

Happenings

NEWSLETTER

Paws for Peace Kennel

If you follow the news, you have probably heard a lot about comfort animals recently. Comfort dogs from across the country showed up to support students in Parkland after the deadly shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in March and right here in Orlando on the first anniversary of the Pulse shooting last summer. The canine therapists were also in Michigan as more than 150 young women read their statements at the sentencing hearing of Larry Nassar, the former USA Gymnastics team doctor convicted of decades of sexual abuse. Courts throughout the U.S. are employing comfort dogs to lower anxiety. You can even find them in many airports to ease the fears of nervous flyers.

While these dogs have hours of training to serve, many studies show that pets—with no special training—provide many of the same benefits. Being with a pet can lessen stress-related issues such as cortisol, blood pressure, and heart rate. They can reduce our anxieties and fears.

These facts are particularly important to us at Harbor House because domestic violence victims are dealing with more fear and anxiety than most of us can imagine. One of those fears is often that their abuser will harm or kill their pet. Many who come to us have already faced that reality. That is why Harbor House opened the Paws for Peace Kennel on the campus of our emergency shelter in 2012. When people are being abused in a home, 88% of the time the pets are being abused as well. No vulnerable family member should ever be left behind with an abuser.

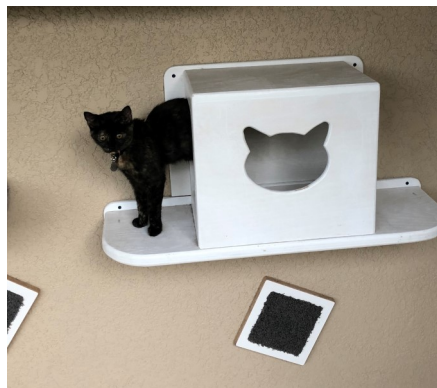
When a pet first moves into our kennel, they are kept in a quarantined area for 24-48 hours until their person can locate their vaccination records. During this time, we also

look for signs of any communicable illnesses like kennel cough. If the animal is not vaccinated or records cannot be accessed, Harbor House staff works with local veterinary offices to get the pet up to date.



Above: The entrance to the Paws for Peace Kennel on the campus of Harbor House's emergency shelter.

Below: A kitten enjoys her play time at the kennel.



While service animals are the only non-humans allowed in the emergency shelter, residents have full access to visit their pets in the kennel. There is space where they can take the pet out and sit or lay with them or take them outside to play and get some fresh air. Most of the pets staying at the kennel have been dogs and cats, however, Harbor House does accept other pets including birds, fish, iguanas and hamsters.

When Kim* arrived at our emergency shelter, she was very worried about her dog, Mocha*, a chocolate pit bull that she had to leave behind with her abusive husband when she fled. He had hurt the dog before, and she feared what might happen to Mocha without her there. Once she realized Harbor House has a kennel where Mocha could be near her and safe, she wanted to go get her immediately.

Our Kennel Director got in touch with a Harbor House advocate who works closely with the Orlando Police

Department to arrange for an officer to escort Kim and the Director to her house to retrieve Mocha.

An officer met the two women at Kim's former house the next day. Luckily, her husband was not there at the time. They believed he had hurt Mocha after Kim left. The dog had no visible wounds, but she yelped when they tried to lift her into the truck and was especially sensitive when her back was gently touched.

The Kennel Director took Mocha to be checked out at the

Message from the CEO, Michelle Sperzel

January marked a year that I've been at Harbor House. So much happened in those 12 months, not just at Harbor House but landmark moments for violence against women. In the era of #MeToo and #TimesUp, there's a renewed sense of urgency to address and end violence against women and girls. For many women, like myself, there's a keen awareness of a major shift in attitude when it comes to gender, treatment of women in the workplace, and sexual dynamics, but we are still waiting for the spotlight to shine on domestic violence.

