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The Magazine for Animal Care Professionals and Volunteers



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The Soft Touch

Every shelter has at least a few difficult-to-handle dogs who, while not aggressive, are high-energy and lack proper socialization. Sadly, they often get branded "unadoptable," and some wind up being euthanized. The good news is that modifying their behavior can lead to better outcomes—and it's a simpler, shorter process than you might think.

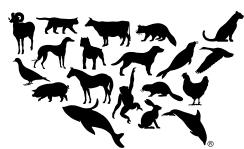


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Scam in a Can?

The canisters soliciting donations to a national animal welfare organization seemed to be in every pizza parlor and tanning salon in South and Central Florida in 2007. But while the organization claimed to be helping animals, it remained a mystery to local shelters and animal welfare groups.

The tree at the Angels for Animals shelter in Ohio certainly catches your eye: It's 24 feet high, made of pipes, plywood, and artificial grass. You can picture monkeys swinging from it, but it's actually the centerpiece of the shelter's cat colony room, and among its branches you'll find happy felines awaiting adoption. But you don't need a giant tree to keep your kitties and adopters interested—some basic design upgrades can work wonders. *The "101" Department, p. 39*



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

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7 Scoop

As tough economic times continue, pet food banks help people fill their animals' bowls; the Pets for Life NYC program provides counseling to keep people and pets together; a Colorado shelter is running on sunshine, thanks to a socially conscious teenager; a Yonkers family teams up with Farm Sanctuary to save a lamb; artists pick up their paintbrushes to portray shelter animals and benefit their keepers; big cats help little cats in Texas; and much more.

24 Coffee Break

In your space, you told us about the times you've come close to losing your cool with a frustrating member of the public, but managed to save a difficult situation by staying calm and polite.

39 The "101" Department

A cat adoption space should appeal to both felines and the people who come to see them. If the space is clean, bright, and interesting for cats, it will please potential adopters and lead to more cats finding new families. Learn how shelters are sprucing up their cat rooms with elements that keep cats engaged and help them show their true personalities.

45 Q&A

Aristotle claimed that animals do not have much capacity for thought or feeling—but science has come a long way, baby. Jonathan Balcombe and Marc Bekoff—leading scientists in the growing field of animal ethology—have spent decades studying the complex emotional lives of animals, including morality in animal communities and animals' capacity for pleasure.



MICHAEL STOCK.COM

49 Shelter Medicine

Canine influenza virus, which first grabbed headlines in 2004, is back in the spotlight, thanks in part to the release of the first canine influenza vaccine. How concerned should shelters be? What preventive approaches should they take? Miranda Spindel, the ASPCA's director of veterinary outreach, helps separate fact from fiction.

53 Behavior Department

For a pet who's used to being the center of attention, the arrival of a newborn child can be an upsetting experience. Pets puzzled by the sudden lack of attention often resort to inappropriate behavior—which sometimes has tragic consequences. But some shelters are showing expectant parents how to adjust their routines beforehand to make their pets baby-ready—and prevent them from being relinquished unnecessarily.

60 Off Leash

Shorty Rossi's *Pit Boss*, a new reality show on Animal Planet, gives viewers a glimpse of pit bull rescue with a little difference.

Animal Sheltering is a publication of The Humane Society of the United States.

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ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE

Animal Sheltering (ISSN 0734-3078) is published bimonthly by The Humane Society of the United States. Our magazine serves the people on the frontlines of animal protection—by offering practical expertise, technical know-how, forums for debate, program profiles, news on the latest research and trends, and a sense of inspiration and community among those striving to make the world a better place for animals.

Subscription Prices

Single-copy subscriptions are \$20 each (\$25 for subscribers outside the U.S.). Members of Shelter Partners receive a 10-percent discount. For information on multiple-copy discounts, visit animalsheltering.org.

Circulation Offices

To order, renew, change your address, or inquire about other subscription-related issues, visit our website at animalsheltering.org or contact our circulation office:

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Remember the coloring books you had as a kid? Some were black-and-white drawings where you filled in the hues with crayons, but others were more complicated. When you opened them, what you saw made no sense: Dots and numbers were scattered across a page, seemingly at random, creating what looked like a clutter of meaningless chaos.

But if you dragged your pencil from one number to the next in the correct order, a picture would emerge out of the lines you produced: a bear eating honey, a boy chasing a kite.

It seemed like a kind of magic, at the time: Something that wasn't there before, something you hadn't even imagined, was on the page, produced by your own hand. All you had to do was connect the dots.

Here at *Animal Sheltering* magazine, we're dot gatherers. But the dots we try to put on our pages are stories, stories about different groups doing good things for the animals in their communities. An animal control agency in Indiana that's figured out how to raise more funds, and thus save more animals. A shelter in California that makes customer service a top priority, and thus makes more matches. A humane society in South Carolina that creates a website where kittens multiply and crawl across the browser, illustrating the consequences of unrestrained breeding and the importance of spay/neuter.

That's just a tiny sample of some of our recent articles, each one a "dot" in the bigger puzzle we're all working on.

In this issue alone, we've got stories to help you help new parents keep their beloved pets without endangering their kids (the Behavior Department, p. 53), protect shelter dogs from canine influenza (Shelter Medicine, p. 49), give you ideas about cat housing design that will stimulate the animals and attract adopters (The "101" Department, p. 39), and figure out ways to give those high-energy adolescent dogs the treatment they need to become better adoption candidates ("The Soft Touch," p. 26).

Each of our stories is just one dot, one idea that's making a difference in one community—but some of them may also work for you. And if enough of us draw lines from one number to the next, connecting the dots, we'll create the picture we've been dreaming of for so many years: A world where no animals are killed due to lack of space. A world where homeless animals all have safe, comfortable, healthy places to stay while they await new homes. A world where euthanasia will be performed solely in cases of extreme sickness or injury—in cases where it's an act of mercy. A world where euthanasia itself is very, very rare—and homeless animals are, too.

Help us gather the dots: Tell us your stories about what's working in your community, and let us share it with others. Write to us at asm@humane.org.

—Carrie, James, Jim, and Amy
Animal Sheltering magazine staff

Spreading the Word

I produce *Animals' Voice* magazine for SPCA Auckland in New Zealand.

Reading your Sept-Oct 2009 issue, I was taken by the great story about Pat Parelli, "The Long Way Home" [p. 25]. I was wondering if you would have any objection to *Animals' Voice* running the story in a future issue?

Many thanks.

—Bruce Scott

Managing Director
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Takapuna, Auckland, New Zealand

Editor's note: Yes, please go ahead! We always allow shelters, rescues, and other animal welfare groups to reprint our articles, as long as the purpose is educational and you credit us. It's one of the services we provide to the sheltering community, and we hope you'll use it whenever it would be helpful. So if your group has been highlighted in one of our stories, feel free to use it in your newsletter—and please send us a copy. If you have any questions or need technical assistance, contact us at asm@humane.org.





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Banking on Generosity to Feed Hungry Animals

In hard times, pet food pantries supply a lifeline

BY JAMES HETTINGER



Volunteer Julie Cantowine, left, helps distribute food to a guest at The Pongo Fund Pet Food Bank in downtown Portland, Ore. Also on hand are Laura Amiton, second from left, of the pet foods retailer Healthy Pets Northwest; and Jon Tingle, right, regional manager for Canidae Pet Foods.

The hard economic times continue to make it difficult for some families to put food on the table ... or in their animals' bowls.

To help, dozens of shelters and nonprofit organizations around the country have established pet food banks—providing free food to ease pet owners' financial burdens and maybe keep family companions in their homes.

"You guys are a lifesaver," Donna Messner of Hagerstown, Md., tells food bank volunteers as she picks up a bag of cat food at the twice-monthly pet food bank run by the Humane Society of Washington County. An owner of nine cats, she's part of a steady stream of financially challenged people coming to the humane society's back parking lot on a cold, cloudy December morning for bags of food and litter that volunteers are fetching from two large trucks.

Walking to her car, Messner explains, "With the way the economy is, they've made

it so I can keep my cats." She says she can't find work, and her husband is on disability. "Sometimes it's hard just to keep us in food."

The scene is being repeated in nearly every corner of the nation, from a warehouse in downtown Portland, Ore., to a van in Colorado Springs, Colo., and a pet food pantry at a shelter for people in York County, Maine.

The food banks vary widely in size, scope, and operating methods. They get pallets of food donated from stores and corporations, and single bags from kind-hearted individuals. Some require proof that their clients reside in a particular jurisdiction and receive government assistance; others will serve whoever shows up. Some serve individuals only, while others also provide help to small shelters and rescue groups. But they all report that they're tapping a real and growing need in their communities, and keeping busy largely because of the bad economy.

Animal Sheltering Online

Your magazine isn't just in print—it's on the Web, too. Check out this issue's online extras.

- More answers to this issue's Coffee Break question are at animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.
- Go to animalsheltering.org/mouth-pieces to download a poster promoting adoption of smaller shelter pets, such as hamsters, rabbits, mice, etc.
- Read lesson plans for teaching basic commands to shelter dogs at animalsheltering.org/partners_lessons.

"Here in Oregon, the [economic] climate is pretty poor, which means that our cat food bank is a huge success," says Kathy Covey, public relations manager for the Cat Adoption Team (CAT), a felines-only shelter outside Portland that has operated a monthly pet food bank since June 2008. CAT distributed 375 pounds of food in its first month, but by September 2009 it was giving out nearly 2,500 pounds—an increase of more than 500 percent. By November, CAT had provided area cat owners with a total of 22,399 pounds of kitten and cat food. Covey says the numbers have left the CAT staff "just floored."

CAT's food bank, staffed by about 10 volunteers, operates from noon to 2 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month. In the summer, Covey says people begin lining up as early as 8:30 a.m., and a few walk roughly a half mile from the nearest bus stop.

When the food bank first began, Covey cautioned her volunteers against making snap judgments: The person driving up in a nice car, for example, might have bought it before he got laid off. Clients fill out an application form that asks if they're receiving financial as-



JAMES HETTINGER/THE HSUS

Marie Wampler, left, a volunteer at the Humane Society of Washington County's food bank in Maryland, chats with Donna Messner of Hagerstown, Md., who says the food she receives from the program has enabled her to keep her nine cats.



KATHY COVEY/CAT ADOPTION TEAM

The Cat Adoption Team, a felines-only shelter in Sherwood, Ore., saw an increase of more than 500 percent in the volume of food it distributes to cat owners in financial need. Here, Connie Snow, volunteer leader for the food bank, pulls a bag off a shelf in the organization's warehouse.

sistance, but Covey says for now no proof is required; she's convinced that no one is "trying to get free food just to get free food."

Families can get a month's supply of food for up to four cats, and are allowed to use the food bank for five consecutive months before being asked to take two months off. "We're a temporary fix," Covey explains.

Owners of cats who aren't spayed or neutered are directed to CAT's subsidized program and asked to get the operation done within a few months, Covey says, "because we don't want to feed a breeder."

Family Matters

Several pet food bank organizers say their programs aim to keep animals in the home and out of the shelter at a time when families—facing everything from home foreclosures to rising veterinary bills—might consider giving up their pets.

"We're just trying to keep the families together during this time," says Christine Wiersema, development director for the Idaho Humane Society, which began a pet food pantry in fall 2008 amid reports of families relinquishing their pets because of economic struggles, and even some seniors feeding their Meals on Wheels meals to their pets. The pantry, which distributed about 18 tons of food in its first year, now partners with the local Meals on Wheels program to provide food for 200 seniors' pets.

Wiersema says the food pantry—with 57 collection bins throughout the region, mostly at veterinarians' offices and pet supply stores—has prompted the shelter to do "a little out-of-the-box thinking." The bins are relatively expensive, so the shelter recoups some of the cost by having individuals or organizations sponsor a bin year-round for a \$50 donation.

Some families refuse to give up their animals, no matter how dire their economic circumstances. "We were gearing to the anecdotal situation that people would surrender their animals as times got tough, and I think really what's happened is people have hunkered down with their animals," says Steven Jacobsen, executive director of the Animal Welfare Society in West Kennebunk, Maine. "So what's happened is people have done everything they can to retain their animals, but obviously need some help to do so."

Free food takes some of the economic pressure off the family, possibly preventing animals from becoming a "scapegoat," perceived as siphoning money from the family's other needs, Jacobsen explains.

Giving and Getting

Michele LaVerdiere, a longtime supporter of Jacobsen's shelter, began a program in September 2008 that enables people to donate pet food or money at about eight businesses in the Kennebunk area. The donations are transported to the York County Shelter Programs' Food Pantry, a food bank for humans that also serves as the distribution point for LaVerdiere's pet food pantry. The pet food pantry distributes about 150 to 200 pounds of food per week, and has left LaVerdiere marveling at people's generosity. "When it comes to giving for children and pets," she says, "people are amazingly generous."

Larry Chusid, founder and executive director of The Pongo Fund Pet Food Bank, which operates from a warehouse in downtown Portland, Ore., says he is dumbstruck by the donations of high-quality food his program has received from manufacturers Canidae and Dogswell. "It's more than great. It's necessary," Chusid says. "It's a lifeline to a community that desperately needs a lifeline."

Chusid doesn't envision his program ending anytime soon. "The need in the community is always going to be there," he says, "regardless of what the economy is."

Despite the occasional grumpy recipient, food bank operators say on the whole their clients are extremely grateful for the helping hand. "We've gotten hugs, we've gotten 'God bless you,' we've gotten all sorts of things," says Darlene McCaslin, founder and president of the Pikes Peak Pet Pantry in Colorado Springs, Colo., a nonprofit that distributes food twice a week from a van parked at a sponsoring business.

Back at the Humane Society of Washington County parking lot in Hagerstown, volunteer Jane Kline suspects a higher power might be at work. "I feel blessed that I'm able to help," she says, "and that the food is here to be given." 

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Maintaining the Bond

An innovative HSUS program keeps pets and their people together

BY ARNA COHEN



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Beth Adelman never met the middle-aged tabby who wasn't using the litter box, the elderly white cat who started howling at night, or the exuberant youngster who attacked his owner's ankles. Her fellow volunteers haven't met them either. And that's the way she likes it.

For Adelman, success is measured by the number of pets who don't show up at the intake desks at New York City's animal shelters—pets like the "evil" cat whose frustrated owner was ready to give up the animal because she'd scratched him. By the end of his conversation with Adelman, the owner had a new perspective. "He had recently found the cat at a gas station, and he didn't know her personality at that point," Adelman says. "The cat was angry at a strange cat she'd seen out the window, and he happened to get in the way. Once he

recognized the reasons for her behavior, he totally got it."

Adelman, a cat behaviorist, is one of many professionals who donate their services to Pets for Life New York City, an HSUS pilot program dedicated to helping people resolve problems that otherwise could lead to surrender, abandonment, or neglect of their animals.

The five-year-old program, formerly known as Safety Net, came under The HSUS's oversight in November 2008. It was a natural addition to the organization's longtime efforts to keep pets and people together. "It's another way to combat euthanasia rates, to keep the animals from even coming into the shelters," says board member Mary Max, a New York City resident who helped coordinate the program's move to The HSUS.

The program has 40 volunteers who answer a hot line and serve as on-site

counselors at the five shelters run by New York City Animal Care and Control. For behavioral issues that require professional help, a crew of experienced trainers and experts provides free phone consultations. A network of 60 foster caregivers provides temporary homes for pets whose owners face hospitalization or short-term housing problems.

"We want to change the perception of animal shelters only as places where you go to give up your pet," says Jenny Olsen, one of two program co-coordinators. "We want people to know they can get help from us to solve their problems and keep their pets." The message is getting out: Last year, Pets for Life NYC served 2,106 clients.

Typical client complaints include animals who are too noisy, boisterous, or destructive; don't get along with other pets or people;

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or aren't completely housetrained. Lack of funds for vet care and the inability to find pet-friendly housing are also common issues. "There are so many people who give up animals that don't want to, but don't know that there are options," Olsen says.

For the financially strapped, Pets for Life NYC provides referrals for low-cost vet care and spay/neuter services, temporary pet housing, and even transport assistance. Volunteers may help resolve landlord-tenant problems or offer tips for finding new digs where pets are welcome.

Few people turn down the assistance, says Ira Brown, a volunteer on-site counselor. And he sees the difference that the program has made. "Before we had a presence [in the shelters], more animals were being surrendered for reasons that could be prevented. Now we see many more go back home with their owners."

The program is a lifeline for pets like King, a dog whose arthritis was so bad that his owner had to carry him up the stairs to her apartment. She couldn't afford vet care on her limited income, so Pets for Life NYC arranged low-cost vet visits and medication for the dog. He's now able to manage the stairs on his own, and his owner is so grateful that she has become a volunteer herself.

Beyond helping pets and people within their city, volunteers have an added incentive: Their efforts are creating a model for the rest of the nation.

The ultimate goal, says program co-coordinator Joyce Friedman, "is to have a Pets for Life at every shelter in the country, to make them a community resource and change the idea that pets are disposable."

As a first step toward this goal, Olsen and Friedman will conduct a seminar about Pets for Life in May at The HSUS' Animal Care Expo in Nashville, Tenn. The pair will describe their own experiences and provide nuts-and-bolts information to shelter staff on establishing similar programs in their facilities. "Ideally, the seminar will give them everything they need to go back to their shelters and set up their programs," says

Olsen. "And if they need assistance, we're here for them."

Dedicated animal lovers like Adelman are doing their part by influencing one person at a time. "I gave my phone number to the man with the aggressive cat and told him to call me anytime," she says. "He assured me that he would, and then he said, 'Don't you worry. This cat is going to stay with me.'"

Creating a Pets for Life Program

The best way to learn more is to attend the seminar at this year's Animal Care Expo in Nashville! For more information, check out animalsheltering.org/expo.

