

Nathan J Winograd

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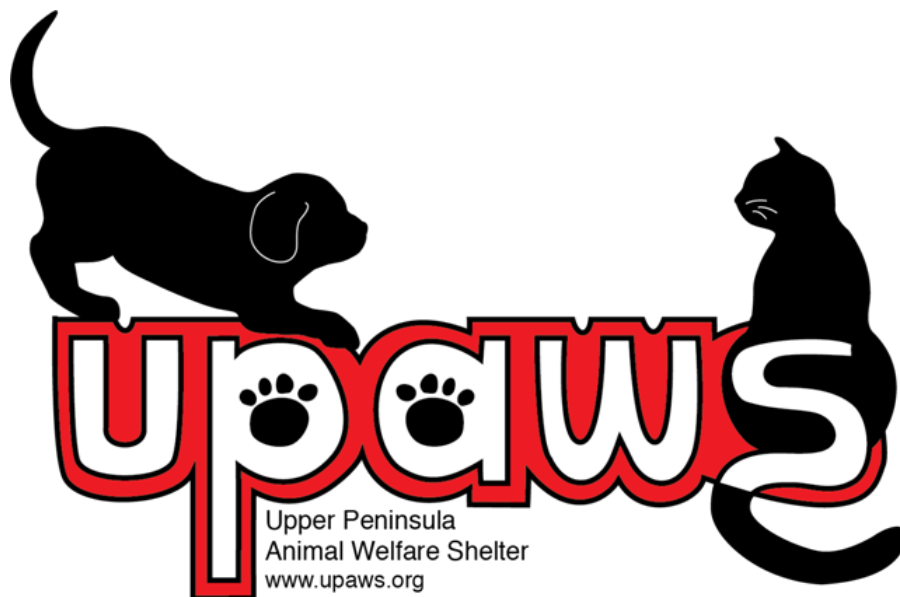
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NO KILL CONTACT

We Can Afford to Save Them All

November 4, 2013, By [Nathan J. Winograd](#) | Comments (Closed)



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One of the most enduring myths used to condone the wholesale slaughter of millions of animals in our nation's shelters every year is that saving their lives is too expensive. While it seems logical to assume that

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saving rather than ending the lives of animals will cost more money overall, this is an overly simplistic view. Among other things, it ignores the fact that many shelter costs are fixed, that saving lives generates revenue while killing and destroying the remains costs money, that No Kill programs are more cost-effective than killing, and that when a shelter commits to save the lives of animals in its care, implements alternatives to killing, and embraces the community it once derided, it reaps great financial reward.

While it is true that some shelters have used their No Kill goals to ask their City Council for more funding and if a shelter is truly focused on saving lives, more money is always better, opponents of No Kill have used this to “prove” that No Kill is very expensive in order to defend those who kill animals by claiming they cannot afford to save more lives. Of course, they ignore counter examples: when I ran the shelter in Tompkins County, NY public funding of animal control was roughly \$1.85 per capita and remained that way while we cut killing by 75%, cut disease rates by 90%, and saved, using today’s standards, 95% of all the animals.

So what does it cost to achieve No Kill? And does it *necessarily* cost more overall? Over the last several years, my organization, the [No Kill Advocacy Center](#), looked at shelter funding and save rates in five states, the economic impact on shelter expenses and revenue, as well as the economic impact on community businesses and tax revenues. After analyzing that data, the answer became pretty clear: saving lives is more cost effective than killing.

veterinary tele-care and save millions of animals

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“ You can read the results of the research by [clicking here](#). ”

Today, [YesBiscuit](#) added an incredibly important component to those findings by publishing a case study of the costs of achieving No Kill at one shelter: the [Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter](#) (formerly the Marquette MI Humane Society) which runs animal control in its community. In 2006, UPAWS was killing 64% of animals and on the verge of bankruptcy when a volunteer asked them to read my book, [Redemption](#). Though fearful of embracing its tenets, they were not only being encouraged to do so by animal lovers in their community, but they were very close to ceasing operations and had little to lose: if they continued on the path they were on, they would have to close their doors. They decided to embrace the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services of [the No Kill Equation](#) which make it possible.

