



## 'Operation Potcake'

## Report 2013

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### Overview

In January 2013, the coalition of organizations who formed 'Operation Potcake' held a ten day sterilization campaign from January 10<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, sterilizing and vaccinating **2,315** dogs.

The 'Operation Potcake' coalition was comprised of: The Bahamas Humane Society (BHS), Bahamas Alliance for Animal Rights and Kindness (Baark!), The Veterinary Medical Association of the Bahamas (VMAB), The Department of Agriculture, Animals Require Kindness Association (ARK), The Pink Potcake, and Proud Paws, led by Animal Balance.

'Potcake' is the name given to the Bahamian street dog as traditionally they were fed the burned rice at the bottom of the pan, known as the 'potcake'



We estimate there are 20,000 street dogs living in New Providence. The dogs roam their neighborhoods seeking food, water and shelter. The VMAB in collaboration with the local rescue groups created a Five Year Plan for reducing the population humanely. Their goal is to sterilize 3,000 dogs per year, on this program at a cost of \$60 per dog. In order to assist with this program and address the sector of the population which is reproducing most quickly, due to their free roaming nature, availability of food and water, we decided to target the street dogs, or Potcakes.' Operation Potcake' would seek to serve the dogs who would never see a veterinarian in their lifetime; i.e. the dogs who do not have owners, or are not considered 'owned'. Operation Potcake would therefore dovetail nicely with the Five Year Plan already in place. The entire program would be

sustainable and would not take away any clients from the existing veterinary clinics. We could provide training in humane trapping and high volume clinic organization, provide the equipment necessary and, most importantly, systematically and logically target the largest grouping of street dogs.

Operation Potcake Promotion Video: [http://animalbalance.net/?page\\_id=282](http://animalbalance.net/?page_id=282)

Operation Potcake Website: <http://www.operationpotcake.com>

Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/OperationPotcake?ref=hl#!/OperationPotcake>

## **History**

In 2011, at The Caribbean Animal Welfare Conference, Emma Clifford gave a presentation on 'Organizing MASH Campaigns'. After Emma's speech, Kim Aranha, the President of the Board of Directors of the BHS, asked Emma if Animal Balance would be interested in assisting the island of New Providence with an island-wide campaign which would target their street dog population. In November 2011, Emma and Dr. Byron Maas flew to the Bahamas for the first in a series of meetings with key leaders to organize the coalition and assess the resources.

Throughout 2012, the coalition worked tirelessly to hold the dog population census and then create the most logical and efficient strategy for creating an island-wide high volume campaign. We organized 5 clinic sites based on the census findings, fundraised for 2,000 spay and neuter surgeries and transport of equipment, recruited close to 200 local and international volunteers, organized all permissions required with the government and utilizing a 'military style' approach organized the entire event, which was fast becoming the largest spay and neuter campaign that we had ever organized, or had even heard of being organized.

## **Results**

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the international volunteers flew into Nassau, the local volunteers greeted us and for 10 days we worked side by side for over 14 hours a day for 10 days to help the Bahamian Potcakes, while the trapping team worked through the night to capture the dogs.

During the campaign we were featured every day in the television news, papers and radio. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Deputy Prime Minister, Philip 'Brave' Davis, visited our clinics and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January we were invited to a reception with Prime Minister Christie. He, along with the Secretary of Agriculture and Director of Agriculture, thanked us for our work and stated that 'Operation Potcake' would now become an annual event.



Click here to read about the Deputy Prime Minister's visit:

<http://www.tribune242.com/news/2013/jan/22/operation-potcake-will-be-annual-event/?news>



By January 21<sup>st</sup> we had sterilized and vaccinated an incredible **2,315 dogs**. The campaign was a tremendous success and every single volunteer left the campaign totally exhausted, but delighted with the results.

## A Year and a Half of Planning

This enormous campaign took an incredible amount of planning; here are some of the major events that we accomplished during that time.

- November, 2011: Conducted a feasibility visit to assess resources and meet with The Veterinary Medical Association of the Bahamas to seek approval for the campaign
- January, 2012: Planning meeting with coalition in Nassau and development of the Memorandum of Understanding between all parties
- February 2012: Monthly planning meetings held in Nassau and reported back to AB. Linda Aranha-Gill recruited and employed by BHS as Operation Potcake's Coordinator
- March - April 2012: Carried out a dog census on New Providence Island – methodology below
- April 2012: We created the name; 'Operation Potcake' and logo; we gave the campaign a recognizable identity
- May 2012: Organized the island into 5 zones and placed our clinic sites in the areas where most of the Potcakes live
- 2011-2012: Raised the funds needed for 2,000 spays and neuters, plus the transport of equipment to the island from the US
- May 2012: The Coalition formed logistics teams for; volunteer recruitment, housing, food, transport, clinic design and build, government liaison, importation, etc.
- June 2012: Recruited 150 international volunteer veterinarians, technicians, assistants, trappers and coordinators
- Summer – Winter: Talks conducted at churches, local schools and meeting groups to tell people about the importance of spaying and neutering. Radio and television shows were also conducted regularly
- October 2012: Veterinary Licenses approved by Department of Agriculture and controlled drugs paperwork submitted
- October 2012: Provided Code of Conduct and all clinic protocols to teams
- November 2012: Medical supplies ordered and shipped to The Bahamas Humane Society (BHS) in Nassau.
- November to January: The BHS shelter was the headquarters for preparation, group meetings, pick up, shipping and storage and close out and packing up. The BHS sponsored many staff hours to all the preparing and meetings before the campaign



and thick vegetation, to wide open spaces. This variable landscape made a predetermined recording distance useless. So, we switched our methods to count every dog that was visible, regardless of the distance. After the data collection, we then used an area calculation tool on Google Earth to estimate average viewing distances for each road we sampled.

