving more lives, encouraging community members to visit our Facebook page in order to see the next day's adoption special. The fun and interesting promotions and events concluded in 250 pets with new, loving homes.

December 31: Our (First) Dream Came True

At the close of business on December 31st it became official: For the first time in our organization's history, HSSM completed a year without euthanizing a single healthy, adoptable pet. This is a monumental achievement for any shelter, but for us it is just the beginning. We celebrated briefly and then got back to work to save even more pets in 2013 and beyond.

Sierra's Story

The message below was posted to facebook and circulated hundreds of times.



A message from Tara High, HSSM Executive Director:

Please take a minute to read this story about a very special dog who is currently looking for a home at HSSM:

This is Sierra. She is a 2-year-old Blue Heeler Mix.

I came to know Sierra under fairly unique circumstances. It was during our Mega Adopt-A-Thon a few weeks ago and things were going great! More than 40 animals had been adopted that morning alone and everything was running smoothly.

Even better was that we had so many wonderful volunteers that we were making efforts to walk each and every dog in the shelter.

When Sierra's turn came, she was eager to get out...so eager she slipped her lead and headed due North along busy Hwy

49. The worried volunteer ran inside, out of breath, and told me a dog had gotten away from him, so I jumped in my car with a staff member, saying "These things don't usually end well."

We both sat in silence, considering our odds and silently hoping the best. As we approached a corner just 4 short blocks north of the shelter, we spotted one of our staff members who had taken off running after Sierra when she had slipped her lead.

Panting in the hot sun, he gestured across the street, "She went that way". We sighed a slight sigh of relief as we realized Sierra had actually taken a turn off of busy Hwy 49 into a quieter residential neighborhood. Little did we know that's where the real work would begin.

We circled the small 4-block-square area time after time, at first gathering clues from people sitting on porches about which way she had gone. But the trail soon grew cold.

We ran across another staff member and a car full of volunteers assisting in the search and stopped to compare notes, when suddenly one of the staffers shouted, "A dog! There!"

So off we went. One staffer on foot, us in the car trying to cut this dog off before it headed back towards 49. That's when I saw her.

The very color of the dust that surrounded her but with the most beautiful, soulful eyes...eyes that glanced concernedly around as we approached her...and her four puppies.

Sierra had run, and run like the wind, directly back to her beloved home and the puppies she thought she had lost forever.

After some discussion with the family that had surrendered her for "Escaping from the yard" (which was enclosed by a shoddy, chain-link fence with a 3-foot-wide hole at the bottom of one side), they decided not only to give Sierra back to HSSM, but three of her puppies as well.

The family had grown attached to one of her puppies in particular, and after some sweet talking, allowed us to take him and have him fixed, vaccinated, and microchipped as well, with the promise that we would return him.

On our ride back to the shelter, Sierra relaxed, both exhausted from her adventures and relieved to have her puppies back with her.

Her puppies each went on to be adopted by loving homes, and what you see here is one of the pictures taken of Sierra's last day with her pups.

This loving, devoted, intelligent girl deserves her shot at a lifetime full of love...can we work together to give Sierra's story a happy ending?

I encourage you to share her story, as it is the story of so many adult dogs who find their way to shelters across the country. Although many do not have beautiful endings. We can change this, not just for Sierra, but for every dog.

Please, if you have room in your home and your heart for Sierra or another one of the great pets at HSSM, give us a call at 228-863-3354 ext. 115."

Although a touching plea for a special dog, Sierra still remained at HSSM for weeks after the note was posted on Facebook. But then, a miracle. A family came to HSSM inquiring about her, asking if she had been adopted yet. In fact, Sierra had come down with an all-too-common Upper Respiratory Infection (or doggie “cold”) and needed a foster home before she could even be adopted.

We explained this to the family and they still were eager to take her home. One of our standard questions when foster parents offer to take home contagiously ill pets is, do you have any other pets at home?

“Yes. We have a puppy we adopted a few weeks ago from here. One of Sierra’s puppies.”

Can you imagine a happier ending to Sierra’s story? She not only got a home, but she found a home along with one of her beloved puppies who she risked so much for.

It is dogs like Sierra that remind us every day why we do what we do here at HSSM. And we thank you for your support, which enables us to create Happily Ever Afters for so many homeless pets.



2012: Financials

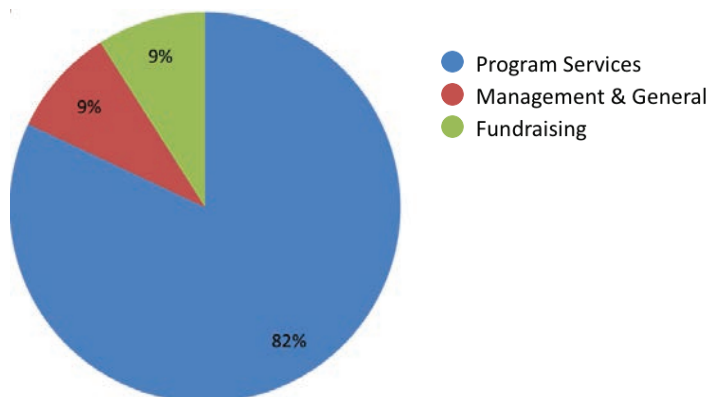
HSSM is a highly efficient organization which goes to great lengths to reduce our administrative costs so that the majority of funds can be focused on our lifesaving programs.

We provide over 30,000 animal services each year, operate an on-site spay/neuter clinic and two stores all in a budget of approximately \$2.6 million each year. Compared to other organizations with similar budgets, HSSM cares for more homeless pets, provides more spay/neuter surgeries, adopts out more pets, and operates a facility nearly 8 times the size of the average.

HSSM reliably receives high rankings according to national charity-ranking organizations such as GuideStar and Charity Navigator.

HSSM depends on the support of our local community to provide the highest quality services to the animals entrusted to us.

Expenses By Category





Humane Society of South Mississippi
2615 25th Ave
Gulfport, MS 39501
228-863-3354
www.hssm.org