“ You can read about their transformation here: <http://bit.ly/1dI23PB>. ”

Since that time, the number of animals saved rather than killed has increased dramatically. Immediately after announcing its No Kill mission, UPAWS posted an annual save rate of 93%. It has been steadily increasing. Last year, UPAWS saved 98% and reports that it is saving 100% of all the animals year to date, expanding its safety net with truly cutting edge innovations such as hospice care for terminally ill animals, better efforts to get lost animals home and expanded programs to keep animals from entering the shelter in the first place, such as a website where members of the public can seek new

homes for their animals themselves rather than surrender them to the shelter.

YesBiscuit wanted to know how much it costs to go from killing 6 out of ten animals to saving ten out of ten.

“ The blog is here: <http://bit.ly/1azQo8a>. ”

The short answer: When UPAWS was killing 64% of the animals, they spent \$190.85 per animal. Now saving 99%, they spend \$207.58. At the same time, however, they threw away \$178,636 in adoption revenue when they were killing the animals and it would only have cost them \$15,660 more to actually save them. But that's not at all: while the cost per animal went up slightly (8%), so did revenue: an overall increase of 61%.

As Reva Lauturi, Board Chair of UPAWS, explains,

“ The ... component that cannot be ignored is that while the cost-per-animal rose 8%, we also saw an increase in donations of 43% and a net increase in fundraising efforts of 294% for an overall increase in revenue of 61%... Obviously, the increased revenue more than makes up for the cost-per-animal, and has allowed us to implement more services, become proactive and plan for a future (including plans for a new shelter). ”

She writes:

“ By 2013, we were open seven days a week and one evening, including every holiday

except Christmas (instead of being open only five days a week). Advertising animals through the UPAWS website, print-radio-TV media, and social media and keeping the public updated from start to finish in terms of adoptability and outcome, became standard. Pet sponsorships became and continue to play a huge role in getting animals adopted (donors can opt to pre-pay for medical care, vaccinations, or all or part of adoption fees for specific animals). Promotions with accompanying adoption fee reductions or waivers were being used on a regular basis. We had implemented reduced adoption fees for seniors and “Lonely Hearts” (those animals who have been in the shelter 3 months or longer). People willing to adopt animals for what would equate to hospice care had fees waived. All animals were being microchipped and we were Felv/FIV testing all cats and heartworm testing all dogs. In addition, staff and volunteers began making a more concerted effort at reuniting lost pets with their owners and becoming more pro-active in pet retention efforts. Also, not included in the cost-per-animal, a community spay-neuter program was instituted to assist pet owners in getting their animals altered which ultimately reduces the numbers of litters being admitted and a Home-2-Home program that allows owners to use the UPAWS website to advertise pets that need re-

homing, thus preventing them ever being admitted to the shelter.” ”

Most impressive of all, these programs have not only revolutionized the shelter and have quite possibly turned Marquette, MI, into the safest community for homeless animals in the United States today, but they have resulted in a 61% increase in revenue for the shelter as well, disproving the notion that we cannot afford to save them all. And not only did UPAWS transform its shelter and reap the financial rewards from its grateful, animal loving public, but most exciting of all, it continues to push the envelope of innovation. Not content to rest on its laurels, UPAWS continues to introduce new and exciting programs to better meet the needs of the animals and people in its community, helping to redefine what an animal shelter can and should be.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: No Kill is a humane, sustainable, cost-effective model that works hand in hand with public health and safety, while fulfilling a fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. But Laituri says it more simply and eloquently: "What is important is the unwavering decision to not kill healthy, treatable, adoptable animals. Once that decision is made and everyone (board, staff, volunteers) are committed to that goal, it can be done."

“ Thank you [YesBiscuit!](#) ”

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