



# FILM COMPANION

Shelter killing is the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States.



It doesn't have to be.

## REDEMPTION

THE NO KILL REVOLUTION IN AMERICA









A FILM BY NATHAN WINOGRAD

# REDEMPTION

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# FOREWORD

## Redemption for HENRY BERGH

A GREAT AMERICAN HERO



1813 - 1888

*"I hate to think what will befall this Society when I am gone."*

— Henry Bergh

On February 8, 1866, as New York was gripped in a winter storm, the City's most prominent citizens braved the snow and cold to attend a lecture on animal protection by a man named Henry Bergh. To a well-filled room of attendees, including the mayor, Bergh called upon the gathering to undertake a moral fight to better the plight of animals. "This is a matter purely of conscience," he said. "It has no perplexing side issues. Politics have no more to do with it than astronomy. No, it is a moral question in all its aspects." It was the first such lecture on animal protection in the U.S. and when it was done, 100 signatories came forward and signed Bergh's *Declaration of the Rights of Animals*, pledging themselves to suppressing cruelty and showing mercy to animals.

Armed with the *Declaration*, Bergh secured a charter from the State of New York, incorporating the country's first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the ASPCA. Nine days later, the state legislature passed a new law prohibiting cruelty to animals, and the fledgling ASPCA was given the power to enforce that law. Henry Bergh went to war.

His first order of business was to better the plight of New York City's much abused, working draft horses. In 1832, New York had



established the first horse railway in the world. By 1863, 16 lines of horse railways crisscrossed the city and 500 horse-drawn cars made their way through traffic daily. Sickly and uncared for horses struggled to pull over-laden cars through the streets, often weighted down beyond their capacity, while impatient drivers lashed at them to proceed. Henry Bergh's answer was simple—the practice would be stopped immediately.

With top hat and cane, gentleman-turned-humane officer Henry Bergh began enforcing the law on the spot, ordering passengers of overloaded cars to disembark and drivers to return to their stables under threat of arrest and prosecution. The annals of the ASPCA describe the first such encounter:

*The driver of a cart laden with coal is whipping his horse. Passersby on the New York City street stop to gawk not so much at the weak, emaciated equine, but at the tall man, elegant in top hat and spats, who is explaining to the driver that it is now against the law to beat one's animal. Thus, America first encounters "The Great Meddler."*

It was a scene that in would be replayed on the streets of 19th century New York City again and

again. During an evening rush hour in February of 1871, as throngs of people packed cars to over-capacity, overworked and exhausted horses with bleeding noses strained under their heavy load through snow and slush, until one such car reached the corner near where Bergh stood, policing the streets for animals in need of his protection. As the driver prepared to give the horses yet another in a series of brutal lashes, Bergh intervened, yelling, "Stop!" and "Unload!" "Who the hell are you?" replied the driver. "Unload!" Bergh called again.

When the driver refused, Bergh entered the car, pitched the defiant driver into a snow bank, and began unhitching the horses himself. Fearless and uncompromising in his defense of abused horses, Bergh would often bring traffic on the lines to a complete stop, causing traffic jams that would leave thousands of people stranded and cursing to no avail.

For over two decades, Bergh spent each and every night tending to sick animals and hauling drivers who overworked them off to the local justice for prosecution on charges of cruelty. Although the owners of the lines complained, Bergh would carry the day. Within two years of the ASPCA's



incorporation, limits on passengers were common, horses were better cared for, and water troughs and buckets for thirsty horses could be seen throughout the city. One chronicler of Bergh's life noted that it was horses that Bergh championed above any other animals. In reality, Bergh's ASPCA labored equally hard to protect the city's stray dogs, particularly against abuses at the hands of city dogcatchers.

Every summer for a period of roughly three months, the New York City pound opened its doors to round up stray dogs. And every afternoon, unclaimed dogs were drowned in a cistern with a slatted cover. As many as 80 dogs at a time were drowned, with the largest dogs beaten on the head with a club until they stayed underwater. Alternatively, they were killed in what the *New York Telegram*, one of the city's preeminent newspapers, called "the terrible iron crate," where struggling dogs were dropped several times in the East River until all the dogs had drowned. *The Daily News* reported the toll in dog lives: "Monday, 320; Tuesday, 218; Wednesday, 140; Thursday 118; Friday, 93."

While Bergh championed leaving the dogs alone, once famously writing: "Let us abolish the pound!" he was also a pragmatist. By fighting breed bans, forcing the city to provide adequate shelter, food and water, by paying the fines to

free the impounded dogs of the poor, and even prosecuting dog catchers for animal cruelty—12 cases in one year alone—Bergh reduced the killing by as much as 80 percent. Whether fighting for the rights of horses, opposing hunting, trying to regulate slaughterhouses, or protecting stray dogs, Bergh spent two decades working to protect animals. Under his leadership, the ASPCA prosecuted 12,000 cruelty cases. It was a dedication and zeal the ASPCA would abandon upon his death.

On March 12, 1888, as a storm whipped the city and gales tore the roofs off of houses, New York's horses pulled carloads of people through the snow. But for once, after spending each and every night policing the streets on their behalf, Bergh was not there to protect them. In the early hours of the morning, Henry Bergh had died.

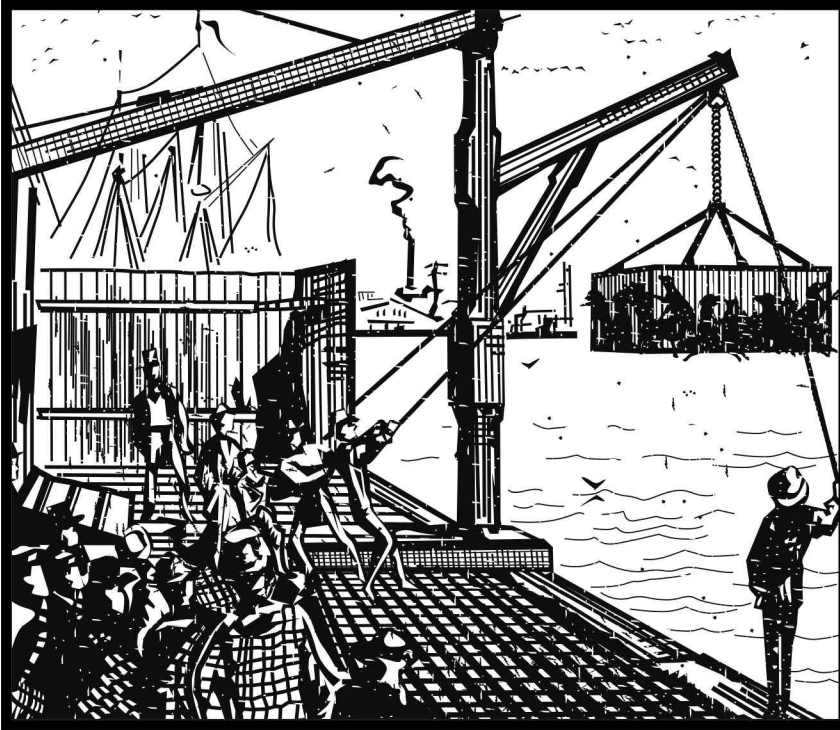
After his death, and against his express instructions, the ASPCA traded in its mission of protecting animals from harm for the role of killing them by agreeing to run the dog pound. In a very short period of time, the ASPCA became New York City's leading killer of dogs (and later cats). By the early 1900s, hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats had lost their lives to the ASPCA. It was a terrible mistake, one emulated by humane societies and SPCAs nationwide, with devastating results.



Unwilling to harm the animals they were supposed to be protecting, animal lovers fled from these organizations, and bureaucrats and opportunists with no passion for animals or for saving their lives took them over, paving the way for the crisis of uncaring and killing in American shelters we have inherited today.

Instead of working to stop the killing, they did the killing. And while the ASPCA has





since become very large and very wealthy, it has also become bureaucratic, lacking the vision, determination, and passion that characterized its early history. It would have hurt Henry Bergh very deeply.

When the early founders of the animal protection movement died and their organizations took over the job of killing those they had been formed to protect, a fiery zeal was replaced with a smoldering ember that gave little light or warmth and the humane movement went to sleep. But after over 100 years of this deadly paradigm, the

grassroots of the animal protection movement is finally waking up.

With no allegiance to the status quo or faith in conventional “wisdom,” and by rejecting the “adopt some and kill the rest” inertia of the past, new leaders are causing shelter deaths to plummet in cities and counties from coast to coast. The No Kill revolution they champion—a movement which started in San Francisco, spread to Ithaca, New York, and is now succeeding in diverse communities across the nation—provides renewed hope for the future.

We have the power to build a new consensus, one which rejects killing as a method for achieving results.

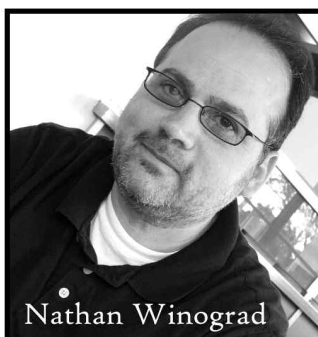
And we can look forward to a time when the wholesale slaughter of animals in shelters is viewed as a cruel aberration of the past. To get to that point, we must learn from history and reject our failures. This film tells that history. To that end, this film is dedicated to the great Henry Bergh; may it help reorient our nation’s shelters and animal protection groups back to his founding vision and, in so doing, help achieve his dream of a truly humane society.

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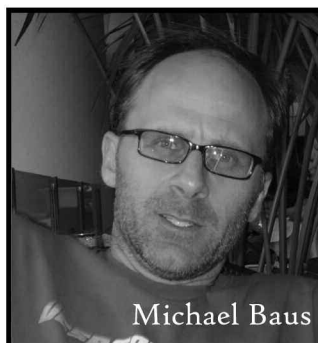
# THE ADVOCATES



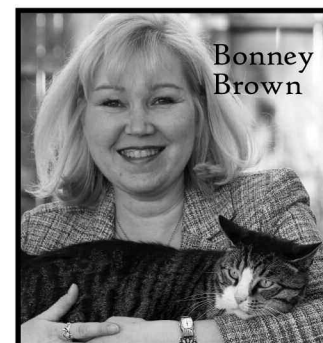
Nathan Winograd



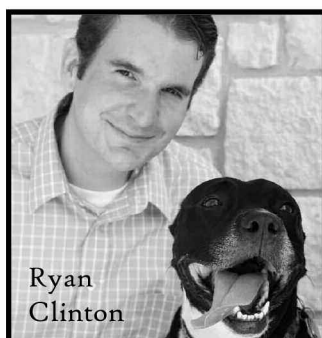
Jennifer Winograd



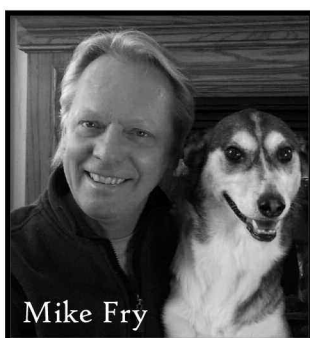
Michael Baus



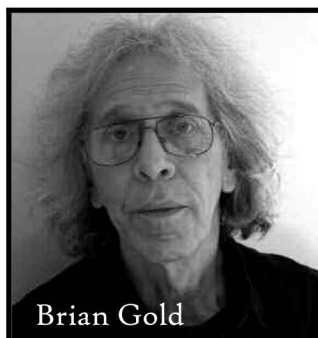
Bonney  
Brown



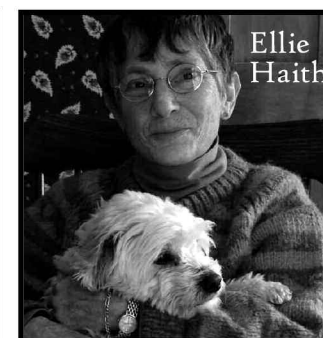
Ryan  
Clinton



Mike Fry



Brian Gold



Ellie  
Haith



Valerie Hayes



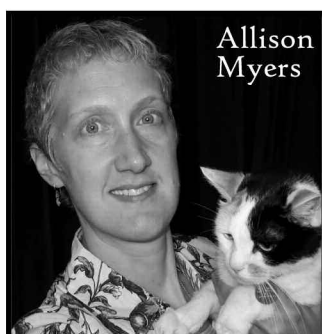
Kerry  
Clair



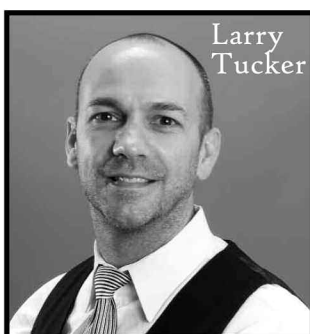
Reva  
Laituri



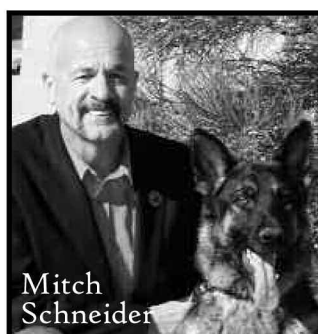
Mike Martinez



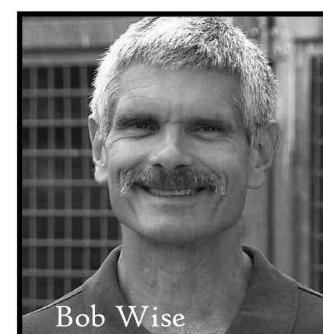
Allison  
Myers



Larry  
Tucker



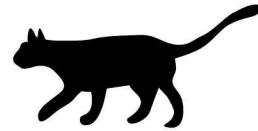
Mitch  
Schneider



Bob Wise



# NATHAN WINOGRAD



ATTORNEY

AUTHOR OF *REDEMPTION, THE MYTH OF  
PET OVERPOPULATION AND THE NO KILL*

*REVOLUTION IN AMERICA*

FORMER DIRECTOR,  
TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
THE NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER

**I**t may come as a shock to those who follow me on Facebook that I was a reluctant convert to the social media. Although I now consider the time I spend monitoring my page and personally responding to comments to be well worth the effort, there was a time when I was conflicted as to whether or not I should join. I am a rather private person by nature, and that, combined with my belief that the No Kill movement should first and foremost be a movement of ideals and not of personalities, all added to my reluctance. But the more I researched the issue, the more I understood the value of having such a wide-reaching, democratic tool not only to educate people about the No Kill movement, but to personally respond to the many myths and misperceptions that exist about the movement, too. What I didn't anticipate was the window it would give me into how I am often misperceived, as well.

It has become a pattern that whenever I post a blog about People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals' (PETA) killing, how the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) defends abusive shelters, or how the ASPCA defeats legislation to save lives, thus betraying the cause they exist to promote, individuals uninformed about the No Kill movement or my history within it will respond to what is often shocking news about groups they admire by questioning my motives and my allegiances. Often, these accusations are no doubt the result of a brief internet search of my name, searches that turn up fabrications about who I am, what I am trying to accomplish, and whose interests I allegedly represent. I have been falsely associated with industries and interest groups that harm animals, such as agribusiness. I have been falsely accused of being in league with breeders, such as the American Kennel Club. Self-identified animal "activists" have responded to my reports about PETA killing animals by falsely accusing me of trying to destroy the animal rights movement or of not caring about animals beyond cats and dogs. To my bewilderment, I have even been falsely ac-



cused of hating rabbits and deaf animals, an absurdity that is no doubt the bungled outcome from the spread of misleading information—like a game of cyber telephone—upon the internet. I am grateful to have the opportunity through the social media to set the record straight. For in every way except the truth, those who oppose No Kill have a competitive advantage.

The organizations I criticize are large. They are powerful and well-known to many people. Their public image, often at odds with the practices in which they engage behind closed doors—such as PETA’s deliberate poisoning of thousands of animals every year, HSUS sending animals they claimed to “rescue” to a shelter which gassed them, or the ASPCA’s defeat of legislation which would have saved the lives of 100,000 animals—shields them from accountability. The No Kill movement is relatively new; the traditional sheltering establishment and the national organizations that provide them political cover are just that: *established*. They are old organizations with pedigreed names and reputations while the No Kill movement and my organization, the No Kill Advocacy Center, are, by comparison, relatively young. Basic human nature tends to jealously guard the familiar and the status quo, and so when

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**It is my hope that by recounting my journey in the animal protection movement, readers will gain a perspective that leads them to view my opposition to the national groups as not only justified, but morally obligatory.**

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it comes to winning the battle of first impression, I face an uphill battle. People, upon encountering news regarding the true nature of our nation’s animal protection organizations, are inclined to assign the groups I criticize the benefit of the doubt, and me, the burden of it.

Although most of the comments on my Facebook page come from No Kill supporters who share my heartbreak and dissatisfaction with the state of our nation’s shelters and the leadership of the large, national groups that enable the abuse and killing of animals in shelters, there are enough comments of a particular nature from incredulous people who have never encountered me or the No Kill message before to warrant a response. To those who read my Facebook posts and blogs for the first time and become so upset that—rather than research, accept as verifiable facts, and then assimilate the information I report as a true commitment to the well-being of animals demands—choose instead to shoot the messenger, I would like to answer the charge either stated or so often implied by their hostile comments: *Just who in the hell do I think I am?*

I want to answer this question because although, as I stated, the No Kill movement should be first and foremost a movement of ideals and not of personalities, there are too many people who find permission to dismiss the No Kill message based on misinformation about me that my duty to the animals demands clarification. Although, in the end, it should not matter *who* is right, but *what* is right, and although an idea should not be judged by the person who is delivering the message but by its merits, that, sadly, is not the way some humans are inclined to work. Too often, people seeking to be lulled back into a complacency that does not threaten their view of the animal protection movement, organizations, and individuals they have historically lionized seize on criticisms of me as justification to dismiss the message I advocate. I don’t want that. I don’t want lies about me to get





in the way of the needs of animals. Nor do I need to accept it, either, because I am not and never have been what my detractors claim I am.

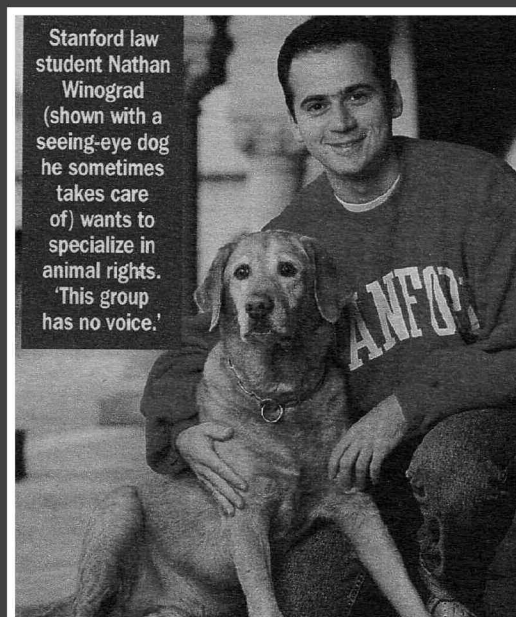
For although I and the message I advocate may be new to many people, I am not new to the animal rights movement, and have, in fact, been active in it for over 20 years. How it is I came to be the most vocal and outspoken critic of its hypocrisy is the result of my experiences, experiences that left me no choice but to publicly expose the groups for what they repeatedly demonstrated to me over and over again they really were. For people who are disinclined to believe what I report about PETA, HSUS, the ASPCA, and the equally reprehensible American Humane Association, but are inclined to believe rumors that they have heard that I am a front for animal abusers or that I seek to destroy the animal protection movement, here is my story, the back story that places my efforts into a historical context. It is my hope that by recounting my journey in the animal protection movement, they will gain a perspective that leads them to view my opposition to the national groups as not only justified, but morally obligatory.

### THE EARLY YEARS



When I arrived at Stanford Law School in 1991, I was already an ethical vegan, a long time rescuer, and a community cat advocate.