To set up a program at your shelter, you must evaluate your facility's capabilities and the resources your community has to offer. Use this checklist to determine what you have and what you need:

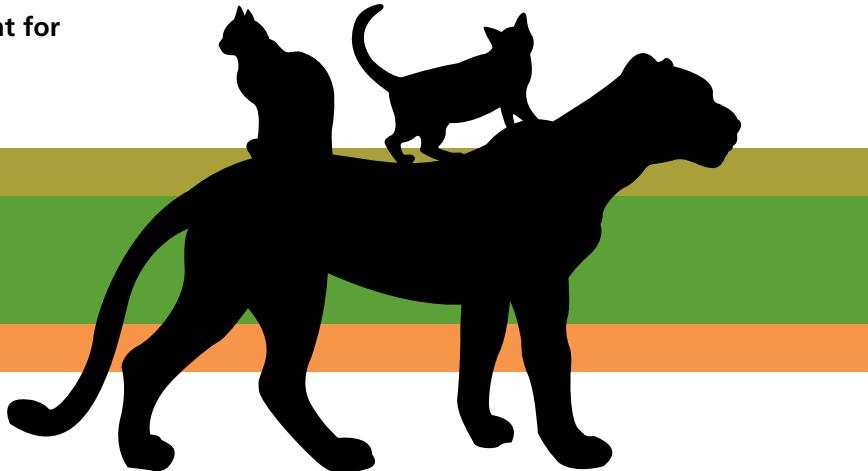
- One or two people (staff members and/or volunteers) to act as program coordinators
- Capability of setting up a dedicated phone hot line
- Local businesses/professionals willing to provide reduced-cost and/or free services, i.e.
 - veterinarians
 - dog trainers and cat behaviorists
 - boarding kennels
 - pro bono attorneys to offer advice on landlord-tenant issues
- Volunteers to
 - staff the hot line
 - provide on-site counseling to people surrendering pets
 - provide foster homes
 - transport animals
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 - the program
 - basic animal care
 - allergies and shedding
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It's a Cat-Help-Cat World

Sanctuary for exotic animals hosts event for adoptable kitties

BY KATINA ANTONIADES

ISTOCKSTOCK.COM



At first glance, the two organizations have plenty in common: Both care for cats. Both call Texas home. They even shared a volunteer: Holly Duval, who worked with both groups before a job transfer moved her family to Canada.

But while the kitties at New Beginnings Cat Rescue are looking for potential adopters to take them in and share their sunbeams, the cats at In-Sync Exotics aren't exactly lap-sized.

Some of them tip the scales at 400 pounds—or more.

Thanks to connections made by Duval, though, the lions and tigers kept at the sanctuary north of Dallas lent a paw to their little buddies last spring, when In-Sync hosted "Big Cats Helping Little Cats," an event that raised awareness for both groups.

In 2007, during Duval's second year as a volunteer with New Beginnings, one of its board members told her about In-Sync. She was eager to work with large animals, so as soon as she could, she started helping out at the sanctuary.

And the assistance was mutual—in early 2009, In-Sync's volunteer coordinator, Chemyn Reaney, sent an e-mail to Angela Corley, president of New Beginnings, inviting the group to hold an off-site adoption day at In-Sync's sanctuary.

Reaney thought it was a natural partnership. "Although we obviously have very different size animals, their volunteers and our volunteers all have a shared interest, which is, of course, cats," says Reaney. "And the people who come visit our cats are animal

people. I thought it'd be interesting to see if we could get them any help adopting out or at least getting the word out about what they do."

As a volunteer-only group, New Beginnings often has a tough time finding enough people to staff such events. Still, Corley says she couldn't pass up the opportunity.

After both organizations' boards approved the proposal, it was time to plan. In March, Corley visited the big-cat sanctuary for a tour and to figure out logistics. Duval happened to be in town at the time and came along to visit the tigers she'd helped raise. Corley says she wasn't worried that her group's cats would be nervous or in any danger, since their cages wouldn't be near the wild cats' enclosures.

Reaney and Corley worked together to put out a press release, and the event details made it into a small local paper and onto area rescue websites. Each organization notified its supporters, and New Beginnings told past adopters and handed out fliers at PetSmart.

On the big day, May 9, rain forced a move indoors, so several New Beginnings volunteers set up tables and cages in the sanctuary's visitor center containing six or seven of the more laid-back adoptable cats. They had brought brochures about the group, volunteer applications, and coupons for the local low-cost spay/neuter program.

Corley estimates 40 to 50 people attended Big Cats Helping Little Cats, and several bought New Beginnings T-shirts or picked up brochures. Though no cats were adopted on the day, she says she wasn't

too disappointed. "I didn't expect it to be gigantic or anything, but even a handful of people, I consider that successful," she says. The facility's rural, out-of-the-way location may have discouraged some potential visitors, she says.

Corley says she was happy to gain exposure for In-Sync Exotics. "Most of the people who went to the event, the people who knew us, came up to PetSmart afterwards and were just going on and on about how great the facility was, and how much fun it was, and [that] they're going to volunteer there, and they're going to take their nephew there. They thought it was the coolest thing on Earth."

The groups hope to collaborate again in the future and may even make "Big Cats Helping Little Cats" an annual event. Corley—and Reaney, who describes this year's effort as a "last-minute, spur-of-the-moment thing"—have future improvements in mind. They hope to start planning earlier next time, obtain more advance media coverage, and adopt out some cats.

Duval, whose experiences in Texas helped her land a paid position with Wildlife Rehabilitation of Edmonton, sees key characteristics shared by the two organizations that bode well for their future cooperation.

"Both NBCR and In-Sync Exotics have wonderful, dedicated people working hard for the animals they rescue and care for," she says. "Both have volunteers that work hard for animals that have been neglected." **AS**

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Canvassing the Nation

Artists collaborate to bring money—and warmth—to shelters

While President Obama may not have ended up adopting a shelter dog, he inspired at least one person to step up to help homeless animals. And the project she started with some artistic friends is one that can benefit shelters and rescues across the country, and even internationally.

"I listened to Obama's speech when he was elected and felt the urge to reach out to the community," says Carrie Jacobson, an artist who lives with her photographer husband Peter—and several adopted shelter animals—in Connecticut. "And I realized, I can't really do very much. I don't have very many skills that seem useful in terms of strengthening community. All I can do is write and paint."

At first, she says, those skills didn't seem like community-builders. "I can't build a house or put a roof on something. But I was really moved by that sense of wanting to do something useful."

Her mission became clear through her friendship with Sandy Tajima, another artist who lives all the way across the country in California. They had met through an art blog and struck up a friendship, discovering a shared love of animals.

Jacobson had been a newspaper reporter for many years, and had often covered shelter issues, using her writing to bring attention to the animals who needed homes. Tajima, a former police officer who'd once served as an interim animal control director for nine months during her 26-year career in law enforcement, felt a similar calling.

They tossed around a bunch of ideas before settling on their final project. The site they started, Art for the Animals (artforshelteranimals.blogspot.com), is a blog where artists from around the world can come together to share their work, but



PETER JACOBSON

Artist Carrie Jacobson poses with Kaja, a 12-year-old chow-German shepherd mix from a shelter in Westminster, Md., as well as her portrait of the dog. She and her husband, Peter Jacobson, have had Kaja since she was a puppy.

more importantly, use that work to help local animal welfare groups.

The approach is simple: Artists go to their local shelter or rescue and make a portrait of one of the animals there. They then donate the portrait to the group, and the group can use it as it pleases. The artists send photos of their work to the blog so that Jacobson, Tajima—and their friend and fellow artist, the improbably named Sandy Sandy—can publicize the project and pull in more artists. More than 40 artists have participated since the project got started in spring of 2009.

The project is special in its flexibility: Shelters and rescues can use the donated paintings however they choose: They can sell them to raise money. They can offer them as adoption incentives to accompany the animals they depict to their new homes. They can use them to brighten up their own facilities, making the shelter space more

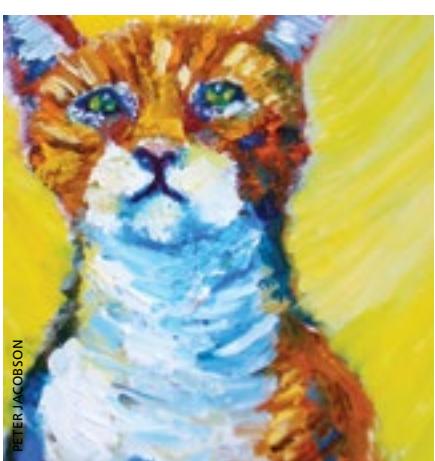
appealing to adopters. They can give them as gifts to special volunteers, or to foster parents who've worked with the animal portrayed and are happy—but just a little sad—to see her go to a new home.

Part of the inspiration, says Tajima, came from her own visits to her local shelter with her two kids.

A single mom, Tajima says the family budget is tight. "We do have two cats and a hamster, but we've always wanted a dog," says Tajima. "But we know to be a responsible guardian, you need to have a really healthy budget. But we like to go visit the dogs anyway. And occasionally there's a dog that's just so cute, and it's so frustrating—because the shelter is not like a petting farm where you can buy a treat you can feed the animal, and it's not like a zoo with a store where you could buy a replica of a crocodile or whatever. My kids feel frustrated when we



DONOVAN SHADBIE



A shelter in Westerly, R.I., received artist Carrie Jacobson's donation of her portrait of shelter cat Scotty.

leave the shelter empty-handed. So I thought, *What if there were other people out there who have tight budgets but want an animal, but can't bring them home because of some issue—allergies, budget like me, whatever? Why can't they have little art cards of the animals there? Or you can buy a painting of the dog, and your payment buys that dog a nice hammock bed?*"

Well aware of the hectic nature of shelter work and the existing pressures on shelter staff, the organizers have worked to make it easy for animal groups to participate in Art for the Animals. The site provides brochures and handouts artists can customize, and a template for a letter to the editor people can adjust and send to their own local papers to drive up interest.

Providing those things is just common sense, says Jacobson. "I was at the Westerly shelter [in Rhode Island] in a line; there were

Artist Sheila Tajima, right, holds one of the paintings she did for Art for the Animals, a project she helped found that enables artists to donate art to shelters. At left is Kendra Adams of East Bay SPCA in Oakland, Calif., who spearheaded a showcase at her shelter for Art for the Animals paintings.

eight people ahead of me," says Jacobson. "They were doing everything from getting dog licenses to wanting to see if the shelter had their cat, and I was looking at the two staff who were there working, and was just like 'Good heavens, they can't remember to deal with this, too!'"

While some of the donated paintings have been sold by the shelters and used to raise money for the animals, Jacobson and Tajima say they haven't closely tracked how much money has been raised, since the paintings aren't always used in that manner. They're hoping to track results a bit more closely, though, so they'll know where a painting—and the animal it portrays—ends up.

But Tajima says she can already see the effect of the project on the artists who have participated. "I had one artist who said, 'I never wanted to go into a shelter, because I was afraid of what I was going to see there, but I wanted to try this project anyway.' She went in, and she was overwhelmed! She was treated like a queen, given the grand tour, the shelter staff were introducing her as 'the artist,'" Tajima laughs. "She went on and on about what a wonderful experience it was, because her image before then had been that dismal, dark, *Lady and the Tramp* image."

It's an image that Art for the Animals is reshaping, one lovely painting at a time. 

Tune Your Skills in Music City

Looking to get in tune with your profession? Hoping to sharpen your edge?

Then The Humane Society of the United States' Animal Care Expo 2010—set for May 12-15 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tenn.—is the place for you.

The annual event attracts thousands of animal sheltering and emergency response professionals seeking to improve their skills through workshops, explore the latest products and services in the Exhibit Hall trade show, and reinvigorate themselves by networking with their peers.

A new series this year—Expo Edge—will feature hour-long workshops focusing on new trends, research, and emerging issues in animal sheltering. The topics will include the Shelter Pet Project, coalition building, lifetime care for pets, new spay/neuter research, and getting the most out of your Expo experience.

A new workshop track this year will be devoted to equine protection. Other tracks will address building humane communities, pets at risk, executive leadership, field services, fundraising, shelter medicine, shelter services, and emergency services.

For more information, including the registration guide and workshop descriptions, go to animalsheltering.org/expo.



Running on Sunshine

A socially conscious teenager helps a Colorado shelter go solar



Dustin Michels of Boulder, Colo., undertook a unique community service project for his bar mitzvah: arranging to have solar photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the Humane Society of Boulder Valley. His project will save the shelter thousands of dollars a year on its electric bill.

In 2008, Dustin Michels was struggling to balance two passions: helping animals and protecting the environment. His bar mitzvah was coming up, and the Boulder, Colo., middle-schooler was mulling over what kind of community service he wanted to perform to mark his coming of age in the Jewish religion.

He knew one thing: He wanted to do something big.

In the end, Dustin didn't have to choose between the two causes. An enthusiastic environmentalist, Dustin is particularly interested in the benefits of solar energy—his family had just installed solar photovoltaic panels on their roof, and he was immediately intrigued by the concept. He realized that he could help animals and protect the environment by getting a solar panel system donated to the local animal shelter, the Humane Society of Boulder Valley.

Solar power would mean less energy from the grid, lower utility bills for the shelter, and more money for the animals. "I chose the humane society because it's a cool place, a good cause, and good people," says Dustin.

In the summer of 2008, Dustin asked Namaste Solar, the company that had installed the panels at his house, whether it would be interested in funding his project. Namaste steered him to its matching grant program. If he could raise half the money for the installation, the company would donate the other half.

Dustin arranged to present his proposal to Lisa Pedersen, CEO of the humane society.

It wasn't just any presentation. It was a slick PowerPoint number that Dustin had designed and produced himself. "It was phenomenal," says Pedersen. "He went through what the investment would be, how many years it would take to get the money back, why it was good for the environment. I was very impressed with his knowledge."

But even with the grant from Namaste, there was still a \$12,000 gap to be filled—and the shelter just couldn't divert such a big chunk of its operating funds to the project. "Lisa thought solar energy was great, but really expensive, and she didn't want it to get in the way of the money they needed for animal care," says Dustin. "And I didn't want it to get in the way, either. That defeats the purpose."

It didn't defeat Dustin, though, who assured Pedersen that he would raise the money.

Enter the Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC), a Boulder organization that provides education and services to empower the community to conserve natural resources. An anonymous donor wanted to fund a solar energy project, so CRC contacted Heather Leanne Nangle, co-owner and director of marketing and community relations for Namaste, to ask for her recommendation. Dustin was at the top of the list.

The shelter unveiled its new solar awning in May 2009. Pedersen estimates it will save between \$1,000 and \$3,000 a year on the utility bill, money that will go directly to

the animals. Cost to the shelter: \$0. "This was a great partnership," she says. "And a great example of what one person can do. Dustin absolutely inspired so many of our constituents."

Dustin plays guitar, and he says he sees himself down the road putting a band together, cutting records, and touring. Or he may make a career in technology or science, working on something "that would change the world." He's not done giving, though. He plans to volunteer at the humane society as part of a community service unit at his school.

At his bar mitzvah, Pedersen says, Dustin spoke about how much the project has done for him and how it had enriched his spiritual journey. "He is a remarkable young man, and we're very honored that he chose us," she says. "This is a kid who's going to make stuff happen." **AS**

MOUTHPIECES))))))

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Hey, you! Yeah, I'm talking to you.

How's it going?

Hey! Hey! I'm over here! Right HERE!

Sheesh. It's hard being small sometimes.

Cats and dogs aren't the only people here, you know.

I just wanted to let you know that I'm available.

What? You say it sounds like the dogs are the only ones here?

Yeah, tell me about it.

That's actually why the staff keeps me—and the rabbits and mice and rats and gerbils and ferrets—in a different area of the shelter. We get stressed out by the barking. (And also because—speaking for myself here—I really prefer not to have a cat watching me all day. It just kind of creeps me out after a while.)

On behalf of all the little critters in the house, I just want to say,

"We need homes too!"

My name is Flufferbutterkins, by the way. (Yeah, I know. I didn't pick it. I've always seen myself as more of a "Steve." You know, if you adopted me, you could give me a more dignified name.)

So if you're looking for me—or one of my buddies—just ask a staffer to show you our room and make some introductions. I'm really a face-to-face kinda guy.





Saved from Slaughter

A Yonkers family and Farm Sanctuary shepherd a lamb to safety

Talk about the warm fuzzies.

Last September, Cindy Rexhaj, her mother, Sonija Hadzovic, and Rexhaj's two children—Adriana, 4, and Leila, 2—were browsing at an Italian produce market in the Bronx when they spotted a livestock truck unloading sheep at a slaughterhouse a few storefronts away.

Wanting to get a closer look at the animals, the foursome walked down the street, and Rexhaj peered inside the truck. There she saw two newborn lambs. One hadn't survived the trip, but the other was still alive.

Rexhaj alerted the driver, asking him to pull the lamb out of the truck. When it became clear there was no way to know which ewe he belonged to, dashing any hopes of reuniting the pair, Rexhaj asked what would become of him. "Some of them survive, some of them don't survive," the driver told her. No slaughterhouse would expend the time or money to nurse and raise a lamb.

So Rexhaj begged the man to give her the animal, saying she and her mother—who grew up on a farm in her native Albania—would take care of him. Finally, he gave in.

They wrapped the lamb in a blanket, put him in their car, placed him on Adriana's lap—the seat belt around both of them—and drove to nearby Yonkers, N.Y., where Hadzovic lives in a house with a big backyard. "I didn't even think about it until we brought him home. I was like, 'That's it, let's go, we're out of there.' We grabbed him, and we left," Rexhaj says.

They'd saved the lamb from death. Now what?

They wiped him down with a wet cloth and baby shampoo, and then put him in one of Leila's baby diapers so he could run around the house—which he did, following Hadzovic everywhere. They bottle-fed him diluted baby formula. And they gave him a name: Bootsy. (Rexhaj says the word means "cutie" in Albanian.)

