



If you have spent time in Panama, outside of resort walls, you will surely have seen street dogs and cats in varying stages of poor health and nutrition. Many of these animals live in lower economic communities, supported by families who themselves struggle to survive. While the people in these communities can sometimes manage to help an animal fend off starvation with dinner scraps, they cannot afford the more expensive veterinary care. Unfortunately, this means that many animals don't get sterilized. Left unchecked, this can result in startlingly large numbers of unwanted animals.

Panama lacks the better known world organizations like Humane Society which attend to animal health and treatment. To fill the gap Patricia Chan, a tireless advocate for animal welfare in Panama started an organization in 2001 called Spay Panama. Focusing their efforts on sterilization, Spay Panama goes into Panama's neighborhoods, sets up mobile clinics and does on-site spays and neuters for cost. Soliciting donations as they go along, much of the campaign costs are paid for by donors. The organization targets communities who cannot afford to have their pets spayed, and strives not to turn away any animal arriving for sterilization, regardless of the amount paid. Patricia Chan fearlessly sets up campaigns, judging it's success on the number of animals sterilized and relying on Hail Marys for the funds.

With Pat Chan at the lead, Spay Panama has joined forces with other animal welfare organizations to increase their effectiveness. As such, their ranks are often bolstered by volunteer veterinarians from around the world. The organization has taken huge steps in helping control the animal population in Panama. In 2008, they had preformed 15,000 sterilizations in 7 years. That number sees big increases each year, to the point where the group expects to do it's 32,000th operation at an upcoming clinic this week in Gorgona. This more than doubles in 3 years what they accomplished in 7.

The praise the organization receives is well deserved. What the need more of, is funds and

volunteers. Click the links below to help.

[For more details on the Gorgona clinic click here.](#)

To donate to Spay Panama's efforts, visit <http://www.spaypanama.com> .