



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Humane Society of Southern Arizona Announces New Chief Programs Officer and Strategic Pillars to Guide Lifesaving Work**

**Tucson, Ariz., Sept. 9, 2024** – The Humane Society of Southern Arizona (HSSA) CEO Dr. Kristin Barney announced Monday the appointment of animal welfare leader Michele Figueroa to the critical role of Chief Programs Officer and the adoption of three new strategic pillars to guide the organization’s work.

Barney said that Figueroa, who brings to HSSA nearly two decades of experience in animal shelter operations, including her most recent role as Community Engagement Manager for Pima Animal Care Center (PACC), will begin at HSSA on October 2. An expert in contemporary lifesaving practices who frequently speaks at national animal-welfare conferences, Figueroa’s appointment coincides with the HSSA Board of Directors’ recent unanimous vote to adopt **Lifesaving Programs, Animal Care and Well-being, and Community Engagement and Support** as the three new guiding principles to inform the 80-year-old nonprofit’s work.

“We can’t wait for Michele to bring her experience to our team and help us focus on our new pillars, which were designed to ensure we meet our community’s most critical needs,” Barney said. “These strategic directives will drive our decision-making process and our accountability to ourselves and to the public. With HSSA’s new leadership team now in place, we are moving forward with a clear focus.”

Barney said that as part of HSSA’s commitment to its new pillars, HSSA will implement new shelter data and reporting software this fiscal year. This will enhance transparency and better track HSSA’s impact on lifesaving rates, foster caregiver and volunteer engagement, animal well-being, and community impact. Additionally, HSSA will implement pathway planning, a national best practice for moving homeless pets through the shelter more quickly into loving homes. HSSA will also work to keep families together and support the human-animal bond by expanding its pet pantry program and building deeper partnerships with organizations like Petco Love Lost.

Figueroa’s experience will complement these efforts, Barney said. Her hire comes after two other animal welfare leaders, José Ocaño and Dr. Sarah Neuser, DVM, skillfully filled the position on an interim basis and while HSSA conducted a national search.

“I am excited for the opportunity to make HSSA an even stronger force for southern Arizona’s pets and the people who love them,” Figueroa said. “I can’t wait to get started next month.”

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**About the Humane Society of Southern Arizona**

The Humane Society of Southern Arizona is the oldest and largest nonprofit animal welfare organization in Southern Arizona, dedicated to compassionately serving pets and the people who love them. For more information, visit [HSSAZ.org](http://HSSAZ.org)