



PRESS RELEASE

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Alaqua Animal Refuge and Florida State Attorney Eddins join forces to prevent animal abuse crimes in Northwest Florida

*(Editor's note: For photos of today's event, go to:
<http://TheLastWord.zenfolio.com/aarseminar>)*

FREEPORT, Fla., (Feb .3 , 2011) – Alaqua Animal Refuge, Northwest Florida's premier no-kill animal shelter and adoption center, recently partnered with Florida State Attorney William "Bill" Eddins in a unique program to help prevent animal abuse crimes in Northwest Florida.

On Feb. 3, Eddins and the Freeport animal shelter hosted more than 115 law enforcement officials, animals control officers and prosecutors from Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties and surrounding areas at a seminar held at Northwest Florida State College in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. The seminar, which offered credited training hours for participants, focused on investigating animal-cruelty cases, the link between animal cruelty and other crimes and the successful prosecution of animal-cruelty cases.

Speakers included Eddins; Laurie Hood, Alaqua Animal Refuge founder and president; Sherry Ramsey, director of Animal Cruelty prosecutions for the Humane Society of the United States; and Sherry Schlueter, executive director for the Wildlife Care Center of the Humane Society of the United States and a retired Boward County Sheriff's Office lieutenant.

Ramsey is a nationally recognized animal-cruelty advocate, and Schlueter initiated, co-authored and lobbied for the original felony aggravated animal abuse statute that became law in Florida in 1989.

"Having seen the tragic results of animal abuse – from burned cats to dogs with broken limbs to starved horses – we at Alaqua Animal Refuge were compelled to take action," said Hood. "It is time to do more than shelter animals from cruelty, we want to stop the abuse. By giving our law enforcement personnel the tools to thoroughly investigate and successfully prosecute cases, we are clearly saying there is no more tolerance for these crimes and animal abusers in Northwest Florida will be punished," she said.

Hood added, "Increasing animal-welfare awareness is at the heart of Alaqua Animal Refuge's mission, but this is an effort we cannot accomplish alone. We thank State Attorney Eddins and all the agencies involved in this effort. Through this seminar, we are making incredible, lasting strides for the humane treatment and protection of animals in our region."

About Alaqua Animal Refuge: Alaqua Animal Refuge, an independent, nonprofit organization located on Florida's Emerald Coast, advocates the general welfare and humane treatment of animals by providing shelter, prevention of pet overpopulation and adoption services. Alaqua,

located on 10 acres in the town of Freeport, was formed by Walton County, Fla.-resident Laurie Hood in 2007 when she discovered that countless animals were being euthanized due to a lack of a no-kill shelter/adoption organization in the area. Since that time, Alaqua Animal Refuge has helped find homes for more than 6,000 animals. Currently, up to 100 animals are adopted per month from this unique rescue facility, which serves as a true refuge for more than 250 animals at any given time.