When I graduated, I wanted to devote my life to helping animals through the law. It was, in fact, the reason I went to law school. Anxious to begin furthering the cause even as a student, I founded a campus animal rights group, the Stanford Animal Protection and Education Society, or Stanford APES for short. We leafleted in the quad, urging other students to embrace a more humane diet. We leafleted in front of zoos and aquariums, urging patrons to oppose the keeping of animals in captivity. And we were a thorn in the side of the vivisectors at Stanford, exposing not only the cruel experiments that were



**From an article in Parade magazine, discussing the growing interest in the field of animal law among law students.**

taking place there, but the deplorable housing conditions for the animals as well. We requested, researched, and publicly exposed damning government inspection reports of Stanford animal research facilities to the faculty and media.

I also served on the Board of Directors of the local No Kill Palo Alto Humane Society (PAHS), helped found CatWorks, an organization that provided care for 2,000 free-living cats across the Bay Area, worked with the National Greyhound Protection League not only to end the scourge of greyhound racing, but to find homes for retired greyhounds, and I was a member of the Stanford Cat Network, a group of Stanford advocates who cared for the cats who made their home on the University campus, cats and their offspring who







## Suit charges Stanford mistreats lab animals

STANFORD (AP) — Stanford University has given laboratory animals outdated drugs, allowed algae to form in water bottles and let fecal matter pollute their food, a group of students alleged in a federal complaint.

A university spokesman countered, however, that the complaint was misleading and cited problems that had already been corrected.

In the complaint filed Tuesday with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Stanford Animal Protection and Education Society claimed the university has a 14-year history of neglecting and mistreating its lab animals.

The complaint also alleges that Stanford violated the federal Animal Welfare Act by leaving animals to die unattended following surgeries and by inadequately training laboratory personnel.

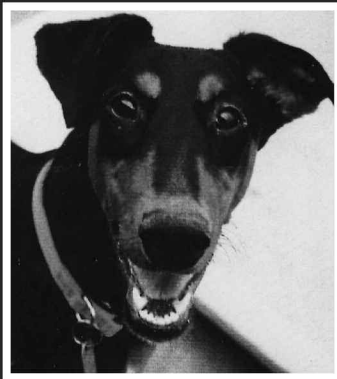
The evidence in the complaint was obtained from Department of Agriculture veterinary inspection reports, said SAPES president Nathan Winograd, a Stanford law student.

"Our findings reveal a disturbing pattern of consistent and serious incidents of animal neglect and mistreatment," Winograd said.

But Stanford Medical Center spokesman Don Gibbons said problems cited in the complaint were all reported at least a year ago and have been rectified.

SAPES has also filed formal complaints with the National Institutes of Health, which funds most animal research at Stanford, and Stanford's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, which oversees animal research at the university.

The Stanford Animal Protection & Education Society, or SAPES, was a campus animal rights groups I founded as a law student. In addition to a broad promotion of animal rights issues such as veganism, we also worked to expose the cruel animal experiments being done in the Stanford labs. Above, an article in a local newspaper discussing Stanford violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Below, a dog we saved from one such lab. When this photo was taken, it was the first time this dog had ever been outside. We found her and several other dogs loving homes.



had been abandoned by the transient student population. It was through these affiliations that I was first introduced to the dysfunction of the animal protection movement itself, and, by extension, the cause that would come to define my efforts on behalf of animals for the next two decades.

When Stanford announced plans to round up and kill the cats living on the campus, cat lovers turned to the local Santa Clara Humane Society and then HSUS for help. Tragically, these groups supported Stanford's extermination campaign. They agreed that killing the cats was the right thing to do and urged the school to trap the animals and take them to the local pound where they would be injected them with a fatal dose of poison. That these groups would advocate such a position stunned me. Little did I know that this was the first of many instances where I would be bewildered, shell-shocked in fact, by the pro-killing positions that groups which claimed to be the leading voice for animal protection in the nation would take.

My work with the Stanford Cat Network and PAHS introduced me to the No Kill movement, and by extension, the San Francisco SPCA. Just 30 miles from the Stanford campus, the San Francisco SPCA was, at that time, the leading voice of the No Kill movement and I wanted to be a part of its success. Although I was also a full time law student, I took a job working in its Law and Advocacy Department. It was my job to defend the animals being threatened with killing within San Francisco's borders, to expand the safety net so we could save more, and to promote the new and innovative programs the San Francisco SPCA had created, programs that transformed San Francisco into the safest urban community for homeless animals in America—which, paradoxically, made it the target of criticism by other shelters and the large, national animal protection organizations.

As an animal lover and animal rights advocate, my experiences working at the SF/SPCA were life altering. I felt privileged to be witnessing history in the making, to be a part of an organization that was re-





defining animal sheltering and that was successfully tackling one of the many ways in which animals were losing their lives by the millions in America. I understood that the SF/SPCA had started a revolution, and I was honored to be a part of it. But few others within the larger animal protection movement at that time grasped or appreciated its seminal achievements. Rather than celebrate the SF/SPCA's lifesaving success, virtually every animal protection group either ignored it or openly condemned it. They criticized each program that provided an alternative to killing, programs that have since become accepted, even lauded. HSUS, for example, called the neuter and release of free-living cats who were not socialized to people and would have been killed in shelters "subsidized abandonment." They called offsite adoption venues "sidewalk giveaways," called foster care "a sham that delayed killing," and, along with the ASPCA, called No Kill itself "smoke and mirrors" and a "cancer." The leaders of the large national groups such as the ASPCA and HSUS argued that any talk of saving the lives of animals in shelters was pure nonsense (or, as one of them put it, "not worthy of a passing daydream"), that "the only solution" to animals in shelters "is the blue solution," referring to the blue color of the barbiturate, sodium pentobarbital, that shelters use to kill animals. HSUS sought to undermine the spread of the SF/SPCA model by publishing knowingly false information about the SF/SPCA in its national publications, information they refused to re-

tract when confronted with their misinformation and asked by SF/SPCA leadership to do so. Local humane societies throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, likewise threatened by the success of the SF/SPCA, also mercilessly attacked it for saving, rather than ending lives, suggesting that the SF/SPCA was lying about its success, calling it derelict in its duties for refusing to kill, and vowing to prevent what was happening in San Francisco from spreading to their community.

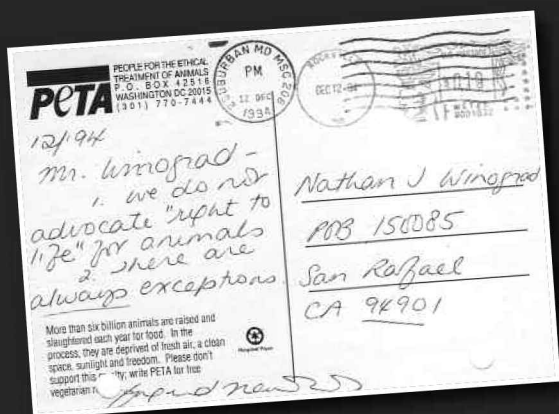
To say that these experiences left me disillusioned with the animal protection movement would be an understatement. But it was nothing compared to the shock I experienced when I learned that PETA, the group I naively revered as the most stalwart defender of animal rights in the nation, not only shared these disturbing views, but was, in fact, its most vocal and outspoken mouthpiece. During the first of two summers I would serve as the law student intern for the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), I would learn this lesson up close and personal.

Located just outside Washington, D.C., the ALDF office where I worked was not far from PETA headquarters at the time. My roommate, in fact, was a former PETA employee, a member of PETA's inner circle; someone who spearheaded the campaign against Revlon's animal testing that would introduce millions of Americans to the ugly LD50 test and put PETA on the national map. She

“As an animal lover and animal rights advocate, my experiences working at the SF/SPCA were life altering. I felt privileged to be witnessing history in the making, to be a part of an organization that was redefining animal sheltering and that was successfully tackling one of the many ways in which animals were losing their lives by the millions in America.”

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A postcard I received from Ingrid Newkirk after writing to ask her how, as an animal rights organization, PETA could oppose non-lethal programs for feral cats in shelters, and why her organization advocates that they be rounded up and killed. She wrote back explaining that PETA is not an animal rights organization, stating in no uncertain terms: “We do not advocate ‘right to life’ for animals.”

**NOTE:** Newkirk’s statement that “There are always exceptions” is not a qualifier to her belief that animals do not have a “right to life.” It is an answer to another, unrelated question.

was also a close acquaintance, if not personal friend, of Ingrid Newkirk, the founder and President of PETA. Together, we would volunteer at PETA one night a week, stuffing envelopes for mailings (she leading the volunteers; me stuffing envelopes with the others).

One day, my roommate rescued a dog we named Ray. He was a wonderful dog, a young and healthy German Shepherd with a playful disposition. She wanted me to help her find him a home. When I suggested that we take Ray to PETA, certain that with their vast resources and ability to communicate with hundreds of thousands, if not

millions, of animal lovers nationwide that they could easily find Ray a new and loving home, she explained that that was a bad idea because Newkirk would kill him. *Come again? Did I hear her right?*

And that is when she explained to me what had been going on within PETA for many years—activities that for the next 20 years I would watch continue unabated. She explained that PETA routinely killed the animals who are brought to them, and equally egregious and perhaps even more disturbing, that PETA also actively sought out animals to kill, thousands of them every year.

Another bombshell to my innocence, for I learned then and was to discover in the coming years that not only does PETA kill animals, but that they advocate for the immediate destruction of all community cats and dogs who looked like “Pit Bulls,” too. I learned that Newkirk considers life for animals to be little more than suffering, believes that animals want to die, and that to kill them is to give them, in her own words, “a gift.” I learned that she does not believe that animals have a right to live (once sending me a postcard which read, “We do not advocate right to life for animals”) even though the right to life is in fact the most basic and fundamental right of every animal and serves as the basis for the entire animal rights philosophy.

I learned that she recruits legions of activists to this cause, people who drive around the Eastern seaboard in donor-funded vans, acquiring animals from various sources—free to good home ads, rescue groups uninformed of their real agenda, and animals displaced by natural disaster—only to kill some of those animals immediately in the back of those vans, stocked to the hilt with tackle boxes full of bottles of poison, syringes to inject that poison into animals, and garbage bags to hold their bodies after they take their last breath. I learned that animals who are not killed on the road are taken back to PETA headquarters in Norfolk, Vir-







ginia where they are killed; their furry bodies then stacked high in a freezer PETA has installed for this very purpose. I learned that dogs and cats weren't the only animals to fall victim to PETA; that they killed wild animals, chickens, and rabbits, too.

And I learned that killing animals themselves was not the only way PETA sought to end their lives; they encouraged others to kill them, too. When I approached Georgetown University about starting a neuter and release program for the cats who lived on their campus, modeled on Stanford's, they refused, indicating that PETA—urging them to reject the lifesaving approach—gave them their blessing and encouragement to kill. In the end, PETA succeeded in having the cats rounded up and killed, a move that resulted in cat lovers finding neonatal kittens left to slowly starve to death throughout the campus after their lactating mothers had been trapped and taken away.

I would spend the next 20 years watching PETA repeatedly fight reform efforts by coming to the defense of regressive, cruel shelters, watch PETA track No Kill reform efforts nationwide, efforts they would try to undermine with letters to the editor of local newspapers and to political bodies which were debating shelter reform efforts, letters that equated No Kill with hoarding and animal suffering and which called No Kill reformers “fanatics,” urging them to oppose lifesaving measures in favor of the status quo of killing.

To find that what I had believed PETA represented was in fact the opposite of how it behaved was a bitter pill to swallow. It not only broke my heart; it filled me with anger and resolve. What choice was there but to refuse to tolerate such treatment of animals? What response was there but to reject such perversion, to speak out against it, to try to bring such a cruel and deliberate slaughter of animals to an end? That, after all, was why I became involved in animal rights in the

first place: to protect animals, regardless of the context in which they were exploited and killed and irrespective of who it was that was doing the killing. But I was to learn another sad truth that summer. And that was this: in my condemnation of PETA, I was in the smallest minority.

I learned that the truth about PETA was common knowledge among those who worked in the animal rights movement. I learned that the leader of every other self-professed “animal rights” group knew what was really going on at PETA, but never spoke out against it or against Ingrid Newkirk herself. In fact, they took Newkirk's telephone calls, they would shake Newkirk's hand when they met her, and they would all make excuses for her, granting her absolution to kill with the tortured logic that since she had seen so much animal suffering she should be allowed to kill animals herself, or, quite simply, that her efforts to protect animals had earned her the right to harm them. These people, who worked in jobs that were supposed to eliminate animal killing, condoned and enabled it simply because they knew the person doing it, even going so far as to celebrate Newkirk by inducting her into the “Animal Rights Hall of Fame.” In the early 1990s, this attitude towards PETA's killing was held by virtually everyone I met who worked in or volunteered at an animal rights group, with rare exception. One of those rare exceptions was the woman I would eventually marry, my wife of almost 20 years, Jennifer.

Jennifer worked at the ALDF main office near San Francisco, and as the D.C. office's law student intern, I had spoken to her on the telephone several times. But it was not until a meeting of a small, grassroots group we both joined to defeat two pieces of legislation pending in the California State Assembly that we first met face to face. One of those bills, introduced at the behest of the Fund for Animals, an organization that has since merged with HSUS, would have authorized the round up and killing of outdoor cats. The other, introduced





by the California Department of Health Services with the support of the Fund For Animals, would have authorized animal control officers to kill cats immediately on the street if they did not have proof of a rabies vaccination. Since cats can't provide this information themselves and many do not wear a collar and rabies tag, the law would have led to a bloodbath of any cat an animal control officer found outdoors without a rabies tag. Determined to protect cats by defeating these deadly bills, a small group of us banded together to successfully fight them, a group which included Jennifer, who not only did cat rescue in her spare time, but volunteered at the San Francisco SPCA, too. A vegan, an animal rights advocate and No Kill supporter just like me, we hit it off immediately, and have been together ever since.

When I met Jennifer, she had been working for ALDF for several years. Prior to that, she had worked at In Defense of Animals, and not long after we met, she also went to work briefly for Farm Sanctuary, primarily as an investigator. I, too, would later do work for Farm Sanctuary, as a volunteer pro bono attorney. Although we recognize that our prior involvement with well-known animal rights groups would establish our connection to the animal rights movement and thereby help to dispel some of the criticism and conspiracy that we are "outsiders" trying to undermine animal rights, the truth is we rarely mention these groups or our historical association with them for a reason. Many of them, like virtually every other self-professed animal rights group in the nation, have ignored the plight of animals in shelters, failed to celebrate the No Kill model, and have continued to turn a blind eye to the atrocities committed by animal shelters across the nation and by PETA.

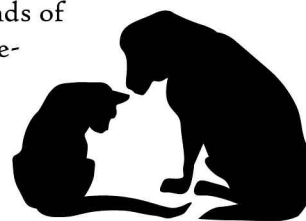
Although our early history in this cause clearly demonstrates that we come to No Kill not, as some have suggested, as breeders, as shills for the meat industry, or any interest group which represents

those who harm animals, but rather through the cause of animal rights itself, we do not wish to be associated with groups that do not embrace an authentic animal rights agenda—one that includes rights for companion animals, too. Sadly, though our once association with these groups has meant that their failure to champion No Kill or to speak out against PETA's atrocities has been personally disappointing, in truth their failure to do so is not surprising. It is, in fact, the norm among animal rights groups, a tragic and paradoxical position born of the nature of the founding of the animal rights movement itself.

### THE ANIMAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT'S ORIGINAL SIN

Like Ingrid Newkirk who, prior to founding PETA, had a job killing animals at an animal shelter, many of the founders and employees working at our nation's animal rights organizations came to animal rights by way of sheltering. This meant that they not only brought to the cause the historical excuses used to justify the killing of animals in shelters, but having had many animals die at their very hands, they needed a way to justify such behavior in light of their competing beliefs. To champion a cause that claims that animals have rights while at the same time having killed thousands of animals themselves re-

quired them to adopt an inconsistent philosophy to reconcile what in reality are diametrically opposing values. This view became firmly cemented within the animal rights movement when other animal right leaders, deferring to the "expertise" of their friends and colleagues who had worked in shelters, bought into the rationalizations and failed to challenge them. And so a deadly philosophical dichotomy emerged within the animal rights movement: one that held that all animals have a right to life, except those who enter shelters. This





killing, it was argued, was necessary where the other kinds were not and those doing the killing were not to blame, but rather unsung heroes courageously performing the public's dirty work; or, in Newkirk's words, "Dark Angels."

In fact, to this day, efforts that focus on dogs and cats are often viewed with disdain in the animal rights movement and somehow "less animal rights" than other issues. Many animal rights activists erroneously believe the thousands of shelters across this country are in fact meeting the needs of these animals who therefore require no further advocacy or attention on their part. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only is shelter killing the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States, but our shelters are in crisis, plagued with animal abuse and neglect as well. But few in the animal rights movement are aware of these tragic facts because the people and organizations they trust to keep them informed about important issues affecting animals refuse to do so when the victims are not on farms or in laboratories, but inside our nation's animal shelters.

Today, healthy debate within the animal rights movement is discouraged in favor of "movement unity" and deference to the agendas promoted by large, powerful organizations. It is a top-heavy movement—and therefore intolerant of dissent, suspicious of change and prone to censorship (just try to get a vegan cookbook that contains a statement critical of PETA reviewed by VegNews or

popular vegan bloggers; they won't do it in deference to PETA and its killing agenda). While many animal rights activists, lacking a sophisticated understanding of the pressing need for No Kill reform, underestimate and dismiss the cause as a mere "animal welfare" issue, leadership of animal rights organizations are not so naive and are far more calculating. They willfully ignore the No Kill movement and fail to champion its more widespread implementation precisely because it challenges the historical narrative (and those who have perpetuated it) that has explained and condoned shelter killing since the movement's inception. In the animal rights movement today, innovations that threaten the prevailing paradigm and those in power are rejected in favor of the status quo.

Consequently, there is no mention of No Kill in the newsletters of large animal rights organizations. It is unlikely to be found on their websites, on their Facebook pages, or any of the other ways these organizations regularly communicate with their members or the grassroots, except—in the case of PETA—to denigrate it. Likewise, because the guidelines of animal rights conferences mandate that speakers not criticize other animal protection organizations—even when doing so is required to expose their actions which harm animals and deny them their rights—No Kill advocates are under a gag order that prevents them from sharing the true causes of shelter killing as well as its proven cure—rejecting old philosophies and those who embody them. Within the animal

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Healthy debate within the animal rights movement is discouraged in favor of 'movement unity' and deference to the agendas promoted by large, powerful organizations. It is a top-heavy movement—and therefore intolerant of dissent, suspicious of change and prone to censorship.

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rights community today, it is not *what* is right that matters, but *who* is right—even when they are clearly wrong. As a result, many animal rights activists continue to parrot the charade that the killing of innocent dogs and cats is acceptable, consistent with their beliefs that one should never kill pigs, cows or chickens.

This movement wide silence about No Kill combined with a historical embrace of both the excuses used to rationalize the killing and those who promote them have coalesced to render the No Kill movement essentially invisible to most animal rights activists, except when it is being bashed and misrepresented by PETA. The so-called leaders of the animal rights movement keep grassroots activists ignorant and impotent, denying them the information necessary to see through PETA's nefarious agenda and the tools they could use to assure lifesaving success at the shelters in their own communities. That is why, although the No Kill movement is having tremendous success tackling one of the ways in which millions of animals lose their lives in this country every year, most animal rights activists are unaware of this success. It is why, though savvy No Kill advocates understand that pet overpopulation is in fact a myth, open-admission No Kill shelters now exist throughout the nation, and that there is a proven cure to shelter killing, many animal rights activists do not.

Indeed, although most animal rights activists consider themselves on the cutting edge of animal protection, when it comes to companion animals, they are, in truth, regressive; perpetuating antiquated and disproven dogmas that defend and enable, rather than challenge, the wholesale slaughter of certain species of animals. And it is also why, when they encounter me and my message for the first time, they so often respond with incredulity, disdain, and then resort to personal attacks.

