



American Humane Honors Animal Care and Control Organizations for Model Programs

Every day, healthy or treatable, adoptable dogs and cats are euthanized in animal shelters simply because of lack of space to house them or lack of funds to care for them. The number of animals euthanized in the United States each year is estimated to be 10 million. American Humane wants to drastically reduce the number of healthy and treatable animals that are euthanized — ultimately to zero.

American Humane's *Getting to Zero* is an unprecedented national initiative to address animal overpopulation and increase animal adoptions. By identifying and replicating best practices from dozens of animal care and control organizations across the country, we can eliminate the euthanasia of millions of healthy and treatable companion animals.

Getting Under Way

American Humane began the first phase of the *Getting to Zero* initiative in May 2006 with a call to the animal sheltering community for nominations of model programs or “best practices” that have had a demonstrated record of success. These include innovative ideas in spay and neuter programs, adoption, training, foster care, and programs that transfer animals from overcrowded facilities to others which have capacity and are located in areas with more potential adoption opportunities.

Model practices in these areas can make a big difference in the lives of animals who end up in shelters and animal control facilities. “Getting to Zero will help these effective local programs be replicated, and their successes multiplied, on a national scale,” says Marie Belew Wheatley, American Humane president and chief executive officer.

Phase 2 began in September at the National Leadership Forum that preceded American Humane's Annual Conference for animal care and control professionals, held in Schaumburg, Ill. American Humane hosted the forum to shed light on the problem of euthanasia and highlight some of the best animal welfare practices in use today.

Honoring Successful Programs

At the forum, American Humane recognized more than 40 sheltering organizations and animal rescue groups for their extraordinary efforts in helping animals. They serve as an inspiration to those concerned about animal welfare, and their programs demonstrate that significant progress can be made in lowering euthanasia rates and increasing adoptions. Awards were given to the following organizations:

Adoption

Humane Society of Boulder Valley (HSBV), Boulder, Colo.

HSBV has made potential adopters feel more valued and trusted by decreasing the length of the adoption

application and engaging them in friendly, open-ended conversations. Previously, adopters had felt that the shelter had too many rigid rules and intrusive questions. Now they feel that there are fewer roadblocks to adopting, they receive better service, and they have a better understanding of the needs of the animal they are adopting.

San Diego Humane Society and SPCA

The San Diego Humane Society and SPCA has not euthanized a healthy, adoptable animal in more than six years or an animal with a treatable condition in more than five years. Evaluated upon intake, animals receive extensive medical and behavioral assessment and treatment. The shelter staff then create the best adopter-pet matches they can, which leads to permanent loving homes for most of their animals.

Animal Behavior and Training

BAD RAP (Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pitbulls), San Francisco

BAD RAP's weekly Pit Ed classes give overwhelmed pit bull owners the tools and knowledge to succeed as responsible dog owners, which works to prevent them from surrendering their pits bulls to overcrowded shelters. The classes are also open to other shelters so their dogs can become more adoptable by gaining new manners and training, thereby overcoming the stigma placed on pit bulls.

Foster Care

Tompkins County SPCA, Ithaca, N.Y.

The Tompkins County SPCA euthanizes animals only in those rare instances when euthanasia is the most humane course, but never because space or funds are lacking. When the shelter has more animals than space, it can turn to fostering, drawing upon a bank of more than 160 foster parents, to handle the overflow. The shelter actively recruits foster parents for cats and dogs, soliciting the most dedicated and knowledgeable individuals. This practice also ensures that animals in the shelter for long periods don't go "cage crazy," but instead receive care and rich socialization in a home environment.

Spay/Neuter

Humane Alliance Spay/Neuter Clinic, Asheville, N.C.

The Humane Alliance has been making low-cost spay/neuter surgeries not only available, but also extremely convenient — even providing free door-to-door pet pickup and return to clients within a 120-mile radius. This program has resulted in a 70 percent drop in the euthanasia rate and an almost 50 percent decrease in the number of animals coming into the shelter.

Solutions to Overpopulation of Pets, Concord, N.H.

This publicly funded low-income neutering assistance program enables pet owners who are eligible for at least one of seven public assistance programs (for example, Medicaid or food stamps) to have their cats and dogs

spayed or neutered with a co-payment of \$25. The charge also covers the entire cost of rabies and distemper shots and a presurgical examination. The success of this program, which is funded in part by a \$2 surcharge on dog license fees, has caused a 75 percent drop in the number of cats and dogs euthanized at the state's animal shelters.

Pet Amigos Program, Santa Ana Police Department Animal Services, Calif.

The Pet Amigos Program was honored for spay/neuter education. In this program, Officer Reed, a 35-year police veteran and ventriloquist, teaches humane education to third- and fourth-grade classes with Short Stuff, a hound dog puppet, and Fluff, an alley cat puppet. Officer Reed's lesson about how to treat animals and how to avoid dog bites also includes an emphasis on the importance of spaying and neutering, and students are given applications to take home for free spaying or neutering of family pets.

Transfer

PetSmart Charities Rescue Waggin', Phoenix

Rescue Waggin' runs programs that transport dogs and puppies from shelters where they have little chance of finding a home to shelters in areas where there is higher demand for pets and, therefore, they are more likely to be adopted into loving families. Operating in the Midwest, California, and on the East Coast, Rescue Waggin' also increases adoptions through health check and vaccination protocols, grants to improve facilities, and initiatives to increase spay/neuter resources.

Peterson Express Transport Service (P.E.T.S.), Cookeville, Tenn.

P.E.T.S., a low-cost alternative to air travel and volunteer transports, safely transports rescued dogs to new families, keeping costs down for rescue organizations. It is estimated that, through this service, nearly 10,000 dogs have been prevented from being euthanized in the last two and a half years.

The Next Steps in Getting to Zero

Over the next couple of years, American Humane will take these and other model practices and replicate them in animal care and control facilities across the country to assess their effectiveness and build on their successes. The idea is simple — by identifying what works and learning from each other, we can end the euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals.

American Humane will continue to seek best practices that may ultimately help communities and shelters get to zero euthanasia. For more information on the *Getting to Zero* initiative or other animal care and protection issues, visit our website at www.americanhumane.org.