



[Pets for Life]

PETSMART
Charities®





● Program Goals and Strategic Planning

"If you only do what you know you can do, you never do very much."—Tom Krause

● Program Goals and Strategic Planning

Providing free services, specifically spay/neuter, is often the key to success in this work.



🎥 Kenny Lamberti

When you have completed your community assessment and have a team prepared to do outreach, it's time to get a solid plan down on paper. A thorough plan should include a mission, strategy, and timeline. Set realistic outreach and spay/neuter goals and plan to adjust them as you become more familiar with your areas of focus. Be sure to assess the capabilities of your team and your spay/neuter provider's capacity.

It is important that you intimately understand the spay/neuter infrastructure and availability in your community. When you are in the community meeting and talking to people, you need to know how quickly you can schedule veterinary appointments, which days volunteers or staff are available to provide transportation, and what guidelines your spay/neuter partner(s) may have on age, weight, etc. If your organization is providing the spay/neuter surgeries, it is still important to determine these details and put a plan in place for clients identified through this specific program.

One of the worst things you can do when building your reputation in the community is to make promises you cannot keep. For example, if you tell a client that you'll be somewhere at a certain time, it is imperative for you to show up at that time. Many of the communities

you'll be working in have become accustomed to outsiders letting them down, given false hope of assistance, and overlooked by the system. Your word is the most critical component to building trust and relationships— professionalism and good time management are important.

Providing free services, specifically spay/neuter, is often the key to success when doing this type of work. Obviously, it is not possible for a spay/neuter provider to maintain a sustainable budget if they are performing unlimited free surgeries. However, having free spay/neuter as an option to provide to some people and pets will help you get to harder-to-reach clients and could make your outreach work much easier and better received.

If you are doing your work in the right community of focus, you should not need proof of income, as the majority of your clients will certainly benefit from no- or low-cost services. If you are only able to provide free services (vaccinations, spay/neuter vouchers, and additional services) at your community outreach events, use these events as an opportunity to reach the greatest number of owners of unaltered pets.

A common misconception in the veterinary field is that no- or low-cost services cause mainstream veterinarians to lose clients to service providers offering major subsidies. However, it is extremely unlikely that the pets living in your target area will have seen a veterinarian, and until they are properly engaged on the issue, they will likely not invest in veterinary services, low-cost or otherwise.

In PFL program markets, 77% of the unaltered pets met in the areas of focus have never seen a veterinarian before meeting the PFL team.

When pet owners are given proper information in a respectful way, many choose to integrate wellness care when they can afford it—mainstream cost structures are well beyond what these families can manage. Day-to-day outreach and community outreach events in this model do not target those who have the means to pay traditional veterinary fees, but rather target the “systemically poor”—those who, along with their pets, have historically suffered in silence and have gone without mainstream veterinary care.

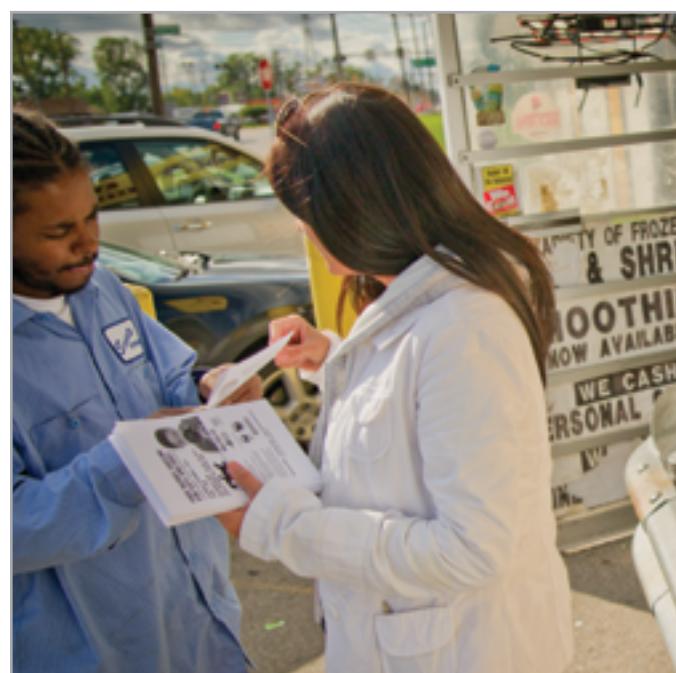
When you are ready to start offering services, having done your research, and organized your team, it is important to “create a buzz” in the community. Talk to volunteers/staff who may live in the community. Find local “hot spots” to display your materials and talk to people you meet. Barbershops, restaurants, and recreation centers are a great place to start.

Think of this time as pre-outreach. You could have lunch at a local cafe, get a haircut from a popular barber, or play soccer in the park. It can be as simple as wearing a spay/neuter t-shirt (with a non-offensive message); this will likely start conversations, and put you on the right track. You’ll inevitably run into the same people later in your work and because you connected within them in the recent past, chances are they will remember you, making it easier to engage them about your program and its services.

