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A first for WMNF: Talking Animals Festival combines music, pets

By Dalia Colón, Times Staff Writer
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WMNF 88.5 FM is known for hosting outside-the-box concerts. But this weekend, the station will put on a musical event that's unusual even for itself.

Sunday afternoon, WMNF will host its first Talking Animals Festival at Lowry Park Band Shell. The festival was inspired by the station's *Talking Animals*, a show highlighting animal issues and animal-themed songs.

For WMNF, the festival is unique on two fronts: First, the station has never held an event combining so many diverse elements: live music, pet adoption, animal art, food and more.

Second, admission is free. For most WMNF-sponsored events, the station charges an entry fee. To cover expenses, the not-for-profit station requested a temporary permit to sell beer as a fundraiser — something nonprofits in Florida may do no more than three times a year. The station also hopes to make money selling nonalcoholic drinks, raffle tickets and T-shirts.

"Pretty much all of our events are ticket-driven events, and we make our money off of tickets," said Randy Wynne, the station's program director. "It's a little bit of experiment to find out if that kind of event is a model for us that could work for other WMNF events."

The festival was the brainchild of Duncan Strauss, who drives from Palm

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Beach County to Tampa in order to host the *Talking Animals* radio show and a rock program, *Sonic Detour*. *Talking Animals* airs twice a month and includes interviews with nationally known animal activists, celebrities like Chrissie Hynde, Moby and Joan Jett. Strauss sees Sunday's festival as a chance to highlight the local animal welfare community.

"Of course it's a cliché to say I want to give something back to the community," said Strauss, 52.

The family-friendly event will feature pet adoptions by the Humane Society of Tampa Bay and other groups, agility demonstrations by the Dog Training Club of Tampa, animal-themed art exhibits, outreach tables and vendors selling pet products.

Dogs on leashes are welcome. The Animal Coalition of Tampa and veterinarian Dr. Jeanne Hart will provide \$10 microchipping for up to 50 pets.

"\$10 is really, really cool," Strauss said. "It normally costs \$50 to \$60 and up."

If all goes well, Strauss will consider making the *Talking Animals* Festival an annual event. Of course that, like the radio station itself, will depend on an army of volunteers.

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Talking Animals Festival

The event is noon to 5 p.m. Sunday at the Lowry Park Bandshell, 7530 North Blvd., Tampa. Free. For details, call (813) 238-8001 or go to talkinganimals.net. *Talking Animals* airs the first two Wednesdays of each month at 11:30 a.m. to noon on WMNF 88.5 FM.

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