After our initial sample of the major roadways, we concentrated our efforts on neighborhoods bordering the larger roads sampled. After sampling the bordering neighborhoods and testing the results, we found that the neighborhood densities were proportional to the densities found along the major roads they bordered. (Pearson correlation of .98, two tailed T test p value of 0.0018, which are both extremely statistically significant) This means that the overall population of the island can be periodically monitored using roadside counts on major roads.



In order to calculate linear population densities, we input the recorded results in a Google Spreadsheet, and created a histogram that counted the total number of dogs observed per tenth of a mile. Using the visible area calculations, we also calculated the approximate dogs/sq mile for each 1/2 mile. Using Google Earth and our GPS tracks, Scott correlated the odometer mileage recorded with locations on Google Earth, and then placed markers identifying population densities on a public map to share. We also calculated the estimated densities in neighborhoods that we did not directly sample using the proportion between major roads and bordering neighborhoods. Once this was all tallied together, Scott created a relative density heat map as well as determined clinic zones of relative equal dog populations that were divided by major roads.

The rough data for the NP surveys can be found in this spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjKboDbiNR6GdE5sVGw1aHhOVlhRZXFu1pCRGJPSWc#gid=20>

Maps:

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=207529640361830171301.0004bc3a2b62a4dc1a893&msa=0>

### **The Organization and Development of the Campaign**

The island of Nassau, New Providence is 21.1 miles long and 6.8 miles wide. Based on the information from the dog census, the island was divided into 5 zones. This information was entered into Google Maps and shared internationally. We mapped out the densest areas of dogs and put our clinic sites as close as possible to these areas. We did this so that we could be as efficient as possible with our resources. If our clinics are close to the dogs we can save time and funds when transporting them.

The Bahamian coalition groups split into teams and each were responsible for different areas of the local logistics:

- The Hospitality Team was tasked with taking care of the volunteer needs, such as; finding free hotels, food for the clinics, transport to and from the airport, dietary needs and transport to and from the clinics, plus tracking all this information in spreadsheets.

- Clinic Team Leaders were tasked with locating the clinic sites and finding donated non-medical supplies for their clinics. They were responsible for finding the tables, lights, water source and a huge list of non-medical supplies for each clinic. They were also tasked with recruiting volunteers in that area to help with the clinic.
- The Public Relations team was directed by Laura Kimble in the Bahamas and Nigel Smith in the UK. They were responsible for ensuring that the campaign was reported in the media (traditional and social media) before, during and after the campaign. Our first video blog, pre campaign. The local PR volunteers also designed and created all the merchandise for Operation Potcake, such as t-shirts, posters, fliers and banners. During the campaign itself we utilized social media, including video blogs, to report back directly from the campaign nearly every day so that our international audience would be engaged as and when events happened.
- Dr. Grant was the liaison between the Veterinary Medical Association of the Bahamas, Government and Animal Balance. He was tasked with ensuring that all the permissions were achieved for veterinary licenses and the importation of drugs, medicines and equipment.
- Linda Gill-Aranha was Operation Potcake's 'scribe'; she recorded every piece of information from each committee into Excel spreadsheets. She tracked the entire development of the campaign and shared this regularly via Google Docs with each of us.
- Linda and Dr. Grant also ordered all supplies that could be purchased locally.

#### International Support:

- Animal Balance (AB) worked out the quantities, price checked and ordered the supplies and equipment, sought the permissions for supplies and licenses with government and organized the transport of all supplies and equipment to Nassau from the US
- AB recruited the international clinic volunteers and provided them with the clinic protocols. All volunteers paid for their own flights.
- The dog trapping strategy and recruitment was directed by Consie von Gontard. She worked closely with Scott Werner, who had developed the dog census and each Clinic Team Leader to create an efficient trapping plan. She utilized Google Earth to evaluate the areas for trapping and identify possible "feeding stations" to be set up and maintained by the individual clinic teams. The "feeding station" strategy was utilized to encourage dogs to congregate into a safe area for trapping at a later date. This strategy proved very valuable and effective on the feeding stations that were properly maintained for several weeks before the start of the campaign. The information for possible feeding station locations proved easier to gather from Google Earth than having volunteers drive each of the hundreds of streets searching for possible locations. Of the 20+ possible feeding station locations identified on Google Earth, all but 3 proved to be useable locations when confirmed by local volunteers on the ground. Google Earth proved a valuable resource for learning the lay of land and getting a bird's eye view of the target areas. She raised funds for 50 dog traps and had them transported to Nassau for January.
- AB directed and oversaw development of the entire campaign both in the US and in the Bahamas.

#### The 5 Clinics

There were 5 clinics: Kemp Road, East Street, Fox Hill, Carmichael and the Western Clinic. The Western clinic operated for one week only as a mobile clinic. The Western team clinic was relocated to multiple sites on a rotation basis. This was done as this area is sparsely populated, with smaller communities spread out in multiple locations. The Kemp Street, East Street, Fox Hill and Carmichael clinics were stationary. They were at the Eastern side of the island, which has the denser, more urban areas where the highest numbers of dogs live. The campaign was 2 weeks in total.

Each clinic had a clinic team staffed by local and international volunteers. We had: registration/release team, preparation/anesthesia team, surgery team, recovery team, cleaning team and runners who jumped in and did whatever was needed; between 15 to 30 people staffed each clinic site.

The dogs came to the clinics in 3 ways: owners brought them in, the collection team picked them up, or they were trapped by the trapping team.

