

Doggone Pet Overpopulation

SNIP Collier Low-Cost Veterinary Clinic spays and neuters dogs and cats and provides other care and services.

A decade ago, Tom Kepp saw an unmet need in Collier County, and he stepped up to fill it: Spaying and neutering dogs to relieve the pressure on dog rescue and shelter operations. “We can’t adopt our way out of pet overpopulation. That’s our motto. And that’s a fact,” he said. “I started doing it because no one was approaching the problem. At the time, it was about adoption, adoption, adoption—but there were not enough homes for the ones out there.”

Kepp, a native Neapolitan, began spaying and neutering stray and rescued dogs that he put up for adoption, and he worked with low-income families to take care of and return their reproductive-age dogs. Today, the project he started in the Bayshore area has evolved into SNIP Collier Low-Cost Veterinary Clinic, which became a 501(c)3 in 2019. The clinic offers spaying, neutering, vaccinations, and exams for both dogs and cats. It is open five days a week to the public.

The SNIP team works with families to foster pregnant canines and put their puppies up for adoption through the Gulf Coast Humane Society in Fort Myers and Cape Coral Animal Shelter & Veterinary Clinic. The canine mother is then returned to her family. The organization also traps, neuters, and returns feral cats to their neighborhood and facilitates animal rescues.

SNIP was the recipient of a \$6,000 Collier Community Foundation grant for its Helping Paws Medical Fund and spay and neutering program. The financial support is vital for the grassroots nonprofit, and so is the organization’s guidance from the Community Foundation during the past five years. “They have been very supportive of us. They guided me through building this organization and supported us with finances and getting our name out to donors who support what we do,” Kepp said. “They’ve been good mentors.”

SNIP plans to open a pet surgery, rescue, and education center on a three-acre site in Immokalee. When Kepp began this work in 2013, he counted 35 canine clients. After opening the clinic in 2021, 2,015 dogs and cats were spayed and neutered. Last year, SNIP assisted 130 pregnant dogs, which Kepp affectionately calls moms, and puppies. “I still like to crawl under trailers and go out in the field,” Kepp noted.



Dogs (and cats) that have recently been rescued by SNIP and saved with the Helping Paws Medical Fund.