

Dear Volunteers,

Please know I have been waiting in anticipation to connect with you as a group but I could not speak freely until now. I'm sure you all are aware that John and I did seek outside counsel due to the sudden elimination of my position. My statement of accounts and incidents that occurred between mid-June to July 9th has been submitted to the County Commissioners for review and supported by a cover letter by our attorneys. We will aggressively pursue a satisfactory resolution.

Like all of you, I was quite surprised by my sudden termination and yet, as of today, I still do not have any more answers as to why. Both sides along with counsel were going to meet this week and I hoped many of our concerns would have been addressed but unfortunately, it was canceled for the second time. First I would like to say (in my whirlwind of emotions and exhaustion) I can't thank each one of you enough for your support and words of encouragement. Everyday another volunteer was standing up and taking the lead to speak their truth and fight for our animals and their rights. I guess the only way I can describe it is like a mother giving birth after 48 hours of hard labor; in a delirium and a range of emotions and witnessing this miracle that has just occurred. Every day I was reminded of the many blessings that surrounded me and so grateful to those who took the lead, so I could rest and regroup.

We all know as volunteers that the needs of the animals were always daily on the forefront of our minds and ask: Are they getting out (we've all witnessed the amazing 2 minute streams)? Are they being touched and told they are valued and loved? Do they have the comforts that can make their stay bearable during their stay? For 10+ months the animals became an imprint in every fiber of my being and not much else existed. I had a vision that I felt was always within reach. Knowing as a community that we are outnumbered with the amount of unwanted animals, I knew it was going to take a village to care for our four-legged friends, so recruitment was essential to our success at saving lives. For months, I operated out of the trunk of my car, as one volunteer came on board then another and within a short amount of time I was proudly sporting a traveling tote full of applications. Between recruiting and word of mouth our volunteer numbers increased and our animals were being cared for, marketed, fostered and adopted thus lowering the euthanasia rate monthly. I thank you ladies and gents because we did it and **we did it well!**

Unfortunately, this and more did not come without challenges and daily obstacles and yet we still rose to the occasion and made a difference in our animals' lives. When I first took the position, I was like a sponge and I wanted to absorb every aspect of the county shelter environment. Please do not let me delude you into thinking I was not aware of the many concerns and frustrations that have existed within the animal center operations prior to my employment and even a few years prior to that. For two plus months I worked beside every staff member, getting my hands dirty and learning every aspect short of doing vaccinations, act of euthanasia and an adoption contract. My grandmother taught me to never look away from a man's dirty hands because it meant he did an honest day's work. I will tell you the kennel assistants work their tails

off, especially on the mornings when the kennels needed to be bleached and sanitized. I “got it” when they were finally able to open the front doors after the push and shove; they earned their break and it was well deserved. I also "got it" when there were multiple events happening all at the same time, but was it weekly, daily, hourly? No. I can honestly say the staff was not working to their fullest potential. Did they hustle when the poo hit the fan, yes but then it entitled them to another break, many times at the cost of providing basic care to our animals. I do not have enough fingers and toes to count the numerous times I was told by the staff to slow down. What I expect from myself was nothing out of the ordinary because it was my work ethic and lowering my standards would not benefit the animals.

A man (or in my case, a woman) is as only good as his/her last day's work. Call it pride and not egotism because results were being produced and it took work. I weigh everything and will analyze every thought and/or action and do not react until I've assessed all aspects and all parties involved can benefit.

I was and still am on the fence about sedation prior to euthanasia. An aggressive, severely injured animal suffering in pain, I agree with sedation. Those that are healthy, happy (through no fault of their own and because they are taking up space), my personal opinion right or wrong, is why take away the animal's full senses of being held, touched and told he is loved by a human as he takes his last breath. I can count to three and the animal was gone but never in vain nor in my mind ever forgotten.

