

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Crisis At Humane Society Prompts VI Community Foundation To Step In

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There's a crisis at the Humane Society of St. Thomas. As has been reported, the organization was stripped of its non-profit status by the IRS, causing it to lose major donors who won't give money because the tax benefits are no longer there. That's when the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) stepped in to lend a hand, and is now accepting donations for the St. Thomas Humane Society that are tax deductible "to the fullest extent of the law," according to a press release issued by the foundation.

Ray Szymanski, treasurer for the Humane Society of St. Thomas board, recently spoke to [Non Profit Quarterly](#) about the situation, saying that the Christmas season is not a good time for the group to lose its tax-exempt status.

"This is a horrible time, during the holidays," Szymanski told the site. "Granted, we should have had our returns in, and we feel horrible about that."

"We knew we were behind," Szymanski admitted.

To help, CFVI is encouraging donors to give liberally with the confidence that all funds will go directly to the Humane Society.

"It's one of my favorite times of the year, and it truly is the season of giving," CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown said. "I hope people feel inspired to give generously and can do so with full confidence. It is an honor for CFVI to do our part to ensure that the Humane Society can continue their invaluable service to the community."

As for the Humane Society of St. Thomas, the non-profit said that one IRS office had approved an extension through November 15, by which date the Humane Society had already filed all of its delinquent documents. However another IRS office was not made aware of the extension and stripped the nonprofit of its status. Work is being done to reinstate the organization, but it's not clear how long it will take.

Szymanski, however, is hoping for swift action.

"We were hoping to have a response by December," he explained. "I'm calling them weekly. I called them twice this week," he said. "They're working through it as fast as they can [but] I think it's already affecting us. People have said, 'We can't donate to you right now'. We feel horrible right now. Horrible."

Those interested in donating to the Humane Society of St. Thomas through CFVI should write checks payable to "CFVI" with "Humane Society of St. Thomas" in the memo section. Donations may also be made via credit card through PayPal by going [here](#) or by calling CFVI at 340-774-6031.

Szymanski thanked CFVI for its support.

"The Humane Society appreciates the service and expertise CFVI is providing to assist us while we resolve the issue regarding our tax-exempt status," he said. "Bringing together the strengths of CFVI and the Humane Society, we believe the shared vision of creative education initiatives for the children in our Virgin Islands community can be realized more effectively."

"Additionally, we believe there are operational and administrative synergies that both organizations will benefit from, including as an example, the generous support CFVI has offered as a short-term fiscal sponsor," Szymanski concluded.

Image Credit: *House Cats Central*