After five wild and woolly days of the lamb's antics, it came time to find him a permanent home. Rexhaj called the Bronx Zoo,

the Queens Zoo, various farms, and an apple orchard with a petting zoo. No luck.

But one woman she spoke to suggested she contact Farm Sanctuary, located in Watkins Glen, N.Y., about four hours northwest of New York City. Rexhaj called the organization and spoke to placement specialist Melissa Woodruff, who said a volunteer who lives in the area could come by to pick up the lamb that same day.

Bootsy arrived at the farm, his health was evaluated, and he was given a new name: Angelo.

Susie Coston, national shelter director for Farm Sanctuary, gives high marks to Rexhaj and her mother for the obvious love and care they gave him. "He was in fantastic shape. It speaks really highly of his human mother, who took him in and knew exactly what to do with him," she says.

Once they found out they would be getting a lamb, Farm Sanctuary staff started calling every adopter who had ever taken a lamb from the organization. (All adopters have to be vegetarian or vegan and promise to keep adoptees as companion animals.)

They came up with Robert and Leslie Nason, of Williamston, Mich., who have been adopting lambs and turkeys from the group since 1991. They said they'd be happy to add Angelo—along with another lamb and two turkeys—to their 40-acre farm. In early November, Woodruff drove all the animals from New York to Michigan.

The Nasons gave the lamb a new—and likely final—name: William Shakespeare. They've named all their sheep after British writers, so he joins ewes Virginia Woolf, Beatrix Potter, and Charlotte Bronte; their other new lamb is Daniel Defoe.

Thus Bootsy-Angelo-William Shakespeare survived his harrowing beginnings, and began a new life of peaceful grazing and cavorting with his adopted kin.

His rescuers will never forget him—especially the two little girls.

"We have pictures, we talk about him," Rexhaj says. "I put a video of him from Farm Sanctuary on my computer, and my daughter



GREG STRAIGHT EDGE/EXERCISE COMPASSION.COM

Cindy Rexhaj (center, holding daughter Adriana, 4) rescued a newborn lamb from a Bronx, N.Y., slaughterhouse near an Italian market where she and her family were shopping. Pictured are: Rexhaj; Adriana Rexhaj; Leila Rexhaj, 2; and Rexhaj's mother, Sonija Hadzovic.



GREG STRAIGHT EDGE/EXERCISE COMPASSION.COM

After being born in transit to a Bronx slaughterhouse, Bootsy the lamb found refuge—and a new name, Angelo—at Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen, N.Y. He was later given a permanent home (and yet another name) at a farm owned by vegetarians in Williamston, Mich.

was like, 'Bootsy! Mom, when are we going to see him?' And I'm like, 'We will see him. One day we definitely will take a road trip, just to go see him.'" **AS**

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Help Them While They're Young

Fighting juvenile animal cruelty in Phoenix

BY DEBRA J. WHITE

A 9-year old boy appears in family court, accused of dousing a cat with gasoline and setting her on fire. Already in foster care, he's too young to incarcerate, but he's inflicted pain and suffering on a sentient being. What are the judge's options?

In most parts of the country, very few. A judge may refer the child for counseling, but if no other criminal charges are pending, the child is usually released to the custody of his family or guardians—and if they don't seek counseling for him, he's unlikely to get it.

Childhood animal cruelty is troublesome. Social workers and psychologists recognize it's a likely indication of later violence. Prominent researchers like Frank Ascione, Randall Lockwood, and Phil Arkow have

violent behavior in juveniles. Risley-Curtiss, an associate professor at the Arizona State University School of Social Work, recently founded the Children and Animals Together (CAT) assessment and diversion program. Based in Phoenix, CAT is designed to provide structured intervention in the lives of children who've committed acts of animal cruelty, helping treat and prevent both the behavior and its underlying causes.

Two years ago, Dorothy Thompson, a Maricopa County juvenile probation officer, contacted Risley-Curtiss about two boys who had killed a cat. The kids were mandated to attend a diversion program, and the officer asked Risley-Curtiss where to go—and she had nothing to suggest.

It might have ended right there, but for Risley-Curtiss, it presented a challenge. "No treatment program existed, so that was our opportunity to develop one," she says.

With help from other experts in child and animal welfare—humane education director Kris Haley and supervisor Andy Starr of the Arizona Humane Society; Pam Gaber, president and founder of the animal-assisted therapy group Gabriel's Angels; and the county probation department—Risley-Curtiss put together a one-day pilot program designed to be an empathetic learning experience for the boys involved. The first sessions were held at the Arizona Humane Society in 2008.

Thompson, the juvenile probation officer who handled the case, believes the boys benefitted greatly. "I could have easily given them a standard diversion consequence, such as community service at a food bank or writing an apology letter," she says. "However, my goal was to find something meaningful for the boys to learn to prevent any further harm to animals." That, she thinks, was accomplished through the CAT program.

Encouraged by the success, the team went on to make the program official, expanding on the activities of the first session. The program is voluntary and free of charge, and includes assessment, intervention, consultation, referral, and follow-up for children ages 6-17 who have a history of animal abuse.

In June 2009, CAT accepted its first clients, all boys. That mirrors the national statistics on childhood animal abusers, most of whom are male. The program, now based at the Arizona Animal Welfare League, consists of three three-hour sessions on three consecutive weekends.

Family participation is now required, says Risley-Curtiss. Initially, some families weren't always reinforcing the messages their kids were getting through the program, Risley-Curtiss says, and sometimes, the families have work to do as well.

"We have a 4-year-old who has killed two puppies," she says, "one when she was 2 and one just recently." The girl is too young for their program—though she will be assessed—but Risley-Curtiss thinks there are obviously supervision issues, too. "We are going to try to find out about why [she did it], but the other question is why was she left alone with the puppy?" she asks.

Working with the families is a challenge in itself. Most of the children referred to the program are Hispanic, and in some cases, the children speak English but their parents don't. While the CAT team has enlisted the help of a translator, "every case that we have is complicated by socioeconomic issues, everything is complicated by class issues, and cultural issues," Risley-Curtiss says.

Participants in the CAT program include a treatment team of social workers, a humane educator, a therapy animal, and a handler from Gabriel's Angels, an animal-assisted therapy group devoted to freeing children from the cycle of violence. Exercises and homework projects teach empathy and compassion. Under supervision, children get to meet and interact with a variety of shelter animals.



The Children and Animals Together (CAT) assessment and diversion program requires family participation. This helps ensure the reinforcement of the messages children hear in the program, and highlights the need for adult supervision when young children are around animals.

found a strong link between animal abuse and human violence. Serial killers Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, and Patrick Sherrill all had a history of animal abuse. Is it possible their murderous rampages could have been averted if they'd received treatment when they were younger?

Christina Risley-Curtiss, Ph. D., believes that early intervention may be key to stopping

The Right Way to Transport

The National Federation of Humane Societies weighs in

They also work on recognizing and describing emotions. "We're doing more on faces," Risley-Curtiss says. The team will show the children pictures of people and ask them to describe what the person is feeling based on their body language. "We have them show us 'What does it feel like to be mad? What about sad, or hurt?'" Risley-Curtiss explains. "And then connecting that to an animal—'How would it feel to have your tail pulled or be hit?' We work on having them identify their own feelings and be able to recognize [those of] others."

The animal-assisted therapy team even brings a stethoscope, Risley-Curtiss says, which allows the children to listen to an animal's heartbeat. "We talk about how we both have hearts, so they listen to their own heartbeat and the animals' heartbeats, and that's part of talking about the needs we share."

Gaber, who serves on CAT's executive committee and the CAT treatment team, says she was honored to be asked to be part the program. "CAT is one of the few intervention programs in the nation for young cruelty offenders," she says. "It is so important to stop, treat, and prevent childhood animal cruelty."

Creating the program from scratch has been a challenge, but it's also been exciting, Risley-Curtiss says. It's way too early to study outcomes, but Risley-Curtiss suggests that if these kids have positive experiences helping and caring for animals, it will help build empathy and reduce the cycle of violence.

CAT is privately funded through the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, a KeyBank Trust, and has received a supporting grant from the Animal Welfare Trust. In addition, several volunteers help support the program.

For more information, contact Risley-Curtiss at risley.curtiss@asu.edu. **AE**



Done properly, animal transport programs can be an effective tool for reducing the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable pets. But the process can be complex, and there are practical and ethical considerations to take into account before launching a transfer program.

In order to help groups around the country achieve more uniform standards, the National Federation of Humane Societies (NFHS) recently released protocols that explore the best practices for transfer programs.

The NFHS spent most of 2009 developing the new protocols after it identified several issues that could impact the ability of shelters and rescue groups to transfer animals. For example, many state veterinarians are concerned about animals being moved across state borders without proper health certificates and required vaccinations; local authorities are worried about unscreened animals who may pose a public health or safety risk entering their jurisdictions; several states are proposing licensing programs for all organizations transferring animals, as a means of regulating the practice; and some jurisdictions have even talked about regulation to stop transfers altogether.

Among the group's key recommendations for high-quality transfer programs:



- Adopt a three-tiered approach, beginning with the most basic requirements and expanding to include additional requirements as resources of the partners allow;
- Ensure full compliance with local and state regulations;
- Put animal health and care as the primary focus;
- Work jointly to solve the community issues leading to pet overpopulation—by, for example, establishing a spay/neuter program so that the community with surplus puppies won't always be in that position.

"If we don't self-regulate, we could end up losing the ability to transfer animals, which would be a big loss for the sheltering community," says Steve Putnam, executive director of the NFHS. "So we need to do it, and do it well, and do it within the regulations that are out there."

"Companion Animal Transport Programs—Best Practices" can be viewed at the organization's website, humanefederation.org. **AS**

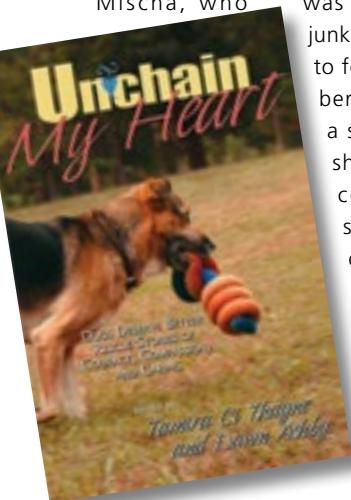


Get out your handkerchiefs! Dogs Deserve Better is a nationwide group that devotes itself to rescuing dogs from life on the end of a chain, where they often fail to receive even minimal care and are denied the warmth of a family. Forty real-life rescue stories have been compiled by founder **Tamira Ci Thayne** and Illinois representative **Dawn Ashby** in *Unchain my Heart: Dogs Deserve Better Rescue Stories of Courage, Compassion, and Caring*, a volume of heartbreak and happiness that will have you buying stock in Kleenex. Members battle bad weather, irate owners, and the long arm of the law to liberate dogs such as Mischa, who

was released from a junkyard and went on to foil two bank robberies, and Doogie, a sick, old German shepherd mix who could no longer stand. He lived only 5 ½ months longer, but it was in a loving home for the first and only time in his life. Most of the stories end on

a much better note, and the fortitude of both rescuers and rescued could make a stone weep. The book can be purchased for \$14.97 plus shipping and handling at the group's website, dogsdeservebetter.com.

Weaseling out of paying. You know times are tough when people start making off with mustelids. That's what a man in Jacksonville Beach, Fla., did in November. WJXT-TV reported that **Rodney Bolton**, of no fixed address, slipped a ferret into his pants and left a local pet store without paying, unaware that a 17-year-old customer had witnessed the crime.



The teenage boy followed Bolton out and confronted him. A struggle ensued, during which the thief held the ferret up to the boy's face and squeezed it, causing the agitated animal to bite the boy's ear. Police arrested Bolton and charged him with shoplifting and battery for **wielding the ferret as a dangerous weapon**. The ferret was returned unharmed to the pet store. Bolton is not the first to attempt a ferret filching: A nearly identical case occurred a month earlier in Beckley, W.Va., where, according to the *Beckley Register-Herald*, a man stole a ferret from a pet store by ... stuffing it in his pants and running. We think the ferrets should have pressed sexual assault charges.

Sorry, wrong number. A case of mistaken identity recently left an animal sanctuary in Texas \$5,000 richer. In September, **Dawn Rizos of Dallas** was extremely flattened when she was named Entrepreneur of the Year by American Solutions for Winning the Future (ASWF), a conservative political group headed by **former House speaker Newt Gingrich**. The group lauded her success in building her business and recognized "the risks you take to create jobs and stimulate the economy," according to the pet blog Ohmidog.com. The letter also informed her that for a \$5,000 donation, Rizos could have dinner with Gingrich in Washington, D.C. She jumped at the chance, immediately sending a check and booking

plane and hotel reservations. But it was not to be. ASWF sent Rizos an "oops, our bad" letter, telling her that it had confused her company (doing business as DCG Inc.) with another by the same name. Her business, The Lodge, is stimulating in its own way—it's an adult-entertainment club. When ASWF realized its mistake, it essentially said, "We're returning your money, and could we have our award back?" Amused, Rizos complied. The club owner donated the \$5,000 to Animal Guardians of America, a sanctuary outside Dallas, to help build a shelter for pit bulls. It will be called **Newt's Nook—A Home for Pit Bulls**, to honor the man who made it all happen.

LEEDing by example. It's not easy being green, sings Kermit the Frog, but the **Potter League for Animals** in Middletown, R.I., is up to the task. In October,



U.S. Green Building Council bestowed a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold award—its second-highest distinction—on the new facility, honoring the league for meeting at least 60 percent of the council's criteria for environmentally friendly construction.

The only animal shelter in the country to receive the award, the building, designed by ARQ Architects, incorporates a roof garden, recycled building materials, natural lighting, a gravel parking lot to absorb water runoff, and a 15,000-gallon cistern to hold and treat runoff for reuse in cage cleaning and toilet flushing. And animal-friendly features help make the shelter a healthier and more comfortable environment for the critters, reports the *Providence Journal*—the facility has a hospital-grade air exchange system that has reduced URI in cats to the point where the league is no longer eligible to participate in a research study of the problem. Dogs and cats stay in glassed-in, soundproof communal living rooms rather than standard cages, which prevents isolation and boredom as well as noise and odor in the shelter. E-mail

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path@potterleague.org to request a copy of the league's brochure on building green; you can also take a photo tour of the shelter at potterleague.org.

Serving time serving. When **Osceola Animal Control** in St. Cloud, Fla., laid off 12 of its 31 staff members in August because of budget cuts, it faced the very real possibility of closing its doors. But Zootoo News reports that the shelter is being kept open partly by an influx of labor from an unexpected source— inmates. Usually seen collecting roadside litter, prisoners from the county jail are now picking up puppy poop and cleaning kitten cages. Participants are nonviolent offenders who get five days shaved off their sentences for every 30 days they work in the shelter. **Joyce Peach**, the shelter's director, is delighted with the program. Visits from the public have increased, and "we get a lot of compliments on how clean the shelter is," says Peach. "The dogs are much more socialized because the inmates get them out and exercise and play with them." County officials estimate that the program is saving \$100,000 a year and plan to make it permanent. This year Peach would like to establish a formal training program that would give the inmates certification in various aspects of shelter work and better prospects for employment. (For more on shelter programs that get help from inmates, see the *Animal Sheltering* feature, "Inside, Looking Out" in the Jan-Feb '10 issue).

Shape up or ship out. Following a fatal pit bull attack on a child at Camp Lejeune, N.C., in 2008 and several other injuries to people and dogs, the Marine Corps moved to prohibit owners from keeping the breed—as well as Rottweilers, wolf hybrids, and mixes of those breeds—in base housing, forcing owners to give up beloved pets. Fortunately, the Corps left an "out" in the regulations: If a dog could pass a nationally recognized temperament

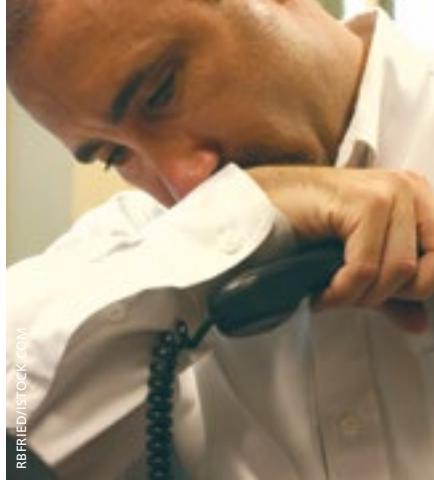
test, the owner could apply for a waiver that would allow the dog to remain on base through December 2011. Noncompliance meant eviction for both dog and family, according to the *Marine Corps Times*. On Oct. 6, a team of animal behaviorists arrived in Beaufort, S.C., to evaluate more than 80 dogs at Parris Island, the famed Marine training



base. Led by Emily Weiss, ASPCA senior director of shelter research and development and a certified behaviorist, the team tested 85 dogs using the ASPCA Safety Assessment for Evaluation Rehoming (SAFER) and found only two who showed enough aggressive tendencies to be removed from base housing. Two others needed help; one will work with a trainer, and the other will be neutered. **AS**

Tell us about a time when you were about to lose your cool with a member of the public. How did you manage to calm down and handle the situation politely?

That was the question we asked you for this issue's Coffee Break, and you sent us plenty of creative examples of how you maintained your professionalism in the face of trying circumstances. For more of your responses, go to animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.



A mother and grandfather came in with three rambunctious, out-of-control kids to adopt a dog because the mother was told it would help calm the children. No one in this family seemed to have the skills or patience needed to handle any pet. After 10 minutes of out-of-control behavior, we were furious at the adults for allowing the kids to run rampant through the adoption lobby and less than happy with the kids. We were to the point of asking them to leave when I decided to instead take each child individually by the hand and one by one take them on a five-minute private tour. We sat on the floor of the kitten room and with our "quiet voice" invited kittens to crawl into our laps to be petted. Turns out these children had never touched a cat or dog and were just overwhelmed at the mere presence of them. I gave each the homework assignment of practicing the quiet voice and gentle touch on a stuffed toy at home and invited Mom to come back when she thought they were ready to accept the notion of gentleness and respect for their future adopted pet. The family did come back three months later, eager to show off the positive results of their newly practiced skills, and left with a 6-month-old kitten.

