

Jeffrey Epstein, Education Activist, Helps Launch the First Humane Society in the US Virgin Islands

Financier and education philanthropist Jeffrey Epstein has just donated critical funds to launch the first Humane Society campus on the island of St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands. Known around the world for its fight against the abuse and abandonment of animals and for their unparalleled adoption programs, the Humane Society is on the verge now of opening a 15,000 square foot facility and education program, the first of its kind in the US Virgin Islands.

Founded in 2000, the Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation supports cutting science and medical research around the world. Based out of St. Thomas, the foundation also focuses on improving education and humanitarian efforts throughout the US Virgin Islands.

The original Humane Society of St. Thomas was established in 1957, on the Estate Nadir, under the auspices of the St. Thomas-St. John Chamber of Commerce. The new campus now sits on 4.7 acres of land donated by Lockhart Realty, adjacent to the Weymouth Rhymer Highway.

Besides state-of-the-art kenneling and administrative facilities, the campus features parks and walking trails for both animal members and visitors. The campus also has an education center with ongoing classes, lectures, pet training, events for local youth, an ongoing volunteer program, especially for the young and a "No Flea Boutique." All of these facilities are designed to not only improve adoption rates and interaction with the animals but to improve awareness in the community.

"The new Humane Society of St. Thomas is truly an interactive facility," Jeffrey Epstein noted, founder of The Jeffrey Epstein VI Foundation and a former member of the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, New York Academy of Science and a former board member of Rockefeller University. "Its presence is invaluable, not just for abandoned animals on the island but as an education and inspirational center for local youth."

Despite this new facility, the statistics for abandoned animals is sobering. For example, in the last month, the shelter took in approximately 175 animals. Only 20% have been adopted, 5% returned to their owners, and 75% euthanized due to illness, injury or lack of cage space. The task though of caring for stray animals on the island, as it is in the United States, if not the world, is overwhelming. An estimated 60,000 to 100,000 cats and dogs populate St. Thomas alone. In the US that number goes up to an estimated 160 million and more than 10 million dogs and cats are euthanized in the US every year.

“The breeding laws in St. Thomas need to be restricted,” Andrea Martin remarked, President of the Humane Society in St. Thomas. “Too many animals are left to starve and suffer. Every animal should also be spayed or neutered. It is the only humane approach to take.”

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