I am often called divisive, unreasonable, and a liar. I am accused of being in league with puppy mills

and agribusiness. Ingrid Newkirk has accused me of being out to destroy the animal rights movement. One of the most common criticisms I hear is that we are all a part of the same cause, should work together, and best serve the animals by getting along rather than fighting. In fact, whenever No Kill advocates expose the many ways in which the large national groups undermine efforts to save lives, betray the mission they ostensibly exist to promote, kill or cause animals to be killed, there are invariably those who come to their defense by stating that these organizations should not be criticized because they “do so much good for animals.” It is a tragically commonplace argument, but no less indefensible because of it. In effect, they are arguing that because some of the money donated to these organizations may actually be used for its intended purpose, that they have earned the right to cause harm to other animals themselves—terrible, irreversible, life-ending harm.

The fact that those who most commonly make these arguments are people who support these organizations because of their professed missions and would therefore likely self-identify as “animal lovers” is as troubling and paradoxical as the argument itself. Sadly, for such people, a misplaced trust and need to identify with such groups or the people who work at them at some point became more important than the professed values that presumably led them to support these organizations in the first place. The ideals that animals have rights and interests independent of humans—including the right to be free of suffering and the right to live—are casually discarded so long as those causing the suffering or death are self-proclaimed members of the animal protection movement.

Indeed, this argument is problematic precisely because it promotes the harmful idea that under the right circumstances, animal abuse or killing are acceptable. That is, as long as the harm is being done by the right people or balanced by a counterweight of good, there is no harm that is in and of itself in-





herently wrong or unacceptable, effectively eviscerating the philosophical foundation of the cause. Moreover, by arguing that we should ignore or overlook certain forms of animal abuse or killing as “payment” for some perceived “good,” the door is opened to condone all manner of animal cruelty and exploitation. By this same logic, were a slaughterhouse owner to donate a percentage of his profits to a vegan advocacy organization, or a dog fighter to donate some of his winnings to a companion animal rescue group, the killing and cruelty they inflict upon animals would therefore be rendered acceptable, the harm being cancelled out by the good. Though an obvious absurdity, time and again self-professed animal lovers and animal rights activists postulate this exact scenario, but in the reverse.

And not only does this argument capriciously surrender the welfare of animals and the principles which should guide all advocacy on their behalf, but it also hinders the cause by setting the bar for these organizations at a dismally low—in fact, counterproductive—level. In condoning behavior that is the antithesis of the cause such organizations are supposed to be advocating, this argument promotes the defeatist mentality that we have no right to expect or demand that our animal protection organizations be what they claim to be in practice as well as rhetoric, when of course we absolutely do. Indeed, while those who make this argument seemingly lack the vision or passion for the cause necessary to imagine a future in which animal protection organizations are authentic and unadulterated forces for good, in truth we do not need to accept nor tolerate some harm of animals in one sphere in order to promote their well-being in another.

The corruption at these organizations is neither inherent, nor inevitable. It has been fostered by various historical, financial and sociological factors that the leadership of these groups would be forced to address and overcome if animal lovers stopped making excuses for the betrayals and

funding them with their donations. Some animal suffering and some animal killing are not and never have been the price we must pay to end other animal suffering and killing. In fact, as the faulty logic of that statement clearly demonstrates, to believe so is to surrender to a self-defeating, hopeless tautology that can never succeed in eliminating that which it also perpetuates. Indeed, how can a rights-based movement ever hope to win the rights that the very people leading the cause have admitted they do not believe in and even actively oppose? How can the animal rights movement in its current manifestation claim to authentically speak for animals when it is advocating the opposite of what some of those animals could say if they could speak for themselves?

Moreover, the criticism that No Kill advocates should never speak out against those in position of power misses the mark for other reasons as well. Such comments are deeply misinformed about the level of abuse—the slanders and *ad hominem* attacks—No Kill advocates have suffered at the hands of the large, national animal protection groups for decades, a hostility I have personally witnessed and been the recipient of again and again. PETA calls No Kill advocates “dangerous,” “fanatics,” and “slow kill hoarders.” The ASPCA says we are “hoarders” and “dog fighters” in disguise and has published a document for shelters advising them on how to fight No Kill efforts. And HSUS says we are “crazy,” “mean-spirited,” and “divisive.” Sadly, what I have realized people often mean when they admonish No Kill advocates for telling the truth about the large, national groups or the people who work at them is not that no one should criticize, they are in fact criticizing by making such comments, but that no one should question those in positions of “authority”—a notion which my early and ultimately futile attempts to work





within the movement to foster change taught me is a recipe for stagnation and continued killing.

### THE MIDDLE YEARS

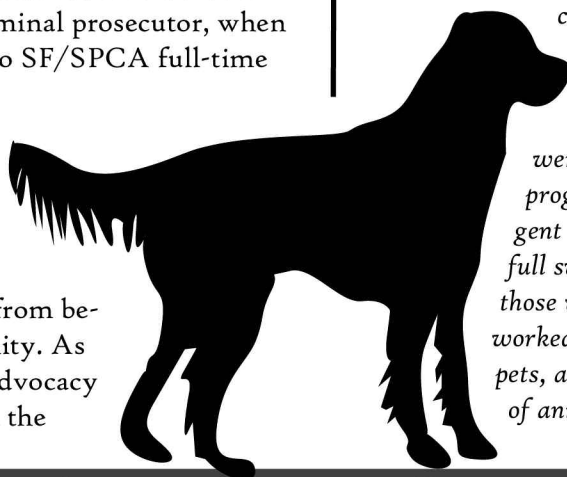
When I graduated from law school in 1995, I was soon to discover that making a living as an animal rights attorney was difficult. Given my heavy law school debt, economic necessity compelled me to leave the San Francisco SPCA and take a job as a Deputy District Attorney, where I satisfied my continued longing to help animals by becoming the “Dog D.A.,” taking on animal cruelty cases to ensure that they were treated with the gravity they deserved, while doing part-time consulting work for the SF/SPCA. At a time when most courts were giving animal abusers a slap on the wrist, I found ways to impose meaningful punishments to ensure they were kept away from animals for as long as possible. In one case, I charged someone who killed a dog with what the law calls “special circumstances” (such as the use of a deadly weapon) when an individual killed a dog using a guitar string, forcing the court to sentence the perpetrator to state prison. In another case, I charged someone who burned a cat to death with “arson of property” rather than just “cruelty to animals” because it carried a higher sentence, mandated state prison, was a violent felony and thus his second of three strikes, and gave him eight years in state prison. I also rewrote the District Attorney’s manual on handling animal cruelty cases to better protect the animals. But after several years working as a criminal prosecutor, when the opportunity to return to SF/SPCA full-time presented itself, I took it.

I returned to the SF/SPCA just as it had acquired new leadership. When I began, San Francisco was a whisper away from becoming a No Kill community. As Director of the Law and Advocacy Department and later both the

Director of Operations and then Vice President, I implored my boss to push the envelope, to seize the historic opportunity of becoming a No Kill community by not only saving every healthy animal, but all the treatable animals, too. Tragically, he refused, choosing to take the organization in the opposite direction. My protests were in vain as one by one he began to dismantle the lifesaving infrastructure that was responsible for San Francisco’s success until, after two years of trying to fight these changes, I could no longer justify remaining with the organization and left. As I write in my first book *Redemption*,

*Moving away from the programs that had made it so successful, the San Francisco SPCA replaced nuts-and-bolts programs that were the underpinning of the SPCA’s lifesaving efforts at an astonishing clip. In their place, partnerships with the University of California at Davis for fee-for-service behavior counseling, as well as architectural plans for a twenty million dollar fee-for-service specialty veterinary hospital were drawn up. And esoteric conferences on animal spirituality and telepathically communicating with animals, which catered to a more affluent, “new age” San Francisco crowd, were held at great expense—in luxury hotels or in posh vacation places like Jackson Hole, Wyoming.*

*Within a few short years, the SPCA’s feral cat program was virtually abolished. The spay/neuter clinic ... restricted its hours, significantly raised fees and, at one point, even closed its doors. On a day that came to be called “Black Monday,” the legions of feral cat caretakers who made their regular pilgrimage to use the services of the spay/neuter clinic were turned away... Plans to phase out programs in the animal hospital for indigent clients and homeless animals were in full swing. Entire departments, including those which protected the city’s wildlife, worked to find apartments for renters with pets, and advocated for stronger protections of animals, were eliminated. The crown*





*jewel of the No Kill movement quietly passed into obscurity.*

At that point, Jennifer and I faced a choice. I could return to the law, sacrificing the cause that gave our lives such purpose and direction, or we could take a bold step and leave our beloved San Francisco Bay Area, sell our house, and move our two dogs, 26 cats, four year old daughter and infant son to whatever community was willing to take a gamble on my determination to create a No Kill community through the model that the SF/SPCA had forsaken. We chose the latter when the upstate New York community of Tompkins County offered me the job as Executive Director of the local SPCA which ran animal control for all 10 towns and cities of the county. On June 11, 2001, literally the day I started, the killing came to end in Tompkins County and a historic milestone was crossed. From day one of my job as Executive Director, the TC/SPCA began saving rather than ending the lives of the animals in its care, by implementing, then expanding, the San Francisco model of sheltering.

It was not without its challenges. No one had ever taken a full-service open admission shelter and operated it as a No Kill shelter. How do you rehabilitate a dog who has been chained her whole life and is globally under-socialized and resource aggressive? How do you operate beyond capacity and prevent the spread of disease? How do you save all the motherless neonatal animals coming through the doors? How do you provide lifesaving surgery for emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week? And how do you save them all when in addition to dogs and cats, puppies and kittens, you are also getting hundreds of rabbits, birds, mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, lizards, chickens, horses, even a stray cow, while running an inherited \$124,000 per year structural deficit in a shelter built decades earlier to warehouse and kill animals? There was no model in existence; even San Francisco did not go that far, the field of dog rehabilita-

tion was in its infancy, and every veterinary college was telling shelters it could not be done. But I was determined to do it anyway.

I impaneled a committee of some of the most respected veterinarians in the nation: a Cornell epidemiologist, the head of the Cornell Feline Health Center, and a veterinary behaviorist. I told them I was going to double up dogs and cats, mix litters, and operate the shelter at well beyond capacity, and I needed them to help me do it. "It can't be done," they said. "It will cause stress and disease." I told them it was their job to help me figure out how to do so without stress and disease. "It can't be done," they said. I told them to figure it out, anyway. Together, we did. We reduced killing by 75 percent while reducing disease rates and deaths in kennel by over 90 percent from the model I inherited. At the same time, we went from a \$124,000



**"It's Great to Be Alive!" became the No Kill rallying cry when I took over the Tompkins County SPCA in 2001, working with an eager, animal-loving public to create the nation's first No Kill "animal control" shelter.**





a year deficit to a \$23,000 surplus as the animal lovers of Tompkins County rewarded our efforts with tremendous financial generosity.

I served as the Executive Director of that agency for three years, helping to build a firm and lasting infrastructure, including building the nation's first green-certified animal shelter, and solidifying a shelter culture which I hoped would allow No Kill to continue even after I left. For I was determined to eventually focus my time and energy on a singular mission: spread the No Kill model to shelters across the nation. I founded the No Kill Advocacy Center to do so.

In this effort, the No Kill Advocacy Center was on its own, because in spite of the success of the TC/SPCA and my efforts to promote it nationwide through my newly formed organization, the other national organizations like HSUS and the ASPCA behaved as though No Kill did not exist

in Tompkins County. They continued on as before, mired in disproven dogma that justified killing, blind to existing No Kill success and the valuable lessons it held for every shelter in America. My pleas went unheeded, and I never received even the courtesy of a response to my communications introducing this new form of animal sheltering (a model I call the No Kill Equation) or to my letters protesting their regressive policies and philosophies which were the backbone of the traditional kill-oriented sheltering paradigm. After years of futilely trying to appeal to their better natures only to have my overtures ignored, my olive branches trampled, and my reputation smeared, I realized my efforts were in vain. I realized that these organizations weren't interested in changing.

Staffed with former animal shelter directors and employees who themselves failed to save lives, they were threatened by the success of the No Kill Equation and were likewise dedicated to protect-

ing their friends and colleagues currently running shelters who were also failing to do the work necessary to save the lives of the animals in their care. This awareness helped me to understand that in the absence of a personal conviction to end the killing, there was simply no motivation for the people working at these groups to try to do so. As long as the American public was ignorant that a lifesaving alternative existed, the failure of these organizations to embrace the No Kill Equation did not matter. Unaware of evidence to the contrary, people believed them when they portrayed

## An article from the local newspaper, *The Ithaca Journal*, highlighting our success.

### Tompkins SPCA boasts lowest kill rate in U.S.

By DAN HIGGINS  
Journal Staff

ITHACA — Tompkins County's SPCA is the safest place to be a homeless dog or cat, according to a national publication that tracks euthanasia statistics.

The journal *Animal People* said Ithaca ranked No. 1 in the nation with the lowest per-capita rate for dogs and cats being put down in animal shelters.

In 2002, the Tompkins County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals took in 2,454 dogs and cats, and killed 185 of them, which works out to around 1.9 dogs and cats per 1,000 people.

Compare that to the national average of 15 destroyed dogs and cats per thousand, said *Animal People* editor Merritt Clifton, and Ithaca is leading the pack when it comes to animal protection.

"It works when you have an aggressive, low-cost pet steril-

#### Shelter survey

Ithaca rated No. 1 in a survey compiled by the journal *Animal People*, in lowest number of euthanized animals per 1,000 people. The geographic areas include both cities and states. *Animal People* editor Merritt Clifton said the geographical areas surveyed were kept together based on whether they had the same methods for retrieving and testing stray or abandoned animals.

Place	Dogs and Cats destroyed	deaths per 1,000 people
Ithaca/Tompkins County	185	1.9
New Hampshire	2,575	2.2
San Francisco	1,942	2.6
New York City	36,500	4.6
New Jersey	48,551	5.8
San Diego	16,463	5.8
Maine	8,000	6.3
Rochester	4,511	6.3
Colorado	119,340	8.3
Missoula, MT	748	8.4
Buffalo/Erie County	7,871	8.5
United States	4.4 million	15.5

Source: *Animal People*

ization program, a relatively affluent community and a dynamic executive director," said Clifton.

Executive Director Nathan Winograd said Thursday that becoming a "no-kill" shelter depends on having enough motivated volunteers, and enough financial resources.

"I didn't do this. Twelve employees didn't do this. An entire compassionate community did this," Winograd said.

He said another reason why the proportion of destroyed animals was so low was the local shelter's decision to find

See SPCA, 2B







the problem of shelter killing as insurmountable and therefore donated to them in spite of the killing. That is when I realized that in my continued attempts to appeal to these groups, I was acting in vain as animals needlessly died. I came to understand that if I wanted to reform an industry and a movement that had no interest in reforming themselves, I would have to do it from the outside, in.

#### THE LATER YEARS

I resolved to take my message directly to the animal-loving American people who would then force their local shelters and these groups to embrace the change they so stalwartly opposed. In 2007, I released my first book, *Redemption: The Myth of Pet Overpopulation & The No Kill Revolution in America*. It tells the story of the early founding of the humane movement in North America by the great Henry Bergh and how his noble legacy was betrayed when SPCAs and humane societies took over the job of killing animals they were founded to protect. It also tells the story of San Francisco's success, then Tompkins County's, and then others. Challenging the myths and dogmas that had built up over the years to justify and excuse shelter killing, *Redemption*, and its follow up *Irreconcilable Differences: The Battle for the Heart & Soul of America's Animal Shelters*, spoke to the experiences of shelter volunteers and rescuers throughout the coun-

try who were weary of the killing and weary of the hostility they, too, experienced when trying to reform deplorable practices at their local shelters. Providing hope and a road map for lifesaving, grassroots companion animal advocates embraced the message of *Redemption* and *Irreconcilable Differences*, and the No Kill movement gained new life.

At the same time, I worked with shelters across the country, helping others achieve the same level of success as Tompkins County, first in Charlottesville, Virginia, then in Reno, Nevada, and then in several other communities, including

**"There is no room for No Kill as morally superior."**

Ed Sayres,  
ASPCA President, 2007

**"The animals... got the gift of euthanasia, and to them it was the best gift they've ever had. How dare you pretend to help animals and turn your back on those who want an exit from an uncaring world!"**

Ingrid Newkirk,  
PETA Founder & President, 2006

**"[HSUS] doesn't have a problem with humanely euthanizing a stray cat."**

John Snyder,  
HSUS Vice-President  
of Companion Animals,  
2008





Austin, Texas. Today, there are hundreds of cities and towns across America which, in spite of resistance and push back from the national organizations, have embraced the No Kill Equation, and, like Tompkins County, are saving between 90 and 99 percent of all the animals they take in. The No Kill movement is rapidly growing and gaining converts across the nation pushing for change in their own hometowns. But as welcome as this effort has been, it has also been heart-breaking, revealing an even deeper layer of dysfunction within the animal sheltering industry.

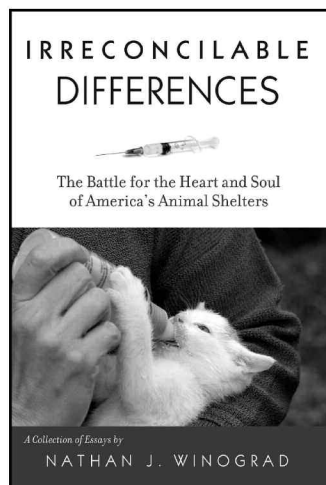
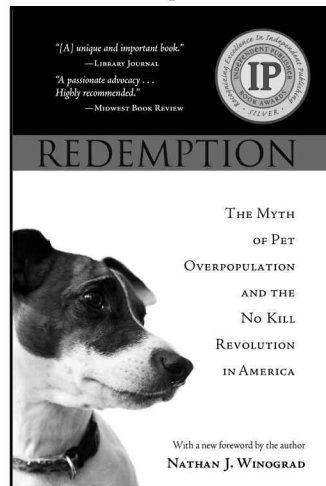
As the movement to end shelter killing has grown in size and sophistication, the networking made possible through the internet and social media has allowed animal lovers to connect the dots between individual cases of animal cruelty and neglect in shelters nationwide. These incidents reveal a distinct pattern. Animal abuse at local shelters is not an isolated anomaly caused by “a few bad apples.” The stunning number and severity of these cases nationwide lead to one disturbing and inescapable conclusion: *our shelters are in crisis.*

Frequently overseen by ineffective and incompetent directors who fail to hold their staff accountable to the most basic standards of humane care, animal shelters in this country are not the safe havens they should and can be. Instead, they are often poorly managed houses of horror, places where animals are denied basic medical care, food, water, socialization and are then killed, sometimes cruelly. The first time many companion animals experience neglect and abuse is when they enter the very place that is supposed to deliver them from it: *the local animal shelter.*

It is a tragic story true to cities and towns across this nation. And the large national animal protection organizations are as much to blame as the individual shelter directors themselves for not only have they fought lifesaving innovation at shelters, they have enabled the neglect and abuse of animals

in shelters, too. For decades they have perpetuated the fiction that all is well in our nation’s shelters. They have assured us that they are overseeing these organizations, providing guidance and assistance to make sure they are run humanely and effectively: through their shelter assessments, their national conferences and their publications for sheltering professionals. In reality, they have ignored abuse, failed to create substantive standards by which to measure success and hold directors accountable and have remained deafeningly silent regarding the epidemic cases of abuse occurring at shelters nationwide. In short, they have failed the public. Over the past 100 years, Americans have trusted these groups to oversee our shelters, writing them checks to do the job while looking the other way because the “experts” were in charge, and in so doing, have allowed our shelters to remain virtually unsupervised and unregulated for decades, with devastating results.

In fact, excluding laws imposed by health departments regarding the use of controlled substances, the disposition of rabid and “aggressive” animals and mandated holding periods, shelter directors in this country have essentially unlimited discretion as to how they operate their facilities. If a shelter director decides to kill each and every animal even if there are empty cages, it is legal for him to do so. In fact, many shelters routinely keep banks of cages intentionally





empty so that their staff does not have to clean those cages or feed the animals inside them. If a non-profit rescue organization wants to save an animal on death row at a shelter, the shelter director has the authority in every state but two to deny the group the ability to do so, and they frequently do. Likewise, shelter directors can kill orphaned kittens and puppies rather than work with volunteers who want to provide foster care. They can ban volunteers from walking dogs and socializing cats. And they can limit the number of hours they are open to the public for adoptions, or have hours that make it difficult for working people to reclaim their lost animals or adopt new ones.

