



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

[Pets for Life]

PETSMART
Charities



III Testimonials

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."—Epictetus

III Testimonials

Throughout the development of this toolkit, we have engaged with incredible people who have participated in and embraced this approach.

Below is some feedback from collaborative partners and clients.



Leroy Cuyler
Owner of Duke and Ming
Philadelphia, PA

“I could talk about what your program did for me and my dogs all day. When I was a young boy, everyone in my neighborhood called me the dog boy, because I took care of everybody’s dogs. I would get all the dogs together and go to the park and play ball. They never ran away, they would just always listen to me.

When I heard about the thing you were doing in the park, I just wanted to come see all the animals and get my free shots. I wasn’t even thinking about getting my dogs fixed, I wasn’t really down with that. Everybody was so nice to me and they were all petting and loving my dogs. It was really cool so I gave my phone number in case I could help out. The next day someone called me to say thank you and see how my dogs were doing after their shots. The lady on the phone started asking me about getting them spayed and neutered. You guys were cool, and it sounded like it was a good idea, so I started thinking about it. I started helping out with handing out flyers and talking to people around the neighborhood about good ways to take care of their dogs, and cats too. I even have a cat named Mr. Belly.

I went to the shelter and all the people at the program were always talking about all the animals that get put to sleep and how it helps if we get our pets fixed. I was thinking I should probably go ahead and do it for my dogs Ming and Duke. I was thinking about giving Ming away because she was peeing all around the house and she was hard to control. I heard people at the program saying that when you get your dogs spayed or neutered it can calm them down.

I called Janice from The HSUS the next day and made appointments to get all three of my animals fixed. It has been awesome and Ming is so much better. She is still her crazy self but she doesn’t pee in the house anymore and she listens a lot better.

Duke was always good, but now he and Ming get along better because she isn’t so wild. I really love dogs more than anything in the world and I want to help them so much, because they make me feel so happy. The HSUS program helped my neighborhood and is a real blessing from God. Some people really love their animals, but don’t have any money. It’s awesome. I love it.” —*Leroy Cuyler*



Goizane Mullin
Community Outreach Organizer,
Animal Rescue League of Iowa, Inc.
Des Moines, IA

“I think one of the reasons that I love Pets for Life is it’s a philosophy. It’s actually a way of thinking and being ... I love it because it goes to the root of the problem and is really working with people, trying to build a base for a better future, and not just one day of good. I really believe that it’s something that can change society and how people see pets and how they take care of them in the long run. I think it’s very different.”
—*Goizane Mullin*



Susan Krebsbach, DVM
Veterinary Advisor
Humane Society Veterinary
Medical Association
Oregon, WI

“Being a part of Pets for Life events is truly an honor and a privilege. The goal of the Pets for Life program is to keep pets at home and healthy, and this program does just that by reaching out to under-served populations of pets. By engaging the local community, providing wellness care, vaccinations, and education about spay/neuter with follow-up sterilization services. The program is able to reach an untouched population of animals. Not only do the animals benefit, but the clients and volunteers do as well.

While I was participating at a Pets for Life event in Milwaukee, WI, my heart was touched when a client returned a couple of hours after I had performed a physical exam and vaccinated her beloved dog just to give me a hug and let me know how much she appreciated I was volunteering my services to help the animals in the community. When I woke up that morning, little did I know that I would be leaving the event receiving more than I had given—a sense of community with the clients and their pets, a renewed spirit in the veterinary profession, a full heart from the joy of giving, and a peaceful mind knowing that hundreds of more pets would be living a healthier life with their people.” —*Susan Krebsbach*



Benjamin Sykes
Owner of Lucky
Chicago, IL

“The training classes are fun and keep me and my dog out of trouble. Lucky and I have benefited from the classes because we have a closer relationship now.”
—*Benjamin Sykes*

Helen Sykes (Ben’s mom): “When we found Lucky, he was almost dead. We wouldn’t have been able to bring him back to health and keep him healthy without your help—dog food, training, getting him fixed. You all have been a great help for me, my kids, and my dogs. You’re real helpful with our animals. The training classes have really helped with Lucky’s behavior. Ben loves going to the classes. They keep him out of trouble and keep his mind focused.” —*Helen Sykes*



Lori Hensley

Coalition to Unchain Dogs
Durham, SC

“I’ve learned through doing community outreach that judgment doesn’t work. It is not an effective way to get people to care differently for their dogs. What does work is building a trusting relationship with the owner and truly caring as much about them as their dogs.