The 'collection' teams were comprised of the local rescue volunteers who knew the areas and communities well. Each day they went into the communities letting people know about the free clinics and literally collecting people's dogs and street dogs and bringing them back to the clinic and then returning them after the veterinarian had released the dog.

As Fox Hill was the largest clinic site and was secure, we allocated this clinic primarily for the trapped dogs. However, the Fox clinic also received owned dogs and collected dogs depending on the number of trapped dogs caught the previous night.

Trapping video blog: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1395>

Each afternoon the trapping team would hold a briefing at Fox Hill and create a plan for that night's trapping activities. They worked the neighborhoods letting people know what they would be doing and talked to people about the benefits of spay and neuter. They then worked to desensitize the dogs and then finally trap them using food bait in a humane dog trap and took the dogs in their traps to the Fox



Hill clinic around midnight. The

clinic team arrived at 7 am and began surgery after their morning briefing. The dogs were then either held overnight, or released back to their home later that evening.





Each clinic worked from 7 am each day to 8 pm each evening. We coordinated with other regarding number of dogs and supplies. We followed a chain of command for the entire campaign and within each clinic site and for the entire campaign.

Day one video blog: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1354>

Each clinic held a briefing meeting in the morning to discuss what went right or wrong the day before and suggest how to improve the clinic's efficiency. This was also a chance to ensure that the team was working together cohesively. Emma and Linda visited each clinic site nearly every day to deliver more supplies, answer questions and share information from the other clinics.

In addition to the clinics and trapping teams, the coalition organized a team of foster parents. These volunteers were ready to take dogs who needed further care post-surgery. In some cases the local veterinary clinics, particularly the BHS, took dogs who needed further medical monitoring. An entire network had been set up to provide the most comprehensive safety net possible for the dogs' care.



Puppy Fix Slide show: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1583>

## Results

We achieved our collective objective: to sterilize and vaccinate 2,000 Potcakes – **we did 2,315!** By the end of week one, we had sterilized 1,244 dogs, we were going to run out of supplies! On our 2 days off, we sent out messages over the internet asking for financial assistance. You responded and we were able to purchase the supplies and ask the volunteers flying in for week 2 to transport them. We started week 2 knowing that we had enough supplies to help far more dogs than we had thought possible.

We are currently entering all the information from the 2,315 registration sheets into a database. Once accomplished that data will be analyzed and shared.

## Beyond Numbers

Even though our numbers were high, our goal was always to ensure that every single dog received the highest level of veterinary care possible. Each clinic had a Medical Director who was responsible for all medical decisions. If they needed to confer, they called Dr. Byron Maas, the Medical Director for the entire campaign, who was based at Fox Hill. This system worked well as the Clinic Medical Directors had autonomy over their own clinics, but could also reach out for advice if needed. Dr. Maas also called them each morning to check in.

The clinics also had Clinic Coordinators who oversaw the flow of animals in each clinic and ensured that the team was running efficiently. If they were short in any area, or had a question about resources for an animal who needed further care, they called a request into Emma who was based at HQ, inside the Fox Hill building and was supported by Linda. Every clinic was well structured and provided exemplary care to the animals.

Clinic slide show, click here: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1485>

The clinic teams quickly formed tight bonds with each other. By day 3 of the campaign, the teams were working as well-oiled machines and had become very efficient. They were not only providing professional, high standard care for their patients, but were also taking care of each other. Most had only met 3 days earlier.



Example #1: Buses had been donated by Majestic Tours to take the teams back and forth to their clinics and hotels each day. The bus drivers soon realized that we were never going to be finished by 6 pm, our allocated pick up time. So rather than wait outside the clinics, we invited them in and they started to help us. Soon they started arriving even earlier and helping us with tasks like cleaning cages, giving aftercare instructions and carrying the cages to and from the pick-up trucks. They were given Operation Potcake t-shirts, Animal Balance patches, and were part of the clinic family. This happened over and over with different people at each clinic site. The outpouring of community support for Operation Potcake was staggering.

Example #2: It became very difficult at the end of week one for some volunteers to leave. Rick Goodlander had worked at East Street for the first week and was then going to return home to Andros. At the end of the week, he said goodbye to his team and went. Day one of week 2, Laura Kimble, Clinic Coordinator for the East Street Clinic, looked out the door and saw a man holding a suitcase – it was Rick, he could not stand to be away and miss out on week 2. He had arrived at his home, asked his boss for another week's vacation and turned right around and flown back over to New Providence to help the East Street Clinic.



To have over 150 animal protection volunteers in one place at one time means that ideas for helping animals are shared and lifelong connections and friends are created. Many of the international volunteers have stated that they will volunteer with any future

campaigns on the Bahamas. In addition, many of the Bahamian volunteers said they would like to volunteer on other AB campaigns around the world.

Volunteer explains why we do it, click here: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1562>

### **Summary**

The fantastic results of Operation Potcake are testament to the colossal amount of work that went into creating this campaign by all. Eight nationalities came together for 10 days to help a being that has no rights and is often marginalized by society. The Potcakes are beautiful animals who are just trying to survive. To kill these beings would be a crime. To assist them, by sterilizing them and vaccinating them is truly a humanitarian aid mission. The kindness and compassion that was shown to these dogs was outstanding. The ramifications of this open show of respect and love by so many people will ensure that the Potcakes now have a place in the web of life in New Providence. They are not vermin; they are dogs who are trying to stay alive.

We are all delighted that the government of the Bahamas recognized the importance of spaying and neutering the street dogs and supported the strategy by announcing that Operation Potcake would be an annual event.

The Operation Potcake model for humanely managing the street dog population can now be replicated on the other islands of the Bahamas and worldwide. It is an efficient and sustainable model.

