



## Overview – Jacksonville Humane Society History

The Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) provides care, comfort and compassion to animals in need while engaging the hearts, hands and minds of our community to bring about an end to the killing of abandoned and orphaned shelter animals. JHS is funded by individual donations, wills and bequests, and money received from shelter service. We do not receive any state or federal funding, nor are we a United Way agency. JHS is a no-kill for space facility and does not euthanize healthy or treatable companion animals in our care.

### History

The Jacksonville Humane Society was established in 1885 as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). In 1920, the SPCA was reorganized as the Humane Society, when then Society President, Flora M. (Genth) Bowden and her husband, Richard Fleming Bowden donated 12 acres of land granted in perpetuity solely for the welfare of animals. The first shelter on this property was opened in 1924 as the Humane Society's Rest Farm. The Society was renamed the Jacksonville Humane Society, Inc. in 1958, and in 1993 a facility addition increased capacity to approximately 400 animals, all on the original 12 acres of land. In October, 2005, the Society made the transition from an open admission shelter to a limited admission, no kill for space center. JHS would no longer euthanize an animal to make room for another.

### The 2007 Fire

In the early morning hours of April 7, 2007, fire ripped through the Jacksonville Humane Society's facilities on Beach Boulevard. With more than 150 animals inside, firefighters from Jacksonville Fire-Rescue Station 28 valiantly battled 30- to 40-foot flames in an effort to reach them. Going cage by cage, the firefighters forged through the blaze pulling frightened dogs and cats from the building.

In the end, the fire claimed the lives of 19 dogs and 67 cats—but miraculously, more than 80 pets were rescued. Four of the brave firefighters from Station 28 were hurt that day, one of them with severe injuries.

Thanks to the quick help of volunteers, staff members and the public, the Society was able to start accepting animals again within a week of the tragedy. Over the next few months, temporary modular housing and administrative areas were established, and the Society was once again fully operational with the capacity to care for approximately 400 animals at any given time.

All of the animals that survived the fire have been adopted, many into the homes of emergency workers who helped fight the fire. One dog was even adopted by the firefighters of Jacksonville Fire-Rescue Station 28. "Lucky" lives in the fire station and rides to the vet and pet store in the fire truck.

The cause of the fire was never determined, but in the wake of the tragedy, the Jacksonville Humane Society has challenged the Jacksonville community to help build a new, state-of-the-art facility on the Beach Boulevard campus. The organization has begun a major fundraising effort to raise the funds needed to build a new adoption and animal education center.

## **2012**

In 2012, JHS opened a low-cost, affordable care animal hospital for the community. The Community Animal Hospital is a full service clinic that provides quality care at affordable prices. JHS is pleased to offer these services to the community and help aid families in caring for their pets. Not only did this build provide a needed community service, it also helped aid in the effort to become a no kill city.

During this time, a coalition was formed between JHS, Animal Care and Protective Services, and First Coast No More Homeless Pets. The three major organizations worked together to bring the live release rate of animals in Jacksonville to 90% or more. In October of 2014, it was announced that the city of Jacksonville had sustained the 90% live release rate for one entire year, becoming the nation's largest no kill city.

Jacksonville has maintained that status, and the Jacksonville Humane Society is proud of our partnerships and accomplishments in achieving and sustaining this goal.

## Moving Forward

In 2014, the campaign to rebuild the shelter was reignited. Construction is currently underway on the property, and although it will be a challenge, JHS is committed to staying open and doing adoptions throughout the process. For more information and a construction timeline, please visit [jaxhumane.org/build](http://jaxhumane.org/build). Donations to the Campaign for a Compassionate Community are always welcome. Donate online at [jaxhumane.org/donate](http://jaxhumane.org/donate); email [APierce@jaxhumane.org](mailto:APierce@jaxhumane.org) or call 904-493-4606 for information.