I’ve learned there are people in my community I would have not otherwise had the opportunity to meet who are struggling, really struggling. They are broken. Many aren’t able to keep their electricity on each month and don’t have running water or enough food for their families. But they often have a stronger sense of community than I do. They sit on each other’s porches in the evenings and watch each other’s children and take care of each other. Their faces light up when they see my truck in the neighborhood and they welcome me into their homes. Most importantly, they are just like me—they know what it’s like to be scared and worried; they want to be loved and accepted; and they are just trying to make it through this world with as little pain as possible.” —*Lori Hensley*



Robert Hensley

Coalition to Unchain Dogs
Durham, SC

“When we first started this work, Lori and I were not traditional animal folks at all. We had dogs, and we like dogs, but we were more into politics and social justice. I think that’s something that a lot of our volunteers share—it’s not just a concern for the animals, but they come from a place of how can they serve their community. We always go into the most under-served communities, and those folks are really happy for our assistance. We go into the situation without judgment, without any preconceived notions of their care or concern for their dogs. We’re just there to serve them, and to help them, and that’s how it works. I think that this work is a little bit different from traditional animal rescue in that we’re not taking dogs from some place; we’re trying to keep them where they are. We have a similar approach to social services, a kind of ‘keep the family together’ attitude. And to do that, we really have to work with the owners. Everything we do is with their permission.

The relationship is built on trust and respect. We can’t just focus on the animal to the exclusion of the people. If you’re going to do this work, you have to see the whole picture and a lot of times, it’s not just the animal that’s in a bad situation, it’s the people as well. It’s not that they don’t care about the animal, it’s just that they don’t have a floor in their kitchen, or anything covering their windows, or sometimes they may even be squatting in the house. These folks care about their dogs, they just have a lot of other problems. A dog is sometimes not the highest priority when they’re just trying to make it day by day. When you keep that in mind, it’s a lot easier not to be judgmental.”—*Robert Hensley*

[!\[\]\(6bb0e4f14c4133b37d2887cb37e67ddd_img.jpg\) Hear From Some of Our Clients](#)



 **Jorge Ortega**
 Vice President of Operations
 Humane Society of Charlotte
 Charlotte, NC

“Stick with it. Stick to what’s in the book, what’s in writing—it’ll work. That helps our program be successful. It’s a marathon, not a sprint. So we know it’s going to take time to really build those foundations and reputation that we really want in those neighborhoods and communities. We continue to follow that model, and it’s moving slowly, but it’s moving in the right direction and there are tangible results. We see it, we feel it.” —*Jorge Ortega*



Kelly Ann Rada, DVM
 Humane Ohio
 Toledo, OH

“Our staff at Humane Ohio had their hearts in the right place but were a little bit jaded ... they seemed to think Toledo was somehow “different” than other cities, that pet owners here were less responsible than in other areas and were less cooperative. Our staff was excited to hear about the successes of the Pets for Life outreach program and was cautiously optimistic, but they were doubtful we could have the same results in Toledo. I confess that there were times I caught myself being judgmental too ... when I saw a pet owner receiving food at the pet food bank for free, and then saw them using an expensive cell phone, I caught myself passing judgment. I had to remind myself that you never know a person’s unique experience; maybe she had already bought that phone and then lost her job? Or maybe the phone was a gift and without that phone, she would never be able to find employment?

We all have our own perceptions to overcome if we want to truly help the pets that are in need. Well, the proof is in the pudding, and our staff who did the outreach, delivering flyers, were amazed to find how receptive the pet owners were once we put aside our prejudices. The community outreach event we held was a huge success, and we never would have believed the scores of owners who patiently waited for hours in the cold to do what was right for their pets. The event was wonderful for so many pets and people in Toledo, but it accomplished something just as wonderful for Humane Ohio: it inspired us to abandon our stereotypes and in doing so reach out to many more pets in need.” —*Kelly Ann Rada*



 **Jill Kline**
 Education and
 Advocacy Manager
 Wisconsin Humane Society
 Milwaukee, WI

“We’ve really built some great relationships in the community. The relationships and people always surprise me, in good ways. I think even the best of us have biases or preconceptions about people, and the community continues to shatter them, and each individual person does, too.