Emma Clifford  
Director  
Animal Balance

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## **CLINIC COORDINATORS REPORTS**

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### **EAST STREET CLINIC, by Laura Kimble**

#### **The Clinic**

The East Street Clinic was located at number 31 Fowler Street in Nassau. It is normally used as a Junkanoo warehouse where members create floats and costumes for the annual parade in Nassau. It belongs to Mr. Donny Stewart, a local business man that grew up on Fowler Street. The area houses mostly people from a less privileged background and is one of the highest density areas on the island for both humans and potcakes.

We chose the location because it is central for the northern part of East Street so that it would be easy for people to bring their dogs in and also for the collection teams to quickly fetch and return dogs. It fulfilled most of the requirements in terms of space, lighting, aeration, lock-up security at night, parking etc. One thing we discovered once we arrived was that the water pressure was very low so we had to fetch water from the local community pumps several times a day! This actually didn't prove to be much of an issue. We had a portable toilet donated from a local company, and we had several buckets on the go so we were able to wash all the crates as needed, using water from the buckets.

When we arrived the warehouse still had some of parade equipment inside and there was glitter everywhere. East Street team members did an amazing job cleaning it all out and we even kept a float carriage in one corner.

Previous Animal Balance volunteers/ East Street medical members set up the clinic for optimal work flow.

### Getting Prepared

In the months before the program we had several OP meetings to discuss the logistics of the operation and carried out preparatory activities. As we drew nearer to the start we broke into individual teams to make sure that we had everything covered in our area. This included:

**Finding the location** – Finding the right space around East Street was a challenge as most buildings didn't fulfill the requirements. The area is mostly residential besides the main roads so we were limited in options. We approached several churches and building owners but many of them either could not let us have the space for the time required or didn't want their premises being used for dogs. Luckily an ex-Bahamas Humane Society staff member found the location we used in the end.



**Word of mouth** – We walked around the various sections of The East Street location to spread the word that the program was coming up in January 2013 and handed out flyers. We asked people to bring in their dogs if at all possible and also took notes on where there were either a lot of potcakes or where people did not have potcakes.



**Putting up posters** – We found snags, schools, churches, lamp posts, walls etc where our message would be seen. Most shop owners were happy for us to put posters up and could see the benefit of the program.



**Gathering supplies** – We were given a list of supplies for each clinic. Some of them were bulk items that were purchased with OP funds but many others required us to beg, borrow or buy ourselves. The team did amazingly well in sourcing these, even borrowing vehicles.

**Feeding stations** – We also had to find locations for the night team to trap and then start baiting those areas a week before the program started. The bait consisted of dry dog food biscuits, wet dog food and Jug 'o Juice (a strong mix of fish, dog food and water) to make a trail to the feeding stations. We found leaving the Jug 'o Juice out in the sun for a few hours made it even more attractive to dogs but had to be very careful not to spill it in the car!

### During the Program

Animals could arrive at the clinic in 3 ways:

- 1) Being dropped off by owners
- 2) Being collected by the collections team from owners
- 3) Being trapped on the streets by the collections/trapping team.



The local team was pretty

skeptical that we would have many people bringing their dogs in. On day one we were therefore pleasantly surprised to have a line-up of dogs and owners outside registration at 7:30 am. This gave the collections team some room to breathe as they fully expected to be collecting and dropping off from morning until late into the night. They split their days into collecting animals noted in the community walk around, from call-ins during the program and from driving and walking the roads around the clinic. Most of those collected were from owners that did not have transport but some could not be handled and needed to be lured into a cage or trapped with bait.

Once at the clinic the registration team had the task of getting the animals weighed, making sure we had all the right information in the notes and on the tags. They also liaised with the clinic co-ordinator to make sure that there were enough animals going in and that we didn't have too many later in the day. After surgery they called the owners to let them know they could pick up their dogs and also let collections members know which could be taken home again.

The clinic itself operated like a well-oiled machine from sedation to operating and recovery. Since almost all the clinic staff had participated in previous Animal Balance programs they were well prepared for working in non-hospital environments and handled the animals expertly and efficiently.

We still have many more animals to sterilize but Operation Potcake helped us make a massive start and we will now continue with our local team on a monthly basis and also a yearly bigger event.

## **Community Impact**

The local volunteers feel that the Operation Potcake Team had an incredible impact on the East Street community. Spay and Neuter was our main focus, but shortly into the clinic, volunteers realized there was so much more to operation potcake than just spay and neuter.

Close, lifelong bonds were formed between the local and foreign volunteers. The team quickly became a family. The East Street clinic personalities gelled incredibly well and there were no personality conflicts or issues. The volunteers are looking forward to future opportunities to work together again.

Many dog's lives were changed. Some specific stories will be described further in this report, but beyond spay and neuter the volunteers were able to educate the dog owners about feeding and caring for their dogs, and providing shelter. Many of the dogs in this area are chained because people cannot afford fencing, so the day collectors were able to work with owners to make the living conditions better. Many people put heavy chains around the dogs' neck and connect it with a padlock or wire. It cuts into their neck. Some dogs even had chain that had become imbedded into their necks. The chain is often short and heavy. Baark! (a local group) rounded up donations and purchased a supply of tie out cords and collars so that the dogs would have a longer space. The tie-out cords are light and longer and the collars are comfortable. The local volunteers have gone out after the campaign concluded to follow up on cases and will continue to work in the area.

In many cases we found that what looked like abuse, the owners actually did not know the correct way to care for animals and lacked resources. Once we talked to owners most were extremely willing to put our suggestions into practice and seemed very happy with the results. These are the people that will hopefully slowly spread the message of animal care to their families and friends.

