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Looking for an affordable way to get Fluffy or Fido "fixed?" Pet owners across Michigan will now know where to go with the launch of **SPAY MICHIGAN**, the first statewide pet spay and neuter hotline.

By calling **888-5SPAY-HELP** toll free, Michigan pet owners will get information from a live operator about affordable spay and neuter services throughout the state, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Michigan is one of only 13 states to offer such a program, according Esther Mechler, founder of **SPAY/USA**, a national leader in promoting pet sterilization awareness and education.

SPAY MICHIGAN is a program of **All About Animals Rescue**

(www.allaboutanimalsrescue.org/spaymichigan.html), a Warren, Michigan nonprofit organization that adopts out dogs and cats, and sponsors spay/neuter and vaccination clinics. The group's founder and president **Amber Sitko** says that the hotline is a much-needed resource as the state's poor economic conditions make it difficult for many pet owners to afford sterilization and as more pets are being abandoned at shelters.

"We believe that most pet owners want to be responsible," **Sitko** says. "However, for many, it is a financial burden to do so. We are hoping that the **SPAY MICHIGAN** hotline provides a way of reaching out to those pet owners who could use a hand."

The goal of **SPAY MICHIGAN**, **Sitko** says, is to help reduce the number of homeless and unwanted dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, rabbits and other pets, of which **thousands are euthanized in Michigan shelters each year**.

The **SPAY MICHIGAN** hotline will be promoted through a special t-shirt designed by **Nooters Club®** (www.nootersclub.org), creators of whimsical apparel and gifts advocating pet spay and neuter. The Bloomfield Hills, Michigan company is selling DOG and CAT versions of the t-shirts on its website for \$12 plus tax and shipping, with proceeds going to **All About Animals Rescue**.

"Our wide-eyed **Nooters Club®** dog and cat characters make people laugh, but convey a serious message," says creator and president **Linda Wasche**. "We hope that by getting people's attention we can help **SPAY MICHIGAN** get more people to call the hotline."

The affordable spay and neuter services listed with **SPAY MICHIGAN** are for people who genuinely cannot afford the full, going rate for spay and neuter of their pets or of strays that they may be feeding, which can amount to \$200 or more per pet. Services are being provided by rescue organizations, special programs and shelters throughout Michigan that are able to offer reduced rates. **SPAY MICHIGAN** is also seeking veterinarians to participate in a voucher program in which pet owners can receive discounted services.

Veterinary experts say that spayed and neutered pets live longer lives and avoid many of the health problems that sterilized pets face including certain cancers. "Fixed" pets also tend to be more sociable with fewer behavior problems.

Not only does **All About Animals Rescue** hope that **SPAY MICHIGAN** will get more pet owners to help their pets enjoy better lives, but the group is hoping to reduce the number of homeless pets that never know the love of a permanent home.

"On average, about 50 percent of the dogs and 90 percent of the cats that enter a Michigan animal shelter are destroyed," **Sitko** says. "No one wants to see this happen. It is just due to the reality that there are more dogs, cats, puppies and kittens than there are homes."

If your pet is already spayed or neutered, you can still help others.

1. Buy a **SPAY MICHIGAN** / **Nooters Club®** t-shirt to promote the hotline and benefit **All About Animals Rescue**.

Go to www.nootersclub.org.

2. Make a cash donation to **SPAY MICHIGAN**. Go to www.allaboutanimalsrescue.org/spaymichigan.html

3. Call the hotline if you know of a low-cost spay/neuter program or clinic in your area so that it can be added to the **SPAY MICHIGAN** referral list.

4. Help recruit veterinarians in your area into the **SPAY MICHIGAN** voucher program.

5. Tell others about **888-5SPAY-HELP**.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Photo of SPAY MICHIGAN t-shirt and LOGO available on request.

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All About Animals Rescue: SPAY MICHIGAN Launches First State-Wide Hotline; Links Pet Owners with Affordable Pet Sterilization

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