There are no checks and balances to ensure that our shelters are run in line with the most up-to-date sheltering policies and procedures. Instead, our shelters are run on the honor system, and it is a discretion shelter directors abuse time and again by failing to ensure the humane and compassionate care of animals in their charge, to implement readily available lifesaving alternatives or to work cooperatively with those who want to help them save lives. And almost without exception, whenever animal lovers have questioned this arrangement, developed innovative and compassionate alternatives to killing or have brought the need for greater regulation to light, the large national animal protection groups have opposed them. They argue that such reforms are unnecessary, and that, paradoxically, any alternative to killing or any form of regulating shelters to ensure that animals are treated with compassion and are not needlessly killed is not only unnecessary, but will actually put animals in harm's way.

When a statewide survey found that 71 percent of rescue organizations reported that they were turned away from New York State shelters and then those shelters killed the very animals those groups offered to save, the ASPCA fought to maintain the status quo, defeating legislation that would have given rescue

groups the right to save at private expense, the animals shelters are killing at taxpayer expense. When animal lovers in Texas tried to end the practice of gassing animals, a slow and exceedingly cruel way for animals in shelters to be killed, a coalition of animal control groups led by HSUS defeated the bill. (It has since been enacted into law.) Even though the Virginia Animal Control Association defeated legislation to end the statewide practice of killing animals when there are empty cages, when rescue groups are willing to save them and in the case of community cats, when they can be neutered and released, PETA supported their cause and the National Animal Control Association gave them an award for "Outstanding State Association." When a Louisiana shelter killed every single animal in its facility, including cats, because a handful of dogs contracted a mild illness which clears up on its own, HSUS defended them. In Hillsborough County, Florida, despite the fact that the shelter's then-director killed animals in order to keep cages empty, the ASPCA stepped in not to encourage reform, but to buy them a new "euthanasia table" on which to kill animals. And when a shelter in Reno, Nevada, finished the year saving a higher percentage of animals than virtually every other community in the nation, the American Humane Association encouraged them to take a giant step backward and enact a punitive cat licensing scheme which could have led to the round up and killing of cats.

Whether by coming to the defense of regressive shelter directors, working to defeat progressive shelter reform legislation, fighting new and innovative programs to save lives, or calling for the wholesale slaughter of entire groups of animals in shelters, the large groups are the biggest barrier to ensuring the survival of animals in shelters today.

### SEEKING REFORM

The No Kill movement seeks to change this





tragic reality by bringing standards and accountability to a field that has historically lacked it, by exposing the truth about our shelters, by calling for the replacement of poorly performing shelter directors, and by seeking legislation that legally mandates common sense procedures that shelters should already be following. Where laws mandating lifesaving policies and procedures have passed, greater lifesaving has immediately followed. Legally requiring shelters to do what they refuse to do is the quickest and most effective means animal lovers have to reform our nation's shelters, and to orient them towards lifesaving. Yet, as I document in detail in my most recent book, *Friendly Fire*, whenever and wherever animal lovers mount campaigns for reform or seek legislation, the opposition of the large animal protection groups hinders their efforts. Too often, animal lovers, the media and legislators become confused and cannot see beyond the names and reputations of these organizations to discern their true motives. Too often, the opposition of animal protection organizations sows seeds of doubt regarding the need or nature of common sense reform and efforts falter or fail.

We are a nation of animal lovers, and we, and the animals we love, deserve better. We deserve shelters that reflect our progressive and compassionate values, not thwart them. We now have a solution to shelter killing and it is not difficult, expensive, or beyond practical means to achieve. As the documentary states, "Only one thing stands in the way of its widespread implementation: a deeply troubled and dysfunctional animal protection movement that undermines the effort at every turn."

If we are to prevail, we need to neutralize its harmful and deadly effect. By explaining the na-

ture of this opposition, by exposing the history of these groups and the actions they take which undermine the cause of No Kill, I hope to inspire in others—animal lovers, public officials, legislators, the media—the confidence and courage necessary to see through, and stand up to, those who seek to delay and derail urgently needed shelter reform.

Through the No Kill movement, we can create a country in which it is illegal to kill animals who enter shelters. We can create a country in which children are raised with higher expectations for the treatment of animals—and an understanding and acceptance that animals have legal rights. And we can establish powerful advocates for the well-being of animals in every community by reclaiming the thousands of shelters across our nation, and reorienting them away from killing and back to their founding missions: *to advocate for and save animals*.

In failing to exploit this potential, we are failing all animals who would benefit from the powerful

legal, philosophical and societal precedents the animal protection movement could realize through the achievement of a No Kill nation. Yet we are prevented from harvesting this low-hanging fruit by the very groups who should be leading the charge to reap it, a betrayal that I cannot ignore, downplay, or allow to continue without a fight that is, to quote the great abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, "as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice." That there are those who choose to portray my efforts to reform the animal protection movement as an effort to sabotage it is regrettable, though predictable. My hope is that anyone inclined to believe those who seek to undermine my efforts by disparaging my character and my motives will read my story and not only reject their baseless accusations, but join me in my fight as well.



# MISSION

## SAVE AMERICA'S SHELTER ANIMALS



# ENLIST TODAY!



# JENNIFER WINOGRAD



FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER AND  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS,  
NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER

In the film, I discuss an event that took place early in my journey as an animal activist and one that would help shape the nature of my advocacy for decades: the 1993 public hearings on the proposed “Adoption Act” by the San Francisco Commission of Animal Control & Welfare. This law would have required the city pound to give animals they were planning to kill to the San Francisco SPCA, which would then guarantee those animals a home. Because the local pound had repeatedly refused the SPCA’s offers to work collaboratively with it to save more lives, SPCA leadership faced a choice: either allow the city pound to continue killing animals the SPCA was willing and able to save, or bring the matter to the attention of the people of San Francisco and ask them to decide: *should the city pound be allowed to continue killing animals who had an immediate place to go?*

The SPCA was betting that if the animal lovers of San Francisco knew what the city pound was doing, they would force it, by law, to behave as ethics and kindness toward animals demanded. As a citizen of San Francisco, an animal lover, and a volunteer with the San Francisco SPCA who was

also working for a national animal rights group, I attended this meeting to voice my support for the proposal which I was sure would carry the day. After all, who could oppose such a compassionate, reasonable, lifesaving proposition? Who would claim that homeless animals should be killed when the San Francisco SPCA, the most respected animal protection organization in the city, was guaranteeing to find them a home at their own expense?

The evening of the meeting, I entered a room filled to capacity, thrilled to see so many familiar faces in attendance. Surrounding me were individuals with whom I had worked on a variety of other animal issues, such as anti-fur and anti-vivisection campaigns and those promoting veganism. Side by side with many of them, I had passed out information about veganism at street fairs and other public events, had protested in front of department stores selling fur, and worked to expose cruel animal experiments being done at local universities. As was true whenever an important animal issue like this one arose in the Bay Area, this core group of animal activists could be counted on to speak for the animals. As I scanned the room,







I remember feeling grateful that so many of them had shown up to also advocate for the dogs and cats on death row at the local pound.

I was tragically mistaken.

In shock and confusion, I listened as they stood before the Commission demonizing the heroic, lifesaving efforts of the SPCA and its proposed animal protection law. I listened as one by one they celebrated the resistance of the regressive city pound that was killing animals; an agency whose intransigence to the SPCA proposal and my experiences as a community cat caretaker had shown me was the true enemy of animal welfare in San Francisco. Through tortured logic and outright lies, the very same people who opposed the killing of animals for food, the use of animals in experiments, the wearing of leather and fur, and hunting animals for sport, offered the same message over and over again: *let dogs and cats die*.

Facing intense opposition from Bay Area shelters, animal rights groups, national organizations, and local activists, the commissioners chose inaction. The “Adoption Act,” which would have meant life instead of death for thousands of San Francisco animals and at no cost to taxpayers, was tabled. Instead, the Commission encouraged the SPCA and the city pound to work out their “differences.” At the behest of so called “animal rights activists” and other local animal “shelters,” there would be no law to protect the dogs and cats on death row in San Francisco after all. I was stunned.

Relatively new to animal activism and still unaware of the double standard for companion animals that exists within the animal protection movement to this very day, I had yet to learn that the modern animal rights movement is not what it should be. Unlike other movements for social change that have preceded it, the animal rights movement does not advocate that the intended beneficiaries of its efforts possess an unequivocal

right to life. On the contrary, according to some animal rights advocates and virtually all the national animal rights groups, the rights of animals end the moment they cross the threshold of an animal shelter. Why? Because when it comes to the killing of companion animals, it is mostly the animal protection movement itself that is doing it, at the 3,500 animal “shelters” across this nation. Granted political cover by the nation’s largest animal protection groups—primarily HSUS, the ASPCA, PETA, and the American Humane Association—as well as the legions of gullible grassroots animal activists who defer to the supposed “expertise” of these groups by perpetuating their antiquated and deadly views about companion animals, shelters in this nation have, until very recently, been granted the ability to kill with virtual impunity.

Although over 20 years later, it would be difficult for me to recall specific details of most of my early work for animals, that meeting of the San Francisco Animal Welfare Commission where I watched vegan after vegan urge the Commission to allow the continued slaughter of puppies, kittens, cats, and dogs stands out like a beacon in my memory, a bright light illuminating a path forward. For it was at that moment that I realized that something had gone terribly wrong and that the animal protection movement itself was in desperate need of reform, a cause to which I, along with the man I would soon meet and later marry, Nathan Winograd, would go on to dedicate our lives.

Through the No Kill Advocacy Center, our writings, and with this film, we hope to inspire the animal rights movement to become what it should be: an authentic, uncompromising, and morally consistent voice for all animals that champions—rather than opposes—the value that should be at the very heart of its cause: *the right to life for all animals*. And as we write in our book, *Friendly Fire*, which explores the many causes to blame for the

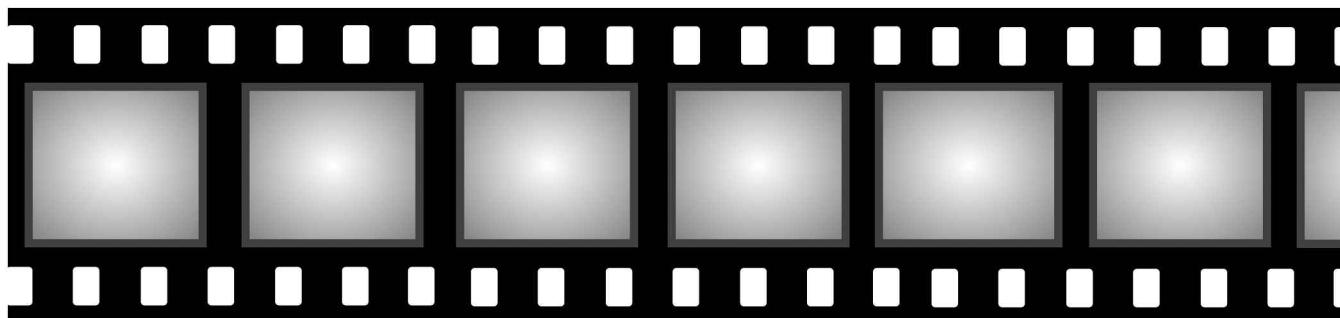




animal rights movement's historical opposition to No Kill, it is a struggle that we will continue until "the need to distinguish between 'No Kill' and 'the animal [rights] movement' no longer exists, because both sides will have finally become what they should have been all along: one and the same."

*Jennifer is a founding Board member of the No Kill Advocacy Center and its director of publications. She has worked for several of the largest animal rights organizations in the nation, has taught classes on vegan living, has spoken*

*at the national No Kill Conference, and has been active in animal rescue work, including community cat advocacy, for well over two decades. She is the author, with Nathan, of two books: All American Vegan, a vegan cookbook which, in 2011, was named USA Book News best cookbook in its class, and Friendly Fire, a book exposing the historical, financial, and sociological causes behind the animal protection movement's opposition to No Kill. A graduate of the University of San Francisco, she also received her Master's degree in the Humanities from Dominican University. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with Nathan, their two kids, and a host of rescued animals.*







FORMER COMMUNITY PROGRAMS MANAGER,  
SAN FRANCISCO SPCA



VOLUNTEER,  
NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER

Michael Baus was the Community Programs Manager at the San Francisco SPCA, from 1995-2000 during the organization's seminal period. His duties included overseeing the daily operation of numerous outreach programs, including the Community Cat, Pets of Homeless People, and Pets in Rental Housing programs. He was also active in wildlife rescue, local and state legislation, and the organization's advocacy campaigns.

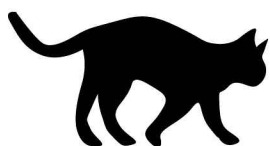
Since 2001, he has lent his services to the Tompkins County SPCA as well as the national No Kill Advocacy Center, where he has aided in No Kill reform efforts across the country, including Philadelphia, Houston, and the greater Seattle area, among others. A vegan for over 20 years, Michael resides in the San Francisco Bay Area with his vegan wife, two vegan children, and several animal companions.



**MICHAEL  
BAUS**

FORMER DIRECTOR,  
NEVADA HUMANE SOCIETY

Bonney Brown is the former director of the Nevada Humane Society in Reno. Under her leadership, NHS doubled adoptions and, in partnership with Washoe County Regional Animal Services, raised the overall save rate to 94 percent communitywide.

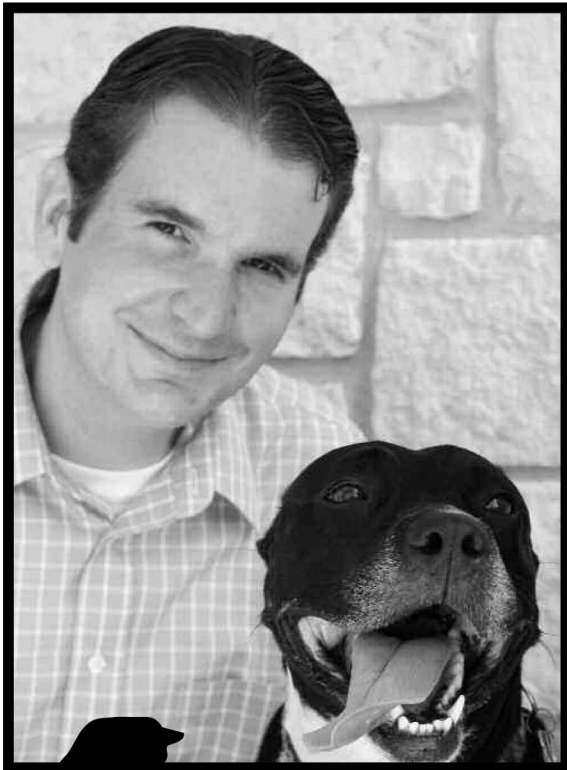


**BONNEY  
BROWN**





ATTORNEY  
FOUNDER, [FixAustin.org](http://FixAustin.org)

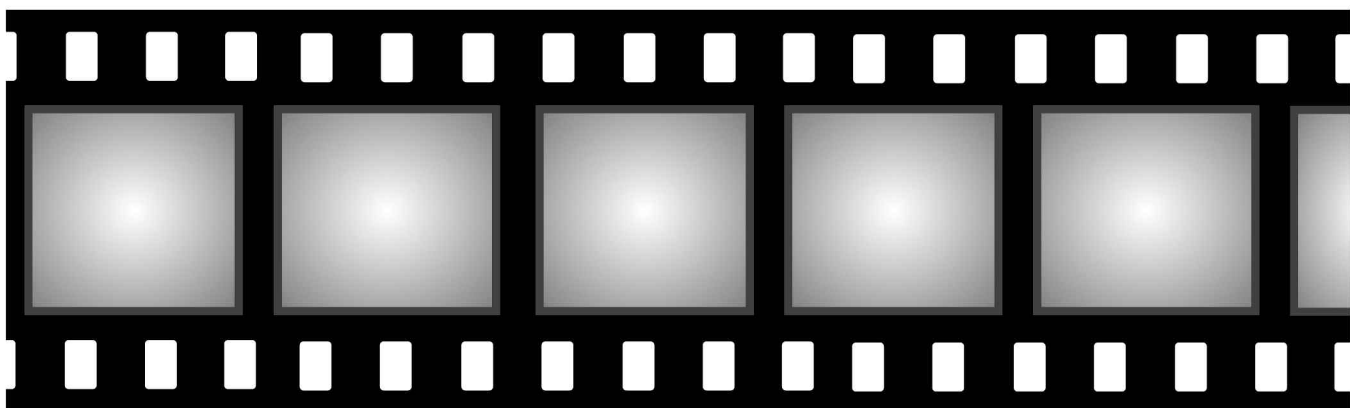


RYAN  
CLINTON

Ryan Clinton is a Texas appellate attorney and a former Texas Assistant Solicitor General who has successfully handled appeals in the Texas Supreme Court, the United States Court of Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court. In 2013, Ryan was recognized as one of Texas's top 25 lawyers under the age of 40 by Texas Lawyer magazine, and he has also nine times been named one of Texas's best appellate attorneys under 40 in Texas Monthly magazine.

Outside of work, Ryan helped lead Austin, Texas's successful effort to become a No Kill community. In 2005, he co-founded FixAustin.org with the goal of ending the killing of healthy and treatable animals at Austin's municipal shelter. In 2010, the Austin City Council unanimously mandated that the City's shelter implement proven programs and policies to achieve a 90 percent save rate based on a plan that Ryan helped draft. Ryan received the No Kill Advocacy Center's Henry Bergh Leadership Award in 2009 for his work to reform animal shelters locally and nationally.

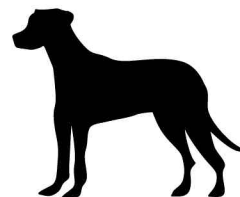
Ryan received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Virginia School of Law. He received his undergraduate degree from Duke University. Although Ryan was raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and has lived in Austin since 2000, he nonetheless asserts that he bleeds Duke Blue, and has been known to sport face paint among the infamous "Cameron Crazies." He lives with his wife, son and several animal companions.





## MIKE FRY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ANIMAL ARK  
RADIO HOST,  
ANIMAL WISE RADIO

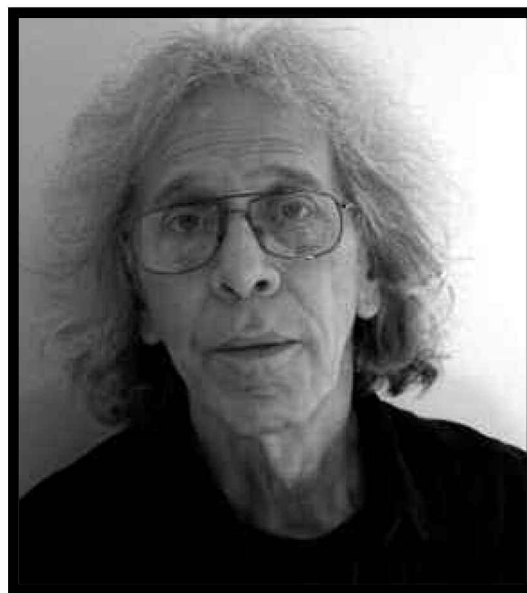


Mike Fry is the former Clinic Coordinator for the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at the University of Minnesota and the former Rehabilitation Manager for the HOWL Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Seattle. Currently, he is the Executive Director of Animal Ark, Minnesota's first and largest No Kill animal shelter. Under his leadership, Animal Ark created the first No Kill community in Minnesota and maintains one of the highest save rates in the nation. Mike is also the creator of Just One Day, a campaign of Animal Ark and the No Kill Advocacy Center which encourages shelters nationwide to embrace the programs and services of the No Kill Equation every June 11, the anniversary of Tompkins County, New York's No Kill success. Each year, this campaign saves the lives of tens of thousands of shelter animals. He is also co-host of Animal Wise Radio.



CAT RESCUER  
VOLUNTEER,  
TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA

With a background in business management, Brian Gold and his wife Marcia became volunteers at the Tompkins County SPCA in 1999, their first experience with an animal shelter. Over the next 18 months with other volunteers, they shared what seemed like endless days of heartbreak and frustration as well as a determination to reform shelter practices. In the years since the transformative arrival of Nathan Winograd and the implementation of No Kill policies at the shelter in June 2001, most of their free time has been devoted to a greatly expanded family of felines, specializing in the care of cats with feline leukemia.