—Kathy Gumph, Adoption Counselor
Humane Society Naples
Naples, Florida

I find that the best way to keep my cool during times when I'm dealing with someone that is really aggravating me is to use "reframing." This involves mentally viewing the situation from a different perspective so that it can be seen in a healthier, more positive light (and thus be easier to deal with). A good example is animal turn-ins. It's pretty aggravating to have someone surrendering a perfectly good animal just because they don't want to deal with it anymore. But I don't get angry with them. (By the way, no matter how much you try to hide anger, it always comes through ... this just makes them defensive and angry back at you.) Instead, I try to reframe the situation by seeing this as an opportunity to rescue this animal from these regrettably ignorant owners and find it a home with someone who can truly meet its needs.

—Steve Kinne, Dog Adoption Counselor
Wanderers' Rest
Canastota, New York

Dogs and cats come in all the time in terrible shape. My first reaction was to get angry. I took a step back and realized my bottom line is I'm here for the animals, not the people. When I was handed a small dog that had what looked like months of dried feces stuck to his back and legs and [he was] crying in pain, I safely and slowly cleaned him up and told the owner very calmly that if he did not want the dog anymore or did not have the time for him that I would love to have him. Two days later the owner brought the dog to me. He now lives with owners that absolutely love him. All's well that ends well.

—Nancy Lancaster, Groomer/Owner
The Rainbow Co.
Smithville, Texas

I work in customer service at a pet adoption facility. Potential adopters are required to complete an application form, followed by a consultation. One day I was confronted by a family who was interested in adopting kittens that were not available. I explained that the animals become available only when they have seen a veterinarian to get spayed/neutered, [undergo a] general health checkup, and [have] their temperament evaluated by the kennel staff. I also explained to the potential adopter that we require a consultation, and the application would need to be approved. I also informed her of the adoption fee. The potential adopter became very obnoxious about the process involved in adopting an animal from our facility. She expected to walk in the facility and come out with the animals of her choice in a short period of time without completing an application, [having a] consultation, or paying the adoption fee. I calmly reiterated our policy and adoption process and what is included in the adoption fee. She was too preoccupied spilling words of contention without giving me an opportunity to speak. I felt myself losing my temper, and before I reached the point of getting enraged by her contentious attitude, I excused myself and walked back to the kennel to speak to a front office staff and have her take over for me. I knew that if I continued to be in the potential adopter's presence, I would reach my "boiling point," and the outcome will definitely be ugly.

—Helen Karganilla,
Customer Service Manager
Sequoia Humane Society
Eureka, California

Honestly, we had a man bring in his dog because "it loved him too much." After the relinquishment paperwork was completed, the animal behaviorist and I were shocked when he asked if we had any dogs he could look at for adoption. Instead of getting angry and scolding him, we very nicely told him yes, but they would all love him just as much (if not more), as they had been abandoned and probably needed more love.

—Tanya Morris, Front Desk Supervisor
Roanoke Valley SPCA
Roanoke, Virginia

Animal control presented us with a gentle, pregnant pit bull one afternoon. Placing her in a kennel with food and blankets, we left, returning the next morning to find a tired new mother of eight. Days passed; no one claimed her. A rescue group spoke up for "Madonna" and her family, just as a cocky guy swaggered in with his girlfriend, long past the stray-hold date, demanding his dog. Our receptionist politely handled his machismo, smiling, nodding, and directing him to the sheriff's department next door. Waiting, the girlfriend admitted she was jealous of the dog, gave it away while the boyfriend was gone, and asked if they could keep one puppy. Our director never flinched, but smiled and said they were all on their way to rescue. Returning from the sheriff's department, the once-owner signed Madonna over to the shelter and left with the girlfriend. We all agreed—luckily, he chose the wrong girl.

—Maggie Tatum, Vice President
Elk Country Animal Shelter
Atlanta, Michigan

I get many calls from people planning on breeding one of their pets, but also wanting to adopt one of my rescues. So how do I manage to stay calm and polite when dealing with that? I stop, take a deep breath, and focus on the fact that they are still uneducated about the situation in its entirety. I wrap my hands around my coffee cup (because that keeps my hands busy and always makes me feel a bit better) and I try to remember that this person will tell others about their experience, so I want it to be a good one. I need people to love this rescue and what we do, so everything I say and do must be done politely and kindly, never rudely. Even if I do not adopt a dog to them, I still need them to have a good experience with our organization.

—Melissa Dory, Founder
Wyoming Rat Terriers Rescue
Lusk, Wyoming

Animal Sheltering congratulates Helen Karganilla of Sequoia Humane Society, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Sequoia Humane Society will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. "Bone" appetit!

**Next question:
Has there been a point when you decided to stop working in the animal sheltering and rescue field?
Why? What brought you back?**

Please submit your responses (150 words or less) at animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering/HSUS*, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20037. Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*. If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a free coffee break (valued at \$50) for your organization. Responses may be edited for length or clarity; no donation or purchase is necessary to win. See animalsheltering.org for contest rules, or send an e-mail or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.



The Soft Touch

Molding “hard” dogs into “soft” dogs may be easier than you think—and it also saves lives

BY MELISSA BAHLEDA



Peering from the kennel she's occupied for weeks, Lizzy, a black-and-tan adolescent Doberman mix, watches and waits anxiously for the next human to walk through the door.

Lucky for her, that human turns out to be one of the shelter's best volunteers, which means Lizzy might get to go for a walk today. She doesn't always: He's one of the few people willing to walk Lizzy, simply because she is so difficult to handle.

After watching other lucky dogs pass by her kennel—each headed out for a walk—Lizzy finally gets what she wants. The volunteer pauses at her kennel. Lizzy is so excited she's ready to burst!

The volunteer gives Lizzy a hesitant look, then reaches down and unlatches the kennel door, saying, "OK, Lizzy, let's do this."

Once he's slipped into the kennel, the volunteer knows what he's in for. He turns his back to Lizzy, who is so happy to have human contact that she leaps for joy, unintentionally scratching his back. He quietly ignores the pain, and after a few minutes of wrestling with Lizzy, is finally successful in clipping the leash to her collar. He gently lifts the latch to the kennel door, and before he has a chance to open it, Lizzy's pushing it open. She's off and running, hauling him down the aisle, out the door, and across the shelter grounds.

The volunteer tries to slow her down. He braces himself, wrapping the leash around his hand several times to ensure

there is no escape on his watch. Lizzy assumes the pause in activity is a request for affection, so she turns to fling herself once again at her beloved volunteer, this time scratching his arm and knocking him back a few steps. Thrilled by the attention and freedom, she bolts off again, pulling even harder than before.

Observing these events through the window of the director's office, one of the shelter staff takes notice of Lizzy's behavior. The shelter has had an influx of new dogs this week, many of whom are social and calm and will be ready to move to the adoption floor later today.

This shelter staffer is faced with her least favorite task: She is making a list, a list that reflects extremely difficult decisions about who will need to be euthanized to make room for the newcomers. She looks out the window again and hesitates, watching the dog's exuberance. Then the reality of the new dogs hits her again. She turns back to her list and writes the name "Lizzy."

Identifying Difficult Dogs

Lizzy qualifies as a difficult, or "hard," dog. Every shelter usually has a few; some have more than a few. These dogs come from varied backgrounds and breeds, but most have suffered from neglect and a lack of proper or adequate socialization with humans and other dogs. Many were chained, tied, or kenneled inappropriately. Nearly all suffer from lack of adequate exercise, stimulation, and energy release.

A hard dog is not necessarily an aggressive dog. Hard, non-aggressive dogs are likely to display out-of-control be-



One way to teach "hard dogs" self-control is to train them to eat properly with other dogs. In the foreground, Meg, a brindle terrier mix fostered by dog trainer and behavior counselor Melissa Bahleda, learns to eat with Bahleda's other dogs.

havior, will be difficult to handle and assess, but will show no signs of dominance aggression, resource guarding, or other types of aggression during their assessments. These dogs may put teeth on skin during play sessions or assessment, but this should not be confused with biting if there is no overt attempt to cause injury or threaten (as there is in cases of dominance aggression). Teeth-to-skin contact, as well as "accidental" scratching, is more often than not the result of the dogs' inability to control themselves and display what most humans and other dogs consider to be "normal" or appropriate behavior.

When introduced to other dogs, hard dogs often appear desperate to interact, and will approach other dogs in an out-of-control, rushed fashion that the other dog may find threatening. So while neither dog may be truly aggressive, the hard dog's inability to control himself—along with his nervous energy—may result in a fight. That's why it's important to carefully supervise any interaction these dogs have with other dogs, at least until their behavior can be modified.

Sadly, the outcome for many of these dogs is often euthanasia. Many, especially the large dogs, tend to be deemed "unadoptable" simply because they are so difficult to handle and because of the potential for accidental injury resulting from their out-of-control behavior.

Many limited-intake shelters and rescue groups hesitate to take these dogs for the same reasons. Volunteers, shelter

staff, and foster-care providers who are willing to work with hard dogs often end up scratched, bruised, and frustrated, and give up on their canine pupils after little progress has been made. Misunderstanding, impatience, and anger can take a toll on these already frustrated canines, and inappropriate or inconsistent attempts to modify their behavior can make a bad situation even worse for these dogs and those who work around them.

Better Options for Hard Dogs

Are there other options for these dogs? Yes, there are! And there is even better news: Modifying the behavior of these dogs may not be as difficult or as long-term a process as many people believe. The application of a few easy-to-apply behavior modification techniques can yield dramatic changes in just a few days—truly a miracle for a dog who, without them, might end up being euthanized.

Anyone—a shelter worker, rescue volunteer, or foster-care provider—who decides to work with difficult dogs should have dog-handling experience and a basic understanding of canine behavior. The safety of all humans involved with the dog must come first. For this reason, I recommend only working with dogs who have been thoroughly assessed and found to be completely non-aggressive. If a dog begins to show any type of aggression during the behavior modification process, the assistance of a professional trainer or behaviorist should be sought, and other options

considered before attempting to move forward. If the dog begins to show aggression at any point, it's likely an indication of more serious underlying issues.

Begin at the Beginning

One of the first and most essential components of modifying almost any inappropriate behavior is proper exercise.

Unless you have a team of fit volunteers who happen to be training for a marathon, it is unlikely you will be able to provide these dogs with enough walks to supply them with the amount of exercise they'll need to become mentally and physically calm. In the beginning, hard dogs may need long stretches of exercise to make up for weeks or months of inadequate energy release and to combat the symptoms of cage anxiety.

For this reason, I highly recommend a daily, or even twice-daily, supervised, controlled romp or game of fetch in a fenced area, followed by a controlled walk.

These supervised play sessions should last a minimum of 20-25 minutes (shorter durations in hot weather) and can involve Frisbees, balls, or other exercise-inducing toys. (My favorite is the Chuckit! line, which can be used to toss a tennis ball long distances without the need for slobbery ball handling.)

It is not important that the dog actually fetch the object—although this time can also be used to teach appropriate play drive and even fetching. What is important is that the dog use this time as an opportunity to appropriately release pent-up energy and get the exercise he needs, and have the opportunity to move forward unfettered, which is an inherent and necessary behavior for all dogs. You can use a variety of toys and other tools to stimulate the dog to move during this supervised romp. If the dog is friendly and non-aggressive with other dogs, find another non-aggressive, high-energy dog and allow them to romp together (supervised, of course). You can even play a game of tag with the dog yourself, as long as this does not overstimulate the dog and lead to wild leaps at your face or tackling maneuvers.

If the dog becomes overstimulated at any time, leash him and walk him around quietly until he calms. The leash can also be used to keep the dog from jumping and flailing at you. At every point in this process, it is best to encourage him to keep "all four on the floor."

Once the dog appears to be tiring (and happy!) from his unfettered romp, you now have an opportunity to teach him how to walk on leash and move forward with humans instead of pulling and working against them. Now that he has had the opportunity to release stored energy, his mind will be in a better state to focus on commands and comply with your wishes. *As you leash him, be sure you are in a calm, confident state; otherwise you are likely to confuse or overstimulate the dog.*

Quietly slip the leash over the dog's head, show him one of the tasty treats you have in your pocket, say "Let's go!"

in a high, happy voice, and begin walking. If he begins to pull right away, immediately stop and wait, or turn in order to regain the dog's attention using the treats, then begin walking again.

The trick is to help the dog begin to understand that a walk is a walk and not a drag session. Reward the dog with treats and praise when he stops with you and walks without pulling. Stop and wait for the dog to halt whenever he begins to pull, and then continue moving forward, halting whenever he pulls. The act of moving forward is a reward in itself, and most dogs will quickly catch on and learn to work for this reward by "checking in" with you and moving back to your side, which is where you want him to be. (For more information on teaching the controlled walk, as well as the other three basic commands featured in this article, please go to animalsheltering.org/partners_lessons.)

Teaching Life Skills

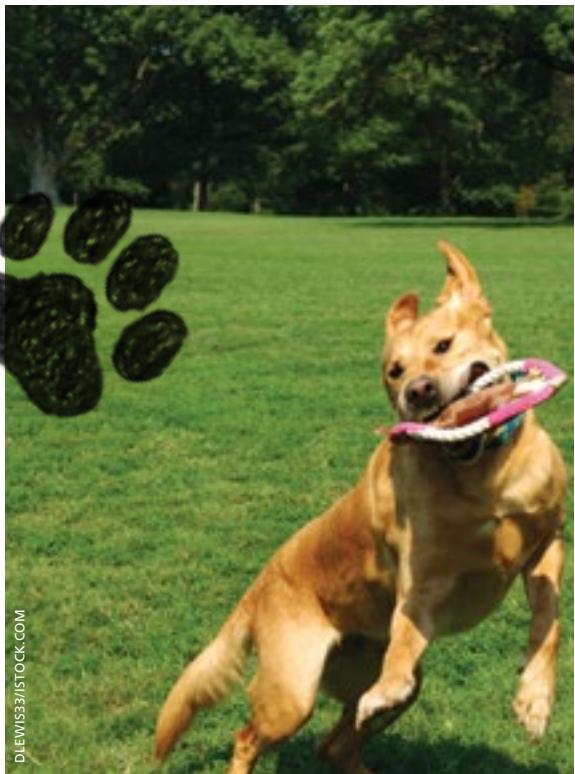
Once you have begun to get control of the dog on leash, and he begins to respond to your walk commands, halts, and praise, it's time to teach him a few other basic "life skills" he will need to learn in order to realize self-control and maintain himself successfully in his adoptive home.

The first of these is "sit." While "sit" may seem like just a basic, maybe even unnecessary obedience command, it is the basis for setting up a system of compliance and self-control in any dog, especially a hard dog. After all, everyone likes a sitting dog.

Utilizing patience, a leash, and a treat held above the dog's head while giving the "sit" command will inevitably lead to the desired response. Be quick to give praise as soon as the dog's rump hits the floor. Most dogs can learn this command and begin executing it successfully and consistently in just one or two short training sessions.

Once the dog has learned to sit on command, you have an appropriate, calm behavior you can begin to use to replace jumping, lunging, and other forms of inappropriate behavior. Once the dog understands that he'll get no reward—treats, praise, physical affection, or interaction—for inappropriate behavior, but get everything his heart desires when he sits, he will quickly learn to replace previously unacceptable behaviors with the "sit." You now have a dog beginning to understand the concept of self-control! Learning to sit also begins to establish an understanding of the causality in the command-compliance-reward system. When this happens, teaching other basic obedience commands becomes much easier. Once the dog is sitting on command—meaning that he complies the first time the command is given—it's the perfect time to begin teaching other commands, especially "off" and "come."

Learning "off"—directing a dog away from or off of an object—is key to self-control for all dogs, and will be much appreciated by everyone who comes in contact with them. It also greatly increases adoptability. Teaching "come" yields



“Hard dogs” often have so much pent-up energy that you likely won’t be able to give them enough walks to make them physically and mentally calm. But regular supervised play sessions, featuring activities such as romping and fetching, can help these dogs get the exercise they need.

respect and bonding, and greatly reduces the chance of escape, thereby also reducing the risk of injury or death resulting from escape. *Working toward consistent recall while the dog is on leash is essential.* Expecting any dog, especially a hard dog, to consistently come when called when off-leash is unrealistic if he has not had the opportunity to learn that “come” means “come to me each and every time you’re called” without the distraction of ultimate freedom. Moving to long-line work or a safe, fenced area once the dog is complying consistently on leash is also an important step in teaching consistent informal recall.

Easy Does It

Along with appropriate exercise and basic obedience, calming exercises are also an essential component of molding a hard dog into a soft dog. And don’t let the term “exercise” frighten you; these are even easier to execute than the basic obedience lessons. Mastering these two basic techniques will enable you to come to the aid of every anxious, confused, or difficult-to-handle dog that passes through your facility.

The first and most basic of the calming techniques is “easy.” Simply hold the dog’s collar in a firm and confident, yet gentle and calm manner, and say “easy” in a quiet, relaxed, calm voice. Draw the word out, using your voice to

provide the calming effect: “EEeeeeaaassssssyyyyyy.” Whether you are sitting, crouched, or standing, you will want to remain still and refrain from touching the dog or saying anything other than “easy”—though you can say “good” as the dog begins to calm. Don’t converse with anyone else during this process, as your voice and movement may stimulate the dog. Simply focus on calming the dog. Otherwise, your efforts will be only minimally successful.

Once you have had some time to practice this technique and have begun to master the transfer of calm, confident energy to your canine companions, you will simply be amazed at the wonderful effect that spending just a few short moments executing this exercise will have on most dogs.

