

Meet MEG SAHDALA

We caught up with the brilliant and insightful MEG SAHDALA a few weeks ago and have shared our conversation below.

MEG, appreciate you joining us today. Are you happier as a business owner? Do you sometimes think about what it would be like to just have a regular job?

One of the major reasons people decide to leave corporate world is to have more time and spend more time with the family.

It was the exact same reasoning for me but little that I knew...I was switching from 9am-6pm job to 24/7 job!

Owning an animal rescue is like living your life at the Emergency Room. The phone NEVER stops ringing. At the present moment we are receiving daily anywhere from 200-400 phone calls, text messages, Whatsapps, Facebook Messengers, Instagram DMs and emails. We also recently opened TikTok page and Twitter.



**MEG
SAHDALA**



It is important to add we don't have any administrative staff therefore since the rescue is basically run by one person, certain things had to be done to streamline the process and compartmentalize the incoming inquiries.

We eliminated the voicemail and introduced an info line instead. Depending if you are contacting us in regards to volunteering or adopting or other matters, you can contact us by text message or email to start the application. Most of the information is also featured on the website.

Emergency Room lifestyle is totally unpredictable – so we really never know what our focus will be the very next day. We are in a state of active waiting. Permanent alertness. We don't know how many animals will come, in what condition etc, – it is always a surprise who will call to surrender and how many fosters we would have to come up with that day. And all cases are always emergencies.



People are getting evicted, animals getting hit by cars, orphaned kittens dying in a scorching sun, stray dogs with broken limbs waiting to be trapped and rescued...it literally never ends. All rescuers work 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

We are truly the first responders. We never close up due to any reasons! If there is a hurricane that's a reason for us to be out there and help with stranded pets. If there is a Covid outbreak and county shelters are surprisingly closed, all rescues work triple hard to accommodate a flood of animals being left behind. There are no holidays or vacations or days off we literally never stop....

Is it tiring? It's beyond exhausting. It is stressful, physically and emotionally draining, but ask every rescuer if they wish to start over or do something different in life and I am sure the answer will be a NO. There is nothing more rewarding than making a difference and saving lives. There is nothing more rewarding to me than seeing an animal recovering and getting better and looking at you with such gratefulness in their eyes. It feels good to make things right, to leave it better than you found it.

Am I happy? Yes! I do what I love. I love the independence and the constant change as I am a fidgety doer. Miami Animal Rescue was established almost a decade ago and it makes me really proud to see how incredibly we grew and how we became the largest animal rescue saving close to thousand animals each year and having already two branches – one in Miami FL and another one in Colorado.

Don't be afraid to create and open your own business! Just make sure that what you do is your passion and not one day would feel like work...

MEG, love having you share your insights with us. Before we ask you more questions, maybe you can take a moment to introduce yourself to our readers who might have missed our earlier conversations?

Miami Animal Rescue is a non-profit 501C charity created to save animals from euthanasia, abuse and abandonment and provide with medical care, rehabilitation and forever homes.

Miami Animal Rescue offers Fostering program for Miami Dade High School System in exchange for community hours. Miami Animal Rescue offers community hours opportunities to approximately 2,000 students each year allowing them to graduate, obtain financial aid or honorable titles and awards at various Societies.

Miami Animal Rescue offers Service Animals outcalls/visits with certified Service Pets (dogs, puppies miniature pigs) to provide comfort and entertainment at Hospices, Hospitals, Special Needs Schools, Nursing homes, Adult Daycares, Kindergartens etc. Empowering young minds is a key to transform their communities.

We have a proven track of influence our organization made on many students in Miami Dade. We receive hundreds of letters from children as young as 3 years old stating they want to do what we do when they grow up. They want to be like us...

Miami Animal Rescue organize and heavily promote Adoption Events at Petsmart stores and many community and pet related events. Miami Animal Rescue has a huge recognition in Miami Dade and events like this are widely presented in the media and bring a lot of attention and networking opportunities.