Many times two of the certified euthanasia techs (CET's) would randomly call on me to witness an animal being euthanized. Every time it was an animal that was highly aggressive, suffering due to neglect and/or injured beyond treatment. I “get that” and I still wonder what their purpose was to have me witness such suffering. Was it to shock me or for me to understand they were not the bad guys for having to euthanize? I'm still not clear as to their intentions. If they truly wanted to impress or educate me, I had stated numerous times to request my presence when they were going to euthanize a healthy, adoptable animal. My only stipulation would be to walk through the entire rear part of building to insure that kennel space was used to its fullest capacity and believe or not, NOT ONCE was my offer taken.

Day after day went by and I did more and more and I witnessed the questionable work ethic in the staff employees. I would be telling myself, well Betsy, now that you got that task done; you still have time to do another and so on. The more I did it became apparent how little the staff really wanted to do outside of their 8 to 5 routine, one hour lunch breaks, smoke breaks and shutting down promptly at 4:45 PM whether or not the animals basic needs were met. Lack of food, water and unkept kennels were surely not up to my standards, so I bucked the system, did not conform and therefore became the outsider. The more we recruited, the more eyes and ears came into AC the more awareness and reinforcement of the dysfunction came to the forefront but fell on many deaf ears. Frustrations rose and policies and procedures through the staff changed daily. It was "The new rule for the day" because it suited the staff's needs and most certainly not always the animals' best interests. We've all witnessed it together in the trenches and I assure you each and every concern was given to either the previous Director (Al Carter) or Interim Director, Tami Golden. All I requested was that all complaints came to me directly first so I was aware and I would forward out to my superior Tami Golden (and not

disrespecting her by going over her to County Manager, Wayne Vest). I believe in following protocol and after many years coming from the airline industry it still holds true to follow Chain of Command, otherwise there's chaos, lack of respect for authority and communication falters and lives can be lost.

Time after time incidents would occur and every day became another crisis. How on earth could anyone get anything accomplished if it was a continuous mixing pot of drama and dysfunction?! I went to the Animal Operations Advisory Board (AOAB) and reported accounts of unnecessary euthanasia and incident after incident of volunteers being disrespected. I went to Tami Golden and tried to shed light on the patterns within but I saw her as one person who was juggling two positions while wholeheartedly trying to grasp the concept of what it entails to run a county shelter properly. Week after week I sat in meetings with Denise Brook/HR, Tami Golden, Jerry Bodnar and sometimes Wayne Vest to reach some form of compromise to enhance the care of our animals. It was always a give and take and the communication lines were open until the "new rule of the day" would rear its ugly head once again. "Dysfunction" unfortunately becomes the norm and many thrive off it or pretend it doesn't exist. No one wants to admit it or take ownership for their role or take the responsibility. If nobody speaks up about it, then hopefully we can ignore it.... the more we spoke we just became white noise to everyone until July 2, 2014, when the writing was clear as day on the inner walls of the Animal Center.

Monday, June 30th I sent out an email to a list of cat fosters regarding kittens and cats that were tagged for euthanasia because they were deemed sick. Please keep in mind the Cat Quarantine area was under construction so as to whether it was more of a space issue rather than illness will be questionable. With the assistance of four volunteers, Tami Golden, one other staff member and I, moved all cats to the front portion of the building until foster care could be established.

Tuesday, July 1st (I still hold my position though the new fiscal year started) it is determined that all kittens and cats must be held under Tami Golden's direct order until Wednesday, July 2, 2014 until end of day (3:30 PM). Those not placed in foster care could very well be euthanized.

Wednesday, July 2nd I emailed Tami Golden and Craig Rogers that morning stating that I had volunteers coming in to select cats and kittens for fostering. I stated most would not arrive until Noon (which is the time I was going in due to my reduced working hours) but one or two volunteers might show up earlier. At 9:40 AM I get a call from a volunteer who had a confrontation with a staff employee over a cat (named Harlequin) housed in the front portion of the building and he was going to euthanize it against direct orders. The volunteer requested he put the cat back into the carrier and we had until later in the day to place it. Phone messages were immediately placed to Tami Golden's work phone number. Upon arrival at AC, another volunteer and I noticed that the cat Harlequin and five Tabby kittens were missing and four more adult cats added to the potential foster

group. When the two staff employees were questioned by the volunteer in my presence, the senior employee admitted giving the order to the other employee to euthanize the cats. Unfortunately, six lives were unnecessarily lost but the remaining eight kittens and adults were placed in foster care before 3:30 PM. Once again, another day of crisis mainly due to the AC staff employees not looking for ways to save lives.

