

Coffee Break

What is your favorite service or program that your organization provides to the public? Why do you feel it's so important?

That was the question we asked you for this issue's Coffee Break. A lot of you talked about your organization's low-cost spay/neuter clinics. Some focused on educating the public, while others spoke of your programs to benefit staff and volunteers. To read more of your answers, visit animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak.



I am ecstatic about our P.A.W.S. Elementary Education program, which provides *KIND News* newspaper subscriptions to all students in the six Sherwood public elementary schools. Over 3,000 students in 123 classrooms are learning the value of treating people, animals, and the environment with kindness and respect.

—Sara Beth Dawson, President
Partners Auxiliary Working for the Sherwood Shelter
Sherwood, Arkansas

When a cat or kitten is adopted, I trim nails and offer free nail trims anytime in the future. This little gesture has created such good will that we have our "regulars," and it allows us to stay in touch with our adoptees as well as making "scratching management" easy for the adopter! It also discourages any thoughts of declawing. Knowing that they can come back to the shelter for something as small as a nail trim also encourages (and reminds) adopters that we offer yearly boosters and checkups by our staff vet, and reinforces feline health care and a relationship with our shelter.

—Pat Brayer, Board Member, Volunteer & Feline Adoption Coordinator
San Gabriel Valley Humane Society
San Gabriel, California

Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission's (MADACC) animal rescue services are performed in close association with municipal law enforcement agencies, the Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services, and health departments throughout the county. Many times, animals enter our shelter through tragedy or extenuating circumstances, such as house fires, an owner hospitalized, an owner deceased, or an owner arrested. Through our Safekeeping Program, animals are held for longer periods of time, often with waived fees, to allow the most optimal outcome for the animal and its owner. This program provides a true safe haven for needy animals in our community.

—Melanie Sobel, Executive Director
Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission
West Milwaukee, Wisconsin

We have implemented a program called Pet University four times a year. We have dog and cat classes geared toward owners who may be experiencing problem behaviors. We hope to keep pets in the home longer as a result of this program. Training demonstrations are done on shelter dogs that further them for adoption.

—Leila Warren, Board Member
Fur-Ever Friends of NC
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

My favorite program is one called Top Dog. It is a monthly educational opportunity for people in animal rescue and animal shelter workers. We have guest speakers come in to talk about a variety of things that appeal to people who work with animals. Our topics have included how to work with animal control, how to photograph your foster animals, gifted animal placement (GAP) dogs, grant writing, how to deal with urban wildlife—pretty much whatever topic there is a request for more information on. Animal control officers are able to get continuing education credits. Last Christmas, Companions for Life had a thank-you party for shelter workers and rescue groups where we had books and information available. I like that we have really concentrated on shelter outreach; it is a difficult job, and we appreciate all that the workers do.

—Darlene Payton, Board Member
Companions for Life
Garland, Texas

We provide assistance with spaying and neutering for low-income citizens. We have supported several low-cost spay/neuter/vaccination mobile clinics in our county. Additionally, every cat, kitten, dog, and puppy at our shelter is spayed or neutered before being adopted. We used to have adopters sign spay/neuter contracts, but found it difficult to keep track of those not honoring their contracts. We made it a goal to make sure we used a lot of our funding on spaying/neutering. We've reduced our litters of animals coming to the shelter significantly within the past several years; we received one litter of puppies in 2007 compared to 17 litters in 1999. Our spay/neuter efforts are slowly beginning to make a huge difference in our community.

—Angel Oppermann, Director
Otsego County Animal Control
Gaylord, Michigan

One of our neat programs is our cat enrichment program. Two of the staff members saw a need for cats that were being treated medically to get human enrichment because they were associating [human hands]

as negative (because they were being medicated). Cats that were once adoptable were becoming unadoptable. They started with a core group of 15 dedicated volunteers and taught them what to do with the cats that needed help. We then expanded that to cats who are older, shy, or have been at the shelter for more than a week. Communication and documentation is stressed. It has been so successful that they are now up to 50 members of the enrichment team, and the two staff members now go around the country speaking of the success of the program. Our staff vet has even included enrichment as a form of medical treatment because the staff has seen the results.

—Debby Williams, SPCA Veterinary
Department Manager
SPCA Serving Erie County
Tonawanda, New York

In an effort to reduce intake in the shelter and to make room in a more timely manner, we have adopted a program we call "Make it Happen." Officers in the field research the area in which a pet is picked up. They talk with neighbors, children, and postal carriers. Every effort is made to return pets to their owners [while the officer is still] in the field. The only requirement is that they have a license. A notice of violation is issued for those who don't have adequate resources for paying the fees at that time. The notice allows the pet owner to set up the payment dates and amounts. In the shelter, we do basically the same thing, making every effort to locate and reunite the pet owner and their pet. Then we work with them to enable them to take their pet home, again with a current license being required. We are making every effort to reduce the stress on animals by processing them through the shelter. Though a car ride can be stressful too, we can minimize impact by returning the animal to the owner. There are no rules to this program (except for licensing), but it offers the flexibility to all staff to "make it happen."

—Gail Mackie, Executive Director
SpokAnimal C.A.R.E.
Spokane, Washington

Animal Sheltering congratulates Darlene Payton of Garland, Texas, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Companions for Life, where she works, will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to Starbucks. "Bone" appetit!

Next question: What's the most creative, funny, or effective adoption promotion your organization has ever done?

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.