

Let's Be S.M.A.R.T. (Successfully Managing Animal Rights Today)



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Summary

Let's be S.M.A.R.T. (Successfully Managing Animal Rights Today) is a non-profit animal welfare organization with a mission to help tackle the stray animal issues globally, with specific projects in Greece. Our mission considers education, working with the local Municipalities and Mayors for community projects, providing care for the strays and operating a cat rescue that welcomes our global volunteer program.

We are dedicated to working toward solutions so that our communities and animals can live peacefully together.

Let's Be S.M.A.R.T. was created back in 2007 with a mission to educate the communities and raising the awareness level for the rights and well-being regarding the benefits of animals. Our motto is to "think globally and act locally" which corresponds with our U.S. organization working with and helping to support the Greece organization in a collaboration to share the benefits and struggles of this very challenging subject through various projects.

We focus on bringing communities together to promote responsible care for the animals through several actions.

Firstly, and most importantly is education for both children and adults. With this in mind we have created several projects working toward engaging a larger part of the community to be responsible for our stray animals. Our team created the SMART family series of videos which reflect the SMART family adopting a stray cat and all the important care requirements needed and important related subjects covered. We also focus on the benefits of the strays in a family homelike setting and for various reasons going beyond just having

a pet. There are proven benefits for children to have pets at home and more so for children that might have some challenging situations such as autism, PTSD, or a long-term hospitalized illness. The animals help to diffuse situations which then the child can focus on the pet in many aspects, who the pet in turn is very intuitive to a child's challenges. Our SMART video series was approved also by the Ministry of Education in Greece and can therefore be shown in the school system. The videos capture information for children and also adults in a fun yet informative way, whereby there are many character scenes, along with facts and statistics that help understand the subjects at multiple levels.

Secondly, engaging the community to help be responsible for our loving strays is important. And for this subject we have worked on collaborating with the local Mayors to allow outdoor feeding stations that have proper coverage for weather conditions and even shelter should a cat be in need. By allowing these feeding stations in key locations of a community you resolve several points. The cats can be fed at these stations in a neat and organized manner, without people basically throwing food in unwanted areas (although they mean well of course). For people that are not animal friendly, it helps with these stations being maintained and therefore do not create an eyesore in a neighborhood. In addition, one can engage people in the area to share in the responsibility of putting food and water and keeping the stations cleaned. And it also creates a sense of satisfaction as we know the cats are receiving the basics, just like we humans certainly want. And for an older person, it can give something to look forward to daily and to see the happy cats awaiting their food, water and love, it is a

great way to help against loneliness and depression, it gives a sense of purpose!!

Thirdly, engaging children and adults in events whereby the animal welfare subjects are discussed is a great way for people to learn. One very successful event was Tails for Tennis where we held a junior tennis tournament (and both Eleni Daniilidou and Alex Jacupovic participated!), had key animal specialists at the event such as an animal trainer, animal psychologist, Veterinarian, some pets for adoption, etc. We coupled the two subjects (tennis and animals) which really go hand in hand to bring children and their parents together and expose them to the animal welfare subjects. Another event was in collaboration with Love Without Borders who helps support the refugees. We specially created our video series in the Arabic language in order to visit a refugee camp and share our videos in addition to organizing crafts for the children. It was an eye-opening experience with a positive ending in that the children felt someone cared about them to provide this event and to teach them about animal welfare. These children will one day integrate also into society, so it is important they understand.

Lastly, we prepared a 5-Star plan for stray cat management that was proposed to one of our local Municipalities as there are many facets of stray care. Firstly, is to focus on the Trapping and Neutering program (which is key to helping reduce the stray population which must be given great importance) then medical care for the strays, chipping the strays, providing the feeding stations as mentioned above as well as supporting the local animal welfare groups which are really the hands-on people to help manage the day-to-day issues. Our Mayor was quite impressed and granted in the first year a budget just for the cats of 125,000 euros to focus on the sterilizations. He later granted a spot for (3) feeding stations. Persistence is a key issue in this matter and in the end, it is beneficial for the cats, the community and the government to show they value animal welfare. To date we are collaborating with four Mayors including the Mayor of Hydra, Theologos and the Saronikou for our SMART feeding stations.

Another very important program that is in collaboration with the Greece Let's be SMART is our global volunteer and Veterinary Internship programs. Sharing our experiences with

people outside the country allows them to see our challenges and also our successes. They see first hand what is happening and can take those experiences back with them to either improve their own situations or to help share and get support for the Greece program which is much needed. One of our successful programs is the Veterinary Internship program which was launched in 2021 which caters to Veterinary Students and or Animal related studies whereby they will gain hands on experience in animal care, shelter management, and working with our collaborating veterinarians, animal behaviour experts, holistic animal care practitioners, and other animal species rescues such as a dog shelter, donkey rescue and wildlife rescue. Within this program we also provide cultural activities so the students can experience life in Greece as well and therefore gain a global knowledge.

All in all, Let's be S.M.A.R.T. is taking the stray animal issues very seriously and applying global solutions which encompass many aspects of the situation in order to hopefully help create a world whereby people and animals can coexist peacefully and in a responsible way (whether an animal is an indoor pet or a stray). Animal welfare takes the responsibility of not only our governments but of our people as well. Education for both our children and adults is key to this process. Our volunteer and internship programs can enlighten people from all over the world to see Greece and its stray issues in a very personal way and to help be part of creating solutions to helping in this global quest. It provides hands on knowledge. What a great way to visit the beautiful country of Greece and give back philanthropically at the same time for our innocent animals. Many of our participants in our events and programs also find themselves adopting the cats that live at our rescue and what a great way to help our Greece program, as for one animal that gets adopted to a loving home, another stray that needs help and healing can be saved. It is a win-win situation. And visiting Greece and participating in this quest gains the country even more positive energy.

One can join in the mission by signing up for our newsletter at www.letsbesmart.org and joining our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LetsBeSmart> and our Instagram page [@letsbesmart_](https://www.instagram.com/letsbesmart_)