I am optimistic that the movement will grow. We have momentum each time someone wakes up and says, "I can do something about violence in my community." We are in a moment when people are not only speaking differently about gender violence, but they are finally listening. We are no longer the only voices that speak up when we hear "boys will be boys - just deal with it." We are not the only ones who are speaking out on behalf of survivors. More people are saying, "believe her." If you are reading this,

you are an advocate in the movement! By being a part of the Harbor House community, you are listening to survivors and supporting an organization that is on the frontlines. Collectively, we are saying "NO MORE!"

Changing mindsets and increasing awareness is hard, but success has been seen on other deadly issues. We stopped whispering the word "cancer" a long time ago. But do you remember when breast cancer was something no

in the pets, children, family members, co-workers, friends of the survivor, law enforcement, and bystanders. Social justice movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp work, and it's long overdue for domestic violence. I am asking you to get involved. Join us as we continue to work with survivors and their children. Help us raise awareness about domestic violence and talk about the impact it has on our community.

We can start our own hashtag:

#ItTakesCourage

#ItTakesCourage. It does. It takes courage to say no more, to advocate, to respond to a domestic violence call,

one spoke about because you don't say "breast" in polite conversation? This awareness was fueled by advocates and family members whose lives changed when someone they loved got cancer.

Domestic violence statistics are sobering. Every day, on average, three or more women are killed in the United States by their husbands or boyfriends. The number of related deaths is even higher when you factor

to listen to a friend, to call a crisis hotline. And it takes courage to leave everything you have just to be safe. It takes courage to stand up for what you believe in and stand against social injustice. I look forward to seeing you at Paws for Peace, responding to or sharing a post on social media, volunteering, leading a Conversation of Courage, or attending the Purple Door Luncheon.

Thank you for your courage.

Young Professionals Board

The Young Professionals Board of Harbor House started in January 2018 with 21 members. Harbor House Board Members Riva Dumeny of AmWINS Group, Inc. and Imran Malik of Malik Law PA co-chair the new committee whose members range in age from 21 to 40.

The Young Professionals Committee is an organization of young adults committed to promoting the works of Harbor House and becoming leaders in the community through collective action, including volunteer service, social fundraising for Harbor House, and advocating for survivors. The YP

Group taps into the energy and creativity of young professionals, utilizing their skills to benefit Harbor House.

Through the Young Professionals, Harbor House addresses its sustaining interests—to ensure that succeeding generations understand, value, and take part in elimination of domestic abuse, stalking, and dating violence. In addition, the Young Professionals Board provides young Central Floridians with the opportunity to fulfill their personal call to service.

The objectives of the group include

building networks and raising awareness among young professionals, increasing the volunteer network, engaging volunteers, planning and executing YP fundraising and networking events, supporting Harbor House special events and fundraising activities, and providing feedback from the young professional community to the Harbor House Board of Directors.

The first awareness and fundraising event hosted by the Young Professionals Board is Handbags for Hope on May 10. See Page 3 for more details.

Paws for Peace Walk



Tails are wagging in anticipation of the 8th Annual Paws for Peace Walk—a fun and leisurely stroll for pets, their families, and friends to raise awareness about domestic abuse and its effect on pets and their owners. The walk benefits the Paws for Peace Kennel on-site at our emergency shelter.

Make plans to join us at Blue Jacket Park on Saturday, April 21 at 9 am. Check in and day of registration open

at 8 am. You can sign up online now for \$25 and receive a t-shirt and doggie bandana. Kids under 12 are free.

Bring the whole family for a morning of fun with yoga with your pet, activities for you and your dog, face painting, a bounce house, and more!

We have also added a silent auction and pop-up shops this year.

We walk because:

- *48% of survivors delay leaving an abusive situation for fear their pets will be harmed.
- *88% of pets living in domestic violence homes are abused.
- *100% of the proceeds of the walk funds will service survivors and their pets staying at Harbor House.

A big thank you goes out to our event sponsors: SeaWorld, WKMG, Sand Lake Animal Clinic, Wells Fargo, Orlando Health, Massey Services, Inc., Ted Maines Interiors, Clear Channel Outdoor, 105.9 Sunny FM and Macbeth Studio.

