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## **Animal Services Director Accused of Euthanizing Pets Against Sheriff's No Kill Policy is Cleared by a Federal Court Jury, Launches Shelter Pet Fund**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MIAMI, FL, – October 9, 2018

Jacquelyn Johnston's Statement:

"Four years ago, today, on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2014, twenty pets lost their lives at Lake County Animal Services. The story that unfolded in the hours after their deaths resulted in my termination and world-wide destruction of my reputation as an animal advocate.

Last week, a federal court jury ruled that the statements made about me by the Lake County Sheriff's Office and former Sheriff Gary S. Borders regarding these twenty pets and what occurred on Oct. 9 were false and stigmatizing, which violated my constitutionally protected liberty interest under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Additionally, the jury ruled that statements about what occurred on October 9 made by a shelter employee (the former kennel supervisor) to a shelter volunteer were false and were made with malice.

My name is now clear.

I will tell the full story in the coming months, as I begin a new chapter through my continued commitment to help shelter pets in need.

Moreover, this case is not just about a Sheriff's Office depriving me of a constitutional right. This case is not just about a subordinate employee defaming me and using the raw nerve of no-kill animal advocates to get me fired.

This case is about the twenty dogs and cats who were killed that day, as they were caught up in the midst of a politically driven dispute over achieving "no kill" status at the shelter.

These pets are more than mere shelter numbers. These dogs and cats had names and stories of their own. Now that the lawsuit is over, I will dedicate myself to telling their stories and honoring their lives.

Max. Bruno. Dean. Jester. Angel. Roxy. Kenny. Dooley. Unnamed Aussie mix. Unnamed Hound. Unnamed Hound. Unnamed Cat. Unnamed Cat. Peaches. Charter. Unnamed Hound. Unnamed Catahoula. Hennessey. Harry. Paris.

The reported reasons why some of these pets were killed were false. Their lives were cut short as a result of efforts to harm me as Director, and these pets paid the price.

Harry was a Hound mix who was specifically targeted that day to infuriate shelter volunteers and increase the outrage towards me as new Director. Despite having pledges for his heartworm treatment, he was maliciously killed after sitting in the shelter for 59 days with no treatment.

We must do better.

Today, I stand here and say before the world, my directive four years ago was to stop hiding shelter pets from the public and immediately cease the senseless euthanasia of pets who never had a chance to be rescued or adopted.

To honor these twenty pets, I'm honored to announce, "The Harry Fund." This new fund is a dedicated grant fund through my 501c3 rescue No Paw Left Behind. The Harry Fund will provide up to \$300 grants to qualifying heartworm positive dogs in shelters across Florida. Shelters will be invited to apply directly for the fund for any dogs housed in their facilities who test positive, as a way to expedite their life-saving treatment and increase their chances of finding adopters or rescues. The grants will go directly toward the payment of life-saving medical care for shelter dogs suffering from this horrible, preventable, and treatable disease.

I am donating the full amount of the punitive damages awarded to me to The Harry Fund.

Additionally, I am personally sponsoring twenty Harry Fund grants to the dogs at Lake County Animal Services, in honor of the lives lost four years ago today.

Please join me by donating to The Harry Fund to help some of our shelters' most at risk dogs or contribute to the No Paw Left Behind general fund to help our rescue continue to help some of the neediest dogs, cats, rabbits, and pocket pets in need."

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No Paw Left Behind is non-profit 501c3 emergency pet rescue and foster network since March 2006; a rescue organization focusing on extreme cruelty, neglect and pets in immediate danger of dying in shelters across the state of Florida.

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