



Kaua'i Mega MASH September 2019

The Animal Balance team has just returned from a successful five-day sterilization campaign on the Hawaiian Island of Kaua'i. Together in partnership with Kaua'i Community Cat Project (KCCP) and the Spay Pod, Animal Balance volunteers from around the world launched a multi-location MASH-style spay/neuter campaign that will ultimately provide up to 2,000 spays and neuters for cats on the island. During the campaign, 526 animals were provided with high-quality sterilization and microchips in an effort to control the island's free-roaming cat population.



Animal Balance has been working with local animal welfare organizations on Kaua'i since 2015, hosting large scale spay/neuter events and working to establish a more sustainable, long-term humane solution for the island's cat population. The efforts of both Animal Balance and the Kaua'i Community Cat Project culminated with the opening of the Spay Pod, a permanent source of affordable and accessible spay/neuter for cats on the island, earlier this year. Together with the Spay Pod and KCCP, more than 1,800 cats

have been spayed or neutered through this collaborative effort. With the support of the recent Mega-MASH campaign, along with funding from the Petco Foundation, the Spay Pod is on track to continue to sterilize approximately 200 cats per month through the end of the year, bringing the total number of cats to more than 2,400 in 2019.

Two clinics were set up during the week of Sept. 8-13, one at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Kapa'a, on the island's east side, and the other at Koloa Missionary Church in Koloa, on the southside of the island. The clinics were held simultaneously in an effort to aid those who are not willing or able to battle the traffic on the island to access the Spay Pod, which is not as conveniently located for those who live on the south and west parts of the island.

This campaign was our first attempt at holding a clinic on the southside (after requests and support from local cat caregivers in the area) and we saw an increased volume of cats at this location over the Kapa'a location, where we have held previous campaigns and where the Spay Pod has been operating since January. This indicated that the cat population on the east side of the island is being sufficiently maintained and that offering consistent affordable and accessible spay/neuter is key to managing the population in a humane way.

Our trapping team focused on areas on the southside of the island, working in the weeks leading up to the campaign to identify "hot spots" and collaborate with local caregivers to maximize trapping efforts. After visiting a number of sites with local caregivers, it was discovered that many of the cats who were previously thought to be unaltered were in fact eartipped. On one hand the trapping team spent valuable time researching these locations only to find out the work had already been done, but on the other hand we were thrilled to see so many well managed colonies who were already fixed. Animal Balance will continue to work with KCCP to provide the community with more education surrounding colony management and eartipping.

One limitation that the trapping team experienced was the number of traps available for use each night. In 2016, Animal Balance shipped 150 traps and transfer cages to the island and worked with local partners to manage their usage when Animal Balance was not on the island. Unfortunately, about half of the 150 traps that we had previously purchased and sent to the island were unable to be located prior to our campaign. Thankfully, our trapping team was creative, and worked extra hard to trap approximately 60 cats each night. The remaining traps have now been catalogued and handed over to KCCP for use by the Spay Pod.



Because the Kapa'a clinic had increased bandwidth due to a lower number of cats arriving at the clinic, we reached out to local rescue groups KSPCA and KAWS to offer our services. A small number of hunting dogs from owners who had wanted to have their dogs spayed and neutered for many months but could not afford to do so were contacted by KSPCA. The owners of these dogs are influential in the hunting community on Kaua'i. Hunting dogs on the island are rarely sterilized, thus resulting in many

"accidental" litters of puppies that often end up at the shelter. By providing these hunters with positive experiences with veterinary care, they are now stewards for spay/neuter and will begin to create change among that demographic on the island.

The most notable aspect of this campaign was the difference in education and awareness that we detected in the community. Not only did we see increased community support from previous campaigns in terms of in-kind donations from restaurants and businesses, but we are finally starting to notice an increased desire amongst both cat and dog owners to have their pets fixed, keep cats inside, and seek out further veterinary care for when needed. These are big advancements that signify that the social change aspect that Animal Balance focuses on is working.



Taking it one step further, Animal Balance Founder and CEO Emma Clifford, along with Directors Elsa Kohlbus and Megan Gram, used this campaign as a catalyst to meet with representatives from the Department of Land and Natural Resources and other environmental protection groups on the island to begin to discuss ways in which the groups can work together to prevent killing of free-roaming cats, while also protecting the diverse and threatened species on the island. This meeting was extremely positive and ideas for potential collaborations were discussed to help protect the delicate biodiversity which exists on the beautiful Garden Island.



Of course, in addition to the very serious nature of the work that our team was doing on the ground, we wanted to ensure that we were approachable to the public. We developed an entertaining “Space Cats” theme for the campaign, utilizing a NASA style font and producing banners with cat astronauts, etc. This approach was successful in drawing people in who were curious about the advertisements and opening the door to have more serious

conversations about how to care for and manage cats on the island. The Spay Pod will also carry-on with this approach. We have learned through our work on the Hawaiian Islands that it is crucial to sit and “talk story” with members of the community in order to gain acceptance. By making ourselves approachable to these conversations we can increase our outreach and ultimately our impact.

We are finally beginning to see the signs of sustainable, positive change on Kaua’i in terms of how the community is managing their cat population. Residents are accepting spay/neuter as the standard among cats and we are witnessing increased collaboration amongst residents and businesses to ensure that these efforts are able to continue moving forward. Thanks to the supporters of this Mega-MASH campaign, we were able

to continue to provide positive support to those involved in protecting cats and all wildlife. We were able to provide the Spay Pod with supplies which will allow them to provide sterilization for more than 1,000 more cats, including microchips and anesthetic drugs. We will continue to provide support as needed to ensure that the work on Kaua'i continues to move in a direction of increased capacity for surgery, collaboration with all stakeholders involved and an increased awareness in the community regarding well managed cat colonies.

Campaign Highlights:

- Community Outreach/Education
- Collaboration between vets & techs
- Participants from Charlottesville's SPCA, SNAP (Houston/San Antonio), RAVS, HSUS, Red Rover, ASPCA, etc.
- Increased community involvement and buy in (donations from local restaurants/businesses, local volunteer participation)
- Increased interest in Spay Pod & increased awareness of the importance of spay/neuter for health of cats & environment