The day's not over yet....

4:30 PM, I was questioned about two Bob-tailed kittens that were in a kennel in the front lobby by the employee who euthanized Harlequin. My response (not knowing about two more kittens available for foster) was "What about the two kittens?" and his reply was "They are sick too". I said "It's too late now to be bringing this up but I'll find foster care that night and "don't put them down"..... famous last words.

Thursday, July 3rd I get to AC around Noon after replying back to Tami Golden via phone, which we finished our conversation as I was entering the AC parking lot. Going directly to my desk and working and moving throughout the rear building and my desk, I was consumed catching up after the crises of the three previous days. A volunteer came in and we began talking and I asked her if she saw the kittens in the lobby. She replied "What kittens"? Again, I said "The kittens in the front lobby." We both hightailed it to the lobby and the kennel was missing along with the kittens. I immediately went to the break room where two full time employees were calculating number totals for the previous month of June. I asked "Where are the two Bob-tailed kittens?", one answered, "In the surgery room" and I asked "Were they euthanized"? I got a shrug of a shoulder by one and the other said "Go see Jerry." The volunteer and I rushed to the back and I questioned Jerry Bodnar as to where the two kittens were as I was frantically looking for a small carrier. Less than a minute later he came out with the kittens in a carrier. I immediately had the volunteer take them and I called Carthage Animal Hospital to have an antibiotic (as a pre- cautionary measure) ready for pick up since they were closing within a half hour.

After 5:00 PM, I get a message from the volunteer that both kittens drank a bowl of water and were famished. I had to question how long those kittens were in the kennel (8:00 AM to 4:20 PM) without food and water and was it the staff's intention to euthanize them? I was upset because had the volunteer and I not been present, I believe the kittens would have likely been added to those we lost the day prior, again unnecessarily. It was not a matter of space because nothing replaced them in the front lobby. I also told the employee not to put them down the day before and I would find foster care. Where was the Director during all this and why wasn't she present and following their every move from what transpired a day earlier? Why is the Volunteer Coordinator running interference to save lives????

Is it Friday yet? The weekend is some of my busiest times not only within AC but outside events as well and this is when I need to find the energy to push through.

Friday, July 4th most volunteers are busy with family or out of town. We're short on volunteers but I enlist my husband and we along with two other volunteers go to the 4th

of July Parade to walk dogs. My thought was, next year we'll have enough volunteers to be in the parade with a fun and creative float and I felt a sense of excitement.

Saturday, July 5th we muster enough volunteers and attend the Southern Pines Farmer's Market where we average one adoption per week and we did just that by adopting Laverne out. During this whole time everyone was upset over the past week's events and yet apparently nothing was being done about it. I'm exhausted and blue in the face from talking and I have a mile long list of projects that need to be completed by July 9th.....I was beyond frustration to say the least.

As many of you share with your partners in life, I am no different with my husband, John, a longtime animal welfare advocate who has been my #1 supporter through it all and has spoken up about AC-related issues at several AOAB meetings. I worked hard and if it wasn't for him I'm sure I would have skipped more meals than I already have. I was focused and determined to accomplish our goal of 100+ volunteers, to ensure the animals had the best advantage in finding their forever homes. More volunteers = more awareness, more foster families, more rescue contacts and more adoptions. Keep in mind finding volunteers was not my only goal but keeping those who were already on board was just as important. Every day it seemed there was another issue between a volunteer and staff employee. The environment at AC was hostile to volunteers, and of course, to me. Not every day was miserable and days passed where we all coexisted and yet, the tension was continually there and it was just a matter of time when the other shoe would drop. Pattern and practice over and over...the dysfunctional cycle was spinning out of control due to numerous numbers of volunteers speaking out. I took great pride in answering every question or concern and yes, days blurred together but you were always there to remind me and our communications were solid. It was just a matter of adjusting to "the new rule of the day."

