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## For Immediate Release

### FREE SPAY AND NEUTER INITIATIVE TARGETS HOUSTON'S ANIMAL OVERPOPULATION

**Houston, Texas, September 12, 2013 – Unity 1000, a project of Unity for a Solution (UFAS), is currently raising funds for a spay and neuter initiative targeting low income pet owners. Unity 1000 hopes to raise \$100,000 to fix 1,000 pets free of charge by the end of 2013 and in the process, increase awareness about Houston's animal overpopulation crisis. Unity 1000 is focusing on pets whose owners live in Houston's East End, Fifth Ward, Sunnyside, Denver Harbor, and "Corridor of Cruelty" along U.S. 59 North.**

There are estimated to be 1.2 million homeless animals in Houston.<sup>1</sup> Adding to the problem are countless owned animals that are not fixed and are allowed to roam and produce unwanted litters of puppies and kittens, some of which end up on the streets. Offering to fix pets for low income owners free of charge is a first step in reducing overpopulation. To date, Unity 1000 has fixed almost 400 pets belonging to low income residents in its target areas; in exchange, pet owners are asked to educate friends and family about the importance of fixing their pets.

The Unity 1000 Challenge and an ongoing awareness campaign are the latest efforts by UFAS to bring attention to the city's large numbers of homeless animals and the lack of resources to address the problem. UFAS has also been urging local elected officials and the city of Houston to bring more community education and spay/neuter resources to the low income communities that are hardest hit by overpopulation.

"Free and low cost spay and neuter along with ongoing community education efforts are the only solutions to this city's overpopulation crisis. Sadly, there are few options in many of Houston's low income neighborhoods," said Gloria Zenteno, president and founder of Barrio Dogs. "We want to challenge the city of Houston and others to do more to address this huge problem." Zenteno founded Barrio Dogs in 2010 in Houston's East End after moving back to her old neighborhood and discovering what looked like Third World conditions for homeless and abandoned animals there. Barrio Dogs educates area residents about proper animal care and during 2012, fixed more than 200 pets free of charge during its "Fixit" campaign.

Corridor Rescue board member, Anna Barbosa, and Kelle Mann Davis, founder of Forgotten Dogs of the 5th Ward, agree. "We saw more puppies than ever in the Corridor last spring. We took in as many as we could but there are just too many to take in," said Barbosa. "We know of no way out of this terrible situation other than to help the people who live in the Fifth Ward and elsewhere fix their pets," added Davis.

Barrio Dogs, Corridor Rescue and Forgotten Dogs of the Fifth Ward formed UFAS in January 2013 to improve conditions for Houston's homeless and unwanted animals by raising awareness and finding ways to increase free and low cost spay neuter options. Since forming, UFAS has brought in additional partners including Shaggy Dog Rescue, South Side Street Dogs, Scout's Honor, Lucky Dog Rescue, AARF, Twyla's Friends, Jurassic Bark, Texas Litter Control, One Hundred Thousand Hearts, 4 Paws Farm, Winston's on Washington, The Buck Foundation, FMW/FabLab, Christi's Pet Sitting, Haute Pets Mobile Grooming Salon, Olivine, Martini Hardware and Star Pizza. For more information, contact UFAS at [unityforasolution@gmail.com](mailto:unityforasolution@gmail.com). To donate or learn more the Unity 1000 Challenge, go to [firstgiving.com/unity1000/fundraisers](http://firstgiving.com/unity1000/fundraisers).

<sup>1</sup> BARC statistic reported by Fox26 Houston, "A chorus of help for homeless animals in the Houston area," 9/21/12