## BRIAN GOLD





## VOLUNTEER, TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA

Ellie Haith has lived with dogs as long as she can remember, though she will admit to sheltering a stray cat in her college dorm room for a couple of weeks, and caring for a terrific house rabbit for eight years. She began volunteering at the SPCA of Tompkins County in 1995, first as a dog walker, then as an adoption counselor. She was incredibly fortunate to witness the building and opening of the new Pet Adoption Center: on opening day, the sight of ALL the resident dogs lying peacefully on their beds in “doggy apartments” instead of barking incessantly in cages caused tears of joy.

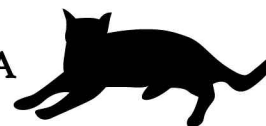
Since retiring, Ellie has been able to spend two afternoons a week helping to place wonderful cats, dogs and other small critters into loving homes through the TC/SPCA. Ellie and her husband currently share a roof with Annie and Harry, two rescued dogs who are suitably spoiled and deeply loved.



**ELLIE  
HAITH**



## FORMER VOLUNTEER, TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA LEGISLATIVE ACTIVIST



After studying biology at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, Valerie Hayes volunteered at the Tompkins County SPCA. It was not what she expected. The heartbreaking killing of two of her foster kittens and her resolve to reform the practices of the shelter are told in “I Was There: One Volunteer’s View of a Shelter’s Transition to No Kill,” found on page 48. As she writes, “Among the reading material left lying around the shelter

**VALERIE HAYES**

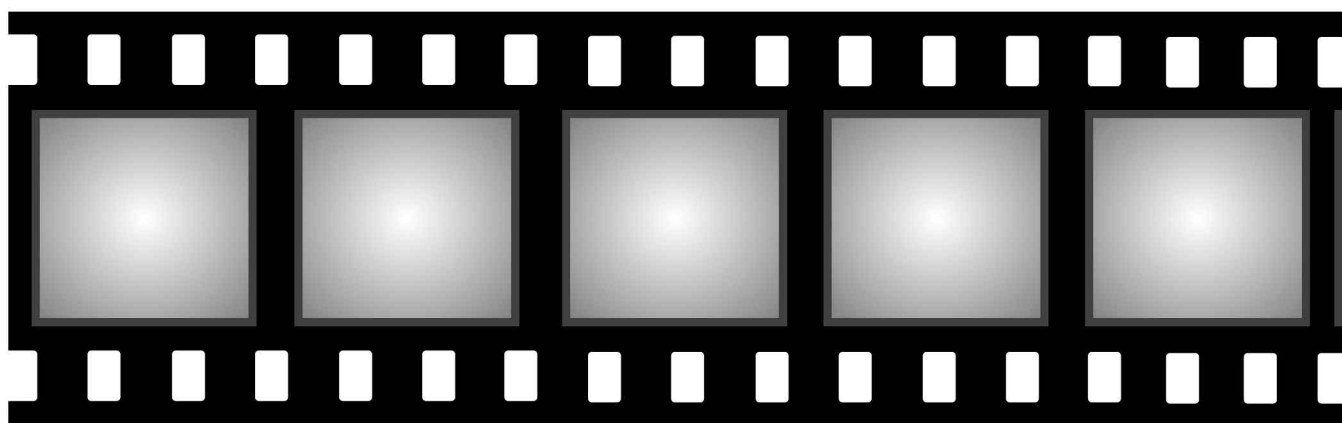




was a publication from California, a newsletter from a foundation I'd never heard of before. I remember standing in the lobby of the TC/SPCA, in front of the desk as I read it. I can picture the room, the angle of the sunlight coming through the window, and where I was standing, perfectly. It told of a day when the entire nation would be No Kill. No shelter in the entire country would kill healthy or treatable animals. The author was even crazy enough to put a date on it and it would be within my lifetime. It seemed so incredibly

impossible as to defy even imagining.... I could not have known then that I was standing exactly where it would happen first." Valerie would have a hand in making that true.

Since moving to Georgia with her husband and their rescued dogs and cats, she was involved in the successful campaign to pass Grace's Law, which banned the use of the gas chamber to kill dogs and cats in Georgia shelters.



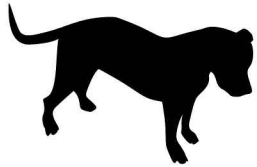
# KERRY CLAIR



FORMER PRESIDENT,  
PETS ALIVE

Kerry Clair is the former President of Pets Alive of New York. Under Kerry's leadership, Pets Alive become a safe haven for ill, elderly, abused and behaviorally challenged animals, with a 99 percent adoption rate. With Kerry at the helm, Pets Alive—a small but powerful voice for No Kill—took on some giant opponents. Most notably, Kerry worked with local lawmakers to spearhead the fight for Oreo's Law, named after a dog killed by the ASPCA, after the ASPCA refused to turn her over to Pets Alive which offered her a permanent home in their sanctuary.





**BOARD PRESIDENT,  
UPPER PENINSULA ANIMAL  
WELFARE SHELTER**

Reva Laituri has been volunteering for the Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter (UPAWS) for more than 25 years. She began by working the front counter, admitting and adopting animals, answering the telephone, and performing general office duties. What began as a three-hour position on alternating Saturdays quickly grew in time and scope and today averages 25 hours per week, including as President of the Board of Directors.

Her proudest moment was to have been part of the board's decision to stop needlessly killing animals and to commit UPAWS to changes that would eventually result in moving from a save rate of only 34 percent to one that consistently ranges from 97 percent to 100 percent. Reva resides in Negaunee Township with her husband, three dogs—Hadley, Fiona, and Muffin—and a host of foster dogs.



## REVA LAITURI



**CITY COUNCIL MEMBER,  
AUSTIN, TEXAS**

Austin City Council Member Mike Martinez spearheaded the City Council's embrace of the effort for a No Kill Austin. Before taking office in 2006, Council Member Martinez served as an Austin firefighter for 13 years and in 2003, was elected the President of the Austin Firefighters Association where he led a successful campaign to secure collective bargaining rights for Austin firefighters. He also served as the Chair of the Austin Firefighters Association Political Action Committee from 2001-2004, where he represented the interests of public safety professionals in elections and campaigns. Council Member Martinez's family includes his wife, their two sons, their dog Chucho (mentioned in the film) and three adopted cats, Kizmet, Punkin, and Tater Tot.



## MIKE MARTINEZ





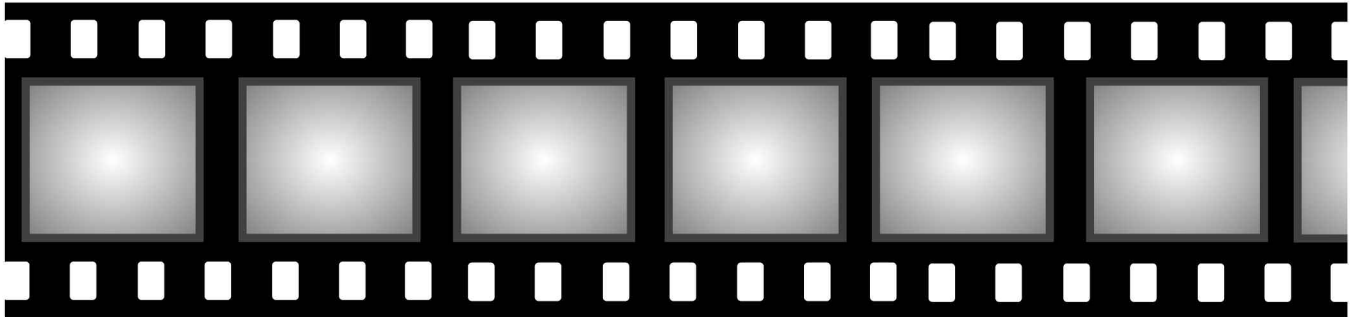


**VOLUNTEER,  
TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA**



Allison Myers has lived most of her life in the Ithaca, New York area and has been a volunteer and foster parent for the SPCA of Tompkins County since April 2000. She and her husband share their home with several cats and a small dog, all adopted from the TC/SPCA. She was part of the core group of volunteers who successfully led the transition to No Kill.

# ALLISON MYERS



**FORMER CHAIR, CITY OF AUSTIN/TRAVIS  
COUNTY ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD**

As Chair of the Animal Advisory Commission, Larry Tucker oversaw Austin's transition to No Kill. He was the lead author of the No Kill Recommendations and Implementation Plan, modeled after the No Kill Equation, which was unanimously approved by the Austin City Council in March of 2010. Since the Plan was implemented, the City of Austin achieved and has since maintained a save rate of better than 90 percent.

Larry was the recipient of the 2011 Henry Bergh Leadership Award, which recognizes those who have an unwavering commitment to ending the systematic killing of animals in shelters. He has been a panelist at the No Kill Conference and has spoken at the American Pets Alive conference. He resides in Austin, TX with his husband Lupe and Mouse, their cat.



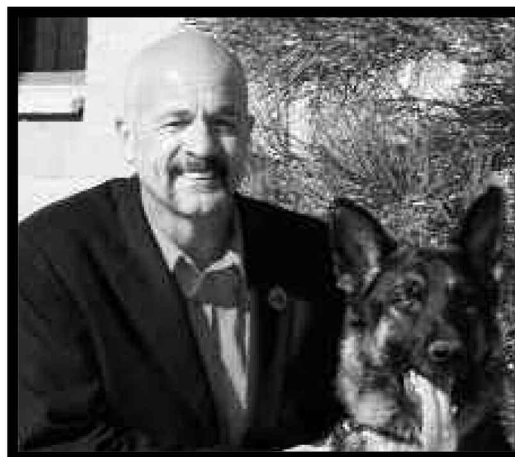
# LARRY TUCKER





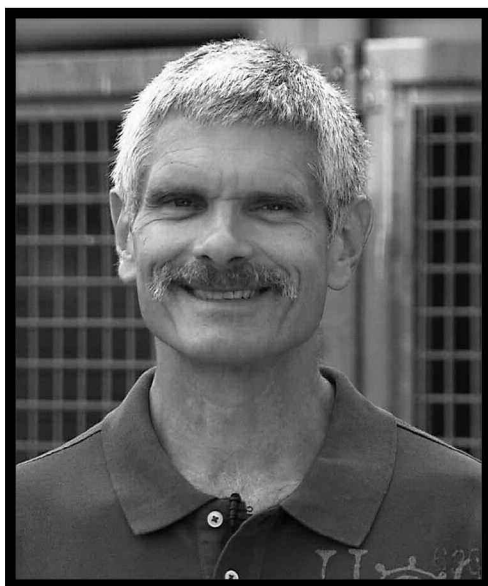
FORMER MANAGER,  
WASHOE COUNTY REGIONAL ANIMAL SERVICES

# MITCH SCHNEIDER



Mitch Schneider is the former manager of Washoe County Regional Animal Services, which includes the cities of Reno and Sparks, in northern Nevada. Under his leadership, Washoe County saved 94 percent of the animals despite a per capita intake rate over 10 times that of New York City. He has a business management background and began his career in the animal world as a professional dog trainer, before spending the next 30 years in animal control sheltering: as an animal control officer, a member of the Minnesota Animal Control Association Board of Directors, supervisor, animal control manager, and even interim director for the No Kill Nevada Humane Society.

Mitch frequently gives presentations and consults for animal control agencies throughout the United States on progressive approaches to animal control; including speaking at the International City/County Management Association's national Alliance-for-Innovation conference. He was awarded the Henry Bergh Leadership Award by the No Kill Advocacy Center, the Maddie's Fund Community Lifesaving Award, and received a leadership award from the Northern Nevada SPCA. He is currently the Program Director and trainer for G.I. DOGS, a program that transforms abandoned animals into companion dogs for disabled veterans.



VOLUNTEER,  
TOMPKINS COUNTY SPCA

Bob Wise earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of South Carolina. After graduation, Bob developed test software for U.S. Air Force radar systems and U.S. Navy sonar and minesweeper magnetic field measurement systems. In the private sector, Bob developed textile manufacturing process control software. He is currently a network engineer at Cornell University. He was part of a core group of volunteers who successfully led the Tompkins County SPCA transition to No Kill.

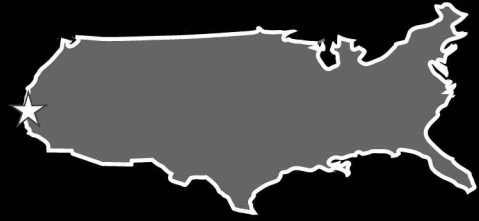
# BOB WISE





SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA  
ITHACA, NEW YORK  
RENO, NEVADA  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

# SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



## THE TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY OF SAN FRANCISCO: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

by Nathan Winograd

Several years ago, the *San Francisco Chronicle* broke a story about the San Francisco Police Department Crime Lab. It claimed that the police crime lab was itself potentially a den of criminal activity. A technician there was alleged to have been stealing some of the drugs seized as evidence and getting high. Ultimately, they closed the lab. And then a subsequent front page headline told of another fall out: “S.F. crime lab’s new woes—army of feral cats.”

When they closed the crime lab, the Police Department ordered the removal of the community cats who made their home in the warehouse where the lab was located. One by one, the cats were trapped and taken to the city pound. Although a spokesman for the city pound said that “They will be evaluated,” those of us who have long been insiders knew that this was merely “shelter speak” for killing those cats who are not socialized to humans. While cats nationally have a

60 percent chance of being killed, when those cats are “feral” or unsocial with humans, the death rates climbs to 100 percent, unless that shelter neuters and releases, rather than euphemistically “evaluates” those cats for adoption.

I could write a lot about why this is wrong, why this is wrong for San Francisco, why killing cats is unethical, why it simply won’t work if the goal is eliminating the cats from the area, and why the country as a whole is rejecting this sort of cruelty to cats. That is what I would normally do and that is what I have done in four prior books and perhaps thousands of blogs, articles, interviews, and social media posts. In fact, that is why I wrote *Redemption*, the book, and made *Redemption*, the film. Here, I am going to do something different, something I rarely do. I am going to talk about my feelings. If you’ve read my books, my writings, or if you’ve heard me speak, you know that the last thing anyone would accuse me of is being

“touchy-feely.” But the demise of San Francisco has been so personally and professionally painful; I need to put it into a very personal context. This is a story of loss.

I was not born and raised in San Francisco. But it is the city I chose to be my adopted home; the city I hand-picked out of all the possibilities when I chose where to go to law school. I could have lived in a number of other U.S. cities, but I chose San Francisco. And I have never looked back. I’ve not always lived in the city itself. But even when I am in other communities around the Bay Area, it is the *San Francisco* Bay Area I live in, measured by the proximity to that marvelous city, home to green building codes, to universal health care, to bans on plastic bags, to mandatory composting, to rainbow flags waving proudly in the Castro breeze, to dog walking on Ocean Beach, to watching a ballgame at a stadium that overlooks the Bay and sells vegan hot dogs and, yes, most important to me of all, the birthplace of the modern No Kill movement itself. San Francisco is not without its competitive suitors, mind you and my eye sometimes wanders, but in the end, it is always San Francisco that holds my devotion.

When my wife and I lived in the Marin County community of San Rafael, we were “just North of San Francisco.” In the Oakland Hills, “ten minutes outside of San Francisco.” Ithaca was not “five hours from New York City,” we lived “3,000 miles from home.” And so it was whenever we left for one job or another, we would end up coming back. Always. One evening several years ago, we were visiting my in-laws on Thanksgiving after having moved to Southern California. I had been working at the San Francisco SPCA and left to take a job as a prosecutor in the Riverside County District Attorney’s Office. I had a mound of crushing debt from law school, other financial obligations, and I was getting married. I could not make it work on what I was being paid. So we headed south, leaving my heart, as the famous song goes, in San Francisco. There was a football game on television, the San Francisco 49ers, being played at Candlestick Park. It was dark out, and there was a shot from the Goodyear blimp of the city, framed by the Golden Gate Bridge, rain coming down. I stood there, transfixed. “We have to go home,” I

said to myself. And we did. But as always, opportunity called and we left again. Those days in Riverside, upstate New York, San Diego, and San Clemente were always the days of my exile from my beloved San Francisco. I loved that city and what it stood for. And no better moment captured it than one evening in 1994.

Still a young law student, I was walking to my car near Japantown on the corner of Sutter and Steiner. I just had dinner with Jennifer, my girlfriend—now my wife—and I was heading down the street to get the car on a cold, foggy night while she waited for me in the restaurant. I looked up at the local bus stop and saw an advertisement. It pictured a small dog, ears straight up, head slightly bent, responding to a call. An advertisement for the SPCA’s hearing dog program, the clever tag line simply read, “Hear Boy!” At one time, the SPCA used to pull dogs out of killing shelters all over the state and train them to assist deaf people, by alerting them to a ringing phone, a smoke alarm, and in myriad other ways. (The program, like many others, has been eliminated by recent leaders.) Then as now, I had mixed feelings about the program ethically and philosophically, but in the end, it saved the lives of those dogs, and it was part of a large safety net of care that made San Francisco the beacon of hope for our movement. At that time, San Francisco was the safest urban community for homeless dogs and cats in the United States, its death rates a fraction of the national average. It was the only one saving all healthy dogs and cats and it just cut treatable deaths in half. It had programs and services that were the envy of the nation, and it was well on its way to becoming the nation’s first No Kill community. The achievement of that historic and profound goal was right out in front, there for the taking. And, in those days, I never doubted we’d get there.

As a young animal activist facing what often seemed like insurmountable odds to help animals, I knew that if an issue relating to animals occurred within San Francisco’s city limits, the SF/SPCA would have our back and use its considerable power and resources to help. I can’t adequately describe the feeling seeing that sign emerge out of the fog had upon me. And no matter how often I write, delete, and rewrite, it still comes off as sappy. So

I'll just say it: I was overcome with a feeling of tranquility. I was overcome with love for the city and the SF/SPCA. The animals had a champion. And things were just going to keep getting better. I felt a part of something bigger than me, part of something special and historic. Most of all, the animals were safe.

Jennifer and I had just finished raising a litter of orphaned, motherless kittens, kittens washed out from under a bungalow when they began tearing the bungalows down at a high school in the Sunset district: five of them, barely a few days old, cold to the touch, gasping, and near death when we got them. We nursed them back to health. For eight weeks, we fed them, cared for them, watched them grow and play. All of them survived. We have a picture of them that is still up on our wall: Tabitha, the popular one; Lolita, the little nerdy one; Gray Matter, the chubby one; Olivia, the long haired beauty; and Nathan, Jr., a loud mouth. When they hit the magic number—two pounds—off they went to the San Francisco SPCA, where they were guaranteed a home. Although it hurt to say goodbye, we knew they were in good hands.

As I stood looking at the picture on the bus stop for a moment, I could literally feel tears welling up in my eyes. I was young, I was in love, I was graduating from Stanford Law School, I lived in the greatest city in the U.S., my whole life was ahead of me, and the animals of San Francisco—my city—had a powerful protector. It felt great to be alive.

Of course, I had the opportunity to do my part, having gone to work at the San Francisco SPCA. But the years after my leaving that organization has been like watching someone you love, someone you helped nurture, someone who had so much going for them, so much promise, the valedictorian, the one voted “most likely to succeed,” leave the nest and then make a series of intentional, though disastrous choices that leave that person, or in this case, that organization—as a local magazine devastatingly though deadly accurately described—a “shell of its former self.”

In the time before its demise, I would sit in the former office of my boss, the President, on the corner of 16th Street and Alabama, late in the

evenings, talking about what needed to be done, how to push the envelope further, how to respond to some dishonest claim by HSUS or the ASPCA about our work, how to protect a colony of community cats under attack by the National Park Service. There we'd sit, talking away, and I'd look out to the window, the little bullethole where someone once took a shot at him, the roof of the printing factory next door with all the roosting pigeons, drinking dark colored swill water that passed for coffee because it was cheap. We made mistakes, but we cared, we worked long hours. There was no play book back then. No “No Kill Equation” to emulate. It was all trial and error.