Within six days after the incident of euthanizing Harlequin, I was scheduled to have a meeting with Wayne Vest, Tami Golden and Jerry Bodnar to discuss volunteer tasks and defining Lead Volunteers on Wednesday, July 9th at 3:00 PM. John, on my behalf (as my personal attorney) was researching the law as to the recent events and trying to determine whether an animal cruelty crime was committed. After talking to other attorneys, they all concluded that there was an ethical obligation to seek out guidance and advice from the county sheriff, which John did via email on July 7th and in response he was given other resources to contact. The Sheriff then advised Wayne Vest on Tuesday, July 8th of John's email contact with him, ONE DAY PRIOR TO MY ABRUPT AND UNEXPECTED TERMINATION. John did make contact with Wayne Vest on Monday, July 7th as well and the two agreed to meet for lunch on Wednesday, July 9th prior to my scheduled meeting with Wayne Vest at 3:00 PM. I was working from home after the

holiday events but I needed to get my goals and objectives for the volunteer program in order. John and I felt our concerns were being heard and felt our questions would be answered in a timely manner.

Tuesday, July 8th, I inform Tami Golden that volunteer slots were full; the animals were being cared for that I would like to stay home, rest and finish compiling the volunteer information requested for the following day's meeting. Tami Golden immediately replied back via email and stated for me to rest and do not work and the meeting for the following day was canceled. I was disappointed but still eager to submit my plans anyway for the Volunteer Program. Subsequently, later the same day, John received a message from Wayne Vest's secretary /assistant that Wayne needed to cancel their lunch meeting.

Wednesday, July 9th, I was scheduled to have a second opinion regarding a possible health issue but I was eager to have peace of mind and get to AC with my list of objectives, goals and accomplishments for the volunteer program, which I have to admit was quite impressive (too bad I didn't get to share it). After accepting numerous calls on a sick cat (in one of the condos) who needed to be seen by a vet (as well as finding a volunteer to handle the task) and other calls for regarding an apparent undefined "outbreak" in dog viewing and notifying volunteers to stay home, I finally arrived at AC at 2:00. Immediately upon entering I was informed of an outbreak (I'm still unclear as to the diagnosis) by two staff employees behind the desk. As soon as I enter the office area and before I had the chance to put down my items, Tami Golden approached me and said Denise Brook /HR needed to see me ASAP. It took me a minute to collect my thoughts and I was processing how I could accomplish all the requests within an hour or so. I decided not to delay and head straight to Human Resources hoping that Carrie Levario would make me copies of the four or five volunteer applications. Please note that after I decided to start hand delivering the volunteer applications instead of relying on the AC Staff and/or inter office mail, the processing time for approval was reduced dramatically.

I arrive at HR and ask Carrie Levario if she would be so kind to make copies of the applications, which she graciously did, as not to delay the meeting with Denise Brooke. I sat in the reception area for at least 15 minutes as it began to rain heavily outside. Dee Ann Purvis came out to get me and I jokingly made a comment about keeping me long enough until the downpour was over. Note, that this was not the first time I was summoned to HR due to "investigations", so I assumed I was being questioned again and hopefully about the incident that occurred on July 2nd. Less than three minutes and before I could seat myself, Denise Brook (to my right and Dee Ann to my left) slipped a second copy of a form to me and began to read her copy out loud. My position was eliminated and my services were no longer needed. I asked "for what cause?" and Denise Brook's answer was "without cause and your position has been eliminated". She

immediately went into stating that I needed to return all county property. Stunned, I handed over my county ID and said I would go get my personal belongings. Denise Brook then stated "You are no longer permitted on AC property and your personal belongings will be collected and HR would call me when I could retrieve them at their facility. With that, I rose and left the building within three minutes of being lead to their conference room. End of day and 10+ months of producing results as requested and not even a thank you for my services or a job well done. I was devastated.

When I was originally hired and during my interview, I had stated to Denise Brook, Al Cater and Jerry Bodnar that it was not about being paid and I would work for free. I also stated that if I was not selected for the position, I was not going away as a volunteer. According to then Director, Al Carter I was told my interview was a slam dunk. For the first five months I submitted my allotted 20.0 hours per week but was spending 35 to 40 per week at AC, working out of my trunk and working from home every evening and days scheduled off from my own personal computer. Not once did my superior or anyone else mention that I was allowed to work up to 29.0 hours nor was I informed I could not volunteer my time.