Children in the community learned so much and became part of the team. Every afternoon we had children helping out at the clinic. They were so interested in what was happening and it provided opportunities to speak with them about animal care. Local volunteers are going to be sponsoring some of the East Street children to attend the day camps at the Bahamas Humane Society to further their knowledge.

## **Stories**

### **'The Stinky Dogs'**

There was a house on 'Lily of the Valley Road' where Jack, Jodi and Nancy discovered four dogs enclosed in a small, dirty pen with no ventilation. It was filled with feces and very gross. They were nicknamed 'the stinky dogs' because they smelt terrible and the clinic was blanketed by their odor the entire day they were there. The dogs were spayed and neutered and in the meantime while the dogs were at the clinic, volunteers went to speak to the owner. He immediately tore down the 'box', created an overhang with wood so they had protection from the rain, and tidied up the area so that the dogs would have a

much larger space to run around in. He was more than willing to better the lives of his dogs with some suggestions and encouragement. The local team visited on February 16th and the dogs are happy and healthy. Neighbors commented that they are so happy we came along because others had tried to tell the man what he was doing was wrong but he had refused to listen.

### **Volunteer Feedback**

*"This was my very first time volunteering at something of this magnitude and I have to say I had the most incredible time, meeting so many great people who truly care about the wellbeing of not only the potcakes but of the people. This experience has truly changed my life, I look at things so differently now. I still look at the pictures daily, and cry, I cannot imagine not going every year now whether it is in Nassau or wherever the next clinic takes place. I want to bring my husband and children, but I know that won't be possible with the kids for a while. Thanks so much for allowing me to take part in this project but most of all thanks for doing it. I have never seen "the bad" in this, I mean the conditions that people and animals live in, guess I have always lived in a bubble. Everyone that has viewed my photos, co-workers, family, friends were blown away by this project. Can't wait for next year!"*

### **Nancy Brooks**

*"Overall, I think the clinic ran exceptionally well! This was my first time with Animal Balance, but certainly not my first spay/neuter "rodeo." Our clinic had an amazing balance of experts, well versed, and novice volunteers that worked like a well-oiled machine. We adapted our process and found that having one person who was well versed to liaise with the registration crew and the vets was very helpful during intake for surgery and release from surgery. This person also made sure that cages were ready, supplies were handy and stocked, animals were appropriately marked, and Vets had a quick overview of any complications and/or items of note prior to their signatures for released. I was this logistics type person and the benefits to the group were:*

- 1. Pregnant or in-heat females were given priority over healthy males or females that weren't either. This was done to make sure they were given ample time for surgery and in recovery to receive fluids before release to owner or at location.*
- 2. The flow remained constant with a specific number of animals waiting for surgery at any given point. The Techs and Vets were not waiting for animals and work level remain constant thus producing maximum output.*
- 3. When not physically working with an animal in recovery, additional vaccines were drawn, hydration checks on fellow volunteers were made, supplies were replenished, laundry was gathered, trash was taken out, staging was done for the following day, etc.*

*In closing, our East Street Clinic had ZERO fatalities as a result of our surgeries or post-operative care! The whole lot of us are Rockstars and I'd work with any one of them or for Emma or Laura any day of the week."*

### **Angela Shields**

### **WESTERN CLINIC – By Dr. Valentino Grant**

Question 1): Where and who were on the Team

The Western Clinics were at Gambier Village - Jan 10th and 11<sup>th</sup> and then Adelaide Village - Jan 12th, 13th and 14<sup>th</sup>. We remained in Adelaide on the 14th which was originally scheduled to be the Mt. Pleasant Village clinic

Question 2): Why was your clinic put there?

The clinic sites were chosen based on a demographic of persons who were under-privileged and did not have the wherewithal to properly care for their animals, as a result most of their dogs and cats were not spayed and neutered, thus there was an overpopulation problem.



Question 3): What was your set up and give a general overview as to how it ran.

The Western clinic was unique in that we were originally assigned 3 clinic locations.

Gambier Village - St Peter's Native Baptist church hall on January 10th - 11<sup>th</sup>, Adelaide Village at the Neely's Beach house from January 12 - 13<sup>th</sup> and Mt. Pleasant Village on January 14th

We had a very good team and were able to set up our MASH hospital in approximately 2 hours. We had a "forward operating team" comprised of 6 persons who basically placed the major hardware like surgery tables & preparation tables in place, ran power cords and lights, made sure the water supply was intact and got all the crates in place etc.

Then the registration, preparation, surgical and recovery teams followed and got all their supplies and utensils situated in their allocated zones. Things ran very smoothly BUT our challenge was that we had to BREAK DOWN the whole Gambier clinic on the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> and transport it to Adelaide and had to have the Adelaide location ready for operations by 8am the following morning. This was NO small feat, but we did it! It was wonderful teamwork, however we decided that to repeat the same thing - to move and set up the Mt. Pleasant clinic as we had such a good response from the surrounding Adelaide community, which comprised the neighbouring communities of Coral Harbour, Carmichael Rd. (West) and Cowpen Rd – would NOT have been a WISE move.

We therefore cancelled the Mt. Pleasant clinic and remained in Adelaide on the 14<sup>th</sup> and placed 2 volunteers at the site in Mt. Pleasant to direct persons to our Adelaide location. We also transported dogs from Mt. Pleasant to Adelaide.

IMPACT of the clinics: The sterilization clinics made a positive impact on these communities. We canvassed these village communities prior to the clinics by going door to door handing out flyers, speaking at churches like St. Peter's Native Baptist and speaking at the various schools like Adelaide and Gambier Primary.



In Gambier we used the church hall



of the Baptist church because I spoke at the church service back in October of 2012 telling the congregation about our sterilization campaign and they "bought into it" and offered us the church hall.