By constant community outreach and seeking community guidance and involvement with Miami Dade residents, Miami Animal Rescue is developing transformative leadership, and promoting collective power. Together we save thousands of animals each year and transform and influence thousands of human lives.

Miami Animal Rescue along with associated partners provides Internships and Job Opportunities, youth mentorship, specialized workshops and job training for future groomers, dog trainers, photographers, administrative/marketing assistants, vet tech, social media specialist etc.

Miami Animal Rescue is successfully training and influencing youth and students by hands on engagement and direct action while creating a sustainable network of youth and student leaders.

Volunteering program offered by Miami Animal Rescue promotes positive behavior and enhances social skills. Black youth, disabled youth, at-risk youth obtains various life and job specific skills, attends public events, learns public speaking, makes new friends and establishes business contacts etc.



This ongoing process specifically **TARGETED** to marginalized communities through internships, job opportunities at Miami Animal Rescue partners like Petsmart (retail/grooming/pet associate), Bark for Cuts (groomers), Applause Your Paws (Dog trainers and Behaviorists), Lavakan (Pet Spa Salons) or various vet offices and hospitals will be enabling them to achieve independence and live productive, meaningful life.

Many of our volunteer students obtained employment at various Petsmart stores, became occupational therapists, animal trainers, groomers with their own practice, even opened their own non-profits or received free scholarships thanks to academic performance acceleration gained through volunteering with Miami Animal Rescue, who actively enhances students life and shapes their future opportunities like no other place.



How did you put together the initial capital you needed to start your business?

I am sure most of you heard this statement before: "When I win a lottery, I will buy a farm and open a rescue and save all animals from the shelter!" Nothing but illusion... Based on statistics apparently you have a greater chance of getting killed by a vending machine than winning a lotto. So much safer approach is to start small and take it from there. Don't wait.

Start with one dog. Get yourself a mentor, someone with experience and learn step by step the entire process of saving a life. From taking a pet off the streets, vetting, sterilizing, socializing, through taking great pictures, posting for adoption, prequalifying adopters, organizing meet and greets and matching with the best possible family that will love it forever and never leave it behind again. Then simply repeat the process.



Learn from mistakes! These are your best mentors. If something doesn't go perfectly, it means your process needs improvement and it's a blessing in disguise. Don't use credit cards!

Find a veterinarian who works with rescue groups and offers special discounts and works weekends! And most importantly, don't be ashamed to ask and beg on behalf of animals in need!

Share all the stories and videos on social media, be transparent and just tell the story how it is! Get the community involved, be the engaging tool, organize fun events and make yourself known in the community.

And last but not least, look for strategic partners and sponsors who will assist with grants, donations and logistic support.



Any insights you can share with us about how you built up your social media presence?

We are lucky to be in a business of saving lives and most people feel automatically connected to our mission, since most folks love animals. One picture speaks better than a thousand words, so using great photography and various animatic marketing tools is our main strategy in building social media interest.

We make movies showcasing our work, we create short informative reels about animals in critical care who need crowdfunding to be saved, we organize cute photoshoots for pets ready for adoption, we create animated flyers with lost and found animals that go on social media...

The work never ends, we work 24/7 and we post 24/7 as soon as we admit new animals each day. We never used any artificial boosters to increase our followers count, it's all real, all organic currently hitting 50k on Instagram.

To better address different social groups and diversify we also opened TikTok page and Twitter. Miami Animal Rescue also reached out to several celebrities to bring more awareness and we were honored to work with David Hasselhoff, Lamar Odom, Dule Hill, Carol Baskin, Jerry Springer, Bob Saget any many others last year.

- Website: miamianimalrescue.org • Instagram: [miamianimalrescue](https://www.instagram.com/miamianimalrescue)
- Facebook: [MiamiAnimalRescue](https://www.facebook.com/MiamiAnimalRescue) • Twitter: [@MIAANIMALRESCUE](https://twitter.com/MIAANIMALRESCUE)
- Youtube: [Miami Animal Rescue](https://www.youtube.com/MiamiAnimalRescue)