February 2014, Al Carter's termination and in comes Tami Golden (county auditor) as interim director. I was impressed immediately because she was 1.) Tami was present at AC and 2.) Eager to help and get us the resources we needed to help the animals. She led with what she knew and started ordering office supplies: new copier, office furniture and accessories and I believed the animals' needs would follow. After 6 months of employment, she gave me space within the Field Officer area to hang my hat and work. I was given a 12" very outdated notebook computer in order to check email, yet still much of my work could only be done during off hours from my personal computer.

Day by day we moved forward and projects were being completed and issues were being addressed. I was pulled in on two occasions with Tami Golden and Denise Brook to express my thoughts and concerns within AC. I worked, Tami Golden worked and even the staff shifted to second gear when Tami was on the property. I felt there was a light at the end of the tunnel and eventually we would collectively obtain our goals. The only time I was questioned by either her or Denise Brook was about the amount of hours I was working, yet I was encouraged to grow the volunteer base, with essentially nothing when I went into position. I never knew myself what I could "let go of" where it wouldn't be detrimental to the animals. Tami Golden stated (which I will take as a compliment) "I (Tami) see you are working you're ass off and I want to be fair to you." So I recorded my hours at work, off site and at home (due to the lack of human and other resources to effectively accomplish our goals and everyone's vision of the volunteer program). I

was working 55 to 70 hours a week and yet many times, I was so busy running daily, that I'm sure I had more hours which I did not report. That was not the issue. I did as Tami Golden requested and I figured I could use the money to spend on the animals or assist fosters or rescues with incidentals. My husband and I live a very comfortable life (only through hard work and personal choices) but we do not take anyone or anything for granted and feel we are now in the position to give back to the community we call home. All we expect (from ourselves) is to lead by example and hopefully others will want to do the same....reap what you sew.

During Tami Golden's interim as Director and waiting 7+ months to fill the position, the volunteer base was growing and we obtained some of the most dedicated volunteers any one could ask for. The more volunteers, the more opportunities arose and more work was needed to accomplish it all. We did it with a few hiccups here and there but we were steady, our determination and dedication at its all-time high. During this time, I was requested by Tami Golden to advise her daily of my tasks and hours. Tami Golden has stated that she should put me on salary so I could work as many hours as I wanted to, just like her. I said I would volunteer my hours, but that was against county policy. I kept putting the ball back in her court and allow her (management) to figure out a plan how to cut my hours without decreasing the number of volunteers requested (100+ per week- 200+ per month) as agreed upon by County Manager, Wayne Vest. This was to be accomplished so all volunteers coming every other week would notice a natural progression of turnover in animals opposed to euthanasia therefore retaining volunteers due to AC being a county/ kill shelter.

Wayne Vest also acknowledged that my job duties could not be accomplished within a 20 hour work period. The added pressure did not help me and I offered to quit, volunteer and then reapply for the full time position on July 1st when the new fiscal year went into effect.

Every day I had to be prepared to enter a hostile work environment going to AC or hearing about another incident between the staff and a volunteer. Note, my concerns have been submitted numerous times to Al Carter, Tami Golden, Denise Brook and Dee Ann Purvis.

If an animal's life was at stake, that took precedence over my many other duties as a Volunteer Coordinator. It brings meaning to when the cat is away the mice will play and that is exactly what the staff did when neither Tami Golden nor Wayne Vest were on premises. Both Wayne and Tami took vacations within a two week period, as AC was in turmoil. They were not there when the treatment room was dismantled during Tami Golden's absence (the front cat viewing/treatment room sat empty for days) prior to her return. By delaying and not placing cats in that particular room, space was limited and countless lives were lost again from another employee who took it upon himself without asking for permission first.

