

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Building Excitement— and Support for the Animal Shelter

Local car dealership helps shelter through cause-related marketing

BY CARRIE ALLAN

When it comes to getting funding support, sometimes it's not who you know, but who knows you.

But who knows you can also depend on who you know—and how you let those who don't know, know.

You know?

Consider the case of the Dorchester Humane Society in Cambridge, Maryland. Last summer, employees of a local company generously used their “summer hours”—time off granted by the company at 2 p.m. each Friday—to help walk and bathe the animals at the shelter. A local paper profiled their efforts.

That story caught the eye of Brett Dean, the general sales manager at Preston Buick Pontiac GMC, a car dealership run by the Preston Automotive Group. At the time, Dean was already interested in the



shelter because he and his girlfriend were looking to adopt a dog. And when he saw another business supporting the humane society's work, he wanted his own company to get in on the action.

When Dean called the shelter, “he had several things he wanted,” says volunteer coordinator Jerilyn Kirby. “He was interested in sponsoring an ad on the website, he wanted to offer the car dealership's big tent for off-site adoption events, and he was interested in adopting a pit bull.”

Kirby was only too happy to assist him with all three desires. Dean ended up becoming a foster parent to one of the shelter's pit bulls—he later adopted the dog—and soon he and Kirby were working together to set up a monthly off-site adoption event at the car dealership, which is located near a Wal-Mart and gets a lot of foot traffic.

“Before the off-site adoptions started, our highest adoption rates were from the Web,” says Kirby, “but once we started, the off-site event started to outpace the website.”

Kirby wasn't even sure quite what to charge the company for an ongoing ad placement on the shelter's website, she says. She finally suggested that the dealership sponsor heartworm treatments for the dogs. Now, for \$200 a month, the car dealership will get ad space on the shelter's site and the pooches will get their medicine. “It makes a big dent” in the heartworm treatment bill for the year, Kirby says.

When local companies get involved with community organizations, both benefit, says Dean. “When a humane society gets away from the shelter atmosphere and gets out into the community, it starts to give them a little bit of a reputation,” he says. “And vice-versa, the business that's involved gets the reputation of a business that cares.”

Dean is happy for his company to have that reputation. His general manager—also a pet lover—thinks it's a great collaboration. Dean's girlfriend is pleased with their adopted pooch (who's become a protective surrogate mom to the miniature dachshund the couple later brought home). Shelter staff are happy with the extra resources and greater visibility.

With all this goodwill going around, the only ones getting the raw end of the deal are the heartworms. **AS**