

SHOW ME THE MONEY

BY VICKI FISHER



Philly Fundraiser Hits a Home Run

The Utleys help drive animal cruelty out of the park

May 29 was a night off for the Philadelphia Phillies, but not for all-star second baseman Chase Utley and his wife, Jennifer. The Utleys were busy hosting a charity fundraiser to benefit the Pennsylvania SPCA (PSPCA).

The Utleys held an invitation-only casino night dubbed Utley All-Star Animals at the F.U.E.L. gallery in Philadelphia. The event raised \$200,000 for the Etana Fund, which supports cruelty investigations that lead to the arrest of animal abusers, says PSPCA events coordinator Nick Chapman.

“With the launch of our new 24-7 cruelty reporting hotline, we are receiving more calls than ever before, and we are adding cruelty agents across the state,” says Chapman. “This additional funding is critical in investigating these calls.” PSPCA agents, he adds, have been sworn in by the City of Philadelphia and now have the power to make arrests.

“My husband and I wanted to create an event that was entertaining, elegant, and extremely informative,” says Jennifer Utley. “We figured that a casino-themed fundraiser would be a great way to raise money and awareness at the same time.”

Along with cocktails, games, and casino-themed fun, Phillies players and guests learned about the cruelty behind dogfighting. Cashman & Associates, a public relations firm, helped Utley plan the event pro bono.

The Utleys teamed up with the PSPCA because Utley was searching for a shelter that addressed a wide range of animal issues. “I found a perfect fit at the PSPCA, and I admired the direction that they were heading,” she says. After months of volunteering, she was asked to join the organization’s board of directors and gladly accepted.



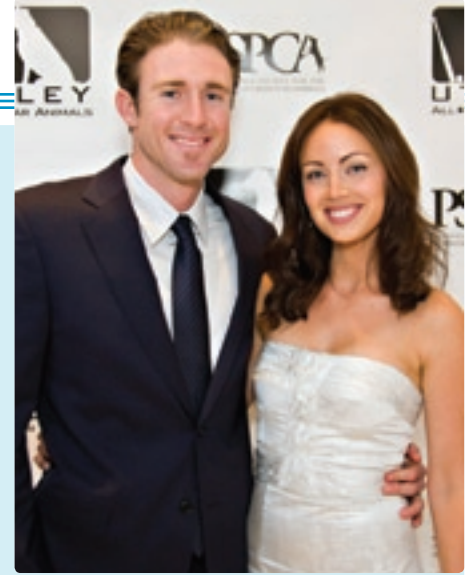
A May 29 charity event organized by Philadelphia Phillies star Chase Utley and his wife, Jennifer, raised money for the Pennsylvania SPCA’s Etana Fund, an anti-cruelty initiative named after this pit/boxer mix, who was involved in a cruelty case in 2007. PENNSYLVANIA SPCA

In planning the fundraiser, Utley says the only real challenge she and her husband faced was maintaining focus. “It is easy to plan a great ‘party,’ but you have to remember to stick to your goals and remind yourself why you are having the fundraiser,” she says. “As soon as you set your goals, you can make sure everything follows suit.

“My advice is to start early. There are always things that come up, whether it be a change of venue, a guest list alteration, finding donors, etc. Also, accept help. I am the first to admit that I like things done my way, but when you have great people around you with the same goals, they can be right sometimes, too!”

Chapman’s advice for shelters planning a similar event is to make sure the organization’s messages don’t get lost or diluted. “Focus on one cohesive message and offer multiple avenues for your guests to experience it, and they’ll walk away with a stronger connection to your organization,” he says. “I think the message should focus on one to two aspects of your organization. ... We offered an exhibit on dogfighting that educated attendees about the reality of this type of abuse and its prominence in our community.”

The Utleys also presented a video that showed the dramatic changes in



dogs rescued by the PSPCA. In the video, the attendees saw dogs who went from being emaciated, with open and infected wounds, to healthy, happy, and well-socialized companions. Everyone clapped and cheered when the “after” pictures came on the screen, Utley says. “I teared up because I felt like they got it,” she says. “They got a sense of what made Chase and I adopt this cause in the first place and try to bring as much attention to it as we can.”

The video educates the attendees on the PSPCA’s work, Chapman says, such as the number of cases agents see in a year and the number of dogs who have been rehabilitated. “Your typical event program often isn’t enough,” Chapman says. “Providing an alternative way to communicate your mission—such as a well-thought-out exhibit of your work—gives people a chance to experience your organization on their own time.”

Utley All-Star Animals will be an annual event, Utley says, and the Phillies organization held a “Save a Pet at the Park” event in June with more fundraising and adoptions for the PSPCA. “If you have a drive to change something, do it,” says Utley. “For me, it was animal cruelty. ... It wasn’t a choice for me, it was instinct. Protect the ones you love, and we happen to love animals!”