For dogs who don’t respond well to the “easy” command, a more extreme method of calming may be required. I like to use an exercise called “settle,” although this technique can be more difficult to master, especially if the person attempting the exercise has not had extensive handling experience or is not in a calm, relaxed state.

It can also be dangerous if the dog’s behavior and temperament have not been properly assessed, as this is also the technique used by many shelters and trainers to test for dominance and other types of aggression. But if the dog has been found by a professional evaluator to be completely non-aggressive, and if you have built a good rapport and relationship with the dog during your obedience and walking sessions, this exercise will be the icing on the cake in your modification process.

Get yourself into the same calm and confident state of mind as recommended for the “easy” command, and begin by sitting or crouching next to the dog, who should be on leash. Entice the dog into a down position, either by using a treat or by gently sliding the dog into a down position using your hands. (If you have taught the dog “down” during your obedience session, this will make the process even simpler.) Once the dog is lying prone on the floor, gently slide the dog over on his side while quietly saying “settle,” in a calm, quiet voice.

Once he is on his side, let your hand rest on his side near his heart, while keeping your other hand on the leash. Do not keep the leash taut, and do not press on the dog, but rather rest your hand on him in an assuring, comforting way while also encouraging him to remain still.

If the dog begins to panic or struggle, do not battle with him; simply start over and continue until you can get the dog to remain quietly on his side for several seconds. Once you have achieved this, give a release command—“OK!”—and then remove your hand and allow the dog to stand. Reward him for his compliance.

As you continue to practice this exercise, extend the period of time you expect him to remain on his side. The longer he remains in this position in a relaxed state, the more his breathing and heart rate will slow, leading to true, physiological relaxation. Once your hard dog achieves this level of relaxation, he will be well on his way to the transformation

you have worked so hard to achieve, and you will now—or very soon, with a little more work—find yourself in the presence of a well-mannered, easy-to-handle, highly adoptable soft dog.

Other Considerations

Providing socialization opportunities for your hard dog during the “softening” process will also be helpful. These sessions should be supervised, and the dog should only be allowed contact with other non-aggressive dogs who are not “bullies” (overly dominant), overly submissive, or “rough players.” The key is to teach proper play methods and allow for energy release without overstimulating the dog.

Do not hesitate to leash your dog and even remove him from the play area if he begins to play too roughly, or if he fails to heed your calls and commands. This will help him learn that you expect him to behave appropriately and respond to you even when he is distracted and having fun.

A final note on calming elements: Many shelters, due to budget limitations and a desire to minimize animals’ stress, do not sterilize a pet until he or she has been chosen for adoption. But if you’re working with a hard dog who is un-neutered, any success you have will be minimalized by the dog’s innate desire to reproduce. Whenever possible, dogs should be spayed or neutered prior to any attempt to modify behavior.

Ensuring Long-term Success

Finally, the day has come! You have put in the time and effort, and it’s paid off. Your sweet, adoptable dog, previously considered unadoptable and too difficult to handle, is now responsive, respectful, and no longer “accidentally dangerous.” He is ready for his new home, and his chance of success there is now very high.

There are some basic preparations you can make to help ensure his success. Let potential adopters know about his previous issues, and what you have done to reform them. Share the lesson plans (online at animalsheltering.org/partners_canines), and show the prospective adopters how to perform these commands—this will not only help make the transfer a smooth one, it will showcase your dog’s new talents. Tell them about his exercise and nutritional needs, his toy preferences, and give them information about crating and house-training methods. Over the years, I have successfully adopted out hundreds of foster dogs—many of them “hard dogs turned soft”—into wonderful, devoted, lifelong homes. I have found that being willing to share information and being available if and when issues arise are instrumental to successful adoptions, and even more importantly, to retention. After all, I likely know more about their new pet than anyone else!

This process has helped scores of dogs like Lizzy. Three days before she was scheduled to be euthanized, I picked her up from my local shelter. And she was indeed wide-eyed, frenzied, and out of control. After only three days of

exercise, controlled walks, a few basic obedience lessons, and some calming time, I could see the diamond in the rough: She was incredibly smart, loving, and highly adoptable, but the experience of being kenneled for more than two months with inadequate exercise and few opportunities for energy release or appropriate stimulation had simply left her suffering intensely from kennel frenzy.

After two weeks, Lizzy was completely housetrained, crate-trained, and performed all of the obedience lessons she had been taught like a pro, even off leash! Most importantly, she was sweet, respectful, and affectionate, a true companion. I hung fliers and spread the word, and when the call came, I knew she was ready.

Today, Lizzy’s family boasts of her good behavior to their friends. She is helping one of her humans as he recovers from cancer treatment, and for another she serves as a source of companionship, exercise, and entertainment. They consider her to be a priceless member of their family. It would have been a shame if she hadn’t found her way into their lives. **AS**



Melissa Bahleda is the owner and president of PARTNERS! Canines (partnerscanines.org), which aims to help shelter dogs through behavior training. She has been rescuing, training, and working with shelter dogs for more than 20 years. In 2001, Melissa received her certification in canine training and behavior counseling from the Animal Behavior Center of New York, allowing her to combine her master's degree in education with her love for dogs. In 2006, she was recognized as one of *Glamour Magazine's* and Toyota's Women of the Year for her work in animal welfare and rescue.



Scam in a Can?

The history of an elaborate con should serve as a warning to animal welfare groups

BY JANET WINIKOFF

**"Please help me and my suffering friends,"
read the sign taped to a donation canister
in a Vero Beach, Fla., convenience store.**

Complete with photos of pitiful-looking animals, the canister solicited donations to a group calling itself National Animal Medical Care and Birth Control Inc. (NAMCBC). A few blocks away, a gas station had an NAMCBC coin bank with a sign pleading, "You hold the key to my freedom," while the NAMCBC canister in a nearby Chinese takeout reminded customers that "Even man's best friend needs a friend."

In 2007, it was hard to walk into a South or Central Florida pizza parlor, tanning salon, discount store, dry cleaner, flower shop, or gas station without seeing an NAMCBC canister right next to the cash register.

A photocopied flier was attached to most of the canisters, listing the charity's numerous concerns: pet overpopulation, spay/neuter, teaching children not to approach strange dogs, and helping pet owners cope with financial hardship. "We are a new non-profit organization and our goal is to have all dogs and cats spayed and neutered," read the first page of the flier. The flip side addressed a separate topic. Headlined "Children at Risk: Dog Bite Warning," the text briefly discussed dog bite prevention and then jumped back to discussing spay/neuter and animal neglect. The text was paired with a photo of three puppies.

To a hurried, sympathetic customer fumbling with the change from a purchase of coffee or a paper, the NAMCBC canisters gave the appearance of legitimacy.

Yet anyone calling the listed phone number received a perplexing explanation of how the organization actually helped companion animals. Some callers seeking help with veterinary bills were told they could pay the doctor up front and then mail the receipts to NAMCBC for reimbursement, but that the amount reimbursed would depend upon how much money NAMCBC generated from its donation

canisters. Other callers were told they could send their veterinarian's estimate to the group and would be reimbursed whatever amount the organization could afford.

Who was behind NAMCBC? Local shelters and animal welfare groups were mystified.

"To this day I've never met anyone who said they were either staff members or volunteers with that organization," says Joan Carlson-Radabaugh, who in 2007 was the executive director of the Humane Society of Vero Beach and Indian River County. Carlson-Radabaugh had become suspicious about the group after hearing from colleagues in New Jersey about a slew of animal charity scams.

Less than two years after the canisters appeared, NAMCBC's phone was disconnected, the website was abruptly taken down, the organization's office was vacant—and the canisters and money were gone.

Tracking the Cans

Florida business records list Linda Lowe, Daniel Sutton, and Susan Meyer as NAMCBC officers, but the organization is also connected to a couple with a lengthy criminal past, Russell and Margaret Frontera.

Shopkeepers throughout Florida identified Russell Frontera from photos as the main person who dropped off and picked up NAMCBC's donation canisters. Many gave similar accounts of his pitch. "The man just came in to my store and asked if he could leave [the donation canister] on the counter," says Vero Beach businesswoman Mary McDevitt. When McDevitt, a shelter volunteer, probed the man for information, he bristled. "He told me that if I didn't want the canister, he'd just take it and leave," she says.

Reporter Adam Neal pushed for information about the group, but was never able to get a face-to-face interview with any representative. A woman identifying herself as Linda Lowe answered Neal's questions over the phone. She said she was president of the NAMCBC and that her



only connection to Russell Frontera was that her mother and Frontera's wife were friends. She acknowledged that Frontera lived in her residence, but denied that he had any connection with NAMCBC.

It's commonplace for animal advocates to network with one another, but everyone affiliated with NAMCBC was off the radar where local animal welfare groups were concerned.

"No one at our shelter had ever heard from them, and attempts to talk to them weren't fruitful," says Frank Andrews, executive director of the Humane Society of St. Lucie County in Fort Pierce, Fla.

Eighty-five miles away in Sebring, Fla., former Humane Society of Highlands County board president Barbara Shrewsbury also saw red flags.

"We didn't know anything about [NAMCBC] until we started seeing the canisters around town," she remembers. "They would never answer the phone, and would only call back after I'd left a message." Shrewsbury got a call back from a volunteer calling himself "Danny," who became terse when she asked how his charity helped animals and how its finances were structured. "When I asked him for his financial statement he said [the NAMCBC] was 'too new.'"

Shrewsbury says she contacted several of the doctors listed as participating veterinarians on NAMCBC's website. None claimed any affiliation with NAMCBC. When Shrewsbury confronted "Danny" about this during a phone conversation, she says he told her that it was their right to put whatever they wanted on their site.

In early 2008, Neal's front-page story in the *Indian River Press Journal* and several other Scripps papers across Florida revealed that the cans looked exactly like those from two animal charities shut down by the state of New Jersey—one of which was started by Russell Frontera's sister, Josephine Thornton. NAMCBC changed the look of the canisters after the news broke, but after two follow-up stories, the canisters were all but gone, picked up by NAMCBC representatives.

In May of 2008, Russell Frontera—the man Lowe had claimed had no affiliation with NAMCBC—was arrested in Brevard County, Fla., for possession of a weapon by a convicted felon after police spotted him in a car ripping open NAMCBC donation canisters with a knife. The arresting officer, Sgt. David Baker, says that Frontera had materials in the car to put together new coin banks.

The weapons charge was dropped, but seeing Frontera in action was a sobering experience for Baker. "It makes me personally angry when good people give money and it's not

used to help," he says. "Now I tell people to never, never put money in those coin banks."

A History of Deceit

Florida hadn't been the Fronteras' first stop. Russell Frontera's criminal history includes a 1979 conviction for weapon possession, and 1982 convictions for assault after threatening to kill a teenager and a disorderly person's offense resulting from a charge of sexual abuse. A former gas station owner, he was also convicted of using stolen credit cards to defraud Exxon and 14 filling stations of \$7,500, charging more for gas than advertised, and selling stolen and altered auto inspection stickers.

In 1991, the Fronteras branched out into canister philanthropy, scattering 4,500 donation cans throughout New Jersey for an "AIDS Research Foundation." In 1993, according to the *Bergen Record*, a New Jersey superior court judge shut down the organization when the attorney general's office accused it of distributing less than 3 percent of the \$270,000 it had collected. The state also dissolved another charity Russell Frontera was running, the "National Foundation for Abused Children, Inc."

Frontera signed a consent agreement with the state prohibiting him from doing any charity work for five years and requiring that he register with authorities should he resume a career in fundraising.

"His operation shows how virtually anyone can create a charity and collect money for a popular cause, tapping donors who want to help but don't know which groups perform valuable services and which don't," wrote *Bergen Record* reporter Susan Edelman.

One year later, authorities caught the Fronteras depositing canisters for their "Puppy and Kitty Rescue" throughout New Jersey. Although the small print on the canisters stated that the group was a for-profit operation, the couple was ordered to remove the donation boxes and account for all the cash.

Deputy attorney general Deborah A. Young called the operation "a blatant attempt to circumvent" the judge's orders. "The chameleon may have changed color," she told the *Bergen Record*, "but this has not changed the fact that cash is being solicited from benevolent members of the public who have been misled into believing they are helping support a good cause."

A Family Affair

In 2002 Frontera began serving a seven-year prison term in New Jersey for wrongful credit practice, or loan-sharking.



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Margaret Frontera was also convicted and but received probation. Released after three years, Russell Frontera hooked up with the Lovers of Animals Organization (LOAO). The now-defunct Tom's River, N.J., nonprofit was headed by a woman identified as Russell Frontera's sister, Josephine Thornton. LOAO used both donation canisters and phone solicitations as sources of revenue. The organization operated out of Thornton's home and used a local UPS Store as its mailing address. (Kevin Dean, listed as LOAO's vice president, was later listed as the owner of NAMCBC's Web domain name.)

In 2006, LOAO was shut down for multiple violations of New Jersey's Charitable Registration and Investigation Act and state charity regulations. Judge Peter Doyne authorized the state to immediately impound LOAO's canisters. A 2006 *Bergen Record* article reported on the civil suit, in which the state alleged that "(Russell) Frontera and son Dominic have been the primary individuals responsible for the collection of the LOAO's canisters." Frontera denied involvement and commented that his sister's accountant had mistakenly put his name on the group's official documents.

Within a year of LOAO's closure in New Jersey, NAMCBC canisters began popping up across Florida, printed with sad photos and catchphrases identical to those used by LOAO. Some of the Florida canisters even had the old initials still scribbled on the bottom.

When reporter Neal asked NAMCBC president Linda Lowe about the graphics, she told him she had designed them herself from hundreds of photos received from pet owners. Asked why her graphics were identical to those Frontera had used in New Jersey, she said, "I'd have to get back to you on that."

With donation canisters distributed in at least eight Florida counties, Lowe claimed that the organization had helped 60 pet owners. The Form 990 the group filed for 2007 lists revenue of \$3,896 and expenses of \$3,690, much of which, according to the form, went toward spaying and neutering.

Yet only one Floridian has come forward to acknowledge receiving financial assistance from NAMCBC.

As stories about the group began breaking, local shopkeepers were angry and felt duped. "Lots of people in our area refused to give the canisters back [to the NAMCBC representatives who came to collect them]," Shrewsbury recalls, adding that some people turned NAMCBC canisters over to her shelter.

Andrews, of the Humane Society of St. Lucie County, said many storekeepers felt bad that his shelter, which takes

in 10,000 animals annually, may have been cheated out of much-needed funding. "We got several calls from store owners asking if our shelter could put out canisters, to make [up for it]," he says.

Community Rapport is Key

It's not clear exactly how much money came in through the NAMCBC canisters, but at least 20 established animal shelters and rescue groups across Florida may have been impacted by the canister appeals.

The case should serve as a potent reminder to legitimate shelters and rescues to be aware of possible scams happening in their own communities. In the wake of the scandal, many wonder why so many stores displayed the canisters and why so many donors gave to an unfamiliar charity with no track record in their community.

"Tragic photos can catch people off guard, and they wind up giving from the heart and not from the head," says Sandra Miniutti, vice president of marketing for Charity Navigator, a nonprofit that evaluates the functionality and efficacy of charities. Even savvy people can be taken in: Two Florida detectives initially assigned to look into NAMCBC sheepishly revealed that they, too, had previously dropped money into the canisters, never once considering that it might be a con.

Your community's residents should know how your shelter appeals for funds. If you solicit by mail, conduct online fundraising, or distribute donation canisters, make sure the donation point can clearly be linked to your organization.

In New Jersey, Humane Society of Bergen County executive director Kathy Johnson remembers how local residents confused LOAO with her shelter. "There were a bunch of [the canisters] in our town. People started calling and saying 'When are you going to pick up your canisters?' We told them that they weren't ours, but people kept insisting they belonged to our shelter."

For their part, donors shouldn't assume that documents listing an address and phone number—or even 501(c)3 nonprofit status—mean that a group is living up to its promises. LOAO and NAMCBC both had all of these. "Do your homework," Miniutti advises. "Do some research before giving and find out exactly how an organization is using their money and what they are doing to make a difference," she says.

Even after LOAO was shut down, Johnson recalls that shopkeepers were in disbelief. "They kept pointing to the canisters and saying, 'But look ... they [LOAO] have an address!'"

While some may argue that organizations like the NAMCBC can't impact other groups, 500 canisters raising just \$5 a month could earn \$60,000 annually. The 1,500 canisters maintained by LOAO might have produced thousands of dollars. According to Shrewsbury, naïve donors make these scams worthwhile. "Don't just give to anyone who has a can out or hangs a sign. If they can't provide paperwork and you don't know what services they are providing, don't give."

Outraged at how LOAO had conducted itself in his home state, former New Jersey Assemblyman Neil Cohen stressed that legislation is the key.

"Phony charities will keep cropping up until we pass legislation outlawing the abuses associated with these charity-change charlatans," he said in a press release, adding "only then will we be able to donate our loose change to a cause without having to worry about whether or not we've just been robbed."

Don't let it happen to you. "Develop a close rapport with your community so that you can open conversations with them," advises Joan Carlson-Radabaugh. "Let people know about the good work your shelter does and encourage them to ask questions. If they know your organization is upfront, they'll expect the same of other groups." 

Author's note: This story is deeply personal. As someone devoted to animal protection, I was concerned that none of my colleagues within a 100-mile radius had ever heard of National Animal Medical Care and Birth Control, Inc. As a result, I began to dig, uncovering layer after layer of questionable practices—and got a threatening voicemail after simply asking questions about the organization. I turned my discoveries over to both local authorities and the media. If you suspect that an organization in your area is acting deceptively, it may be up to you to do the same kind of legwork.

A special "thank you" to reporter Adam Neal for taking on this story and following through, and to Joan Carlson-Radabaugh for telling me about the New Jersey animal charity under investigation for canister scams. It was this small but vital piece of information that helped me put the pieces together.

This should be a cautionary tale to animal shelters and their communities. After all, the next city hit could be yours.