I think one of the anecdotal stories about why Operation Potcake was so successful was because we "WON THE HEARTS AND MINDS" of our target audience by going to them. This is what Emma told us to do and it surely worked. We gained the TRUST of the people and they responded by bringing their animals to us!

We also got a chance to counsel some persons on how to care for their pets and what it meant to be a responsible animal owner. They really appreciated it

Short stories:

a) "Janus"

Janus Dean was one of our volunteers and is the deacon and caretaker of the St. Peter's Native church. He was very instrumental in getting the church hall ready for us and was on site during the first day of the clinic. He assisted us and enjoyed what he was doing so much that he rode on our truck that went into the village to pick up dogs. Then assisted us to get these dogs out of their cages and prepped for surgery. He then asked us if he could help us in Adelaide! Janus lives in Gambier but was so excited about being a part of Operation Potcake and being truly appreciated by the whole team that he assisted us for the rest of the time in Adelaide.

He was seriously injured in a car accident a few years ago which left him physically and verbally challenged, but he did not let that stop him or slow him down and for this we were so appreciative and thankful for his wonderful human spirit.



b) "Teamwork" and the award for Operation Potcake goes to, guess it? Teamwork! I have never been part of such a huge undertaking,

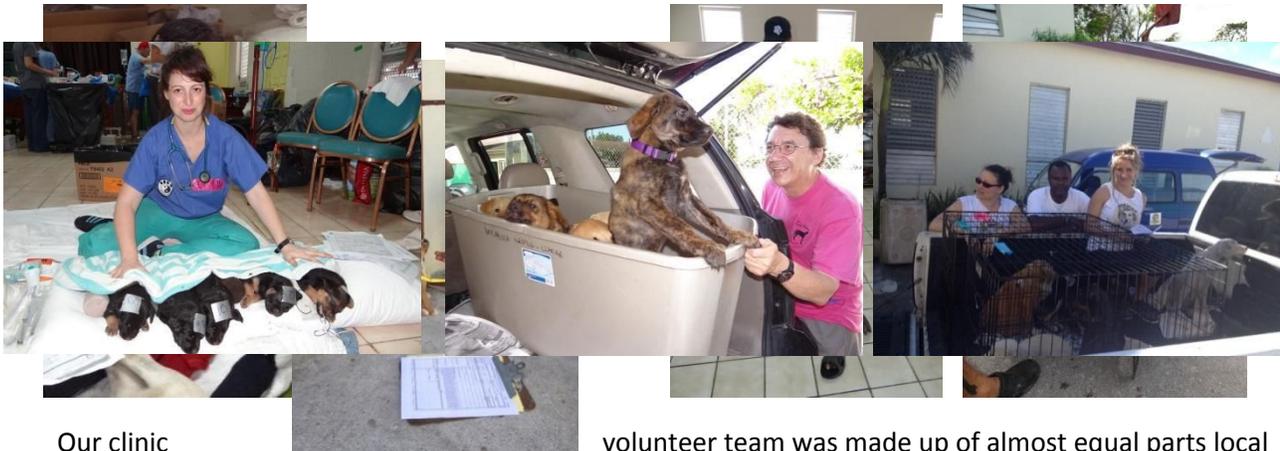
as was the case of the majority of the team members. All the planning, logistics, coordination all worked in the end because we pulled together as a group: A UNIT.

T.E.A.M : 'Together Everyone Achieves Much' and that is exactly what happened! It was not perfect, but then again nothing like this ever is. I am very proud of my unit and for that matter ALL THE TEAMS....AND THE ORGANIZERS! We have all been inspired and were so happy to be a part of this historic effort.

### **Kemp Road Clinic Report by Lissa McCombe**

Kemp Road can be described as one of Nassau's oldest 'Inner Cities'. Crime is high, poverty is high and education is poor. It is an area which is much in need of both a high volume spay/neuter clinic and some community outreach with education. After approaching the Government for use of their building and getting no response, we decided on St. Bede's Catholic Church Hall, a centrally located spacious building that had plenty of parking and was next door to the local school. Father Clarke was very generous to offer this magnificent space with running water, a kitchen, bathrooms and a secure locked area for the supplies (and animals) at night. We couldn't have asked for better clinic location.

We conducted several community walks prior to the start of Operation Potcake, immediately developing relationships with some of St. Bede's neighbors. We held a town meeting, visited the classes and gathered the community kids one Saturday morning to paint our clinic sign. For the most part, we had huge support from the community although we found the need to explain WHY spay/neuter was a good idea for their animals.



Our clinic volunteer team was made up of almost equal parts local and visitors. Everybody clicked right away and the clinic atmosphere was one of positivity and hope. Dr. Lindsay Alexanderson led an energetic medical team through 472 spay/neuter procedures over the 10 day campaign. Dr. Amy Fisher and Dr. Polly Compston lead their own teams along with a few locals in recovery. Sandy Cunningham, a local volunteer, proved to be invaluable as the lead of Registration for both weeks. Sandy created a system, which helped the entire clinic run smoothly and make sure no animal got lost in the shuffle.

We relied greatly on our local trapping teams to bring us the animals as many people were unable to get to the clinic or needed some convincing by a local expert. Maggie and Julian of the 'Pink Potcake' lead the way meeting us every morning with little buses full of animals waiting for surgery. Hannah Wareham

and Tiffany Petre assisted Shelley Hardman of 'Stray Busters' in their own local trapping convoy. While Kirk Duncombe emerged as the Island's very own 'Dog Whisperer', calming agitated dogs that even the vets were unable to get close to!

