

SCOTTSDALE INDEPENDENT



Alex DeForest

The Arizona Humane Society community broke ground on its new facility, located in central Phoenix near the zoo. The planned opening date of the \$46 million project is fall 2023.

Groundbreaking

A humane transformation in Papago Park

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Subscriber Exclusive

[Arizona Humane Society to break ground on new \\$46M Papago Park campus](#)

By Scott Daniels | Special to the Independent

On Thursday, Nov. 4, the Arizona Humane Society held a groundbreaking event on the new AHS Rob and Melani Walton Papago Park Campus, planned to be built and open two years from now.

“Mark it in your heart. Nov. 4, 2021: The day when a new era in animal welfare begins, as we break ground for the most significant development for animals in our lifetime,” announced Groundbreaking Emcee Joelle Hadley-Alexander at the groundbreaking event.

Announced alongside the state-of-the-art facility via press release was the new AHS logo and website dedicated to the new campus.

As described by Hadley-Alexander earlier, the new “era” for how homeless animals are taken into the AHS is more of an upgrade to the foundation than a shift in policy.

The main reason a new facility is being built in the first place is because the present one in the city of Sunnyslope was built in 1957 and is low on capacity.

“The transformation of Sunnyslope to this facility will be transparent. Sunnyslope is still going to be there and stay open, but only a limited part of the clinic,” said Daryl Weil. Along with her husband Chip, the Weils serve as honorary chairs of the AHS Campaign to Transform Animal Welfare.

Sunnyslope’s main function, officials say, will be for spaying and neutering.

Once the new facility is initiated, all foster care processing will move to the Papago campus.

The new, two-story facility of 72,000 square feet will be at least twice the size of the current facility in Sunnyslope with a rescue range that can accommodate dogs, cats, bunnies and occasionally wild or exotic animals like coyotes and lynxes.





Pictured: In center, Dr. Groomes at the groundbreaking. On right, Arizona Humane Society president and CEO Dr. Steven Hansen is among people who spoke at the Nov. 4 event. (Photos by Alex DeForest)

Dr. Steven Hansen, AHS president and CEO, took his leadership position in 2013, and as a previous Scottsdale Independent article reported, has seen significant growth since then.

“What makes the Arizona Humane Society so unique is our trauma hospital,” Hansen said. “We are the go-to organization for those sick, injured and abused animals. And the reason for the new campus is to expand our capability and our capacity.”

Papago Park rests on the border between Phoenix and Tempe, and is famed for other life-based facilities like the Botanical Garden and Phoenix Zoo.

“Once this new hospital opens, we will be able to significantly help other shelters in Arizona and in the Southwest. Many shelters have a very limited medical capacity,” Hansen added.

Included in the programs for the Papago Park AHS facility is a veterinary training wing, where students from partnering universities, University of Arizona and Midwestern University can attain hands-on experience in the industry.

Similar AHS opportunities will also be available on the high school level for students with a veterinary interest.

Laura McBride is the senior program officer at the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, one of the larger campaign investors working alongside the AHS.

“We’ve done a lot of work over the past 24 years supporting efforts to reduce the homeless population of animals and care for those who are discarded. So it makes perfect sense for us to invest in this campaign because they have a big focus on adoption and spay/neutered,” McBride said.

An elephant-sized concern in conversations around the veterinary industry is the euthanasia rate.

Hansen clarified on the misconception that to have a zero percent use of euthanasia would mean or imply that some animals would be turned away, and that AHS does not intend to turn away animals in the old facility or the upcoming one.

“There’s a lot of confusion around ‘no kill.’ ‘No kill’ as a general concept still allows euthanasia if the animal is suffering and there’s no opportunity to correct that suffering,” Hansen said.

The “ethical no kill” philosophy combined with the increased carrying capacity will reduce the amount of animals euthanized in Arizona shelters, as those animals would be more likely to end up in AHS care.

As AHS officials have said, Maricopa County has had a notorious past in the welfare of homeless animals. The Humane Society and its associated foundations have a blueprint to give those animals a more promising future.

Editor's Note: Scott Daniels is a student reporter at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications.