



## THE WELCOME MATTERS – Improving the Experience

AT 10 P.M. ON A MONDAY NIGHT, a large cargo van pulls in at SPCA Tampa Bay to unload a transfer of animals. Anxious dogs already housed at the shelter watch the van pull past the gate and stop in an outdoor parking area. The dogs pick up the scents of newcomers immediately.

On either side of the van is a row of already-occupied dog kennels. As members of our transfer team open the doors of the cargo van, barking begins and quickly becomes deafening. The arriving dogs are greeted with a flurry of new smells and a growing cacophony of barks – some friendly, some alarming.

Staff members open each of the 13 travel crates – one at a time – with caution. It's a 300-foot walk from the van to the kennels so each dog must be leashed before it can be unloaded from the van. Some dogs resist, pulling hard against the lead. The arriving dog could be desperate for a potty break after its long journey or determined to greet the dogs already housed at the shelter. It's a stressful scene – loud and busy – for the arriving dogs, for the kennelled dogs, and for staff members.

That day, 13 dogs wrapped up an 11-hour journey from an over-crowded municipal shelter in Louisiana. They were frightened, tired, and unsure where they were headed. Their arrival at SPCA Tampa Bay was likely a stressful experience.

Animal transfers like that happen several times each week, from partner shelters around the region. Studies have shown that shelter dogs have a higher level of the stress hormone cortisol than owned pets. This level is often much higher in a dog's first two days in the shelter, making the animal more susceptible to illness and increasing unhealthy coping behaviors.

There are some inherent stressors of shelter life that we cannot eliminate, like the scents and sounds of other animals. But we can change an animal's welcome to our campus by easing its first steps off that transfer van.



Your new SPCA Tampa Bay TRANSFER WELCOME CENTER will offer arriving animals an enclosed garage space, greatly reducing the chance that a dog will break free from its leash. The space will provide a clean, quiet, and secure area for members of our transfer team and the animals that are new to our facility.

Their welcome matters, and our new facility will improve the experience for arriving animals, paving the way for A BETTER WAY HOME.

This space will address another important need for our team. When it's not in use to receive animals being transferred to our facility, it will function as a much-needed, indoor bay for our Facilities team to perform vehicle maintenance and other projects.



## CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

IN ADDITION TO ED MONTANARI'S SERVICE as a member of St. Petersburg City Council, he's a big fan of dogs and a supporter of our plan to build a Better Way Home for all animals. Ed serves as an advisor to the capital campaign, helping us connect with like-minded animal lovers in the community.

Ed credits his love of dogs to his pal, Jet. He adopted the handsome 3 year-old German Shepherd from our shelter in Largo in August of 2021. Together, the two participated in April's Pet Walk in North Straub Park, leading the St. Pete City Council team to take home the top fundraising spot. Plus, it's not uncommon to find Jet keeping Ed company in his office at City Hall.

Join Ed and Jet in supporting the effort to help SPCA Tampa Bay build a BETTER WAY HOME. Please consider making a multi-year pledge or a one-time gift to the campaign. Donor recognition opportunities are available.

For more information, please visit [spcatampabay.org/betterwayhome](https://spcatampabay.org/betterwayhome).

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Capital Campaign Co-Chair

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[SPCATampaBay.org](http://SPCATampaBay.org)**TODAY'S FACILITY CHALLENGES & TOMORROW'S SOLUTIONS***Perspective from SPCA Tampa Bay's Senior Facilities Manager NICK RIVARD about why the BETTER WAY HOME project is needed and how it will change his team's day-to-day focus.***Q** With our current shelter in mind, what keeps you up at night?**A:** So many things about our facility keep me up at night. Our 61 year-old structure is failing and not sustainable. We have concrete block walls that are failing. Rodents continue to cause damage to our facility, requiring daily clean-up and maintenance. We have roofs at the end of their lives. It's difficult to decide whether to patch or reroof as we raise funds for a new shelter. The mechanical units that circulate air in the kennels are old, and parts are difficult to find.**Q** How much time does your facilities team spend putting band-aids or temporary fixes on problem areas?**A:** I would say about 75% of our time is spent applying band-aids to problems. We are in the process of gluing FRP (fiberglass reinforced panels) to the insides of dog kennels and adding steel endcaps to some. Block walls and rebar that frame each kennel are failing. The rebar is rusted out, and the block walls have cracked and even crumbled. They're falling apart. This project is the very definition of a band-aid and is projected to take several months as we also must work around kennel occupancy.**Q** Our plan to build a BETTER WAY HOME prioritizes pre-adoption animal housing. In your eyes, what's the most critical need in that area?**A:** 100% – HANDS DOWN – enclosed dog kennels with climate control.**Q** How will the new facility address that need and improve our team's ability to house and care for animals?**A:** This will eliminate our failing concrete kennels, our rodent issues, and our mechanical challenges to keep animals in our care cool during the summer or warm during cold snaps like the few we've had recently. Our staff goes above-and-beyond to keep animals comfortable when mechanical units fail – adding ice to the animals' water and getting portable fans to cool them down or doubling up on bedding and blankets to keep them warm on cold nights.**Q** What excites you most about our new facility design?**A:** Instead of spending all of our time fixing and putting on band-aids, my team will focus on preventive maintenance to keep our new facility in tip-top shape for years to come.**A VALUABLE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE** — Meet a member of the team with an eye toward SPCA Tampa Bay's future and a BETTER WAY HOME!

WE WELCOMED STEPHANIE MORGE to our Board of Directors over the summer. Stephanie's an animal advocate and longtime Pet Walk volunteer.

As the Director of Learning and Development for **Power Design**, Stephanie has participated in Pet Walk as part of the company's team for more than a decade. In addition to forming a team, **Power Design** has been a valuable partner, serving as a sponsor of Pet Walk since 2010.

"Animals are unable to fend for themselves, and we should be responsible and compassionate for other living things," Stephanie says.

She's passionate about creating a supportive and enriching environment both at work, and in her community.