

A HELPING PAW

South Carolina State Society Comes Together to Support Animals in Need



By Kelli Smith

In 2024, when Crissy Taylor, CMA (AAMA), started her most recent term as president of the South Carolina Society of Medical Assistants, she decided to take her lifelong passion for animals and channel it into a community service campaign that would make a difference across South Carolina. “Animals have always been my love, especially dogs and cats,” says Taylor.

The campaign is called Paws for a Cause, and its goal is to work with humane societies, shelters, and rescues across South Carolina to provide them with the necessary items—such as cat and dog food, beds, toys, and towels—that are crucial to taking care of animals in need.

The community service campaign started in Anderson, South Carolina, near where Taylor resides, with the no-kill shelter Anderson County PAWS, which depends on donations. With the shelter often at or near capacity, Taylor felt that it was the perfect place to focus the state society’s attention through donations. “It would be good if we could all go in and adopt an animal, but that’s not always something that we can do. But we can help keep them healthy,” explains Taylor.

Taylor felt that, while charitable causes that help people are crucial, during her presidency she wanted to direct her focus toward animals, a population that can be forgotten or deprioritized when it comes to philanthropy. “A lot of people focus on the different organizations for people. ... But a lot of people don’t think about the happiness that an animal can bring us,” explains Taylor.

Pet Project

In the past, the South Carolina state society has had other community service efforts that have helped other populations in need throughout the state. “We have donated to others, like homeless shelters,” details Taylor. “I’ve been state president three times. So, this last time when I [became] state president, [Paws for a Cause] was what I wanted us to do for that year.”

The Paws for a Cause campaign is ongoing for the South Carolina state society, whose president always chooses a community service project to carry out during their term. While Paws for a Cause started with Taylor, who was the South Carolina state society president from 2024 to 2025, it was continued by Patty Licurs, CMA (AAMA), CPC, when she became president in 2025. This year, the current president, Lisa Kianos, CMA (AAMA), is also choosing to continue the community service campaign.

While the campaign started with Anderson County, it spread across the state with the donations of various South Carolina local chapters. “We had each chapter gather stuff to take to their local humane society,” explains Licurs. “And then at the end of the year, we asked them to bring stuff to our state conference as well. And [Taylor] had a car full of stuff that she took to the Anderson [County] Humane Society. So, it was really successful for that. We continued it on to my presidential year.”

While Paws for a Cause was developed with a love of animals in mind, it also aligns well with the South Carolina state soci-

ety members’ roles as medical assistants. “Medical assistants like to help care for people in any way. So, taking care of animals is just branching off from that,” explains Licurs.

The South Carolina state society has had a special devotion to community service and carrying out philanthropy for a long time. “I think that South Carolina is very committed to our communities, especially with the charities that we have done,” says Licurs. “The president is the one who picks the charity. And that’s something that we want to continue doing every year. We just think it’s very important to reach out to our community.”

For other state societies and local chapters who want to carry out similar kinds of community service campaigns, Licurs has some advice. “The easiest thing that we did is we just asked [local chapters] to donate to their local humane society. That way we’re reaching out to humane societies all throughout the state,” explains Licurs. “So that was the easiest thing: to start with your chapter. And then we had just a big [event] at the end of conference for a statewide [initiative]. But we asked each chapter to submit pictures and what they did each meeting. ... Just decide on what charity you want to contribute to. And then we just went from there.”

Fur the Greater Good

While starting the Paws for a Cause campaign was a special experience for Taylor, certain moments stood out to her as par-



ticularly moving and gratifying: “When you take the whole truckload of stuff to distribute and see the people so excited to help you bring it in and let you take and actually give it to the animals throughout their facility. That is what was most memorable: to see the look on those puppies’ faces and those kittens [because] they just had something to play with. That made it all worthwhile,” says Taylor.

Taylor feels that, as public servants, all medical assistants should aim to make this kind of impact on their communities. “I think it makes a better medical assistant if they’re willing to give their time for free to ... do [what they can] to help others.”

She reflects on her passion for animals and how they serve people in countless ways: “I think that animals ... seem to bring the best out of us. It makes us want to live and be better people. ... To me, that helps humans with their health care.” ♦



Donations for Paws with a Cause were collected at the 2025 SCSMA conference.

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