When Brian O'Neill, the then-Superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) tried to eliminate off-leash dog walking, we threatened legal action. When they tried to kick out the cats who made the GGNRA their home, we fought back. And more often than not, we prevailed. Because we were strong, the 800-pound gorilla, with tens of thousands of San Franciscans, including some of the city's most influential citizens, in our camp.

One day, I was driving to work and I heard on the radio that sticky glue traps were just installed throughout City Hall because of a “mouse infestation.” *Why not humane deterrents? Why not proofing?* I remember thinking. Killing was not the San Francisco way; even for those critters some people, because of societal bias, might erroneously and unfairly label “pests.” But we were the San Francisco SPCA. All animals were worthy of our compassion. We always stood up for the little guy. And glue traps were not only deadly, but a particularly brutal way to die (usually through starvation or suffocation). No, it would not stand.

When I got to the SPCA, I fired off a letter to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors, and I initiated the alert to our advocates—a list of animal lovers who would go into battle when we issued the call to arms. I summoned the team into my office and discussed next steps, the roll out of the campaign. But those turned out to be unnecessary, because the calls and emails were all it took; a “shot across the bow” one city commissioner later described it. One letter and a phone tree, and within hours, the



President of the Board of Supervisors was on the telephone calling to tell me he ordered them taken out, that very day. “Call off the troops,” he told me, describing how the switchboard was being tied up by angry San Franciscans demanding that the city stop killing mice. “I will, Tom,” I replied graciously. “Thanks for listening.” But how could he not? We spoke in a loud symphony, tens of thousands of compassionate voices strong.

And while saving all dogs and cats was the chief goal and aim of the organization, and sometimes the fight involved mice or frogs or turtles or deer or pigs, the animal nearest and dearest to my department, the Department of Ethical Studies (later, the Department of Law and Advocacy), was the free-living, wild, community cat.

We negotiated the first ever neuter and release program on a military base, at the naval station on Treasure Island. We signed an agreement with the city to do the same on all Housing Authority properties. We forced the Commission on the Environment to abandon its plan for the removal of cats from Golden Gate Park. We convinced the GGNRA to sign an agreement allowing the cats within its borders. And we brokered an agreement with the city pound to be the first responder for “nuisance” cat calls involving “feral cats” so that we could convince the complainant of non-lethal alternatives (we never failed!). And that was just the tip of the iceberg. We saved every healthy and treatable kitten at the city pound, thousands of cats, and a whole lot more. And then it was all gone. San Francisco would not cross the goal line, let alone become the nation’s first No Kill community. That honor would go to someone else, using the very model that the SPCA created but would ultimately reject.

By 2000, just six years after launching the movement, the San Francisco SPCA, under new and disastrous leadership, abandoned all

pretensions to No Kill entirely. Advocacy departments were closed. And today, the SPCA turns needy animals away from its \$30-million state-of-the-art fee-for-service animal hospital; even though it claimed the hospital was necessary to help needy animals. It allows the brutal city shelter to kill animals, choosing to impound more “highly adoptable” ones from outside the city. It has even killed savable animals itself, something that I would have called “unthinkable” if you asked me about the possibility in those early, heady days. And it led the fight against a No Kill San Francisco in hearings before the Commission on Animal Control & Welfare; the very same Commission it stood in front of in 1993, demanding that it embrace it. Oh how times have changed.

And then the *Chronicle* announces a “round up and kill” campaign for community cats. The city which once criticized other shelters for lying to the public about their cat policy by promoting “trap and evaluate,” a euphemism for trap and kill, was now using the very terminology. And the SPCA was deafeningly silent on the issue. The SPCA was not fighting back. No quote from the President denouncing the action. No telephone tree to the advocates who would flood city hall and tie up the switchboard. No position statements on their website. No letters to the Police Chief. No threats of legal action. No campaigns for clemency. Nothing. The cats faced killing, while the 800-pound gorilla is reduced to a 90-pound weakling, asleep at the wheel.

It is gone. It is gone. It is gone. A self-inflicted wound.

*What’s here? A cup, closed in my true love’s hand?  
Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.*

Can a city break your heart? It can, if that city is San Francisco.



# ITHACA, NEW YORK



## I WAS THERE: ONE VOLUNTEER'S VIEW OF A SHELTER'S TRANSITION TO NO KILL

by Valerie Hayes

The Tompkins County SPCA is located at 1640 Hanshaw Road in Ithaca, NY, but well outside of town. Many people know it from having read *Redemption: the Myth of Pet Overpopulation and the No Kill Revolution in America*. In *Redemption*, Nathan Winograd recounts the history of American animal sheltering and describes how, under his leadership, Tompkins County, NY became the first truly No Kill community in the entire United States. The inspiring story of its overnight transformation from overkill to No Kill has moved many to replicate its success. It has also infuriated others who have a vested interest in the status quo and its intrinsic failures, and they have alternately ignored and denied the accomplishment of ‘the little shelter that could’, and of the first community in the country to get sick and tired of death and to stop the killing.

I’ve read *Redemption* too, but it’s a little bit different for me. To me, the Tompkins County SPCA is more than a story in a book that I just happened to pick up off the shelf—I was there.

My perspective on No Kill is one of somebody who can look back on a story that has already played out, but who remembers that the struggle looked quite different when we were facing directly into it—back then the future of the TC/SPCA was most uncertain and the struggle had no clear end in sight. There were turning points along the way—dangerous times when the wrong decision could have been made. There were many needless animal deaths and much heartache.

It was a shelter like so many others.

## PREHISTORY

I had first volunteered at the TCSPCA in the early nineties, while I was in college. At that time, I never saw another volunteer. Apparently, I was the only one, and I was left to my own devices—ignored, basically. I came in every week and walked dogs or socialized the cats (who had to stay in their cages at all times) or did basic care. I'd worked in a veterinarian's office and had learned how to give vaccines, check for and treat ear mites, and so forth. I bathed animals who were dirty and trimmed away mats on those with unkempt coats. At that time there were ample supplies of gallon bottles of shampoo and tubes of sticky beige ear miticide. The quantities of these things never seemed to vary between the times that I was there, as if I were the only one using them. The ear mite treatment would always leave the cats looking somewhat annoyed, with the sticky beige paste smeared on the fur around their ears. I look back and wonder if I hurt or helped what I now know was their slim chances of being adopted. I was often the only one working with the animals, as the staff congregated around the front desk socializing. Few potential adopters came through the shelter. I remember seeing the number of empty cages when it wasn't "kitten season" and thinking to myself, "what if there was some way to shift animals around to alleviate crowding?" I remember wondering why "wild" cats were even brought to the shelter. They appeared to be just as capable as any raccoon of taking care of themselves. At the shelter, they had no chance.

It was a lonely place. My presence was barely acknowledged and I eventually stopped going.

## 2000

Several years later, in the spring of 2000, I decided to go back and the place was quite different. Volunteers were socializing cats and walking dogs, and there were several adopters looking at animals. The staff still largely congregated around the front desk, but the presence of the volunteers made the place different. There was a frantic edge to it, though, a certain desperate scurrying around—cleaning here, feeding there. The tension was pervasive and palpable.

The shelter now had an application for volunteers and I filled one out. No longer would I be allowed to vaccinate animals or administer first aid—certain things were not considered the purview of volunteers. There was some interesting talk, though—the shelter was "going no-kill," but "wasn't there yet." There was something called "fostering"—volunteers could take animals, such as orphaned kittens, into their homes on a temporary basis until they were ready for adoption, and this would also take some pressure off of the shelter—its boundaries would be more elastic. There would be less need to kill for space. There was also a nationwide shortage of euthanasia solution, and leaders of national humane organizations were up in arms about this 'crisis' and the suffering it would cause. Shelters would be forced to release animals back onto the streets! They would kill in inhumane ways! They pushed for production to resume. What to do with all of those animals if you can't kill them? Shelters would be helpless without their "blue juice."

At the time, I had a very elderly cat with cancer, and I didn't want to stress him by taking in kittens, but I decided that once he passed away, I'd honor his memory by fostering litters of kittens.

I volunteered in the cat room, socializing cats, cleaning litter boxes, and talking to people interested in adopting cats, and became only slightly acquainted with a few of the other regular volunteers. The building was small and poorly designed for housing animals. Dog walkers had to walk the dogs through the cat room to get outside, which meant that the cats were repeatedly upset throughout the day. The dog kennel area was intolerably noisy—an echo chamber for constant barking—I couldn't stand it and it couldn't have been any better for the dogs who had no choice and very sensitive hearing. I considered myself more of a dog person than a cat person but worked with the cats because the din in the kennel was more than I could take. In a room adjacent to the front desk was an intake area where animals were kept prior to being vaccinated or dewormed. A hallway area was used to house cats and sometimes small dogs not on public view—ferals and ones who were on their initial hold period. At the end of the hallway was the isolation room where sick animals were kept. They were supposed to be receiving nursing care. Volunteers weren't

supposed to go in there. Adjacent to the hallway was the garage, a rather large space not used to house animals, but which contained a fair amount of junk—broken cat carriers, bags of moldy food—items which should have been walked out front to the dumpster. This was where staff liked to take cigarette breaks while volunteers did the work they were being paid to do.

In late April, my beloved old cat Doikie passed away from his cancer. In early May, sick and tired of death, I adopted a skinny, deaf cat with some skin issues. She had come in as a stray and was pregnant, and I was told she was to be spayed, her kittens aborted, before I could take her home. I also filled out an application to foster kittens. The foster care application stated that animals had to be returned to the shelter for adoption—volunteers couldn't just adopt them out. I agreed to that, as it was a precondition to fostering at all, and I didn't know any better. It specifically asked if the applicant was willing to take their foster animals back if they were in danger of "euthanasia," and if not, then why. I answered that I would absolutely take them back from the shelter if space was needed, no questions asked, in a heartbeat and at the drop of a hat.

After her surgery, I took my new cat home. I named her Lotus, hoping that something beautiful would grow out of the mess that she was, and it did. After a nasty bout of upper respiratory infection, she began to gain weight. The unsightly skin problems turned out to be due to a flea allergy and her poor nutritional state, and those soon cleared up. She was a very loving cat with a purr that could be heard in the next room with the door closed.

## MY FIRST LITTER

I waited and waited to be assigned my first litter of foster kittens. I knew that it was "kitten season" And wondered what was taking so long? Why didn't the shelter call me to foster? I'd see empty cages every week at the shelter though. It's not like it was overflowing or anything. Maybe this "No Kill" thing was working. I really didn't know much about it. Finally, in mid-June I got a call that the shelter had a litter of orphaned kittens. Would I take them? Of course. I went to the shelter to

pick them up. There were five kittens; all charcoal gray—four short-haired, one medium-haired. They were very healthy and about 4 weeks old, old enough to eat cat food and not require bottle-feeding, but too young to be adopted or in the shelter environment.

I took them home and set them up in a spare room. Within a couple of days, they were able to climb out of the large box I had corralled them in. They were very mobile. They played nonstop. Lotus, now fully recovered physically, showed an immediate interest in the kittens. She strode in to the room, gave me a look that told me that I was relieved of all duties except cleaning the litter box and keeping the food and water bowls full, and took over where their mother had left off, grooming them, instructing them in important cat things and generally supervising them. She was really in her element raising those kittens and lovingly tended them for the next month.

I took pictures of the kittens and put up a poster advertising them at each of my two jobs, making it clear that the adoption had to go through the shelter. I didn't get any takers, but there were plenty of empty cages at the shelter. After a month, the kittens were old enough for their first vaccinations and to go back to the shelter for adoption. I called ahead of time to make sure that there was room. I wouldn't want them taking up space needed by another animal. I was assured that things were fine, so I brought them in.

They got their shots and got set up in their cages. I reiterated that I would take them back if space was needed, and wrote that I would take them back, along with my contact information, on each of their forms. I bid my kittens farewell and hoped that they would be adopted into good homes quickly. I thought I'd done the right thing.

## DEATH AND THE LETTER

By next weekend, a couple of them were gone. I checked the shelter's logbook and confirmed that they had been adopted. I gave my remaining kittens some extra attention. They were looking good and staying healthy. The following weekend, all five were gone. Once again, I checked the logbook to see when they were adopted. Two of them had

been killed. I never even received a telephone call or an email asking that I take them back. They had been perfectly healthy and loved and wanted, and they had a place to go if the shelter ran out of room. The shelter killed them. No phone call. Nothing.

I felt sick. The room began spinning. I was in tears. I'll never forget the looks on the faces of the other volunteers. The staff didn't budge. One other volunteer was concerned and tried to stop me from leaving, but I fled the building and somehow managed to bike the several miles home, even though I could barely see for crying. Before I left, he told me of a couple of other people who had recently had a similar experience. I passed some friends and didn't stop to say 'hello'.

I'm ashamed to say that my kittens died without names. I'd deliberately resisted naming them, because I knew I'd be giving them up, and I thought it would be easier. I now consider that a mistake. They should be known by names, not numbers.

Looking back on it, I have to think that the euthanasia solution 'crisis' of 2000 (and I subscribe to the definition of 'crisis' as being danger and opportunity) may have been the proverbial 'shot in the arm' for TC/SPCA's foster program and the reason why I even got my first litter of foster kittens. They had simply run out of the means to kill them. Evidently the 'crisis' had been resolved and it was back to business as usual.

At home, I tried to comprehend what had happened. The killing of my kittens was not an isolated incident. There is no such thing as an isolated incident. Not when matters of life and death are involved. If the shelter treated its own volunteers this way, if it talked about "going No-Kill" at the same time as it killed needlessly, then it was suffering from dry rot. It had no core already. If this were to continue, then the animals of Tompkins County would truly have nothing. At the time, the slogan of the shelter was "We are a shelter of hope." What hope was there? They killed healthy kittens with a place to go rather than make the simple phone call which would have gotten them out of there alive. It made me feel ill. "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," would have been more accurate. When I tried ex-

plaining to my family what had happened, I had to relate the story repeatedly before it sunk in. They couldn't understand. It defied normal logic. An animal shelter killing kittens that a volunteer had cared for at home for a month rather than make a phone call? What?

I did not wish to become embroiled in an unproductive discussion with the powers-that-be behind closed doors.

No, this required an audience.

I crawled into bed with a note pad and pen and wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, the Ithaca Journal. I wrote it in one draft and barely edited it. I stayed late after work the next day and typed the letter, proofread it, and then, like tossing a penny into a wishing well, clicked 'send'.

No turning back now.

The editor acknowledged receiving the letter but would say no more. Those in authority at the shelter remained tellingly silent. I watched the paper every day, and over a week later, on Tuesday August 8, 2000, the letter ran as an op-ed piece alongside a weak and insulting response from the then-shelter director in which he failed to address a single point I'd made.

It was in print. My grief was now very public. Now what?

## THEY WERE THERE ALL ALONG

My call to remedy the situation was answered, not by the shelter, but by the community. People I knew expressed amazement at the situation, and support for me. When I arrived home from work, the red light on my answering machine was blinking furiously. It was full to capacity with messages from people expressing support for the position I'd expressed in the letter. Some were from people who I didn't even know, but who'd been moved to look me up. Some told of their own experiences with the shelter.

Notably absent were any messages from the shelter's executive director or anyone on the Board of Directors.



I'd gone to the shelter for my usual shift the weekend after they killed my kittens, knowing that they probably assumed and preferred that I just go away. No apology or comment from anyone on the shelter payroll, but then they didn't throw me out either.

I went to the cat room and was greeted by a sight that would change everything. I consider it the first in a series of miracles I was privileged to witness. Another volunteer, one who had been present when I found out that my kittens had been killed, and who had wild hair like Einstein, stepped out from behind a bank of cat cages and told me in a low voice that there was going to be a meeting at the home of a couple of volunteers, invitation only, and I was invited.

He restored my hope.

The meeting was held soon after the letter was published. Over a dozen people were there. Our hosts had several dogs and cats who meandered through the meeting. We introduced ourselves and shared our experiences. Everyone had a piece of the puzzle. When put together, the picture of the shelter was worse than anyone alone had previously realized. Sick animals were being denied the medication that the veterinarian had prescribed for them (a veterinarian who was also a board member no less). Animals were being physically abused or not fed and watered. Complaints about abusive employees were ignored. Staff sat around socializing even as the shelter was filthy. Volunteers were treated with contempt, as if our only redeeming quality was that we did work the staff was paid to do, allowing them more time for cigarette breaks in the garage. Animals were killed despite available space. The list of specific incidents went on and on. We also learned that collectively, we had a lot of strengths and skills. We resolved to continue holding regular meetings and used email to keep in near-constant contact between meetings.

The shelter director had announced a meeting with the volunteers to take place at the shelter at the end of the week and we packed that stuffy little room. It was actually one of the very few times I'd seen him—mostly he stayed holed up in his office. He managed to make it very clear that gratuitous killing would not stop on his watch and that

he was completely out of touch with reality. He was far too wishy-washy to discipline employees, much less fire them, no matter how much they needed firing. Who would he hire in their place? Who would want to work there? He harbored and protected animal killers and abusers. I would not be getting an apology from the person who killed my kittens, because that would mean revealing her identity.\*

The shelter had a subsidized spay-neuter program called the Helen Milks Francis Fund, which had been established by and named for a citizen concerned about the unavailability of such services to those of low income. He told all present, almost boastfully, that it was "the best-kept secret in Tompkins County." Unbelievable. Wasn't it his job to make sure that it was not a secret?

One volunteer gritted his teeth when angry, a sound we would hear regularly over the next several months. That sound could be heard throughout the entire room.

The shelter director invited us to write suggestions and put them in his suggestion box, but we knew they would simply be ignored. They always were.

Eventually the meeting was over. People got up and began to leave. Another volunteer, a retired school teacher, led me back to the cat room to show me an emotionally traumatized white cat. She'd been there when I adopted Lotus and figured I must have a thing about white cats. This one was literally petrified. I picked him up and he remained statue-like, curled in a ball in exactly the position he'd been in while in his cage. I turned him over and he made no attempt to right himself or adjust in any way. After a couple of minutes of holding him, I thought I noticed a slight positive change. It was after hours and there was no one to handle paperwork, and anyway, I was fried, so I left him. I couldn't stop thinking about him, though.

A couple of days later, I decided I had to adopt him. I went to the shelter and could not find him in the cat room. He wasn't in the holding area or the hallway either. I started getting panicked. I went to the isolation room, and found him there. He'd gotten an upper respiratory infection. I was so relieved to find him still alive. I couldn't go

through a repeat of my experience with the kittens.

Not all of the employees were worthless. The person working in the isolation room was glad to see this cat, now named Blizzard, get out, and she gave me a few tablets of the antibiotic he was on to tide him over until I could get him a vet appointment. The volunteer who'd initially introduced me to Blizzard told me how a mentally disabled man had spent quite a bit of time holding and petting him. Apparently a local group home took residents on outings to pet animals at the shelter. (While I could wholeheartedly support a program like that in a place that was saving lives, I questioned the wisdom of bringing people who may be more emotionally vulnerable than most into a place where an animal they care for is likely to be dead by their next visit. It made me furious. At least that man could be truthfully told that this one got out alive.)

And, wonder of wonders, another employee, the one most sympathetic to volunteers, pulled me aside and, somewhat secretively, said she was sorry about the shelter killing my kittens, and could I possibly take in another litter because she had three tiny orphans that someone had just brought in.

Volunteers are not doormats, they are lightning rods. Forget that at your own peril.

So, one week after the letter ran, I had come to adopt one traumatized cat, and ended up with one traumatized cat with a cold and three foster kittens. Whether the powers that be liked it or not, the foster program was continuing.

Never again would any foster cat of mine go back to the shelter. I'd learned my lesson. They got names, and they went to offsite adoptions. I stayed with them the entire time and would take them home again if they were not adopted.

Over the next few months, the 'core group' of volunteers, as we called ourselves, exercised our constitutional right to peaceful assembly by holding meetings in which we planned and strategized how to save more animals from the shelter. We would have liked nothing better than to be able to simply bottle-feed kittens and train dogs and hold

offsite adoption events, but the shelter staff kept inventing new roadblocks for us to fight, recycling old roadblocks we thought we'd already defeated, and continuing to kill animals that had been spoken for. The faces of some of those animals are with me to this day.

