LOGAN NESER: Hello! Today we are joined with Erika Leckington, the Director of Tallahassee Animal Services, to talk about the integration of shelter, medical, and management teams for a collaborative healthcare program. Thank you so much for joining us.

ERIKA LECKINGTON: Thank you for having me.

LOGAN: Yeah, it’s our pleasure. So, for the first question, from the perspective as the Director of Tallahassee Animal Services, what do you value most in your working relationship with the veterinarian at your shelter?

ERIKA: Well, I think we have an excellent veterinarian. She’s our chief veterinarian and she oversees our entire vet team, but I would say that they are crucial to achieving our mission, vision, and goals, and so collaborating with them, communication, is something that I definitely value and there’s a lot of trust and respect there. That’s something that we definitely strive to, I’m trying to think of the right word, strive to solidify on a regular basis. But I think having the trust in the vet team definitely helps the rest of the function of the shelter.

LOGAN: Yeah, absolutely. That’s super important, to build that trust between your medical staff. Kind of on a similar vein, could you share a story about a time when you and your management team collaborated with the veterinarian and the medical team to create a successful new policy or program?

ERIKA: We’ve had a lot of new programs and a lot of new policies. I think everybody has changed a lot during COVID. One of the things that we were able to roll out as a result of COVID was we used to have sort of MASH style microchip and rabies clinics once a month, and so it was a little chaotic to say the least. So, we had to step back and go, okay, so we clearly can’t have 200 people at our shelter in two hours getting vaccinations and microchips for their animals, and we did it outside, so to add to that it was definitely a lot to handle. And we would do it on Tuesday afternoons for just a couple hours. And so, we had to look at that and go, okay, let’s step back and figure out how we can still achieve the idea of serving our community in providing rabies and microchipping for the public. And so, our management team sat down, obviously our vet team is part of that, and we said what are our options? And we had come up with everything from a drive-thru clinic to appointments and that kind of thing. And what we ended up doing was investing in some software, Clinic HQ, and figured out a way for people to make online appointments so that it was really easy, and designated a day of the week rather than just a few hours a month, and set aside the resources that we needed to provide full exams to people as well. So not only were we not making people wait for potentially an hour, two hours, outside in the Florida sun, but we were also able to bring it back to actually provide feedback for owners in providing a complete exam of their pet at the same time. And, you know, waiting curbside is a whole lot easier, and so that’s how we have rolled that out. We started that in February, we just had one yesterday because it was Wednesday and so it’s gone really, really well. And we’ve realized that a lot of our other shelter staff can participate in these rather than it just being the vet team.

LOGAN: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. That’s really great to hear. I think that’s interesting too about having the other shelter staff participate in it. I’m sure that’s helpful for your vet staff too.

ERIKA: Absolutely.

LOGAN: Well, thank you so much for joining us and for answering our questions, and I hope you have a great day!

ERIKA: Awesome, thank you so much!