

## **Sunday Column – How We Can Help For publication 9.10.17**

As I write this article on the Tuesday after Labor Day, hotels in Columbus are already fully booked in anticipation of Hurricane Irma. One of the strongest storms on record in the Atlantic, Florida residents are taking it seriously and making plans to evacuate.

Because not all hotels are pet friendly, PAWS Humane is currently fielding inquiries from potential evacuees who will need to board their best friends for the duration of their stay, an unknown number of days. You would think hotels could make a merciful exception in an emergency, but apparently not.

Over the weekend we began receiving emails from various national and local animal welfare organizations requesting space for displaced pets from Hurricane Harvey. Unfortunately, this is the worst possible time of year, which is to say it is warm outside. That always means that our local animal control agencies are full and we are compelled to pull animals from there first. It is what it is.

It isn't all bad news though. Due to our robust Community Cat Project, which has been operating in Columbus for the past three years, we have plenty of room to receive a shipment of disgruntled felines by sometime next week. Hopefully, they will settle in to their new digs fairly quickly and go on to be adopted into wonderful homes where they will resume their careers as the pets they were meant to be. Animals are amazing in their resiliency.

Most of their owners, on the other hand, will be wishing they had microchipped their pets. When properly identified every effort is made to reunite pets with the families they lost in the storm. Without this, peace of mind will forever elude the families who once loved and cared for them.

There are obvious things we, as individuals, can do to help provide relief during a natural disaster. We can make monetary donations to the Red Cross, the Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends Animal Society, or any number of organizations who are on the ground easing the burden of animals and humans impacted by an event like this. We can also donate clothing, blankets, pet food, and other items to groups who will deliver them to affected areas. Harley Davidson in Columbus was preparing to make such a trip and I know of several church groups doing the same.

I just came across an innovative new website designed to match pets in need with temporary foster homes. It can be found at <http://www.fosterahurricanepet.org>. This is new and there are only a few pets listed at the moment, but they are no less in need and you may be the one who can help. This website was developed by Adopt-a-Pet and is being sponsored through a grant by Petco.

Please keep the displaced pets of Hurricane Harvey and their grieving families in your prayers this week.

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