



Animal care technician Ricardo Rivera takes a shelter dog for a walk on the Peggy Adams campus.

This happy ending came out of the shelter's kind deeds: As a participant in The HSUS's Emergency Placement Partners program—through which HSUS staff place animals rescued from cruelty cases and disasters with organizations around the country—the shelter took in Mia and 18 other dogs from the Natchez Adams County Humane Society. The move freed space in the Mississippi shelter for pets displaced by May 2011 floods.

All the dogs were eventually adopted, and the weekend they arrived, the Florida shelter also adopted out 45 local dogs thanks to the ensuing publicity.

No stranger to needy animals from other locales, the shelter has also opened its doors to other animals rescued by The HSUS: 45 dogs from hoarding cases in Alabama and Mississippi and 20 cats from a Florida sanctuary gone bad.

## A New Place... in the Sun

Florida shelter puts out welcome sign for scores of rescued and displaced pets

The shelter's history stretches back to 1924, when a group of eight prominent women met to discuss a local problem: Animals were being left behind by Florida "snowbirds," winter visitors returning north. In an abandoned tuberculosis hospital on the grounds of an old Air Force base, the group turned orange crates into makeshift cages and fashioned chicken wire into pens.

### There was just something about Mia.

Heidi Nielsen has worked at the Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League for 12 years. The Florida shelter's assistant director knows what it's like to want to take them all home. But when she saw the mastiff-shepherd mix who'd arrived on a transport from flooded Mississippi, Nielsen knew that this time, resistance was futile.

"After that long trip and everything she'd been through, she was right in front of the cage with her little paw up in the air, trying to get my husband to say hello to her," Nielsen says. The dog looked like a giant boxer and, at 6½ months old, already weighed 60 pounds. After quarantine and spaying, the dog—now named Mia—went home with the couple, joining their menagerie of three dogs and two parrots.

Named for the late Peggy Adams, whose husband gave a major financial gift to start its endowment fund, the shelter has seen many changes over the decades. It now has a 38,000-square-foot, \$11 million building with an adoption center, a retail boutique, and a 15,000-square-foot medical/surgical unit.

The shelter's first priority is to provide services to its community, says executive director and CEO Rich Anderson, but staff also like to partner with national groups to help animals in emergency situations. "We've had just an incredible amount of success placing them into new homes, rehabilitating those animals that needed a little more care and treatment," he says.

Director of operations Thomas Adair agrees: "Our aim is to help all animals, not just the ones within arm's reach." — Jim Baker



Assistant director Heidi Nielsen seems to have found a friend in shelter dog Buddy.

## Peggy Adams Animal Rescue League, West Palm Beach, Fla.

► **EXPANDING ITS REACH:** With its new facility, the shelter has leapt forward in the number of spay/neuter surgeries it's able to perform. The previous clinic limited the shelter to about 5,000 surgeries a year; the goal for 2013 is 10,000.

► **GOING LIVE:** The medical/surgical clinic will eventually have operating-room cameras that stream live video to veterinary classes around the country.

► **REDUCING THE NUMBERS:** In 2012, PetSmart Charities awarded the shelter a \$100,000, two-year grant to launch a major spay/neuter initiative in two Palm Beach County zip codes with large feral cat populations. The goal is to sterilize 1,000 feral and owned cats each year in those areas.