

# Citizens for Pets in condos fight pet restrictions

**BY CAROL CARIDAD**

*President, Paws4You Rescue*



Moving and “Landlord won’t allow” are among the top reasons given by pet owners when relinquishing their dogs or cats to animal shelters. People are absolutely heartbroken to

have to give up their pets in order to find affordable housing. Almost 65 percent of all U.S. households have at least one cat or dog. When an individual retires, the choice to give up their animal to move into a condo or an apartment is an unfortunate necessity because of the strict rules of many associations.

Older people can be lonely, anxious, depressed and could greatly benefit from having a furry friend. But, alas, it is not only retirees who are affected; many people are forced to downsize and find housing alternatives in this economic climate. A big issue in South Florida is that condo or association boards won’t allow animals. People who own their homes or units in association-run housing are prohibited by no-pet deed restrictions from keeping the family dog or cat. Obviously, the best situation for cats and dogs is being able to live with their loving guardian, rather than be turned in to the pound where euthanasia rates are at an all-time high.

Citizens for Pets in Condos, <[www.petsincondos.org](http://www.petsincondos.org)>, was started to help people who moved into common-interest ownership communities (condos, home owner associations, co-ops and trailer parks) and were forced to give up their beloved pets. Without any funding or initial support, they have managed to collect over 23,000 signatures on their petition to allow pets in condos.

Having a simple majority to reverse no-pet deed restrictions was suggested by one legislator, Julio Robaina. But that was not strong enough. Several attempts were made, instead, to get a law to clarify the right to have emotional support animals, to codify HUD rulings on this issue (see <[www.petsincondos.org/legal.htm#ESA](http://www.petsincondos.org/legal.htm#ESA)>).

Activists in California started with an

## Paws4You

ESA bill before getting a law that says that if you live in association-run housing you may have at least one companion animal. No-pet deed restrictions can mean death to healthy, adoptable animals.

Maida Genser, founder of Citizens for Pets in Condos, says, “We are working to increase acceptance of companion animals by educating the public about the health benefits of having animal companions and by stressing responsible pet ownership/guardianship. Our motto is: Creating a win-win situation for both people and pets.” Visit <[www.petsincondos.org](http://www.petsincondos.org)> to find a link to the online petition, plus printable paper petitions, flyers and other materials for spreading the word. There is a wealth of information on the health benefits of companion animals, legal information, stories, letters and more on the web page. Condo reform experts state that in order to get legislation in Florida, which has such a major no-pets-allowed issue, at least 50,000 signatures are needed.

Please review and sign the petition today, as well as spread the word, even if it doesn’t directly affect you. And remember, it is also very important to encourage those who want a pet and can afford to take care of their four-legged friend, to adopt a rescued animal once permission is granted from their place of residence.

Visit Paws 4 You Rescue every Sunday at the PetSmart across from The Falls from 11am–3pm or at the South Miami Petco on the second and fourth Saturday of the month from 12-4pm. At these adoption events, there are volunteers on hand to answer any questions you may have about the dogs up for adoption. We save dogs from euthanasia at Miami-Dade Animal Services where they destroy 100-150 animals per day.

*Carol Caridad is president of Paws 4 You Rescue. She may be contacted by calling 786-242-7377, by addressing email to <[carol@Paws4You.org](mailto:carol@Paws4You.org)> or by visiting <[www.paws4you.org](http://www.paws4you.org)>.*