I informed Tami Golden on July 3, 2014 that a cat condo of four or five long hair gray kittens were housed in the lobby area while she was away and then mysteriously disappeared after a couple of days. It did not register to me until I entered the front lobby on June 28th and immediately noticed that the two volunteer desks were pushed against the interior walls and an X pen (circular fencing) was stationed in the same area where the condo was the previous day. One of the staff employees brought his foster puppies in to showcase for adoption. I did not immediately go in the back building because I had a dozen or more volunteers coming in for orientation. However, later that day near closing I saw the empty cat condo in the Sally Port/Intake area and had no sight of the kittens which I can only assume were euthanized. Was it again coincidence that these beautiful creatures were not actually "sick or terminal" and destroyed due to a matter of convenience? Believe me when I tell you, this was not the first time these "coincidences" have occurred and with every loss (over the years) of lives, the sting only hurts more. When I have brought up these countless incidents with Tami Golden, her repeated remark was "That's the past" and yet loss after loss was occurring on her watch in the present time. The attitude was to ignore it, move on.

I was tired (and admitted that to Tami Golden on more than one occasion) but someone had to speak up on behalf of the animals but it kept falling on deaf ears and it was a continual "wait and see game" which started over three years ago. The problem does not stem from the volunteer program but within the AC walls over many years of the staff still with the mind set of "controlling the numbers" and not wanting to embrace saving lives. Time after time complaints have been filed with county management and with the AOAB and issues have not been resolved. How many meetings can these people have and still find the time to actually do something? I have to question as to whether it's more important for these people to have power and their positions rather than doing right by each and every animal.

How many meetings can one attend and yet, very little gets accomplished? Since its inception I have attended every AOAB meeting with the exception of two (October 2013 and June 2014). Are you aware that only at its very first meeting did 100% of the board members attend? The average attendance during the remaining 17 months was 80% or less. The first handful of meetings and the first 20 minutes of those scheduled meetings, childhood pictures with pets were posted and everyone had to guess which member it was and then they got to tell why they love animals so much. I sat there, shook my head in disbelief as daily I was witnessing animals being unnecessarily euthanized.

In early January of this year five adoptable, healthy dogs all under the age of one year were euthanized. I ran in panic between dog quarantine and viewing hoping to find them somewhere.

Five empty kennels in viewing and at least another handful or more back in the quarantine area were also empty. Shaken to my core, I immediately went into then Director, Al Carter's office and blurted out "Is Viewing the end all?" Why after spending numerous hours photographing, marketing these beautiful and healthy animals would you not just rotate animals back and forth from quarantine to viewing and still market them? The majority of the kennels in Viewing sat empty for the remainder of the day. Al Carter's response was "Let's go have a look." (NOW after lives are gone) To me, this was just common sense and using available space intelligently. I was just beside myself and had to leave the building for a couple of hours to regroup and I believe that was the day I was awarded the "Einstein Award" for my great suggestion.

The following day Al Carter wanted to share this with Shelter Manager, Jerry Bodnar. Jerry was receptive to the idea but when I asked him and Al Carter twice "So what you are telling me is that five dogs were unnecessarily put down?" The answer from Jerry was plain and simple "Yes" and when I asked for a second time, the answer was "Yes". When I asked if he (Jerry) would take responsibility for it, his answer was "It was my day off."

At the following AOAB meeting, I stood up and confirmed five dogs were unnecessarily euthanized, not one comment was made from any board member and I sensed the silence as eyes diverted and heads went down. How could they ignore the unnecessary deaths of these creatures and not say WHAT?! Now when I look back on that night, they should have put their heads down; shame on every one of them for not speaking up and standing up for the dogs and saying ENOUGH! Not one of them held, cared for or looked these animals in the eyes and yet, Sandy, Lucas, Duke, Sweetie and Slink are forever etched in my mind...a day I will never forget, nor their senseless deaths. I had to dig deep in order to find something out of the loss and the peace I found was that "my great suggestion" of rotating dogs back and forth from quarantine to viewing has continued to present day and hopefully more lives were saved because of it.

Many volunteers and I have routinely addressed the AOAB on numerous occasions of animals being euthanized, especially those that a volunteer may have an interest in. How many times can it be a coincidence? How many lives continually have to be lost? I'm all for meetings and communication, however to be effective moving forward one must make a plan then execute that plan and follow it through. Progress continually needs to be made, otherwise, it's wasted time, poor management of time and nothing gets accomplished, period.