Janet Winikoff is the director of education for the Humane Society of Vero Beach and Indian River County, and has worked in the field of animal protection for 17 years. She shares her home with husband Mike, cat Tony, and dog Nala.

To hear audio interviews conducted by reporter Adam Neal with a woman identifying herself as NAMCBC president Linda Lowe, go to tcpalm.com/news/2008/may/21/port-st-lucie-man-linked-charity-type-scams-arrest.

Knowing is Half the Battle

Whether you're a large animal control agency or small shelter, it's important that you educate the public about common scams that can hurt your community—and possibly your shelter's good reputation. These are just a few that have popped up over the years; there are many other variations.

- **The "Free to Good Home" Scam** — Hustlers posing as caring pet owners answer "free to good home" ads, but turn around and sell the animals to research.
- **The Good Name Charity Scam** — Con artists create organization names that sound similar to those of legitimate national or local groups. They may add the phrases "humane society" or "SPCA" to bamboozle the public.
- **The Injured Pet Scam** — Someone calls a worried pet owner to say that he has found her missing pet, but the pet is injured and needs emergency care. The caller says that as soon as he is reimbursed, he will provide the name of the animal hospital where the pet is located. Upon payment, the owner is usually directed to a veterinary hospital that has never seen the animal.
- **The Trucker Scam** — A con artist claims he's found a missing pet while passing through your community and asks that money be wired before he will transport the animal back.
- **The Placement Scam** — Hustlers answer ads placed by pet owners trying to find a home for a pet they can no longer care for. Claiming to be a no-kill shelter, they offer to take in animals for a fee, and assure them a good home. Victims of this scam lose their money, and the pet is often abandoned or sold for research. These scams were prevalent in California during the early nineties.
- **The Nigerian Puppy Scam** — Scam artists send out Internet ads or place local newspaper classifieds, advertising either purebred animals for sale, or mixed-breed animals who must be adopted immediately but require advance shipping or adoption fees. People send their money, but the animal never arrives.



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Helping Cats Find Their Happy Place

Towering trees, designer digs—and more modest efforts, too—showcase kitties and please people

BY JIM BAKER



A fish-eye view of the "Cataquarium" playroom at the San Diego SPCA and Humane Society. The aquarium-themed room gives cats plenty of things to do, and provides an atmosphere where potential adopters want to linger.

Towering over visitors' heads, the tree has become quite an attraction, visible even from the road, turning the heads of drivers who pass the Angels for Animals shelter in Canfield, Ohio.

"We've had all kinds of questions about it. People [who see it] have asked me if we have primates," says Diane Less, who co-founded Angels for Animals in 1990.

It's a reasonable question: The large room that holds the tree is the key attraction in the shelter's 13,500-square-foot, \$3.5 million Lariccia Animal Center. At 24 feet tall, the tree is constructed of steel pipes, plywood, and artificial grass, and wrapped

with durable, black plastic netting that makes the trunk and branches climbable. The branches terminate in big, green pads that are perfect for high-altitude lounging. And at first glance, the room does bear some resemblance to those that zoos set up to house monkeys.

But the tree is orangutan- and chimp-free. Instead, it serves as the centerpiece of the main cat colony space at the shelter—and on any given day, it's the high-altitude hangout for between 30 and 40 cats waiting for homes.

The space offers plenty of room for its feline inhabitants, places to go when they

desire some "alone time," prime spots to sunbathe, and volunteers to interact with.

"They just love it; they have a great time in there," Less says. "They climb all over it. But most of the cats that we put in there run down when we walk in the room. They're very friendly animals."

Because the cats dig their space, they're happier and more outgoing. And because the tree provides such an unusual visual to the shelter's adoption space, people are drawn there to meet them.

Called the Tree of Marie—in honor of Marie Stilling, a supporter who, on her death in 2002, made a \$100,000 bequest designated



GEORGE BEAVER/ANGELS FOR ANIMALS

Visitors to Angels for Animals in Canfield, Ohio, are typically awestruck upon seeing the "Tree of Marie," a 24-foot-tall climbing structure in one of the cat adoption rooms.

to create it—the structure and its room embody what should be a guiding principle for shelter adoption spaces: They should serve both the animals they house and the people who come to visit.

The tree is tall, but so far there haven't been any serious mishaps with kitties losing their footing and falling from the two-story tree. "There were a couple of lessons learned when it was first put in. The only thing we had an issue with was they learned quickly not to put any declawed cats in the room," says George Beaver, systems manager, who says that one declawed cat fell from the tree and got a minor sprain. Now felines allowed in the room have to have all their claws, to ensure they're surefooted enough to enjoy the tree safely.

Visitors to Angels for Animals, says Less, are "just blown away" by the cat tree. "It's kind of funny. We're out here in a rural

area, and the shelter's sort of become like the zoo—it's the destination out here."

Sitting Kitty

Less estimates the tree room cost about \$150,000 to create—a price tag that's likely out of reach for many budget-strained shelters. And most shelters have enough space challenges housing their animals without trying to find a room for an enormous tree!

But while the tree in Ohio is a soaring example of creative and appealing cat housing, it doesn't take tens of thousands of dollars or hundreds of extra feet to showcase cats in an environment that keeps them safe, healthy, and sane, while treating potential adopters to an enjoyable experience. There are simple ways shelters can improve cat adoption spaces, using basic design to keep adopters hanging around, and to draw their attention to the cats.



GEORGE BEAVER/ANGELS FOR ANIMALS

It might not be Cloud 9 exactly, but to cats clambering on the two-story-tall "Tree of Marie" at Angels for Animals, in Canfield, Ohio, it must seem that way. Adoptable kitties residing in the room have to have all their claws, so they can climb and descend the tree safely.

For shelters unable to make sweeping changes, small updates can create a more effective and pleasant environment. Improve the lighting by changing bulbs; introduce more color; isolate intrusive sounds, like barking; keep litter boxes clean; don't let kennel cards hide the cats; reduce clutter; and let in fresh air and sunlight whenever possible.

Many of the fixes that serve the mental and physical needs of the four-legged residents simultaneously appeal to the senses of the two-legged visitors—and the more comfortable and engaged a person feels in a cat adoption space, the more likely it is they'll leave your shelter with a new, furry family member.

"That's always been my point with everything I teach: You don't have to do everything, but you can do something. And that something—that positive change that may be only one thing—can make a huge difference," says Kit Jenkins, project manager for agency enrichment at PetSmart Charities, based in Phoenix. Jenkins, who has worked in the animal welfare field for 30 years, gives

presentations and webinars about ways to improve conditions for shelter cats and boost their adoption rates.

Among Jenkins' pearls of wisdom: If you can keep your kitty room less stinky, potential adopters may linger longer, increasing their chances of meeting someone they want to get to know. If you can get visitors to perceive cats as individuals, they'll be more likely to make a personal connection with one. If you make a good first impression, visitors will stay around to take a second look.

A Room with a View

Not every shelter can make a first impression with an enormous, cat-bejeweled tree—but the Canadian Bow Valley SPCA, in Canmore, Alberta, has a slightly smaller version: a floor-to-ceiling cat tree featuring a spiral of sisal-wrapped steps leading up to two ledges that cats can go back and forth between.

The custom-made wooden structure was designed and constructed by a local home builder, and like the one in Ohio, it's the focal point of the shelter's main cat playroom. It draws plenty of appreciative comments from visitors, who can see it through big windows the moment they arrive at the shelter. The sight of the resident cats climbing the tree, observing the squirrels outside, and cuddled in blankets has proved to be an irresistible attraction.

The shelter also has five smaller cat "chalets" that house different groups of cats: one for seniors, one for kittens, even one for a cat who won't accept other feline roommates—his own private suite.

Staff members have discovered that visitors want to linger in the playroom and the chalets, where big windows provide natural light and there are seats for humans, too. "A whole family can go into a room and spend as much time as they like in there," says Sonya White, adoption center manager. "... Quite often, families will come regularly, like once a week. They'll just grab a key, go into a room, and we won't see them for an hour."

As a result of the time they spend socializing with the cats, people get to know them as individuals—and the cats get to know many different people. "We encourage that; it's good for the cats. It helps them become more adoptable, because they're used to being handled by people, so they're not as



JOSEPH POTT/BOW VALLEY SPCA

Volunteer Lucy Taylor watches a cat descend a custom-made, floor-to-ceiling climbing structure in the big playroom of Bow Valley SPCA in Canmore, Alberta. Cats at the shelter enjoy spaces that are clean, bright, and stimulating—qualities that appeal to potential adopters, too.

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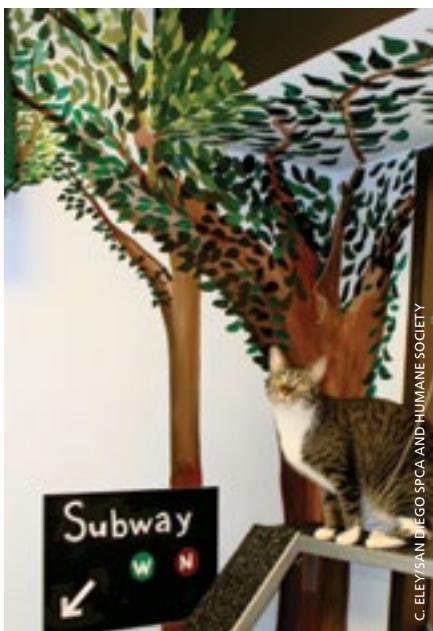
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SARAH JANELLE MARSHALL/DOROTHY H. O'CONNOR PET ADOPTION CENTER

These cats in the cat playroom of the Dorothy H. O'Connor Pet Adoption Center in Victoria, Texas, display an uncanny sense of symmetry as they lounge on colorful, wooden forms mounted on the room's walls.



C. ELEY/SAN DIEGO SPCA AND HUMANE SOCIETY

Each of the 17 separate cat adoption spaces at the San Diego SPCA and Humane Society has a different theme. The "Central Park West" room, pictured here, is meant to evoke the sights of New York City, complete with the trees of Central Park and the subway. Is this kitty headed uptown or downtown?

frightened when a potential adopter comes in a room," White says. "They're not running to hide; they're coming to the door, or climbing in their laps, and that really attracts people, if they're looking for a cat, and the cat is actually jumping on them."

Part of what makes people stick around is the smell—or the lack of it, says Jenn Rowley, the shelter's board president. The windows open, and the air system regularly pumps fresh air into each room.

"I think that people are more likely to go into a room where it doesn't smell like cat," Rowley says. "Our staff is really good at keeping our rooms clean, keeping the male cat smell to a minimum, keeping the litter pans with the litter inside them instead of kicked around the floor. I think people are more willing to sit on our floor here than I've ever seen at another adoption facility."

Bow Valley SPCA is a small shelter; there's not much room to spare. The solution, when it came to giving cats space, was to go *up*—thus, the cat tree in the main playroom, and the various levels and ledges that abound in the chalets.

"I think vertical space is really important. I'm just looking at our rooms right now, and I'm thinking that if we didn't have any of those ladders or the cat-scratch post or any of our ledges, everyone would be confined to the floor. And I think that is going to end up with them needing to have more hiding places, territorial issues, stress issues, and basically the potential for fights," Rowley says.

Mindful of the need to present cats as individuals, Bow Valley also strives to mix together cats of different colors, patterns, ages, and personalities. "I've heard at other adoption facilities that it's really hard to adopt out black or black-and-white cats, so you don't want to have a room of that solid color. You don't want to have a black cat room and an orange tabby room," Rowley says.

Open-Air Accommodations

Is it possible for shelters to do *too* good a job when they update their cat spaces?

Ask the staff at Dorothy H. O'Connor Pet Adoption Center, in Victoria, Texas. Visitors watching the cats in the shelter's playroom regularly make comments like, "I don't know if I want to adopt, because they're having

more fun here," according to Sarah Janelle Marshall, assistant director.

The playroom's become a sensation in cyberspace, too; virtual visitors can observe the goings on via a cat webcam that provides a live feed of their activity. The shelter has even had adoptions result from people who've watched the "cat cam" and fallen in love with a particular star.

The shelter made the latest updates about a year ago, paying for them with funds raised at a garage sale. Marshall came up with a design for wooden shapes—boxes, ledges, stairs, cubbyholes, etc.—that could be built and mounted against the back wall, giving the cats a kind of hanging playground to climb on, hide in, and perch upon. A local man was hired to create the forms, which he coated with a durable, pet-safe paint that could stand up to being sprayed and wiped down for sanitation purposes. The forms are bright and colorful, painted red, yellow, black, and green.

Cats are in the playroom from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and then are returned to their individual kennels for the evening. New cats quickly adjust to the routine. In the morning, they seem eager to be taken into the playroom, Marshall says, and by late afternoon, they're waiting at the door for staff to return them to their individual kennels.

Fresh air and sunlight are often said to be the best disinfectants—and the best de-stinkifiers. The cat playroom here provides plenty of both. The front wall, which faces into the lobby, is glass; the rear wall supports the vertical jungle gym; and the two side walls are sturdily screened in, but open to the elements. Ceiling fans keep the air circulating. Should it get too hot, staff can simply take the cats back to their kennels—but executive director Sally Kuecker says that rarely happens.

Kuecker credits the playroom with reducing stress among the cats, as well as giving them an environment in which their personalities can bloom. The wooden boxes, ledges, cubbyholes, and steps give cats the ability to get away from each other—especially from those annoying kittens—when they're feeling stressed, or just need some time alone.

"Before, they didn't have that opportunity. We had cat trees and things like that,

and we still didn't get the results that we do now," Kuecker says. "You can see they're a lot more contented."

Divine Design

Both cats and people are contented with the spaces at the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA. In 2007, with help from 40 professionals from the local chapter of the American Society of Interior Decorators (ASID), the shelter went beyond simple shapes for cats to climb in and perch on. ASID worked on "Dog Digs and Cat Cribs" as part of its community service program.

Designers were challenged to create unique, "home-like" spaces that would offer a positive atmosphere for adoption. They gathered donated materials and furnishings to complete their themed rooms. The results of their work are cat habitats (and doggie apartments) that not only provide safe, enriching environments for pets, but continue to amaze visitors.

The rooms amounted to about \$250,000 in donated work and materials, but were created at virtually no expense to the shelter, according to Renee Harris, senior vice president for animal services. The designers gutted existing space at the shelter, remaking it into 12 cat condos, four larger rooms called cat habitats, and then the biggest space, the "Cataquarium." Each condo and habitat has a different theme, with murals on the walls and furnishings to complete the look. For instance, the "Aristocats" room is painted and furnished to suggest a quaint French village, while "Central Park West" evokes the sights of New York City (including a painted banner ad for the Broadway musical *Cats*).

The home-like settings model the idea that pets are part of the family and should live indoors with their people; the tranquil settings, coupled with places to perch and things to do, encourage the personalities of the cats to emerge. The environments are much less stressful than traditional cages—and that means healthier, happier cats.

And of course, visitors love them. "It's really amazing," Harris says. "On any given day, if there's somebody in a room, you can walk into that cat area and hear them say, 'Wow, this is great,' 'This is cool,' 'Look at that one, watch that one,'" Harris says. In addition, the décor of the cat rooms has held up over time. Occasionally staff will have to remove

a piece of furniture that gets worn out, but that's about it.

Harris suggests that shelters contemplating an upgrade to their cat spaces should figure out specific goals, such as making the cats as presentable as possible, or reducing their stress (and thus disease outbreaks, too). It's important to keep in mind, she says, that whatever you design has to be easily sanitized and maintained, with furnishings that can be replaced at a reasonable cost. The idea is to create a space where people can fall in love with cats—with all the coolness, curiosity, and playfulness that makes them who they are—and want to take them home. **ES**

Resources

- Go to the resource library at animalsheltering.org to access "Feline Good" (*Animal Sheltering*, May-June 2009) and "All Together Now: Group Housing for Cats," (*Animal Sheltering*, Mar-Apr 2003).
- Many of the ideas discussed in this story are covered in Kit Jenkins' webinar, "Improving Your Cat Space for Adopters and Felines." This webinar can be accessed at petsmartcharitiesblog.org/. Click on the "Animal Care" link, then the specific webinar. You will need to provide some simple registration information before you can access the recording, but it's free.
- For a closer look at the cat spaces described in this story, visit:
 - San Diego Humane Society and SPCA; sdhumane.org
 - Bow Valley SPCA; bowvalleyspca.org
 - Dorothy H. O'Connor Pet Adoption Center; docpac.net
 - Angels for Animals; angelsforanimals.org

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Minds of Their Own

Exploring the emotional and moral lives of animals

Humans have long tried to imagine what other species think and how they may feel, projecting our own perspectives and emotions onto the animal experience. The sight of a hawk spiraling effortlessly on an updraft or horses cantering side by side in a field is enough to inspire wonder about the inner lives of other creatures. And to people who observe their pets' activities and moods, the existence of cat and dog emotions—in the form of joy, grief, even jealousy—seems beyond question.

What seems blatantly apparent to many animal lovers, however, is challenged by some scientists as nothing more than sentimental anthropomorphism. Portrayal of animals as lesser beings without thought or emotion dates at least as far back as the days of Aristotle, who believed that animals existed solely for the benefit of humans and were incapable of feeling beyond mere sensation and appetite.

But ethologists engaged in the study of animal behavior are drawing from a growing

body of evidence to build a case to the contrary. On the forefront of the burgeoning field are renowned scientists Jonathan Balcombe and Marc Bekoff.

After years of researching the emotions of animals, Bekoff began exploring the concepts of morality and justice in their societies, basing his work on animals' adherence to their own sets of rules and the application of punishment in their play. Balcombe studies pleasure in animals—a concept rarely considered within the scientific community—and what it means for our treatment of them.

Now teaching a course on animal minds and behavior for Humane Society University (humanesocietyuniversity.org), the two authors have new books out this year. Bekoff's lat-



Jonathan Balcombe

est, *The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding Our Compassion Footprint*, was published in January; Balcombe's new book, *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals*, is out this spring.