Depending on the partnerships and resources you have in the initial phase, you can start going door-to-door on a chosen street, or you can host a community outreach event to introduce yourself to the neighborhood. The best way to get started is to identify a “hot spot” in which to begin your community outreach: that area where there are lots of people

and pets and where you can really begin building a reputation in the community. After a month or two of creating familiarity in the community, if you are able, we suggest you hold a community outreach event where you offer something free and valuable—free rabies shots, for example. (More details on planning Community Outreach Events will be outlined in Chapter 9.)

Keep in mind that when you do hold your first community outreach event, you’ll obtain contact information from hundreds of pet owners. Plan to spend a few months following up with those ready to spay/neuter, talk with those who are not ready, and listen to the needs and interests of the community during the entire process.



➤ *Passing out flyers for a community outreach event offering free rabies vaccinations in Toledo, OH*



How to Create a Community Presence



 Lori Hensley,
Neya Warren, and
Jon Littlepage

A central component to the PFL approach is meeting people where they are, both philosophically and literally.

One of the best ways to create a strong community presence is to consistently spend significant amounts of time within the neighborhoods of focus. As mentioned, you should spend time familiarizing yourself with the community in the beginning. Continue developing these connections by frequenting the local outlets and patronizing businesses for your own needs. Buy gas at a local filling station. Have your prescriptions sent to a pharmacy within the neighborhood. Test your luck; buy a lottery ticket each week at a corner convenience store in your community of focus.

The residents will begin to notice you, and before you know it, you'll begin to hear about other activities taking place in the community—activities you can participate in, such as greening initiatives, health fairs, back-to-school events, and so on. The key is to make consistent visits and always look for opportunities to engage the people around you. In many cases, the neighborhood kids will be the first to approach you to ask who you are and why you are there. More often than not, kids will be sent to inquire by curious parents or guardians. Out of necessity, many people

in under-served communities look out for each other, so they are acutely aware of who is new to their neighborhood and communicate that information with each other. That said, be sure to make first impressions warm and sincere.

Consider using public transportation to travel to these neighborhoods, if it is available. While spending time in the neighborhood, pay attention to the way people interact, their lifestyles, and their dress. Make a point to subtly find out who is the community leader or elder; there is often at least one respected leader, and sometimes several will have influence. Getting to know who makes up the community is vital. You can serve people best when you can imagine yourself in their shoes, which gives you a better understanding of their lives. For most animal advocates, this type of work is new and will likely challenge your comfort zone. Be realistic and do not extend yourself too far beyond where you might be comfortable, especially in the beginning. You never want to appear insincere or disingenuous. Always be yourself as people respond to and appreciate authenticity.



Strategic Outreach and the Importance of Consistent Involvement



Melanie Angeloz
and Sandra DiTusa

You should have a strategy in place for optimal distribution of information. It is vitally important to have a designated outreach team and to make sure that team knows the short- and longer-term outreach plan in detail. Your outreach team does not need to be great in number; in fact, a smaller team is ideal and effective. When there are too many people doing the outreach, the community does not get to know each person very well and messaging can be confusing and conflicting. The best size for an outreach team is two to four people with each person or team having set days they are in the community. The more consistent you are, the more the community begins to expect to see you, and the easier it is to plan visits, deliver medication and supplies, schedule follow-up calls and visits, etc. For example, if one team conducts outreach on Wednesdays and Fridays and another on Saturdays, people in the community will know what days you come around and will wait to see you to ask questions about their pet or to introduce you to a friend or family member. On the days you're doing outreach, select a local restaurant or store in the community of focus where you'll meet and go over the map and plan for that day.

Morning to early afternoon is the best time of day to do outreach. Weekends are ideal because you are likely to find more people at home and in a social mood. Keep in mind that, in some areas, people may attend church on Sunday mornings.

When you have engaged and built relationships with the majority of people on one street, (what we call “lock the block”) it’s time to move on to the adjacent street. This doesn’t mean you never return to the street that has been “locked”; you go there less often or periodically check in with ambassadors on that street with a phone call. You never completely leave an area, but you do spend less time in a stabilized area and focus your time on a new street. To determine if a street or area has been “locked”, follow these simple guidelines:

- Every companion animal’s human has been engaged, meaning you have shared information and talked about what services you have to offer.
- The spay/neuter and general wellness status of every companion animal has been determined and documented.
- The majority (ideally over 70%) of all unaltered pets have been spayed/neutered.
- Your outreach team is known and trusted by the people in the area.

While continuing your outreach, be sure to map your outreach strategy and track your work. The most basic way is a paper map showing all of the streets in your area of focus. Enlarge the map, put it on the wall, and use highlighters to color code different areas. One color represents an area visited and feels stable, another color represents where you have completed some work but still need to do more, and another color represents where to go next. A digital option to use is GIS software to pinpoint and label specific houses where unaltered pets live, where you have spayed/neutered pets, where those who are on the fence live, and more. Use a free online option like Google maps. The specific method isn't as important as ensuring to plan and track your work for strategic and focused outreach.

