

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Grant Of \$100,000 Awarded To St. Croix Animal Welfare Center By Randolph H. Knight Charitable Foundation

VIC News / **Published On June 06, 2018 10:16 AM /**

Staff **June 06, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- The St. Croix Animal Welfare Center (SCAWC) announced on Monday a grant award of \$100,000 from the Randolph H. Knight Charitable Foundation. The grant monies, to be disbursed over the next 2 years, will serve to strengthen the existing low-cost/no-cost spay neuter program, with an emphasis on community cats through our TNVR programs (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return), according to the release.

"Although the St. Croix Animal Welfare Center has struggled with limited resources, it has demonstrated a resilient commitment to provide outstanding care to St. Croix's animals.

This \$100,000 grant will assist the Animal Welfare Center to advance its initiatives in no-cost/low-cost spaying and neutering, and TNVR (Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Release) for the island's community cat colonies. The St. Croix Animal Welfare Center is to be highly commended for its progress in making a positive impact on reducing animal overpopulation," stated RHK Charitable Foundation Trustee, Randy Knight.

According to the release, despite massive devastation from hurricane Maria, the St. Croix Animal Welfare Center (SCAWC) has been fully operational in a temporary location since the beginning of this year. As of May 31st, even without an animal control contract or associated funding, the SCAWC has taken in over 1200 stray/unwanted/abandoned animals this year.

In 2015, the SCAWC began to add new and strengthen existing life-saving programs, choosing a pro-active approach to reducing the pet overpopulation issues plaguing our island. TNVR, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter, Community Wellness services, and increasing adoptions are some of the ways the SCAWC is proactively combating pet overpopulation and animal neglect and abandonment.

The SCAWC has had trap/neuter/release (TNR) program for community cats for many years but with a dedicated veterinarian has been able to now increase those services. Through collaborative efforts with other rescue groups and individual cat caregivers the number of community cats receiving free spay/neuter and health checks has increased significantly. TNVR services are now available Monday, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and are FREE. The SCAWC encourages the St. Croix community to take advantage of these services, according to the release.

The SCAWC's Community Clinic is one of its most impactful new programs. This program provides low-cost, outpatient care to owned animals, helping keep pets healthy and in their homes. Over 1200 families have already visited the Community Clinic in 2018 to use these services, most never having taken their pet to a veterinarian in the past. By assuring that our community has access to affordable pet care and helping individual pet owners to keep their pets healthy and happy in their homes, the rate of abandonment due to illness or neglect will decrease. The result is fewer animals coming into the shelter unwanted.

Adoption has always been at the forefront of the SCAWC's life-saving initiatives. Recent increased emphasis on local adoptions has resulted in more animals being placed on island. The SCAWC's pet transfer program is also growing and assures that animals that cannot find homes on island have an opportunity to be placed in animal rescue groups stateside that have a shortage of adoptable pets. Our new adoption center (the Pet Place) in La Grande Princesse is a welcoming and playful experience. All summer long there is no adoption fee for adult dogs!

The grant from the Randolph H. Knight Foundation will fund Spay/Neuter surgeries for TNVR and for community animals in need and will kickstart an innovative community outreach effort for community cat services. This funding allows the SCAWC to target and focus on areas that will have the biggest impact on reducing pet overpopulation. With the resources made possible from this grant – including traps, spay/neuter vouchers, promotion and planning – our efforts will have a much faster and visible impact on community cat populations and allow us to reach a high enough rate of sterilization to

quell population growth. The efforts will assure a humane reduction in community cat populations while still protecting the public, the cats and local wildlife. The returns of TNVR programs are plentiful: fewer and healthier free-roaming cats; lower intake and euthanasia; better use of limited shelter resources; increased goodwill and volunteer involvement and of course, saved lives!

The St. Croix Animal Welfare Center was grateful for the confidence that the Randolph H. Knight Foundation has in the organization. The release said the foundation looks forward to making a positive impact on the pet overpopulation problems of St.Croix.

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