So it’s been great to see people I initially thought were never going to spay or neuter do that—and sometimes it takes two visits, sometimes it takes 20, sometimes it takes leaving business cards over and over ... but we’ve seen that people do engage with us.”—*Jill Kline*



Michelle Moonsammy

Pet Owner
Atlanta, GA

“I would like to thank this organization for all its help. I have six dogs and three cats of which six are rescues. Two of my cats and one of my dogs needed to be fixed and I was, and still am, in a financial bind, but was able to get them fixed as well. Ralph himself helped me when I needed food for them. It is hard when you are on your own and have no one there to help but it’s great to know that someone does care as much as I do about my four-legged children. I am unable to pay them back for what they have done for me but have and will continue to volunteer my time as needed to show my appreciation for all that they do not just for me, but for the community in the whole. Thanks for being here. Toffe, Diamond, Lady, Lil Mama, Chocolate, Zoey, Tiger, Kitty and Squeeky. Licks n luv.”—*Michelle Moonsammy*



Jason Schipkowski

Director of Marketing
Stray Rescue of St. Louis
St. Louis, MO

“How structured the Pets for Life program is, and how regimented it is—I am so thankful for it ... so much of the legwork has been done, taking the guesswork out of the program. All the data’s there, it has substantiated the success of the program and through the data and numbers people are putting up in different cities across the country, as far as spay/neuter and how many people they’re actually reaching in these targeted areas.”—*Jason Schipkowski*



Cathy Damiano

Director
SpayNation for Dogs and Cats
Lafayette, LA

“We’ve held two free rabies clinics in the two years since our low cost spay/neuter clinic opened. We can think of no better way of reaching out to—and engaging—our target population. We look at it in terms of two key areas: connecting directly and personally with the people we want to target (in the run-up, during, and after the event), and offering free and needed services to these low-income pet owners. Although we did use some traditional event promotion, we know it was our hands-on, audience-specific targeting that guaranteed many of the attendees on the day: canvassing specific neighborhoods; talking to church congregations; putting flyers in grocery stores, laundromats, low-income neighborhood day cares, etc.; working with Animal Control to hand out flyers on their routes and calls.

Offering the rabies vaccination for free resulted in over 600 dogs and cats at each event. And offering as many free or almost-free spay/neuter services as we could made sure that every single voucher given at our first event was redeemed. We really believe that engaging directly with the people who came to the events—talking with them, spending time with them, showing that we’re interested in helping them (and not judging them!)—and then offering free or highly discounted spay/neuter for their pets is the key to reaching our target audience of low-income pet owners. And it’s something we absolutely plan to continue doing.”—*Cathy Damiano*



Will Mangham, DVM

Pets for Life
Veterinary Consultant
Rutledge, GA

“Animal lovers come from every facet of humanity imaginable. Regardless of choice or necessity, geographic location to call home, financial status, or personal life circumstances, people want and need the comfort and companionship of pets. Most of us also have the desire and need to care for another life. Humans want to be responsible, and at least appreciation—if not outright devotion—is a compliment we all crave.

Those pet owners that live in areas, either urban or rural, that are under-served by veterinary medicine are desperate to provide what their animals need. When this unmet need is compounded by economic hardship, people tend to increasingly be overwhelmed by a sense of decreased self-worth because they are unable to provide for a creature that ALWAYS gives them unconditional affection.

In my experience, when impoverished or isolated pet owners are recognized and aided in doing the right thing for their animals, many aspects of their lives are better. Despite the basic demands of pet owners and the effort and expense of having a pet, most people have pets because they are more than aware of the benefits of animal ownership and the satisfaction of caring for another being. People are grateful for attention to their pets, respect for their humanity, and validation that they both matter. We need to recognize and address this common relationship between people and their pets without qualifying it by neighborhood, paycheck, or quantity of inanimate possessions. All people and animals deserve respect and compassion.”—*Will Mangham*