The 'core group' self-assembled in an almost magical way. It had no real hierarchy. No one person had authority over anyone else, it was a much more of a cooperative, organic, 'flat' type of organization. We had various skills, whether it was keeping paperwork organized, making sure meetings ran efficiently with a predetermined agenda, setting goals to accomplish by the next meeting, coming up with creative ideas, negotiating with staff, communicating with the board, setting up adoption events, rehabilitating animals with behavior problems or illnesses, or coordinating a foster program. Different people took the lead in different areas. We were focused on one thing only—getting animals out of the shelter alive, and that, I suppose, is why things went as smoothly as they did—that and only inviting carefully selected people into the group.

The shelter wanted to discontinue the foster program, claiming that we might one day have a 'run on the bank' and all decide to bring our animals back to the shelter at once. We assured them that would never happen and outlined our plan for shifting animals around in the foster network if need be. They replied "but what if all the foster homes bring their animals back to the shelter at once?" No kidding. It was like talking to the wall. A local business owner who sold pet and garden supplies wanted to feature a couple of cats for adoption in his store. The shelter said 'no,' claiming that the cats might be neglected. Never mind that cats at the shelter were neglected all the time. We offered to have volunteers check on the cats a few times a week—we shopped there anyway. They still said 'no'. The display cage donated to house cats at the store remained in its unopened box in storage at the shelter.

Complaints about animal-abusing staff were ignored. Complaints about staff tossing antibiotics in the trash and then marking down that they'd administered them to the sick animal for which they were prescribed were ignored. Animals that

volunteers had put their names on, with a request that they be called, continued to be killed.

Apparently the negative publicity they had gotten for killing my kittens was irrelevant to them, as nothing changed.

The Ithaca Journal did a 'Pet of the Week' spot, sending a reporter and photographer to the shelter to feature an animal. On more than one occasion, the shelter killed the featured pet before the spot even ran, and people would come to the shelter wanting to adopt an animal who was already dead. Some staff members were very casual about stating how many animals they'd killed. During business hours, they mostly sat behind the desk, socializing, no matter how dirty the shelter was. The microchip scanner sat in a drawer, rarely, if ever used. One employee stole constantly, when he actually showed up for work. It was not so much a shelter for animals as a sinecure for the unemployable.

It was business as usual, except that they had us. We took animals to offsite adoption events at local shopping malls and the farmer's market and elsewhere. We found them homes. We explained to people who insisted that the shelter was No Kill, that it was not so. We had to do that regularly. It got to be quite aggravating. We fostered as many animals as we could, but with so few people willing to volunteer at a place like that, it wasn't nearly enough. We did keep the program going, though. Some volunteers, with the means to do so, adopted animals outright and if staff was being difficult about fostering said animals. We snuck into the isolation room armed with canned cat food. The isolation room was technically off-limits to volunteers, but if we didn't break a rule or two and go in to feed the cats, sick cats didn't eat. A veterinarian on the Board had explained to staff that "food is medicine" to a sick animal, and they had to eat, yet they often went unfed. We socialized cats. We walked dogs. We handled adoption paperwork. We took verbal and emotional abuse. Staff criticized us for being emotional, in an effort to dismiss our concerns. They had no real argument against our ideas or any of the plans we proposed, only the desire to continue as they always had. But what is the human-animal bond if not emotional? Neglect and senseless killing are bound

to arouse emotion. How is that wrong?

Staff also accused us of having too much power. We actually had very little immediate power. Any power we had, we used to save animals. If we had more, we would have saved more animals. If we had still more, we would have hired better staff. Still more power, and that director and most of the Board would have been given the boot and with a great deal of pleasure. No, what we had was responsibility. We took upon ourselves responsibility for saving the animals at the shelter. The shelter's Board, its director, and its staff had power, but wouldn't take responsibility. That's a really problematic dynamic, but unfortunately a common one in shelters. Responsibility without power is the fast track to frustration and burnout. Power without responsibility is a recipe for abject tyranny.

The situation wore on and on. Then, in November, several of us got an unexpected phone call from the Chair of the Board, an individual incapable of a statement that did not reek of politics. The shelter director had "tendered his resignation" "There was really only one way to interpret that—the Board had finally fired him. It had taken much too long, but they finally did it.

We were ecstatic.

## WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

But things were to get even worse before they got better. The Board hired an interim shelter director who openly despised volunteers. Instead of being simply lazy and incompetent, he hated us. Among other things, he advocated keeping every other cat cage in the shelter empty, which would effectively halve capacity and increase the carnage, and he didn't seem to know very much about animal care. He promoted to shelter manager an employee who, unfortunately, had an attitude much like his own. We had to do something. The annual meeting was coming up and all paid members could vote. Those of us who were not yet members paid our dues. It galled me to give money to the shelter at that time, but I did it. The annual meeting was the scene of a showdown between the volunteers and the Board. We asserted ourselves. The belligerent interim director disappeared soon after, but his unfortunate legacy remained with us.

## WORDS ARE DEEDS

The shelter had a subscription to Animal Sheltering magazine, published by HSUS. I am a compulsive reader, completely unable to resist the printed word, so when I saw copies of it lying around the front desk area, I'd naturally pick them up. They made for some mind-bending reading.

The November-December 2000 issue was astonishing. Its cover story was an Orwellian attempt to manipulate terms commonly used in reference to shelter animals, and included cartoons of animals objecting to the idea that they were rescued from a shelter and "explaining" various other terms. It mixed an exercise in rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic with failure to address the weightiest issue of all head-on. 'Pet' is objectionable, "guardian" is preferred, but don't call what shelters do "killing." It deliberately misread the meaning of the term 'no-kill community' before that term was even in widespread use, setting it up as an impossibly utopian goal, and attempting to muddy the line between killing and euthanasia, a definition crucial to distinguishing No Kill shelters and the No Kill movement from places like the one where I was standing as I read this tripe. It treated the term no-kill as if it were something dirty, dishonest, related only to fund raising, or problematic, offensive, and likely to hurt someone's feelings. The article was an attempt to turn simple terms into a sort of unintelligible slurry—able to mean anything and nothing at the same time.

It was accompanied by another article that blew my mind, a story about an animal control officer and his long career. It bemoaned how dogcatchers were hated, extolled him as a hero for animals and went on to describe how he'd "euthanize" stray pets with hot car exhaust, by hosing them down and electrocuting them or by drowning them in buckets (birds, puppies and kittens). But it was all o.k., because he loved his cat, Tinsel.

Juxtaposed with the advertisements for crematoria, and the announcements for 'hands-on' "euthanasia" workshops, these articles left me nonplussed. I was still reeling from the killing of my kittens, even though I had to give the appearance of putting their deaths aside in order to continue.

Abusers will often kill or threaten to kill the pets of their abused, as a means of controlling them. I had enough perspective to see myself and the other volunteers as the shelter's abused. The psychological dynamic was identical. What had I done? Shelters were fond of blaming the 'irresponsible public' for their killing. Was I "irresponsible" for taking in a litter of foster kittens? Why were they punishing us?

As bad as it was for us, the animals had it worse.

The January-February 2001 issue was openly hostile to the concept of animal rescue, and an article stated how the term 'rescue' was deeply offensive, reflecting badly on shelters, ignoring that the saving of a life is defined as "rescue" by most people. Rule number one for rescuers is simple: Must not criticize.

It seemed as if one of the main purposes of this publication was to abuse language in an almost inconceivably ham-fisted manner. How could this go on? Could most readers not see through it? Apparently not. If it offered justification and cover for their killing, anything goes, however shoddy. Deception, including self-deception is a form of armor, at least for a time. Working with rescue groups is to be undertaken only with trepidation, and only on restricted terms. Lives were at stake, but false pride was more important. It is easier to blame others than to take responsibility.

The shelter's own newsletter was a study in absurdity: an article on writing ditties about your cat from a place that systematically killed cats—was it a sick joke?

## 2001

In the New Year, the Board announced a nationwide search for a new director. Three candidates were invited for interviews, and a few volunteers were included in the interview process. They were impressed with one of the candidates. The other two they did not like, describing them as too friendly with the staff members who constituted some of the biggest problems at the shelter. They could make recommendations, but the hiring decision belonged to the Board.

Over the next several months, things continued to go from bad to worse at the shelter. One volunteer likened the shelter to the Headless Horseman. No one was leading it. The shelter manager wanted to micromanage every move of the volunteers, even as staff were allowed to sit around and socialize or treat the public rudely or allow animals to go unfed or without water or to keep the shelter dirty. She'd let the shelter run out of kitty litter or newspaper before she'd get off of our backs.

She instituted the infamous Sue Sternberg Temperament Test for the shelter's dogs with devastating results. She used it as an excuse to kill many friendly dogs, and so many dogs that could have been rehabilitated, dogs that we wanted to save and to present to the community, all the while claiming that they were 'unadoptable'. I suppose that this game-playing was to ingratiate her with the Board—they could claim progress towards No Kill, because she had found justification for killing in a plastic hand. At the time, I thought that she was misusing the test, but I subsequently learned that her use of the test was actually quite similar to the way its creator uses it. It is a test designed to justify killing. The dog volunteers were climbing the walls. We could not stop her and the Board refused to. The shelter seemed to be doing all it could to eradicate any credibility it may have had.

An elderly gentleman came in to adopt a dog. He selected one, a pointer mix, still on his mandatory stray holding period, hence not yet available. The man returned to the shelter the next weekend, eager to take his new buddy home. He'd picked out a name for his new dog and even bought a dog bed with the name embroidered on it. The employee behind the desk informed him matter-of-factly, that the dog had already been killed. I will not ever be able to forget the look on his face.

Among the reading material left lying around the shelter was a publication from California, a newsletter from a foundation I'd never heard of before. I remember standing in the lobby of the TC/SPCA, in front of the desk as I read it. I can picture the room, the angle of the sunlight coming through the window, and where I was standing, perfectly. It told of a day when the entire nation would be No Kill. No shelter in the entire country would kill healthy or treatable animals. The author

was even crazy enough to put a date on it and it would be within my lifetime. It seemed so incredibly impossible as to defy even imagining.

I hold that moment of ignorance perfectly preserved, as if in its own little snow-globe of memory, separated from all else—a silly toy that will one day be placed on a shelf to gather dust. I could not have known then that I was standing exactly where it would happen first.

Months passed. The toll of needless deaths continued to mount with no end in sight. What had come of the candidate search? When would the new director start? We heard nothing from the Board.

'Kitten season' was in full swing. Dogs continued to be "temperament tested" to death. The situation grew more and more desperate. I wondered if and when this new shelter director would materialize. The type of communication necessary for an organization to function well was notably absent from the shelter. Instead we had only that which tells you what you are dealing with.

Eventually, a member of the community became fed up with the mounting list of incidents attributable to the shelter manager, and she wrote a letter to the editor. It mentioned the shelter manager by name. The letter circulated among some of the volunteers before it was submitted to the paper, and a few of us signed onto it, including me. That got me fired.

The other volunteers who had signed on went unscathed, but, as the shelter manager told me when she called first thing on the morning of Saturday, June 9, 2001, I was a "repeat offender" and she'd thought I'd "learned my lesson." She was appalled that I'd do such a thing to her. It was all about her. She ordered me to return the shelter's "property"—my foster cats, immediately, or she'd come to my house to get them.

There was nothing she could have said to me that would have caused me more stress. I called one of my fellow volunteers—co-host of that first meeting, and grinder of teeth. He assured me that the Underground Railroad was ready to receive my cats if need be. I hopped on my bike, pedaled out to



the shelter, and adopted my foster cats outright. The volunteer behind the desk, the one who'd introduced me to Blizzard, looked perplexed, but I couldn't explain. I needed to get the completed adoption paperwork, and I needed to get the heck out of there.

The new director started the following Monday. Soon afterward, he held a meeting of the volunteers. He called and asked that I attend, having heard what had happened. I wondered to myself what the Board was going to inflict upon us this time. What new permutation of schmuckdom did they have in store? The meeting was well-attended. He had a lot of wrongs to right. He listened to what we had to say. He asked us to hit him with our toughest questions, and he answered them.

His predecessors had dug a very deep hole from which he'd have to haul the shelter.

Having been hurt so many times by the shelter, I was skeptical. I was not going to believe it until I saw it.

The first and only genuine apology I ever got for what the shelter did to my kittens, from someone in authority, came from someone who had been on the other side of the continent—3,000 miles away—when my kittens were taken from their cage and injected with sodium pentobarbital, from someone who likely had never heard of Tompkins County, New York at the time, and who would not have allowed something like that to happen. When I hear his critics call him 'divisive' and worse, I think of that. They have absolutely no clue what they are talking about.

I suppose that if this particular incident had happened to someone else, I would find it funny—getting fired from volunteering at a kill shelter for being critical of its killing two days before Nathan Winograd started as director and brought the killing to a grinding halt—but I got hit with a big slug of stress that day and I still can't laugh. Maybe someday I will. The Old Guard is all about killing and abuse and power and lies, and a desperate gasp at the end of its reign is probably best appreciated if you know it for what it is at the time, or if you've gained a great many years' distance on it.

## A DIFFERENT WORLD

The atmosphere at the shelter changed almost immediately. The amount of tension eased dramatically. When the killing stopped, even the worst of the employees eased up. The abuser of cats and tosser of antibiotic tablets relaxed and even smiled, but she thankfully did not last. She was too far gone. Her smiling would have been inconceivable just a couple of weeks earlier, but she did it and her face did not crack. If killing had never been an option at the shelter, would she have turned out differently?

We now had breathing room. The new director dropped in on an offsite at the farmer's market and complimented us on our professionalism. That was a first. The number of volunteers grew and grew. We were asked to foster animals on a daily basis. The shelter asked us, we didn't have to fight and plead to get animals out. The place was cleaner. The animals got fed. Offsite adoption events were more frequent. The Sue Sternberg Temperament Test was no longer used. The animals featured in the 'Pet of the Week' spot lived to be adopted. The display cage was unpacked from storage, and finally set up at the garden and pet supply store. We were no longer treated with contempt. I could finally, in good conscience, recruit others to volunteer at the shelter.

The staff from the bad old days was gradually replaced. Only a couple of them were able to make the transition. The shelter manager who'd fired me back in June remained, though she was stripped of any authority. She mostly stood around scowling at the volunteers, which was mildly amusing for a short while, but a waste of money. I'd seen a lot of positive changes, but remained skeptical. The shelter manager's continued presence cast doubt on the shelter's commitment to change, and was an ongoing insult to the volunteers. I later learned that when the new director was hired, the Board had ordered him not to fire her. She had their support. Knowing what I know now, I am amazed that the shelter succeeded at all. For them to support her was to reveal their total lack of respect for the shelter's volunteers (or for their newly-hired director). We had given so much to the shelter. We were its heart and its soul. The new director persevered and built a case against her for six months. When he finally fired her, the long-time volunteers were ju-

bilant. She was gone. Finally, she was gone.

The shelter was frequently featured in the local media. We had the use of a storefront in downtown Ithaca for the “Home for the Holidays” adoption drive. Conventional “wisdom” said that shelters shouldn’t adopt out black cats around Halloween or any pets at all around Christmas. Those notions were discarded. Good riddance. The shelter sponsored spay-neuter events and courted the support of local veterinarians, and the Cornell Vet School, something it had not done before. It spayed or neutered all animals before they went home. It partnered with the North Shore Animal League, which took kittens to its facility in New York City for adoption, freeing up needed space and resources. The shelter built its capacity to save lives in various ways, even though it remained the same small, poorly designed building. The garage was renovated to house more animals rather than to store junk. It was worked to the max.

Eventually, it broke ground on land next door, and built a state-of-the-art pet adoption facility, a spacious ‘green’ building—LEED-certified, no less. After months of construction, it was finally ready and the animals were walked or carried next door. Once again, the atmosphere changed completely, and I don’t just mean the fresh air from the ventilation system. The first time I went to the new shelter, it was like a revelation. Many of the animals had been at the old building the previous week, but there are no steel cages in the Dorothy Park Pet Adoption Center, no bars of any kind. The animals are housed in small groups in more home-like settings. They were so much more at ease. Instead of seeing cats through steel bars or dogs from behind chain link, you see them through windows, as if they were waiting for you when you came home. The first glimpse anyone sees of the animals there is through the windows of their ‘condos’, and what a difference that makes. A dog or cat peers out of their condo window as you approach, and it is as if you are seeing them as you come home. Adopting? You’re halfway there. Just a few years earlier, this would have defied imagining.

## 2013

When I hear someone deny that No Kill communities are possible, I think of a shelter in upstate New

York, a place where one day it looked sickeningly hopeless, and the next day everything changed. It went through a crisis in the truest sense of the term—a dynamic and dangerous situation, and came to a turning point. Anything could have happened. If wrong decisions were made, the wrong leader chosen, if the volunteers had not united, if we hadn’t finally said “enough is enough” and meant it, the TC/SPCA would not be what it is today. It would be what it was, and that would be tragic.

It got out of the habit of killing.

Its former incarnation was a place that killed animals and abused people. Had the volunteers not had each other to rely on, it would have chewed us up and spat us out one at a time. It was typical of what the American animal sheltering system has been allowed to become. But that place has been dead and gone for twelve years, and, in its place, an example and an inspiration for others to follow.

We live in a cruel, crazy world, one in which shelter killing is a habit, and getting to not killing requires a crisis.

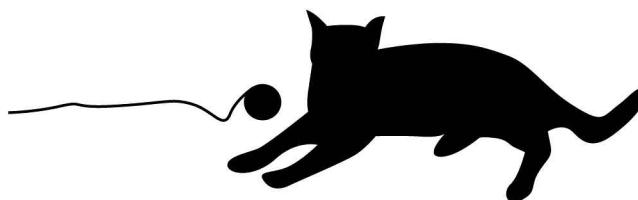
We live in a beautiful world, because we can make the killing stop.

I believe in miracles.

They happen every day.

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\* I subsequently learned that the person who killed my kittens without calling me was the very person who had given them to me to begin with. She was never disciplined for doing so.





# STANDING TALL IN WASHOE COUNTY

## An Interview with Mitch Schneider

by Nathan Winograd

**W**ashoe County Regional Animal Services is responsible for running the municipal shelter for all towns and municipalities of Washoe County, Nevada, including Reno. As a tourism-based economy, Reno and its surrounding communities were very hard hit by the Great Recession. Loss of jobs and loss of homes reached all-time highs. In fact, during that time, the state of Nevada had the highest unemployment rate in the nation. As a result, WCRAS took in four times the per capita intake rate of Los Angeles, five times the rate of San Francisco, 10 times the rate of New York City, and over two times the national average.

If there was ever an agency which should have a high rate of killing according to traditional sheltering dogma, indeed if there was ever a community where No Kill should not work, it is Washoe County. But it is working. Under the leadership of

Mitch Schneider, WCRAS had a stunning 95 percent rate of lifesaving (94 percent communitywide).

Schneider is one of the “few and proud” heads of a municipal facility with a better than 90 percent save rate. He is proud of his staff, proud of his relationship with community groups, and proud of his community. But “few and proud” are not surprising for Schneider, an ex-marine, who likes to remind you that “Once a marine, always a marine.” Several years ago, both Schneider and I were presenting at a conference in South Florida. I caught up with him in Ft. Lauderdale and we sat down to talk about his conversion from skeptic to No Kill advocate.

**WHAT WAS WASHOE COUNTY LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED?**

We euthanized [killed] thousands of animals each

year. In fact, we had two full-time staff members doing that most of the day. That meant a freezer full of dead pets—fifteen barrels full. Every day, a renderer came to empty the freezer, and every day we filled it up again. As terrible as that was for the animals, it was also very hard on the staff. We had tremendous staff burnout.

**WHEN THE NEVADA HUMANE SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS FIRST BROUGHT ME IN AS A CONSULTANT, YOU AND I HAD A CONVERSATION WHERE I TOLD YOU THAT THE NEVADA HUMANE SOCIETY WANTED TO MAKE WASHOE COUNTY A NO KILL COMMUNITY. WHAT DID YOU THINK?**

I didn't believe it could work, at least not in Reno. I did the math and remember thinking that maybe it would work in a more affluent community but we had a more transient population and a high intake rate.

