

Pet-friendly group opens thrift store

BY GEORGE WHITE

"Cats don't require walking so they're good for people who might be challenged mobility-wise. You don't have to worry about them pushing you over but cats can be trippers by weaving in and out of your legs," she said.

HOPE offers a variety of services, all related to helping animals.

"Some cat owners want to surrender their cats but we talk them into fostering them until we find a placement," she said. "For fixed income people, we'll provide the medical until the end of their lives, especially if it's a senior cat. We ask them to try to cover the food and litter and the cost of the annual vaccines."

To donate, volunteer or for more information about the group or the thrift store, call 321-271-7909 or go to hopeforbrevard.org.

Many unwanted pets, if spayed or neutered and given good medical care, could become valuable and loyal companions for local seniors and families. Helping making that connection, and organized with a variety of options for volunteers and support, is the non-profit Helping Overpopulation of Pets End (HOPE).

Formed in 2012, HOPE is now growing larger with a new thrift store run by manager Roxi Wandersee called Pawsitive HOPE located in the Post Commons Shopping Plaza, 4100 N. Wickham Rd., Suite 103, Melbourne.

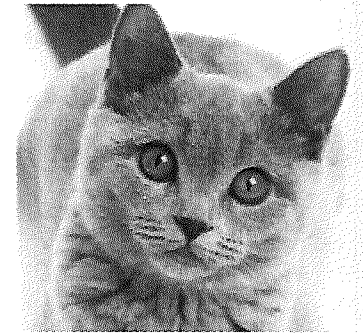
The group's primary

objective is to get animals spayed and neutered "and in the process of doing that we end up with adoptable animals," said president Dawn Whedbee, co-founder along with Jennifer Gardner.

"It's a very small group, probably under 20 volunteers. Some of them work at the thrift store and we have volunteers that foster dogs or cats. We do primarily cats because dogs have a better save rate at the shelters," she said.

The initial focus generally was to gather together a group of volunteers to help the animals of Brevard County.

"We wanted to focus on building a network to provide low-cost spay and neuters and vet care," she



explained on the group's website hopeforbrevard.org. "We received our 501(c)(3) status in 2012. In 2013, we were able to spay over 370 and place over 130 animals, create our infrastructure — that is huge!"

So far in 2014, the group has taken in 172 animals and placed 132. Five were euthanized because of sickness, with the remainder in foster care, she said.

Animals are placed in homes according to the temperament of the animal and the needs of the recipient, she said.

"We're looking to see what the adopter is looking for — whether it's playful and rambunctious or a lap kitty — and then the person will select one or two cats and we'll review the qualities they're looking for. If they match up, that's fine, if not, we can suggest another cat," she said.