

CarrollwoodPatch

BUSINESS

National Humane Society Facing Closure

Facility Needs Thousands To Keep Doors Open

By **Deb Kelley** 10:26am

Driving down Gunn Highway, it's easy to ignore the beige building with the white picket fence porch, even with its bold black letters that announce National Humane Society.

Things may look ordinary on the outside, but inside, founder Carol Childs is facing a difficult task: trying to save her facility from closing.

The humane society needs \$25,000 to remain open next year. Without that, it will no longer be salvation to the hundreds of cats and kittens who enter its unassuming doors every year.

An example of how bad things have gotten at the non-profit:

"We are selling cages and carriers we had up in the attic to fund the store in hopes that the store will, in turn, help fund the rescue," said Childs.

The answer to saving the facility, Childs said, is creating a thrift shop inside the building at 4039 Gunn Highway that will sell items that could help keep the business open.

Those items could include men's and women's clothing or household items, but Childs needs help deciding how to run the store. More urgently, she needs people who can help her run it.

"Donate to the thrift shop. We need everything to set up: Shelving, a cash register, items to sell, someone with expertise in operating a thrift store," she said. "Participate. We need leaders- doers- to take initiative, not simply volunteer."

A volunteer application for ages 16 and up is available at <http://www.nationalhumane.com> (<http://carrollwood.patch.com/listings/national-humane-society>). Every morning at 9:30 am, volunteers assist with emptying and cleaning litter boxes, filling water bowls, changing bedding, feeding and playing with its four (and sometimes three) legged guests. It isn't always easy being mom to 50 needy cats and kittens, but Childs has been a caregiver for over 21 years, so she is used to the daily routine.

Here, unlike shelters with small metal and glassed-in cages, these animals have free reign in large glass enclosed playrooms with scratching posts, pillows and many places to run, play and hide together – adoptive cats in one enclosure, kittens in another.

A potential "parent" can visit in room full of happy purrs and mews of curious pets waiting for an available lap. Adoptions fees range from \$50-\$75, depending on type and breed of cat. Pets are also up for adoption at Community Partner Pet Supermarket, 11409 N. Dale Mabry.

Nicole Rohner, who with son in tow surprised Carol with bags of donations, had the reaction most people did upon discovering the gem inside the building: "Now that I know what this is, I will definitely be back with more (donations)."

While visitors like Rohner stop by, Childs is in the process of moving her feline residents toward the back of the building, where Nancy Workman offers pet grooming services, to make room for an 1,800 square foot thrift store. This is a last-ditch effort to help the all-volunteer cat and kitten rescue that was initially closing in October 2010. Childs is stubbornly determined to save the rescue has saved countless lives.

"There is a misconception that we are connected with the other Humane Societies. We are not. We need donors and sponsors. Or," she said, smiling, "my family."

Her family and friends have pitched in to help keep the humane society running. The floor was a Mother's Day present, the roof a Christmas present, and the walls are currently being sanded and redone through a donation from a best friend's son.

Childs describes herself as a Type "A" personality. She has many innovative ideas planned for the National Humane Society, such as combining her background in Montessori education with "Paws to Read." This program would allow children to comfortably read to the animals without an adult stopping an incorrect pronunciation or wrong word.

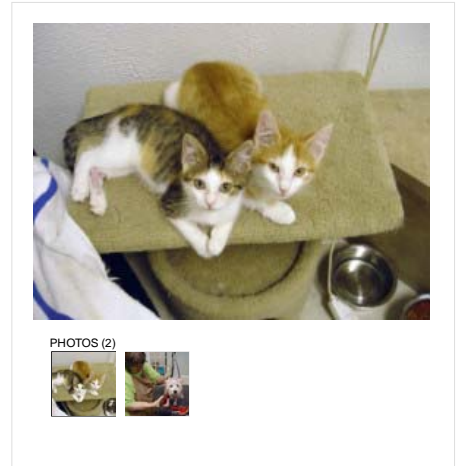
Childs explains, "Reading is supposed to be fun. Being stopped and corrected all the time- that's not fun." Child's also has the concept of Meals on Wheels for Pets.

In the meantime, Childs is focusing on the many items are needed to keep the facility afloat: paper towels, cat litter and garbage bags are examples. She said the animals there can use up to 200 pounds of litter in four days, and that flea treatments can cost \$4,500 a month.

"We need someone to take and wash a bag of laundry. Anything will help," she said.

Childs has incredible plans for the National Humane Society, but without the success of her new thrift shop or the community she's helped since 2000 to step up and offer "the rescuer" financial help, these goals will remain unfulfilled, and deserving cats and kittens may never find their forever homes.

To help donate or volunteer at the NHS, call Childs at 813-695-4777.



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