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**STATE ATTORNEY OFFICE'S EXPANDED ANIMAL TASK FORCE SERVES AS A FORCE
MULTIPLIER OF JUSTICE**

The Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office released this update, announcing the Ninth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office will join its Animal Cruelty Task Force.

(MARION COUNTY, Fla.) In a landmark collaboration aimed at combating animal cruelty and enhancing animal welfare, the Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office announces the Ninth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office is joining its Animal Cruelty Task Force. This strategic alliance represents a significant step forward in ensuring the protection and advocacy of animals within our communities.

By consolidating resources, expertise and jurisdictional reach, the newly expanded task force will possess greater capabilities to investigate, prosecute and prevent instances of animal abuse and neglect. This partnership underscores a shared commitment to upholding justice and compassion for all sentient beings.

"Animal cruelty is a serious offense that demands a concerted effort to address effectively," Bill Gladson, Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney. "Through this collaboration, we are pooling our strengths and resources to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable, while also promoting education and awareness to prevent future incidents."

The Fifth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office formed its task force in 2022 to ensure that animals are protected from harm and that their welfare is upheld. The task force is comprised of prosecutors, law enforcement officers, veterinarians and animal welfare experts. The Ninth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office established an animal cruelty unit within its office for the same purpose back in 2016.

Andrew Bain, State Attorney for the Ninth Judicial Circuit, echoed these sentiments, stating, "We advocate for and seek justice for all victims and that includes innocent animals. While the Ninth Circuit's existing animal cruelty unit has done great work prosecuting offenders since it started in 2016, this new partnership will allow us to expand our access to more resources and specialized knowledge to help us build even stronger animal cruelty cases which are often complex. We also want to deter future instances of cruelty, fostering a society built on empathy and respect for all living beings."

The expanded task force will harness a multidisciplinary approach, leveraging the expertise of law enforcement agencies, animal welfare organizations, veterinary professionals and legal experts. By fostering collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, the initiative aims to maximize impact and effectiveness in addressing the complex issues surrounding animal cruelty.

In addition to investigating and prosecuting cases of animal cruelty, the task force is working to prioritize outreach and education initiatives to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership, humane treatment practices and the legal consequences of animal abuse. Engaging with communities, schools and advocacy groups, will allow the task force to foster a culture of empathy and respect toward all living beings.

As the expanded task force begins its operations, both offices invite collaboration and support from stakeholders across the region. Together, we can strive towards a future where every animal is treated with the dignity, compassion and respect they deserve.

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