You can sign up for the walk at www.harborhousefl.com/paws. Be sure to share your pictures of the fun day on social media and use the hashtags #PawsforPeace and #PeaceLovePaws. We can't wait to see you and your furry friends there!



Paws for Peace Kennel

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vet's office. X-rays revealed no serious injuries, but Mocha was given pain medication and updated vaccinations.

After about a month in shelter, Kim had found work and a place where she and Mocha could live. She was able to get her car back when her abuser was arrested. Kim and Mocha are now happy and safe together.

Harbor House has plans to make

improvements to the kennel for the safety and comfort of the animals and their people, just like Mocha and Kim. Some of the simple enhancements include adding indoor/outdoor carpets and pet friendly furniture to the indoor spaces. Outside we want to create more shade and play space by adding a canopy and comfortable seating. We want to make the dog runs safer by adding shade, shelter, gravel, and

kennel flooring. Having comfortable space where they can heal and bond is healthy for the pets and the people at Harbor House.

If you are interested in supporting the kennel improvements, please participate in the Paws for Peace Walk or contact Michelle at msperzel@harborhousefl.com to make a monetary donation.

Handbags for Hope



Join the Harbor House of Central Florida Young Professionals Board at Handbags for Hope on

Thursday, May

10 at The Abbey. We'll be serving up cocktails, light hors d'oeuvres, and a classy selection of new and gently

used handbags available for purchase and silent auction.

General admission is \$25 before May 7 or \$35 at the door. A limited number of VIP tickets are available for \$75 and include early shopping, a champagne toast, and swag bag!

VIP shopping begins at 5:30 pm, and general admission is at 6:30 pm. The Abbey is located at 100 S. Eola Drive, #100 in Orlando. Purchase tickets

online at www.harborhousefl.com/HandbagsforHope.

All proceeds will benefit the Harbor House Children's Program.

Purse donations are now being accepted. Contact Gabrielle at gdinardo@harborhousefl.com or 407-703-2890 to donate purses for the event and for information on sponsoring Handbags for Hope.

GLASS Leads the Way

Earlier this school year, Harbor House launched an exciting new program called GLASS (Girls, Leaders, Sports, and STEAM). The program includes workshops on health and healthy relationships, sports, STEAM, and leadership topics. GLASS teens teach younger girls on various leadership, sports, STEAM, and life skills topics. Members also work together throughout the year on a professional development series, where the teens choose topics on



which to receive training and advice from guest leaders, ranging from goal setting to women's empowerment.

GLASS recently had its first Leader to Leader event where the teens connected with female business and community leaders. The girls spent the day with women from Orlando Police Department, National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), and Harbor House. One GLASS girl said of the event, "Today showed me I can succeed in male-dominated fields. There are more options available to me."

Summer Fun Supply Drive

Do you remember what summer break was like when you were a kid? Sure, the first few days were exciting with no alarm clocks and no rushing to get to school. But after a few days, you probably missed seeing your friends and quickly grew bored. Imagine if you were staring at the long, hot summer ahead of you from inside an emergency shelter.

When school is out, the shelter is filled with kids all day every day. You can help us keep them active and entertained by donating supplies that will make this their best summer ever!

Play is a universal language that lets kids be kids and connect with others, making new friends and feeling "normal".

We have included a few suggestions here, but feel free to get creative. The only thing we ask is that you do not give any toy guns or other violent toys. Get your friends and coworkers involved in collecting supplies to help

our kids be kids for one more summer.

Once you've collected the items, contact us at 407-703-2890 or donate@harborhousefl.com to arrange for a donation drop off. Thank you!



Helping Hands

Do you have a group of friends, coworkers, civic association, or faith-based organization that wants to get involved at Harbor House? We have many volunteer opportunities available for groups that want to lend a hand.

Your group can choose what fits your schedule, skills, talents, and interests. Some ideas include serving dinner in shelter, entertaining residents and their children with crafts or games, helping with landscaping and maintenance, or providing professional services such as hair cuts or manicures. Get creative—we can't wait to hear your ideas too!

If you are interested, please contact Darlene at 407-703-2866 or dkaiser@harborhousefl.com to schedule a date.

Stay in the Know