Our group met every morning and every evening to make sure we were all on the same page and nobody was suffering from compassion fatigue. By the first weekend, the trust had spread through the community and people were lined up outside the clinic with their pets. What an awesome feeling. Somebody from the clinic was always stationed at the front door to answer questions that inquisitive passerby's might have. Most of the time, it was within the hour that those people returned with family members pets or pets of their own.



The local kids were a huge help to the clinic success. There were a few that stood out from the pack in particular, Maurice and Marcian Pinder. These two brothers, who lived nearby on Kemp Road, joined us during the community walks and they stayed with us through to the end. Every day after school and bright and early on the weekends, they would appear in their

Operation Potcake shirts, put their gloves on and start working. They assisted in everything from Cleaning cages to feedings to pick-ups and drop offs. We were so impressed with their work that they now volunteer at the Humane Society on Saturdays and Sundays. Marcian is inspired to be a vet and Maurice is quite the animal rehabilitator!

There have been so many touching stories through the doors of our clinic; it is hard to write about just one or two. On day two, Julian and Maggie brought in little 'Dobby'. She was skin and bone, barely hanging onto life with a cardboard ring fitted over her neck, making it impossible to eat. We immediately got her on fluids, despite her being TERRIFIED of people, and took turns nurturing her back to health. We stood constant watch, determined not to give up on this little soul. She was too unhealthy to spay, but we just couldn't put her back. As the days went by Dobby gained strength and stayed with

us the entire campaign. When she was well enough to leave, she was adopted by an amazing volunteer from our clinic and now lives in Colorado!

Anyone at the Kemp Road Clinic, and possibly throughout the entire Operation Potcake Campaign knows the amazing 'Roger' story. Lissa and Kirk were driving through a very rough neighborhood off Kemp Road called Strachan's Alley. We had been through this corner many times before and had spayed and neutered many of the dogs there. As we banked the corner this time, we saw a horrific sight. A figure, in the shape of a dog, stumbled across the street and up against a building, so we drove up to it. Blinded by swollen eyes, just a patchy scrap of hair on his back, cracked and bleeding skin this sweet thing started to wag his tail at the sound

of our voices. He couldn't see and was too weak to walk without falling over. Kirk scooped him up into the truck and we headed for the clinic. We called ahead to the clinic to have Dr. Lindsay Alexanderson meet us outside so the



kids wouldn't have to see such a poorly treated animal. We were in tears upon arrival and sure that there was no hope for this poor baby.

Upon arrival, our local 'Stray Buster' Shelley told us that she had seen a case like this before and that there was hope. He wagged his tail and we knew that we couldn't give up on him, because he wasn't ready to give up either. We started treatment immediately with what we had at the clinic, and named him Roger. Roger responded quickly to the treatment and the healing process began. He became an inspiration for everyone. He now lives with us and is a happy, playful pup with a bright future :)

Roger's Story via vid-blog, click here: <http://animalbalance.net/?p=1580>

The entire project has gained such positive attention, everywhere we went people would wave; flag us down to ask questions even a thumbs up or a high five! The community finally has begun to realize the value of our animals to our society and the importance of love between animals and children and the positive effect that has on the nurturing side of their development. Thank you to everyone involved in Operation Potcake for bringing such awareness and understanding to our Bahamian people. Last of all, a HUGE thank you to those volunteers who watered and fed us for 2 weeks! We so much appreciated everyone's generosity as it really kept us going!

**FOX HILL CLINIC REPORT by Steffi Kesten and Debbie Krukowski.**

We chose this location for a number of reasons, the first being that it is very centrally located between the north and south ends of the island. It is very easy to get to, most people in and around Fox Hill and the eastern part of the island are familiar with it.

Not only was it a lovely, large and bright building, it had water, electricity and toilet facilities, which were a must. Also, there was ample parking for staff and customers alike.

There was ample space out front for our registration team to get the dogs booked in and set up into their cages, before actually entering the building. They were then brought through to the post op area.

We were able to set up four operation tables, plus a prep table. There was a very large recovery area set up a few steps away from the op. tables, which made it easy for the vets to move the animals once the surgery was completed.



The building was also large enough that we could accommodate the dogs being brought in by the trappers during the night, as well as the ones brought in by their owners. They were able to keep the two groups of dogs separated, which prevented any mix up in ownership of the animals. (Every morning all of the trapped dogs were sound asleep in their cages, so we think they were very happy with the set up as well!!)

Unfortunately, we did not have a separate room for our lunch table; however, it did not seem to matter, as the food got eaten with no problems whatsoever!

We were fortunate as well to have a large cemented area in the front to clean cages and traps. This helped tremendously.

Our sincere thanks go out to Reverend Carrington Pinder, who gave us permission to use the building and to his lovely wife, who gave us such warm words of encouragement.

Registration – On the whole this ran very smoothly once they understood which forms were to be used for which dogs. The numbering system is a brilliant idea and definitely kept the dogs with their right paper work. The aftercare sheets were great, a lot of the owners had no idea how to care for the dogs once the surgery was done and we think this made it much easier for them to understand.

Vets and Vet Techs – What amazing people!! It was an honor to meet our four vets, led by Dr. Byron. I have never seen people work so hard and be so accommodating while continually smiling. No matter how busy they were, if we had to interrupt them, they never seemed to mind. The vet techs were wonderful as well, they were amazing to watch, even the most vicious dogs were handled beautifully.

Recovery – From all accounts this area had no problems. Connie ran a tight ship and got the job done.

Trapping – Our trapping team were fabulous! We could have used more help in this area, the traps and cages with dogs in are VERY heavy, needless to say a lot of sore backs. (I think they would still be out trapping if we hadn't put a stop to them).

Cage Cleaners – This took a toll on our helpers, they all worked so hard especially as they were cleaning the traps and the cages, which we had not expected.