[Sample Google Map \(Des Moines\)](#)

[Sample Paper Map \(St. Louis\)](#)

The most effective way to structure your outreach is to divide it into three categories:

- 1] Proactive door-to-door—"lock the block"
- 2] Reactive—word of mouth/voicemails
- 3] Spay/neuter follow-up

Proactive: Door-to-door outreach is how you'll begin your work and where a large majority of your outreach time should always be spent. You should consistently dedicate blocks of time solely to proactive outreach. This way, you are constantly meeting new people and pets.

Reactive: Word of mouth will start happening almost immediately so you should dedicate outreach time to people contacting you for services. Schedule blocks of time to respond to these clients. Stick to the time you schedule for this outreach or it can become overwhelming. Reactive outreach can be accomplished through phone calls, texts, and in-person visits.

Follow-up: Spay/neuter follow-up is on going and the number of surgeries you schedule will determine the amount of time needed for this part of the outreach.

You'll also find it helpful to divide your clients into three categories:

- Green—clients who have said "yes" to spay/neuter or who have altered pets
- Yellow—clients who are on the fence but getting close to saying "yes" to spay/neuter
- Red—clients who are adamantly opposed to spay/neuter

Green clients will fall under your spay/neuter follow-up outreach, while yellow and red clients should continue to be engaged. Every client is different so you'll need to determine how often to check in with them, giving space as needed, but never disengaging completely.



➤ *Passing out flyers for a community outreach event offering parvo/distemper vaccinations in Baton Rouge, LA*

Proper Outfitting

It's very important to have supplies with you when you are working in the community. Supplies help you to address issues you face and to save time so you don't have to return later with items you need. Keeping an "outreach kit" in your car at all times will help you work more effectively and efficiently. Always park your car close to the area or neighborhood where you are working so, as you meet people, you can retrieve items from your car as needed. On days you use public transportation, you can use a small pack to hold necessary supplies. At minimum, your outreach kit should include:

- Clipboard
- Data collection/information forms
- Spay/neuter vouchers and consent forms
- Pens
- Maps
- Drontal or some other form of dewormer (if it's available to you)
- Flea/tick treatment (if it's available to you)
- Antiseptic/antibacterial spray (can be purchased at any pet supply store)
- Flys-Off ointment to treat ears (can be purchased at most pet supply stores)
- Collars, harnesses, leashes, etc. (have a variety of sizes and styles to fit various situations)
- Climbing clip and plastic coated cable (in case you come across a chained dog, you can help expand his range)
- Business cards with the name and phone number for people to follow up
- Food and treats
- Toys
- Water jugs to provide hydration for dogs and cats

Identify Solid Community Ambassadors

As you spend time in your community of focus, recipients of your services and others might become intrigued and want to get involved. Invite these folks to join the team, either as an official volunteer or someone who simply shares information with family, friends, and neighbors. Be sure to share all information about your services to prevent miscommunication or misinformation from being passed along. Keep in mind that the key to success is building trust, which will not happen if expectations are not met.

Consider inviting volunteers to help perform outreach. Listen carefully as they share their insights about the community and its residents. Exchange contact information and be sure to let them know when you are going to be back in the neighborhood. Gaining support from (and being accompanied by) people who live in the community will dramatically increase your team's credibility and will also provide you with insight you may never gain on your own.



The Presence and Perceptions of Crime



Ralph Hawthorne,
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Jon Littlepage

It's all too easy to develop stereotypes and make judgments about under-served neighborhoods. You might assume that these areas are unsafe at all times if your only exposure to them is through the evening news. The truth is, crime does exist, but its prevalence is usually exaggerated and mistakenly portrayed as targeted toward innocent people. The majority of violent crime in under-served neighborhoods takes place between people who know each other and have a history.

It is likely that your area of focus may be perceived as a high-crime or unsafe area. It is important to remember that the majority of people living there are regular people just like you with a sense of community, kindness, and pride. Avoid letting your fear dissuade you from your mission—you'll find that most people are warm and receptive.

There are correlations to be found between poverty and illegal drug use. But dealers, not users, are usually the people engaged in drug-related violence, and it's important to understand that drug dealers and those working for them are the primary victims of drug-related violence. Maintain a sense of perspective on this topic and remember that illegal drug use occurs in all socioeconomic spheres, not just low-income areas, and that most residents of those areas are not involved in dealing drugs.

Not unlike the illegal drug business, gang-related violence (which could include illegal drug dealing) is often insulated—violence takes place between rival gangs, similar to family feuds. Your neutrality contributes to your safety.

As in any situation, be aware of your surroundings and use common sense in determining the best times to conduct your outreach. By developing relationships within the neighborhoods, doing outreach with a partner, and visiting during the earlier parts of the day, it's doubtful that you'll encounter any problems that directly affect your team. Keep in mind that the majority of people who live in higher crime neighborhoods would prefer to live in a safe, healthy community, and have no desire to do you harm.

It is also important to note that nearly everyone in your community of focus will have or know someone with a pet in need, making you and your team a welcomed community asset and providing you with an opportunity to find common ground.

Notes > Program Goals and Strategic Planning