In the interviews excerpted here, Bekoff and Balcombe spoke with writer Ruthanne Johnson about their work and its implications for our relationships with animals.



Marc Bekoff with Bessie

What are the origins of your connection to animals?

Bekoff: I was always asking my parents about what animals were thinking and feeling. When I was about 3 years old, I yelled at a man for yelling at his dog, and he chased my father. I don't really know where it came from, but I was raised in a very compassionate home with a really compassionate mother.

Balcombe: If there is an animal gene, I was born with it. At the age of 3, I remember petting a kangaroo [at a sanctuary]. That was a meaningful experience for me.

So you weren't the kind of kid who would pull the wings off flies?

Balcombe: No, I was the kid who pulled the arms off of people who pulled the wings off flies! I can remember being deeply disturbed with kids stepping on crickets or caterpillars,

[q&a]

and coming to the defense of the animal. I guess it's empathy for another being caught up in the struggle of life, like we are.

How did educators and others react to the path you chose?

Bekoff: A lot of people thought I was nuts to swim against the tide. They would say that play behavior is a waste of time to study [and that] you don't want to start talking about animal protection. But the thing that vindicated me is that I have done good science. And I was never in their face, and I think that comes back to my belief in compassion. I didn't yell at them; I just said, basically, "You do what you want to do, and I will do what I want to do, and time will tell if I made a good choice." And it did.

What were some of the first scientific studies of animals you were involved in?

Bekoff: Coyotes were the first animals I began to seriously study. Watching them in the field and seeing how smart and emotional they are—and how attached to one another—made me realize how important it was to access their world in order to observe authentic behavior and to see how adaptable they are.

Balcombe: When I went to grad school, I gravitated to bats because they are not popular and they are largely misunderstood. The first really strong evidence of something we call reciprocal altruism—where individuals actually keep track of what friends do for them and then they give back to their friends—comes from studies of vampire bats. It showed that individuals will share blood with others, regurgitating it to others who are perhaps ill or to a mother giving birth who cannot leave the roost to forage that night. So they work together as a group and help each other through tough times, and these are values that humans hold really high.

Have you ever had any "eureka" moments while studying animal behavior?

Balcombe: Six years ago, when I was bird watching at a nature center in Assateague, Va., I watched two crows fly over and land on a decrepit billboard, and their interaction was clearly pleasurable: One of them was soliciting a neck rub from the other repeatedly and giving the [other] one a neck rub. They



World Views

A study at England's Newcastle University demonstrated that starlings, and by extension probably many other animals, "have ambient emotional states," says Balcombe. A barren cage elicited a different response than a stimulating environment where starlings can fly freely and interact with each other; the ones living in the impoverished environment were unwilling to take chances to find food. In his new book, *Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals*, Balcombe writes that negative response mirrors that of people with depression or anxiety. "It reminds me that animals don't just live in the moment," he says. "They also have emotional tenor and they have states of being."



Empathy

A hormone-crazed male elephant knocked over a female elephant with an injured leg. A third elephant rushed to her aid, touching her trunk to the sore leg as if to kiss the pain away. In another case, an elephant matriarch set free a group of captive antelopes, using her trunk to undo the latches on the gate of their enclosure. These stories recounted in *The Animal Manifesto* demonstrate what Bekoff refers to as "wild justice," or animals showing empathy and compassion through unselfish acts. "When a being is in need," he writes, "animals will go out of their way to help them, to keep them from harm, or to teach them how to successfully solve a problem."



Sensory Pleasure

After a night of feeding on land in Kenya, hippos filmed by wildlife cinematographers Mark Deeble and Victoria Stone returned to a freshwater spring outfitted with an underwater camera system. "When the hippos get in the water, fishes from various parts of the spring come over as if on cue and the hippos spread their legs, splay their toes, and open their mouth," says Balcombe, reciting one of his favorite examples of animal pleasure. "The fishes nibble away at various parts of their bodies—their teeth, between their toes and their back, even cleaning their cuts and wounds. It's akin to a spa service, and there is every indication that the hippos really enjoy it, often drifting off to sleep."



Loss

A dog's anguish at the end of an enduring friendship was the subject of a tale related to Bekoff following a lecture on animal emotions in Palermo, Italy. As Bekoff shares in *The Animal Manifesto*, a biologist recounted how his dog followed a cart carrying the body of a mule who'd been his companion for 12 years. "When the mule was buried, the dog slowly walked over to the grave of his friend and wailed," Bekoff writes. Unwilling to ascribe motives to the dog's behavior, the biologist told Bekoff he'd always hesitated to share the story. "But after hearing stories of animals ranging from turtles to magpies to elephants who displayed grief, he was now certain his dog had also grieved the loss of his longtime friend."

looked like best buddies or maybe a mated pair. That made me think about animal pleasure, which none of my biology teachers addressed, because science has essentially neglected that huge subject. And so I am grateful to those crows because they lit a little light bulb over my head, and life has never been the same.

Why choose animal pleasure as a topic of study?

Balcombe: We need to recognize the richness of animal lives—that it isn't just about avoiding pain but also about seeking pleasure. And that has huge moral implications: that life has intrinsic value if you can feel pleasure. Pleasure is pretty distinctive in animals, and there is quite a lot of really great research out there: rigorous studies with repeated, carefully designed data sets and analyses. For example, rats exhibit laughter and mirth when given neck rubs or being tickled, and a horse's heart rate goes down significantly when it is brushed in certain places where he may be groomed naturally by another horse.

Why choose animal morals as a topic of study?

Bekoff: It became clear to me that when animals play, there are rules of the game and there is a moral to it and an ethical mood. When they violate the moral code, they pay for it. If animals are moral, it ups the ante in the sense of who they are. Not only are they smart, adaptable, and emotional, but they know right from wrong, and that sends a strong message for their cognitive emotional skills.

Why are some scientists averse to exploring the possibility of animal morality and emotional experience?

Balcombe: It's threatening to us because it requires us to revisit the whole paradigm of our relationship with animals. If animals are moral and have virtue and a sense of ethics, then how can we continue to treat them the way we do, to keep them in cages and slaughter them by the billions?

Why are people so drawn to stories about animals, especially those that pose the possibilities of rich emotional lives?

Bekoff: Because people are feeling an incredible distance from nature and animals. They get busy and their lives are fractured. I have always said that we have old brains and new bottlenecks: We have Paleolithic brains, and we are living in new times, and new times are ripping us away from nature. And people miss it, and the rubber band is expanding, if you will, such that it's going to snap pretty soon.

Balcombe: We are all animals, and we know what it's like to be an animal. We experience it in every living, breathing moment. I see a squirrel outside running along the fence, and I'm just captivated. I know that squirrel isn't just alive—she has a life and she has experiences and emotions.

What do you hope your students will take away from your HSU course?

Bekoff: A better appreciation for animals, not what they are but who they are, and an appreciation for their cognitive, emotional, and moral lives. I also hope this creates an army of animal protection advocates. 



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Canine Influenza Virus: Fact or Fiction?

An expert breaks down what you need to know

BY MIRANDA SPINDEL, D.V.M., M.S.

The H1N1 virus has been making headlines for nearly a year, yet there is still much confusion about the reality of the situation. Reports that use words like "outbreak" and "emerging disease" often incite fear and leave us gripped by overly active imaginations. Picturing imminent world collapse, we forget to take the time to study available information, separate fact from fiction, and follow a reasonable course of action.

In the veterinary and sheltering worlds, there are parallels in the reaction to the spread of canine influenza virus (CIV), which was first identified and made headlines in 2004.

Recently, CIV has been back in the spotlight following conditional licensure and release of the first canine influenza vaccine. Many questions—*How effective is the vaccine? Should we test our animals? How concerned should we be?*—have been circulating in the animal sheltering community. It seems an ideal time for those of us concerned about the health and welfare of dogs to refresh ourselves with available information, determine a reasonable action plan related to canine influenza virus, and separate fact from fiction.

Fact: When dealing with "kennel cough" in a shelter dog or a whole population of dogs, CIV is one of many possible causes to consider. Canine infectious respiratory disease complex, or "kennel cough," is a common syndrome—especially in shelter dogs. Most humane facilities that house populations of dogs manage cases of infectious cough on a daily basis. The primary agents associated with the kennel cough syndrome include bacterial and viral pathogens, such as *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, Mycoplasma species, canine distemper virus, canine parainfluenza virus, and canine adenovirus-2. Each of these agents can cause similar clinical signs, including sudden onset of fever, loss of appetite, cough, and nasal discharge.



DAVID PAUL MORRIS

There is no way to prevent canine influenza virus so far, but it's possible for shelters to limit the consequences of widespread disease and contribute to an improved understanding of how the virus transmits, persists, and can be prevented.

In early 2004, an influenza A virus was recovered from the lung tissue of a racing greyhound who had succumbed to severe respiratory disease in Florida. Analysis of the viral genome revealed that the isolate was closely related to an equine H3N8 influenza virus. Since 2004, thousands of CIV cases and confirmed outbreaks have been reported in more than 25 states and the District of Columbia, according to Cornell University's Animal Health Diagnostic Center webpage (diaglab.vet.cornell.edu/issues/civ-stat.asp).

The total number of CIV cases that have occurred is not known. However, a recent one-year study, conducted by real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing at

Colorado State University, found dogs shedding the CIV virus in 11 out of 16 shelters (69 percent) that were experiencing outbreaks of canine respiratory disease.

CIV is clearly an important new differential diagnosis for any dog with acute respiratory disease.

Fiction: Canine influenza is really only a problem in animal shelters. Dogs of any age, breed, and health status are susceptible to canine influenza if they have not had previous exposure to the virus. Like influenza viruses that affect other species, CIV is easily transmitted in cough and sneeze droplets and can be transmitted through fomites (hands, clothing, and other objects that

[shelter medicine]



MIRANDA SPINDEL/ASPCA

Laboratory diagnosis is required to distinguish canine influenza from other causes of acute respiratory disease. Here, a veterinarian acquires a nasal swab from a dog to submit for polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing.



MIRANDA SPINDEL/ASPCA

This photo was taken in a shelter where a high rate of canine infectious respiratory disease was affecting the dog population. Nearly every dog had been placed on antimicrobials, which is not a recommended practice.

can be contaminated with disease agents and act to spread the disease).

That said, the risk of infection is lowest for pet dogs who have little exposure to other dogs or dog facilities, and greatest for dogs who are housed in group environments or have frequent contact with other dogs, such as through boarding kennels, day cares, dog parks, veterinary hospitals, and shelters.

CIV does not spontaneously erupt in facilities; initial cases have to enter from community sources to start the cycle of infection, reflecting a community problem.

The virus does not survive long in the environment (it can remain viable on surfaces for 48 hours, on clothing for 24 hours, and on hands for 12 hours) and is easily killed with routine cleaning and disinfection, but many facilities do struggle to break the cycle of transmission once the virus is introduced. There is still much that remains to be studied about how this virus circulates, persists, and evolves in the dog population—both in owned and in homeless animals.

Fiction: Dogs with CIV frequently die rapidly, with signs of hemorrhagic pneumonia.

Initial reports indicated that canine influenza virus caused significant mortality in affected dogs. But it now appears that the disease behaves like influenza infections in many other species. Most dogs will recover without serious complications.

Following infection, the virus replicates quickly in dogs' respiratory tract cells. There is a two-to-five-day period during which nonspecific clinical signs (such as fever and lethargy) occur. It is during this early incubation period that peak nasal viral shedding occurs. Around days five to seven, more visible clinical signs of cough and nasal discharge develop. Typically, viral shedding wanes by days seven to 10, but that can vary in individual dogs.

It is important to note that by the time obvious clinical signs develop, the period when animals are most infectious often has already passed. In many facilities where animals are isolated only after clinical signs are noticed, infection control becomes a significant challenge because viral shedding and transmission to other dogs has already occurred. The majority of affected dogs (80-90 percent) will show mild to no clinical signs, while a smaller percentage of dogs (10-20 percent) may develop more severe illness characterized by high fever, lethargy, rapid breathing, and secondary bacterial bronchopneumonia.

In uncomplicated cases, the respiratory tract may begin to heal in as little as three to five days following infection. In other cases, cell damage may predispose animals to acquiring secondary bacterial infections, and

recovery may take several weeks. Rarely, severe to fatal disease may occur. Thus CIV is a disease that causes a high morbidity (many affected), but a relatively low mortality (death rate) when appropriately diagnosed and managed.

Fiction: Outbreaks of CIV are easily recognized in a facility or population of dogs.

Much focus has been placed on outbreak recognition and management. When CIV first enters a group of susceptible dogs, a presumptive diagnosis may be made based on the rapid spread of an acute respiratory disease accompanied by fever that is unrelated to vaccine history and associated with a prolonged or complete lack of response to therapies that are generally effective for other causes of canine infectious respiratory disease.

Laboratory diagnosis is still required to differentiate CIV from other causes of acute respiratory disease, but the rapid spread can be suggestive. However, when CIV enters facilities where kennel cough is already occurring, it may not be immediately recognized as anything "new," but instead may appear to be a gradual worsening of the existing problem. In these situations, failure to perform rapid and appropriate diagnostic testing—and to offer timely treatment specifically designed to treat the disease—can lead to decline in the welfare and health of the entire population. Therefore, in a population of dogs showing an increase in the number of acute respiratory disease cases, overall severity of illness, or a prolonged to complete lack of response to usually effective therapies, CIV should be a consideration, and diagnostics should be pursued.

Fiction: CIV can be diagnosed based on clinical signs alone.

Laboratory diagnosis is required to distinguish canine influenza from other causes of acute respiratory disease. There are multiple diagnostic methods available for testing; each has strengths and weaknesses.

"Too often, facilities test only one or two dogs using only one test method, and the diagnosis is missed," says Gabriele Landolt, a virologist who is researching canine influenza in animal shelters through a Morris Animal Foundation grant. "To identify the causative

agent accurately and rapidly, thus allowing to institute optimal control measures, it may be necessary to combine several diagnostic tests and test multiple dogs in varying stages of disease."

The timing of sample collection relative to when an animal was infected relates directly to test performance. Some tests, like PCR analysis and other methods aimed at detecting the virus, are designed to work during the first few days following infection, when dogs are shedding infectious virus but showing few clinical signs. These tests are preferred for an early clinical infection.

Other tests, like serology (blood tests), measure exposure to the virus through antibody levels, which do not develop until at least seven days following infection (or potentially, following vaccination). A comparison of serum samples taken two weeks apart is recommended to document recent exposure through a fourfold increase in the levels of antibodies.

In a population of dogs, the odds of capturing a positive sample increase by collecting samples from multiple animals (five to 10

dogs are recommended) who have entered the facility at various times and are exhibiting different clinical signs. For more information on testing methods, read the chapter on canine influenza in the newly available textbook, *Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters*.

Fiction: Doxycycline is a good standard antibiotic for all dogs with CIV.

Not all dogs affected by CIV will require therapeutic intervention. When medication does become necessary, there is no single correct treatment. For many CIV cases, supportive care may be all that is required. Good nutrition, maintenance of hydration, and minimization of stress are still critical components of therapy even when medication is in use.

Dogs who show signs of secondary bacterial infections (e.g. mucoid nasal discharge, productive cough, or pneumonia) should be treated with broad-spectrum antibiotics. Ideally, antibiotics should be chosen on the basis of culture and sensitivity. Until culture and sensitivity results become available,

broad-spectrum therapy is recommended to cover most of the likely secondary pathogens.

Cough suppressants are not recommended for CIV dogs experiencing productive coughs. Some practitioners report anecdotal response to a single anti-inflammatory dose of glucocorticoids, but this is not documented well and not without risk.

Antiviral medications specifically aimed at influenza infections are available, but not advocated for use with CIV for several reasons. These drugs must be given very early in the infection for effect, there are no recommended dosing strategies, there are no efficacy or safety studies available in dogs, and the virus may develop resistance to these drugs. Furthermore, they are expensive medications that—especially these days—are often being conserved for use in humans.

In severe cases of secondary pneumonia, oxygen therapy, nebulization, and bronchodilator therapy may be helpful. However, such intensive therapy can be difficult to provide on a large scale, and if dogs are severely affected and intensive care is not available, euthanasia may become necessary for herd welfare reasons.



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[shelter medicine]

Fact: A facility can break the cycle of transmission.

Ultimately, widespread or uncontrolled respiratory disease can affect an entire community. When CIV is confirmed in a facility, management decisions must be made to limit its impact, but CIV is difficult to control in most populations of dogs for several reasons. The virus spreads rapidly through the dog population, in part through sneeze droplets that can be difficult to contain. While some infectious dogs may show obvious clinical signs, others are asymptomatic, yet shedding infectious agent.

Because of the ease of transmission, an entire facility—not just the animals with clinical signs—is considered exposed at the time of diagnosis. Ideally, dogs with clinical signs should be isolated away from exposed dogs, who are placed in a CIV quarantine area to watch for development of symptoms—but this is not always practical with a CIV quarantine.

In order to break the cycle of infection, the exposed dog population needs to be contained (no new dogs in and no dogs out) for the duration of viral shedding. A 14-day quarantine is recommended. Many dogs will remain symptomatic well beyond the time they are no longer shedding virus.

Shelters and other facilities can achieve a quarantine in several ways. The simplest way to end a CIV outbreak is to stop admitting any new dogs for a two-week period. However, this may not be a possibility for all facilities, and where it isn't, new dogs can be separated from exposed dogs by using a temporary offsite facility (for either population) for two weeks. In small programs, foster homes and rescue groups can be used during the period.

Finally, some shelters have successfully continued to admit new dogs by strictly separating new intakes from the exposed dogs. This may mean that the exposed dogs must be moved and/or grouped in a physical area of the building distant from where new dogs enter. Ideally, the two areas should have separate ventilation systems, but at minimum there should be physical barriers (such as closed doors) to lessen aerosol transmission.