I give the AOAB credit for wanting to implement the Volunteer Program which created my position as Volunteer Coordinator, but together we (me and you the volunteers) did the work. No one held our hands; no one accompanied us in the wet, cold and yes, many times freezing or extremely hot weather to get the dogs out. We stood out in those conditions to capture 100's of frames of pictures and sat behind the computers all hours of the night to post animals and the list goes on and on.

With the rare exception of a few, I never witnessed any board member routinely tour the AC facility. I was so busy, that if anyone of them wanted information, I encouraged them to come to AC, work beside and I would fill them in. Everyone knows we could all have used the extra help. At any given time, I welcomed Tami Golden and Wayne Vest to follow me and the volunteers around for three days to see what we can accomplish. Sorry, no takers. Never once did Wayne Vest, Tami Golden or the AOAB request for me and volunteers to gather for a meeting. I'm sure

all of you would have been eager to attend (due to their positions and power). I'm sure most would agree, that we would have been flattered knowing someone was open to listening and addressing our concerns as a group. I guarantee, even a few golf matches would have been canceled, and that's saying a lot about our dedication to our animals in a golfing community. I have invited Tami Golden to the orientation classes and quarterly meetings but she opted not to show. I was never once brought into an office prior to July 9th nor was I ever reprimanded for any misconduct, insubordination or told my communication skills were lacking in any way. It was Tami Golden who insisted that I inform her of any complaints by the volunteers, which I sent regularly. What more could I have done due to my already busy work load? What more could I have said? These and many questions still remain unanswered. Please note since July 9th, I have not heard from the leadership of the AOAB either and again, no "I'm sorry" or "Job well done."

Whatever the outcome, I do not have any regrets for anything I have done that benefited or saved a life of an animal. If I'm guilty of anything it's because I have high standards, I'm a hard worker and seek justice and fairness across the board. I expected a lot from myself and I hope I led by example because I truly feel we had a wonderful thing going. Every volunteer had a tremendous amount to offer and did so by doing their part within our group whether directly or indirectly with the animals. No one faltered and many stepped up to the plate when animals were in need and for that, you are to be honored and respected for your great deeds. We laughed, we cried and had many highs and very low lows but we kept going back. You are some of the most courageous people I have ever encountered and I consider all of you my friends. Most importantly, the animals were blessed beyond measure because of your devotion to want something better for them and you proved just that. You made change happen facing every obstacle that was thrown your way and you exceeded all expectations. As a group we out shined everyone but for others it's just too difficult to look directly at the sun.

This is all a new learning experience for me because I have never been "let go" from any job I have ever held. If anything, I have been rewarded directly or indirectly through my efforts, time and dedication for a job well done. Life ebbs and flows and in time, I will find the blessing within this situation (along with a few power naps too). I'm blessed beyond measure with the love and support of my husband, two little dogs and a foster or two (down from 12), LIFE is good. Is our work over?? Most certainly not. We must always allow our hearts to lead and do right by our animals in need at any given opportunity. My termination does not put a halt to the needs of our animals and your presence at AC is needed more now than ever. Live in the moment (as our

miraculous animals display everyday) and show up.....your presence alone can shift mountains. Continue to speak up for the animals or any wrongdoing and live within your truth. I am amazed and so grateful to have had the opportunity to work beside some of the most dedicated, loving and giving people on this planet. We worked like a well-oiled machine and we generated a lot of good and have saved many lives along the way. I hope the new director will be the answer to all our prayers. I wish her luck and patience as she settles in....I'm sure she's just as anxious to start. One thing I can leave behind that she will be rewarded with is the best volunteers anyone could ever ask for! Please continue being the voice for the animals, attend the regular County Commissioners' meetings, speak up and demand change, it is your right and the animals deserve better from all of us.

I miss you all but let's keep the faith. I look forward to seeing you all in the near future.

With my utmost appreciation and gratitude for you and all you do,

Betsy "Betz" Ficarro