Food – The food was great. Unfortunately being in the Bahamas it is not too easy to get vegan food, so we were a bit short there. On the whole it seemed to go well, the little local boys that helped one day certainly enjoyed it.

Puppy Nursery – This was not planned, but was to be expected. People did not want their pups back once they had brought them in and we ended up with quite a few pups. Luckily, two of our workers are fostering them at present.

Overall Experience –

For me it has been much joy, the amount of people that have just come up and hugged me and said thank you for what you guys are doing, That they know without us this would never have happened, has made it all worthwhile. The little kids that wanted to help, just shows me that with the right kind of education, the Bahamian people would become better animal owners, the dogs that have been spared the years of breeding year after year, this is what it is all about and I want to thank Animal Balance and Operation Potcake for making this happen. You have set a high standard for us, one that I as a Bahamian know we can continue, if we all strive to work together for the good of our beloved four legged friends.

## **CARMICHAEL CLINIC, By Jehan Wallace**

Operation Potcake was the largest voluntary animal control promotion The Bahamas has ever been a part of. With Animal Balance leading the task, Operation Potcake was able to provide much needed veterinary medical help to many communities through the massive spay and neuter campaign. A clinic in

the Carmichael Road vicinity proved to be extremely beneficial and well-received by the community. The clinic was set up at an unused car garage called Oral's Golden Auto. The building is centrally located in the Carmichael area which made it very easy for people in the community to come there and take part in the operation. The clinic being situated on the main Carmichael Road allowed people who had not even heard about the undertaking become aware and participate in the campaign. We had a lot of people walk up and ask questions, see the set-up and opt to bring their dog in the next day to be spayed or neutered. Headed by Dr. Melanie Dehaan and Ms. Aleshia Overbey from SOS Ohio and local team leaders Ms. Jehan Wallace and Mrs. Donna Kiriaze our clinic provided a welcome atmosphere for people to feel free to stop by and ask questions as well as leave their beloved family dog, protective guard dog or even local stray in the clinic's care.

Considering we had a building over 4,000sq.ft to transform into our clinic, we had a lot of space to make it as comfortable as possible for both animals and volunteers, local and foreign. Our dog crates which kept both animals awaiting surgery and those waiting to go home were lined up in a manner that allowed everybody in the room to keep an eye on them to make sure no one was in distress or potentially harmful to themselves or others. Surgeons and the technicians were also lined up in way that if for any reason either person needed additional hands someone would not be far away. The only group that was set apart from the main clinic area was the recovery team. They were placed in a separate room in order to allow animals to have a calm and quiet area to wake up from the procedure, in a place they weren't familiar with, in peace so that they weren't extra excited and skittish. Once animals were brought in, they were registered, tagged and placed in a crate. There were a few that weren't so happy being away from home with strangers so those animals were given a moment to get adjusted and calm down before they were handled. Sometimes those animals went to the head of the line to be dealt with quickly so they could return home without too much added stress. The animal's comfort was always a major concern.

Animals came from all over the Carmichael area in various different ways. We had so many people drop their dogs off, some even as early as 7 am. They were so grateful for the opportunity to have the procedure done for free as they understood and wanted to contribute to easing the overpopulation of dogs in the community. There was one lady in particular that brought in three of her neighbor's dogs after her dog was spayed at the clinic. So simply by word of mouth and pure compassion we were able to fix three more dogs than we may not have been able to without her help. Then another day, one of our local volunteers brought in a dog from her neighborhood, which she had been feeding and sleeping on her porch, to be fixed. She went on to express concern about another dog in the neighborhood that seemed pregnant and hoped that the doctors could help before she had her puppies in the bushes. But when she and I went out there and found the dog, she had already given birth. However, with the help of the neighbors we were able to find the puppies that had taken up temporary residence under their house. Refusing the leave the dog or her seven puppies, I got on my stomach and crawled under the house to safely get each pup. They were then taken to the clinic site to receive medical attention and little love from our team. If it wasn't for Operation Potcake, there would have been seven additional dogs to add to the stray population in that area.





Our

volunteer team worked with determination to capture as many dogs as possible during those ten days to add to the success from the people dropping off from within the community. One of our volunteers actually fell and injured himself running after three puppies wondering along the highway. We had another one who simply drove through various communities, knocking on the doors of people whose yard had dogs in them. We were even able to enlist the help of children in the neighborhood that were friendly enough with the dogs to help us hold them and safely get them into carriers. It was a great help that people were extremely receptive to the aim of Operation Potcake and appreciated the fact that we offered a pick up and drop off service for animals they loved but couldn't bring in themselves. Most of the dogs our volunteers collected were strays and were not in the greatest of health. There were a few who were pregnant, but knowing that we were able to assist them in making their lives on the street a bit better was the highlight of many of our days. Two of our strays got the opportunity of a lifetime as they caught the eye of two of our foreign volunteers and went on to live the good life with them in the United States. Another one went home with a lady who simply fell in love with it when they came to pick up their own dog that they had dropped off earlier that day. We had many people come back to the clinic days later just to say Thank you and offer us a case of water or even a bundle of hand towels. Their smiles at the end of the day made our extreme exhaustion entirely worth it.

None of the successes we had during Operation Potcake would have happened without the determination and love for animals that brought all of us together. It was a tiring ten days but a meaningful experience. It helped us get to know the community better and point out areas of need that we can focus on in the future. It opened not only our eyes but the eyes of everyone who came in contact with us. Those who never took note of animals, do now even if it was just to help us during those ten days. We formed friendships and made connections that stretched the globe and it was all because of our beloved potcakes.



**Thank you to ALL of the volunteers and sponsors of  
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