As with any infectious disease, biosecurity measures are important. Suggestions include designating specific staff to care for the un-

exposed dogs, but if this is not possible, staff should care for the unexposed dogs first.

Measures that reduce fomite transmission should be in place, including frequent hand washing, use of personal protective equipment like disposable gloves, cover-up gowns and boots, and protocols that encourage following “all-in, all-out” procedures (meaning that a staffer should enter with all necessary supplies, perform their tasks in the area, and then exit, rather than going back and forth into the area and increasing the chances of contamination).

Though its effectiveness is controversial, the use of regularly changed footbaths or disinfectant mats outside of quarantined areas is unlikely to do harm and may serve as a reminder to staff of other necessary biosecurity measures.

Fiction: The H3N8 Vaccine is considered a core shelter vaccine.

When weighing whether the new H3N8 CIV vaccine will benefit shelters, there are a number of things to consider.

Vaccines are an important part of influenza control in all species, and the development and conditional approval of a vaccine for canine influenza is an important step toward better management of canine influenza virus. But before shelters put a new product into widespread use, they should consider information about the product, how it works, and the potential risks and benefits.

It is also important to recognize that whenever a new vaccine is conditionally released, there are often many factors yet to be researched. “Some of the currently unknown aspects of the H3N8 vaccine include the maximum duration of immunity induced by the vaccine, whether there is benefit in vaccinating around the time of exposure, and whether evolution of field strains of the canine influenza virus might make the vaccine ineffective over time,” says Melissa Kennedy, a clinical virologist at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine.

Shelters also must consider that the vaccine is an inactivated product. It is labeled to be given as two doses spread two to three weeks apart to healthy dogs 6 weeks or older. This means that it can take weeks for a dog to respond maximally to the vaccine, and so

shelters that house dogs long term may benefit more than those with short turnover times.

The only available efficacy studies by the vaccine company demonstrate that use of the product lessens clinical signs of disease and decreases—but does not eliminate—virus shedding. Influenza vaccines used in many species have similar effects; vaccinated dogs can still become infected and shed virus, but may not become as clinically affected and may not infect other dogs as readily. This vaccine has been termed a “lifestyle vaccine,” much like available vaccines for Bordetella bronchiseptica. The best use of the vaccine appears to be for preemptive vaccination of dogs at high risk of exposure to CIV.

The Last Word

Much like the present situation with H1N1, canine influenza virus—although a serious issue for shelters—is certainly not grounds for panic. The recent identification of H1N1 in a cat, and apparent transmission of H1N1 from humans to other animals, serves as a reminder that influenza viruses are notoriously unpredictable and require vigilant monitoring.

Cats do not appear to present a significant risk for viral transmission of H1N1, and the canine influenza H3N8 virus seems to transmit primarily dog-to-dog with minimal zoonotic risk, but much remains unknown about both of these viruses. Thus far, there is no way to prevent CIV, but it is possible for shelters to limit the consequences of widespread disease and contribute to an improved understanding of how the virus transmits, persists, and can be prevented through standard infection-control measures, diagnostic testing, separation of affected animals, appropriate therapy, and proactive community education. **AS**

Miranda Spindel is the director of veterinary outreach at the ASPCA and past president of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. She initiated and completed the first residency in shelter medicine offered through Colorado State University and founded the CSU student chapter of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians.

Making Babies? First, Make Baby-Ready Pets

Shelters help prepare pet-loving expectant parents

BY JAMES HETTINGER



Founding Father Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying it first: Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

This particular “father” probably wasn’t thinking about pet owners prepping for the arrival of a newborn child, but he might as well have been.

To successfully bring a child into a house with pets, it’s crucial for expectant parents to plan ahead and help their pets adjust to new routines well before the baby gets there. Otherwise, the results can be less-than-ideal or even tragic: Parents, overwhelmed by their new responsibilities or fearing for their child’s safety, might surrender their pets—or worse yet, a pet might injure or even kill an infant.

It was just such a tragic incident in Rhode Island in 2005—in which a family dog killed a

5-day-old baby—that inspired Jane Deming, then the education director for the Providence Animal Rescue League, to start a program to help new parents keep the peace between their furry “kids” and the hairless one coming home from the hospital.

Deming heard a radio report of the child’s death while she was on vacation. She thought about all the dogs and cats who get surrendered due to a new baby; when she returned to work, she found 16 such cats in her shelter. She also recalled a new mother who, in tears, had relinquished a Chesapeake Bay retriever after the dog scratched her baby’s thighs. “He was just a big, goofy, out-of-control, wonderful dog. And she was so torn, but her husband said, ‘The dog goes today.’”

Deming hatched an idea for a workshop that would show expectant parents how to prepare their pets and keep their newborns safe, with the ultimate goal of reducing bite-related injuries and fatalities as well as the number of pets relinquished on account of children. She got the support of her director and recruited her friend Katenna Jones, who was then the behaviorist for the Rhode Island SPCA.

They created a two-hour seminar—the Baby-Ready Pets program—that proved to be an immediate hit with local audiences. Deming says every class was full. “It’s the only time I ever presented programs ... where when it was over people hugged us with relief,” she says, noting that people welcomed the chance to discuss their fears related to children and pets.

[behavior department]

Deming and Jones presented seminars locally for about a year, and eventually got a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to take the program nationwide. They developed a package for others who had heard of the program (largely via the Internet) and wanted to give it a try. The packages—which included a workshop DVD, a binder of materials, and a CD of baby sounds—sold out, spreading the program to about 130 shelters in 40 states plus Canada, Deming says.

She and Jones are no longer affiliated with the Baby-Ready Pets program; they've both moved on to the American Humane Association, where Deming is the director of humane education, and Jones is a humane educator/animal behaviorist. As of early 2010, the program kit (including an instruction manual, master copies of handouts, a dog and cat training DVD, and a bite safety coloring book, as well as the DVD of workshops and the CD of baby sounds) was still available for \$45 from the ASPCA at aspcaonlinestore.com.

Shelters offering the program say it's filling a niche, providing commonsense advice not often covered in parenting classes and easing the transition as pet-loving families welcome new, human bundles of joy.

Who's Your Baby?

The transition can be a tough one for a pet who's used to being the center of attention at home.

"A lot of times we find that families have treated their animals like their babies for quite some time, and when a real, human one comes along, it can create issues with the animal and how the household is structured," says Jennifer Self-Aulgur, humane education coordinator for the Humane Society of Kent County in Grand Rapids, Mich., which has offered Baby-Ready Pets workshops for about two years.

Dogs in particular are creatures of habit, Jones explains, and the arrival of a child upsets their normal routines. New parents who previously had plenty of time for walks, car rides, and belly rubs are suddenly focused on the baby. For the pet, it's like yanking away a Band-Aid of attention and interaction, Jones says. "The dog was snuggling on the couch in the person's lap, and now the baby's there."

The change often upsets the dog—not because he's jealous or resentful of the baby,



Jennifer Self-Aulgur, right, humane education coordinator for the Humane Society of Kent County, says the Baby-Ready Pets program has helped decrease the number of pets surrendered because of the arrival of a newborn. Also pictured with two recent workshop participants are Namiko Ota-Noveskey, left, a behavior specialist at the humane society, and Self-Aulgur's dog, Hemi, who serves as a demonstration dog during the workshops.

Jones says, but simply because he doesn't understand what's happening. The puzzled dog will often resort to negative attention seeking or revert to puppy-like behavior such as chewing, soiling in the house, or marking. Such behavior is perfectly natural, Jones says, though people tend to anthropomorphize it as anger toward the baby. In reality, she explains, it's the dog's way of saying, "I don't understand what's happening. I need to get your attention in any way that I can, because I'm not getting your attention anymore."

Such inappropriate behavior can land the dog in a shelter, Jones notes, but owners can avoid that outcome by making sure the pet gets adequate attention and exercise. New parents will inevitably have to reduce the quantity of time they spend with their pets, but they can increase the quality. "So instead of hanging out and petting the dog for 45 minutes on the couch, take him for a 20-minute run," Jones suggests. "That's less direct contact, but much better contact. Instead of walking down the hall and patting him on the head every two seconds, take him out back and throw the Frisbee for an hour."

Understanding the Risks

It's important for new parents to realize just how dangerous their pets can be—even if they're small, cute, and cuddly.

"One of the biggest things we stress is that you never, ever leave your baby alone with your animal. That's just something you don't do, because it could only take a second for a dog, or even a cat, to inflict injury on a child," says Self-Aulgur.

Dogs and cats are natural predators, Deming notes. For dogs in particular, a baby—lacking normal motor and communication skills—doesn't look much like a person, so it can easily trigger an animal's prey drive. "It actually probably looks more like a wounded rabbit than it does a human being," she notes, "and it's definitely not part of the family unit."

Jones concurs: "A lot of times people think, 'Oh, my dog loves kids. He's great with kids. I don't have anything to worry about.' Well, a newborn baby is very different than a child walking across the street. Until the child is mobile, it's not considered a human by the dog."

Despite the danger, Deming and Jones say it's rare that pets can't be trained to adjust to the arrival of a new baby.

Jones recalls one family that had a cranky, 14-year-old dog who wasn't prepared to be around children, but the family did not want to give the dog up. Jones helped develop a management system for the home that included baby gates and crates in every room.

The dog got used to being crated or separated from the family by the gates. During times of separation, the family gave him frozen Kongs smeared with peanut butter, so he came to see separation as a reward rather than a punishment. "He's like, 'Hurry up and leave me alone so I can have my tasty treat,'" Jones says. She heard later that the child and dog had learned to keep a respectful distance from each other.

But that was a small dog, Jones notes. Another client had a Saint Bernard mix who was food-aggressive, stranger-aggressive, touch-sensitive, and known to resource-guard the couch and the bed. "I advised them that this dog can never be trusted. It's like having a gun in the house," Jones says. In such cases, families need to observe a variety of safety measures, such as providing constant supervision and knowing where the child and the dog are at all times. "If you're willing to put those management tools in place, you can make it work," Jones says. "But it is a lot of work. And most families are not willing to take that risk."

Baby Steps

Perhaps the most important message to impart to expectant parents with pets is simply this: Get moving before you're knee-deep in diapers. The time to train your pets and revise your household routines is months before you exit the maternity ward.

"We encourage people: Don't wait on these things until your baby's home, because you will be so overwhelmed, you will be so tired, your priorities will definitely change," says Tammy Walter, humane education coordinator for the Animal Rescue League of Southern Rhode Island, which started offering the Baby-Ready Pets program in early 2009. By the time the baby arrives, she adds, "You don't have that extra 15 minutes a day to stand there and do a little training session with your dog ... and that's why the pet ends up at the shelter."

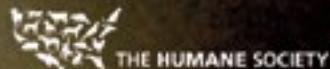
If a room slated to become a nursery will be off-limits to pets, or if the dog will no longer be allowed on the couch or will spend more time in a crate, put those practices in place months before the child arrives. Making the changes ahead of time will help prevent pets from associating the new routines with the baby, Jones explains.



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[behavior department]

New parents are bringing home a baby, and the baby will bring the noise. "It's not only that this new little human being comes into the house and disrupts everything," says Deming, "but they're noisy little buggers, too." And the crying, cooing, and gurgling can upset pets who aren't used to it.

To prevent pets from freaking out, the Baby-Ready Pets packet includes a CD of baby noises aimed at systematically desensitizing dogs, cats, birds, and other companion animals. People can play the CD at home, rewarding the pet for not reacting to it, Deming says. They gradually increase the volume and continue to say "Good dog" or "Good kitty," she explains, so that even loud noises don't prompt a reaction. When the real baby starts screaming, it's nothing the pet hasn't heard before.

Some pets might have issues with even the recorded crying. "For a dog who's experiencing that for the first time, you can't expect that they're just going to be sitting there wagging their tail," says Self-Aulgur. In such situations, she recommends playing the CD alongside soothing classical music to cushion the blow. Pet owners can gradually increase the volume of crying while decreasing the

volume of the classical music—giving the dog a little culture as he learns to not overreact to the baby sounds.

It's also helpful, immediately prior to the baby's arrival, for a family member to bring home either the blanket in which the newborn was swaddled or its second head cap, which has the baby's smells. These will help the pet get used to the baby's scent. Dogs will shove their nose into anything that smells interesting, Jones notes, and "It's better to do that with a blanket or a cap than with a newborn baby."

To further prepare pets for a baby's physical presence, Deming and Jones recommend that expectant parents get a baby doll and treat it like the real thing in the weeks before the real thing comes along—putting it in the crib, playing with it on the changing table, covering it with baby products, and even taking it for walks in a baby carriage, accompanied by the dog on a leash. If the dog gets tangled in the wheels or knocks the stroller over, the parents can make corrections to prevent mishaps with the real child.

That solution is preferable to simply never taking the dog for a walk with the stroller

again, which Jones notes could cut into the dog's exercise time and lead to behavior problems. Another undesirable outcome, Jones notes, is that the dog thinks, "Well, I hate that carriage, because whenever I go with the carriage, I get in trouble," or "Whenever you have the carriage, I don't get to go for a walk."

Walter and her animal care and behavior specialist, Megen Gifford, conduct their workshops at South County Hospital in Wakefield, R.I., from 7 to 9 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, typically attracting three or four couples. The hospital provides a small, comfortable conference room with cushioned chairs (something that's extremely important to pregnant women, Walter notes), where the instructors and participants sit around the

same table. Walter keeps the atmosphere casual, encouraging questions pertaining to the main portion of the presentation, and afterward handling queries about people's individual situations. The hospital originally offered a bigger room, but Walter finds a smaller space more conducive to sharing and learning. "To me, it's very important that people are comfortable ... because if they're not comfortable, they're not listening to you," she says.

Walter and Gifford show a PowerPoint presentation and also use a doll and a variety of baby items (such as blankets and lotions) to demonstrate the proper way to introduce a pet to a new baby. The instructors show people a selection of challenging toys for dogs and cats, which will help the pets work off some of the energy they'll have due to more limited interactions with their owners. The workshop participants go home with a folder containing worksheets on their particular type of pet, the recording of baby sounds, a list of local contacts such as trainers and pet sitters, and some suggested websites. Walter and Gifford hand out their business cards and encourage people to call if they have follow-up questions.

At the Humane Society of Kent County, the workshops follow a similar format, and Self-Aulgur says she's seen a decline in the number of pets surrendered because of new babies. "It's provided a service to our community that wasn't there before," she says of the workshops offered every other month on Saturday afternoons. "You can get books, you can read information online and things like that, but I think having the face-to-face discussion and then giving the follow-up support is really beneficial to the families we work with."

Expectant parents—likely fretting about everything from 3 a.m. feedings to the cost of a college education—can eliminate a few worries by spending a few months before the baby's arrival making sure their pets have heard a baby, smelled a baby, and learned how to act around one. "So instead of one incredibly intense, major, life-altering change, it's several small, very manageable changes," Jones says, "and it's no big deal." 



This kitty agrees: Pet-owning parents must provide constant supervision—and when necessary, intervention—for kids interacting with pets.



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Big Dogs, Little People

New show on Animal Planet aims to dispel stereotypes of pit bulls, short-statured folk

BY JIM BAKER

Animal rescue reality shows are nothing new. *Animal Cops* and *Animal Precinct* have been popular staples of Animal Planet programming for years now.

And last fall saw the addition of two new entries in this category: National Geographic Channel's *Rescue Ink*, about a bunch of heavily tattooed bikers whose mission is to protect abused animals in the New York City area (profiled in *Animal Sheltering* in Nov-Dec 2008); and *Pit Bulls and Parolees*, in which a top pit bull trainer pairs dogs from her rescue with half a dozen ex-convicts on parole, "to provide both man and man's best friend a chance at redemption," according to the show's website.

But Shorty Rossi is convinced that his animal rescue reality show—*Pit Boss*, which premiered Jan. 16 on the Discovery Channel's Animal Planet—represents a new wrinkle in the genre, offering viewers something new and different.

And just what, exactly, would that be?

"You don't every day see little people running down the street chasing a pit bull," says Rossi, the program's star.



DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS

Pit Boss follows the lives of Shorty Rossi and three of his friends/employees as they strive to counter stereotypes that society has about pit bulls—and little people like themselves.

The show follows the lives of Rossi, a little person himself, and three of his friends/employees in their jobs at Shortywood Productions, Rossi's Hollywood talent management company for little people, as well as their work rescuing, rehabbing, and training pit bulls through Shorty's Rescue.

The program might sound like a gimmick thrown together by a producer—it is reality TV, after all. But Rossi's longstanding love for animals, and his advocacy on behalf of pit bulls, is real. He's constantly fielding calls from people who ask him to take in unwanted or abused dogs, and his rescue has a foster network of homes to care for them.

Why pit bulls? "Well, they're a misunderstood breed, and so are little people misunderstood at the same time. I had my first pit bull in the 1980s, and I never left them," he says.

Rossi lives in Venice, Calif., where his company and rescue are based. He shares his home with five pit bulls, three of whom he has trained to work in entertainment. One of the pit bulls, Hercules, serves as his service dog and is his constant companion, as Rossi suffers from back problems.

There's lots of overlap between Rossi's own dogs and his talent management company. He gets them involved in many of the same gigs—films, commercials, industry/corporate events, and private parties—where his clients have been hired to work.

"We take our dogs to events. For example, when we have little people [working] as elves, we have Hercules as a reindeer," Rossi says. "When little people were dressed up as crawfish, we dressed up Hercules as a lobster." **AS**



DISCOVERY COMMUNICATIONS

Shorty Rossi, owner of a Hollywood talent management company for little people and founder of Shorty's Rescue, a group devoted to stray and homeless pit bulls, is the star of Animal Planet's *Pit Boss*, a new animal rescue reality show based in Los Angeles.



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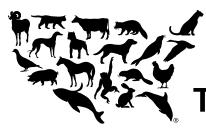
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