**I REMEMBER YOUR SKEPTICISM WELL, BUT I ALSO REMEMBER YOU SAID "IF YOU THINK THERE IS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS THAN WE ARE DOING IN WASHOE COUNTY, I AM WILLING TO CONSIDER IT." WHY WERE YOU WILLING TO TRY SOMETHING NEW WHEN YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IT WAS POSSIBLE?**

No matter what any of us believes, we ultimately won't know if we don't try. On top of that, if in fact No Kill failed, I didn't want it to be because our agency refused to think outside the box or because I didn't like the term. Even if we didn't achieve the ultimate goal, I knew it could still be better than now. We could save more animals. And that would make thousands of animals pretty happy, and it would make thousands of animal lovers pretty happy. It would also make the taxpayers happier. It would reduce staff burnout and turnover, which would reduce costs for human resources for hiring and training new staff, and it would increase our image in the community.

**WERE YOU OPEN TO ALL THE CHANGES AFTER MAKING THE DECISION TO AT LEAST GIVE IT A TRY?**

I've always been committed to process improvement, but I've been in this business for 20 years and I found myself having to check my traditional thinking and responses a lot. But I also knew that many people go their whole lives never making a

difference, but we can, if we choose too. And I wanted to make a difference in the lives of animals, a difference in the lives of people who care about them, a difference in how our community sees itself.

I love Washoe County and if we could achieve No Kill here, it could become a source of collective pride. So while I might dislike the term No Kill, I hate the term dog catcher even more and you are what you act like. Act like a dog catcher, then you are a dog catcher.

**GIVEN THE HIGH RATE OF INTAKES, CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WOULD SAY PEOPLE IN WASHOE COUNTY ARE ESPECIALLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND THAT SHOULD ALSO TRANSLATE INTO A LOW PERCENTAGE OF LOST ANIMALS BEING RECLAIMED BY THEIR FAMILIES. BUT YOU RECLAIM ABOUT 65 PERCENT OF DOGS, THREE TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE. YOU ALSO RECLAIM ABOUT SEVEN TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE FOR CATS. HOW DID YOU MAKE THAT HAPPEN AND PROVE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WRONG?**

Some animal control agencies will pick up a stray dog and even if they pick up the dog in front of the dog's home and they know it, they'll still take the dog to the shelter. That's how a dog catcher acts. But we stopped doing that. If we know where that dog lives, we'll drive the dog home. It's good business practice, it is good public relations, and it is the right thing to do.

By returning the dog home, we don't stress the dog, we don't stress the dog's owner, we don't stress the staff at the shelter, and we don't stress the other dogs in the shelter. Everyone wins. Even the taxpayers win: we spend less of their money. It may be a little more work in the field, scanning for microchips, calling the number on tags, knocking on doors in the neighborhood to see if anyone knows where the dog lives, but it reduces a lot of work back at the shelter. Plus it makes two parties very, very happy: the dog and the person that dog belongs to.

**SOME ANIMAL CONTROL AGENCIES THINK THEY HAVE TO PUNISH PEOPLE WHOSE DOGS ARE FOUND AT LARGE. WHY DO YOU NOT SHARE THAT VIEW?**

We have a public safety mandate and we would never do anything to compromise that, but that doesn't mean we abandon common sense or compassion. Accidents happen, so we treat the dogs and their "owners" the way we would want our pets and ourselves to be treated. If the person is truly irresponsible, we're going to issue citations, but we aren't going to threaten to kill their dogs or make it more likely that their dogs will be killed. If the dog is not dangerous, you don't have to do that to protect public safety.

**WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO OTHER ANIMAL CONTROL DIRECTORS WHO REFUSE TO EMBRACE THIS KIND OF INNOVATION?**

When I hear people in other communities refuse to embrace change because they say "We've always done it this way," I can't help but be disappointed. That doesn't justify anything. If you aren't saving animals doing things a certain way, if you have a poor public image doing things a certain way, if you are wasting taxpayer money doing things a certain way, it means it is time to embrace change. Most resistance to change is just laziness. People want to go through the motions without having to really think about why and what they are doing and how to make it better.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHANGES THAT HAVE HELPED INCREASE THE SAVE RATE AT WCRAS?**

As I said, we work very hard to return animals to their "owners" in the field. One day one of my officers said to me, "I had a good day today, I impounded six dogs." And I said to her, "How is that a good day for the dogs and the dog's owners?" And she said, "I took five of the dogs home in the field." I said, "That is a good day." When we actually bring five of six wandering dogs home, rather than bringing them into the shelter, I know we are doing the job entrusted to us by the people of Washoe County. We've also embraced TNR for feral cats, have a great relationship with the Nevada Humane Society, and work with lots of different rescue groups. In other words, we work well with others, even if we aren't in agreement with each other on everything. In some ways, I see part of my job as getting out of the way of people who want to save lives.

**HOW HAS YOUR STAFF RESPONDED TO ALL THE CHANGES AND ESPECIALLY TO THE RESULTS?**

When I hire someone, I look for the kind of employee that is not averse to continuous process improvement. That is why we have a good team. Our staff morale is high. But we're also people, so we have good days and bad days. And when we change a policy to better serve the people and animals of our community, sometimes one of our staff members may complain that "every day I come in, something's changed." But all I have to remind them is that it takes a desire to be better today than we were yesterday to get them over that hump. Plus, if we do things better, they get lots of positive feedback from the community. People write our officers and thank them for bringing their pet home. How can that not make an officer feel good?

**IS THERE ONE THING THAT YOU WOULD CREDIT WITH YOUR TREMENDOUS LIFESAVING SUCCESS?**

Our success is a result of a willingness to embrace continuous process improvement, which requires not fearing change. That, in turn, requires understanding that you can't solve the problem with the same thinking that created the problem. You can't get a different outcome if you keep doing the same thing.





# MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN



## FINDING THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

In the Fall of 2010, the members and supporters of UPAWS, the Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter, in Marquette, Michigan, read the following “Letter From the President” in that organization’s newsletter:

*“While holding the office of President is totally uncharted waters for me, my association with UPAWS has been long, educational, and rewarding. I first began volunteering in 1981 so I have had the rather unique privilege of seeing the organization*

*evolve over many years. There were many notable benchmarks along the way, but none can compare with the strides made in the last two years, particularly in adoption numbers. We were finally - FINALLY - able to turn some very depressing euthanasia/adoption statistics around. While we hated the high euthanasia rates, we believed they were inevitable if we were to remain an open admissions shelter (a shelter that never turns an animal away). It was what nearly everyone in the animal welfare field told us. They were wrong and we were wrong.*

*Those numbers could be and were changed. In just one year we did more than just flip the euthanasia/adoption rates around. By radically changing our mindset and refocusing our efforts, we were able to go from an adoption rate (those animals leaving the shelter on their own four feet) of between 34 - 40 percent from 1999-2006 to just over 93 percent each of the last two years. [It now stands at 97 percent.] That is more than flipping the numbers - it is blowing them out of the water...*

*In the process we learned something else. Many of the fears we had associated with change were just that - fears. As new programs were implemented, the community was more than willing to provide the support needed to keep them in place. The end result was that over the last two years every member, every foster home, every donor, every volunteer, every adopter has been directly responsible for 3,201 animals walking out of shelter and given second chances. And isn't that what it is all about? On behalf of each and every one of those animals, thank you.”*

*—Reva Laituri, President, Board of Directors,  
Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter,  
November 2010.*

This excerpt from the UPAWS newsletter, written by UPAWS President Reva Laituri (see page 40), was sent to the No Kill Advocacy Center along with the letter on the following page. Both tell the story of individuals whose dedication to animal welfare helped them summon the courage to change; to start a journey on the road less traveled and find, as their reward, a

destination that was not only well worth the perceived risk, but one that exceeded even their most optimistic expectations. Four years later, UPAWS continues to be a No Kill leader, pioneering innovative programs to increase adoptions, pet retention, and reclaim and to address the needs of animals still falling through the safety net of care, such as hospice for terminally ill animals.

## UPPER PENINSULA ANIMAL WELFARE SHELTER



Dear No Kill Advocacy Center,

As part of a shelter that did more than a complete turnaround on its adoption/kill rates, I wanted to share with you some of our story... It wasn't until the summer of 2006 that UPAWS (then known as the Marquette County Humane Society) began making some hard decisions and taking positive steps toward becoming the shelter we are today. Over several months a number of things happened that culminated into what I refer to as "the perfect storm" that gave our organization the perfect opportunity and courage to change our direction and commit to a new and brighter future.

Like so many shelters, we were operating with an administrator that had been with us for over 20 years and who was extremely resistant to change. Outdated policies were built on myths and fallacies. Several influential volunteers and supporters suffered from "Founders' Syndrome." We were afraid that if changes were made and were not supported by the community, the result would be that animals would have nowhere to go and we were their only and final hope. This was a major consideration as we were hanging on by a thread [financially] and [because we were broke] ready to close our doors. But perhaps in part because of our precarious situation, we had little to lose and much to gain. It was at this time a number of things came together to create the "perfect storm":

- A long-time supporter/volunteer/board member introduced our board to Nathan Winograd's *Redemption*.
- The reputation and support of our humane society, its rigid and judgmental rules and policies, and unfriendly atmosphere, were spiraling toward disaster. Many complaints and issues were brought to light and to the attention of the Board.
- We had a fairly new Board of Directors that was open and ready for a change and who had the wherewithal to buck the status quo and make a number of hard decisions...

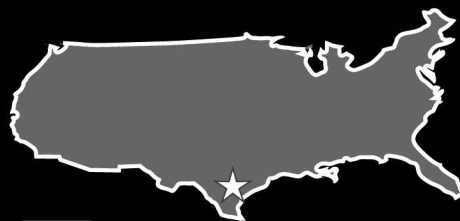
Probably more than anything else *Redemption* became our beacon and we always came back to the idea of "thinking outside the box" and believing there is always another option - if you look for it. We quickly started making changes. Although we were still fearful, the results spoke for themselves and we realized we could save lives and do it without condemning animals to fates "worse than death" as we had been routinely warned. As more animals went into homes instead of garbage bags, the direction we had chosen to take was validated and many of the fears and premises we had based our policies on were proven to be invalid...

The changes so far have had extraordinary and far-reaching effects, many which were totally unexpected - and in very good ways. Our future is one we look forward to because we now know what "thinking outside the box" can truly accomplish and that we have to let go of our fears and misconceptions and try new things. It has not always been easy, but it continues to be extremely rewarding.

Sincerely,  
Reva Laituri,  
Board President

In 2013, UPAWS had a 97 percent rate of lifesaving.

# AUSTIN, TEXAS



## AUSTIN'S ROAD TO NO KILL

Today, in Austin, Texas, over 90 percent of all dogs and cats entering the animal control shelter in that community make it out alive, the largest municipal shelter in the country to cross that threshold. But it wasn't always that way.

In the not-so-distant past, the animal control shelter in Austin was overseen by an individual who killed over 13,000 animals every year despite pleas from animal lovers that she implement the simple, common sense alternatives that today make a life and death difference for Austin's homeless animals.

For years this director ignored their requests, ordering her staff to kill animals instead of adopting them out, ordering her staff to kill animals instead of sending them into foster care, ordering her staff to kill sick and injured animals rather than providing them with veterinary care and ordering her staff to kill animals in spite of empty cages. And for years, she got away with it because the powerful and influential ASPCA defended her, telling the media, Austin's legislators and the Austin public that not only was a 90 percent save rate impossible and not only were No Kill advocates calling for reform dangerous, but that the animals themselves were not worth saving.

The story of how No Kill reformers in Austin succeeded in transforming that community provides many valuable lessons for animal lovers seeking to reform the shelter in their own hometowns, but none more important than this: It takes a fight.

In towns and cities across the United States, wherever animal lovers are waging campaigns to reform their local shelters, not only do they have to overcome a hostile, entrenched shelter director who refuses to innovate and remains intent on killing, but they often have to fight one or more of the national animal protection groups which come to that shelter director's defense. They have to fight PETA, which tracks No Kill reform campaigns nationwide and writes letters to the editor of local newspapers in defense of killing, equates No Kill with hoarding and animal abuse and tells policymakers that they should not give in to reformers even in the face of outright cruelty in the shelter. They have to fight HSUS, which consistently undermines the work of No Kill reformers by urging policy makers to reject progress and maintain the status quo, insisting on the right of shelters to kill animals. And they have to fight the ASPCA, which has labeled reformers as "extremists," has employed people who have labeled them "terrorists" and which co-opts local No Kill initiatives by

stifling dissent and attempting to marginalize any individuals who criticize those in power.

While the resistance of regressive local directors and the influence of their allies at powerful national animal organizations can make the work of No Kill reformers difficult and challenging, they by no means make success impossible. Where activists have succeeded, it is because of their refusal to back down in the face of opposition. They fought back, and over time their efforts and determination systematically exposed what these organizations really are, thereby hindering their destructive influence. And there is no better example of this than the fight waged by the animal lovers of Austin, Texas, who stood up to the mighty ASPCA and won.

### MISSION: ORANGE

In February of 2007, the ASPCA announced a campaign in Austin, Texas, as part of what it called its “Mission: Orange” program. The goal was a combined 75 percent save rate among Austin-coalition partners, including the city shelter, far less than the minimum 90 percent save rate goal at the city shelter championed by No Kill advocates. To launch the campaign, they hosted a meeting of animal welfare stakeholders. The project was doomed from the start. Rather than follow the successful model of the No Kill Equation, the ASPCA told the assembled crowd that “Mission: Orange” would follow a different approach: New York City’s model of “collaboration.”

They would follow the model of a city that was still killing half of all impounded animals and that, to this day, is rife with neglect, abuse, rampant killing and fabricated data. In fact, it is not even a true collaborative model: New York City’s leadership interprets that to mean that they have all the power and rescuers are only allowed to participate if they say so and keep quiet. This was the same model that the ASPCA representative in Austin used when she was director of the Austin Humane Society and promised the city a No Kill community by the year 2002. The ill-fated “No Kill Millennium” plan fell apart for failure to reach its goals.

At the meeting, the ASPCA ignored the elephant

in the room: that the city’s shelter director refused to implement programs and services to save lives, choosing to kill the animals instead. Attendees were forbidden from speaking about what programs weren’t being implemented or what animals were being killed who needed to be saved. Instead, they were instructed to “brainstorm” about what they would do over the next three years to help animals, including writing an imagined speech from a future U.S. President thanking them for their work. It was, according to attendees, “surreal.”

### DO AS I SAY NOT AS I DO

The ASPCA also informed the group that no one would be allowed to participate in the initiative if they criticized coalition members including the city shelter. However, it would turn out that the rules only ran in one direction: the ASPCA would spend the better part of the next several years criticizing those who wanted the shelter to implement programs like foster care and offsite adoptions which the shelter’s director refused to do. The ASPCA condemned reformers, misrepresented who they were, attempted to assassinate their characters and tried to undermine their public support.

The ASPCA consistently defended the shelter director even in her bid to move the shelter to a remote part of the city, a move which activists feared would reduce adoptions. According to the ASPCA, the problem was not getting more adopters to the shelter; the problem was that the animals in the shelter were not “desirable” or “placeable.” In fact, Austin’s shelter director argued that only about 35 percent of the animals in Austin’s shelter were “adoptable” and that they were saving more than that already. Austin, according to the leadership of the city shelter, was already No Kill. And trying to save more would just mean keeping “unadoptable” animals that no one would want alive, leading to “warehousing.” The ASPCA promoted this view both publicly to the media and privately to city officials in their attempt to sabotage the 90 percent save rate goal of No Kill advocates.

Indeed, while acknowledging that their “collaboration” model had not succeeded in New York and had failed several years earlier in Austin, the

ASPCA claimed it would succeed this time because of one crucial difference: the ASPCA would bring dollars to the table. That this view was flawed was not hard to see. All the money in the world would not have made a difference at a shelter run by a director who refused to stop killing. In addition, a lack of dollars was not the issue in either New York or Austin during the “No Kill Millennium” fiasco. In both cases, a private foundation granted a significant amount of money to the effort (over 20 million dollars in New York City alone), more than the ASPCA was offering Austin. Moreover, Austin’s city shelter had a larger per capita budget than many communities around the country which had already achieved success. And ultimately, the ASPCA did not even spend all the promised money on programmatic improvements at the city shelter as it had implied, but rather on advertising in Austin to promote itself. The results were devastating.

Rather than see a decline in killing in Austin’s shelter, killing actually increased 11 percent during the first year of the ASPCA’s sham “No Kill” campaign. Animals had less of a chance of coming out of the shelter alive in Austin under the ASPCA “Mission: Orange” program than they did just one year before. By contrast, Reno’s No Kill initiative, which was based on the No Kill Equation, saw deaths decline by 53 percent during the same period and it cut spending in the process. The contrast in both approaches and results proved a stunning indictment of the “Mission: Orange” program. But no one would have known that by reading the public relations coming out of the ASPCA at the time. By simply not talking about the numbers of animals saved or killed, the ASPCA billed the Austin campaign as an unqualified success. And the ASPCA continued to claim that Austin held promise for the rest of the nation, even as over 13,000 animals were being put to death in Austin yearly.

## THE MORATORIUM ON KILLING

But Austinites had had enough, and the Austin City Council understood that to continue following the advice of the ASPCA was as foolish as the ASPCA’s plan itself. Over the ASPCA’s objections, the City Council passed a No Kill plan, modeled after the No Kill Equation. In addition to

mandating programs like foster care and officially establishing a minimum 90 percent lifesaving goal for the city of Austin, one of the key elements of the plan was a moratorium on killing savable animals when there were empty cages. A state inspection report had found that the shelter routinely had hundreds of empty cages on any given day, and yet the shelter continued to put healthy and treatable animals to death.

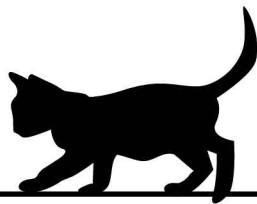
The ASPCA immediately went to work lobbying against the moratorium, arguing it would lead to warehousing of “unadoptable” animals, even though the terms of the moratorium allowed the continued killing of animals who were hopelessly ill, injured or in the case of dogs, vicious. The director also lobbied against it, arguing that there was no reason to do offsite adoptions or foster care because the city shelter was already saving all the animals who could possibly be saved. Despite the lobbying efforts of both the leadership of the shelter and the ASPCA, the City Council approved it unanimously.

After the plan became law, the shelter director must have realized that she had lost the support of the City Council. What she did next revealed such a callous disregard for the well-being of animals that it would ultimately cost her her job: she stopped treating some sick and injured cats, causing great suffering. Some No Kill advocates believed she wanted to “prove” the No Kill plan was responsible for “warehousing” and “animal suffering,” but regardless of her motivations, her actions not only violated the letter and spirit of the moratorium, they were also illegal, tantamount to animal cruelty. Reformers were quick to condemn her. The ASPCA, of course, continued to defend her, calling her the best advocate Austin animals ever had in their corner. It would prove a fatal mistake. In a very short period of time, the director was “reassigned” and the ASPCA’s influence in Austin would be eviscerated.

When the news broke that the shelter director was being removed, No Kill advocates were elated. By contrast, it was news that the ASPCA condemned, calling her departure “horrible” and warning that the animals would pay the price. Immediately, however, the save rate increased. Within a few short months, it had reached 92 percent under an



# AUSTIN THEN & NOW



## Blue as a Summer Sky

There was a time when just being a kitten got you killed in Austin, Texas. A local newspaper did a story a few years ago about life and death at the city pound:

*A 7-week-old kitten weighs about a pound; his veins are the size of vermicelli. So if you're administering a lethal dose of sodium pentobarbital, an anesthetic agent blue as a summer sky, you'll probably inject directly into his round, spotted belly. If you have five cages of kittens to kill this morning, you don't have time to go looking for slippery little veins.*

*A kitten with a hand gripping the scruff of his neck and a needle in his belly will squeal in terror, but once you've pulled out the needle and placed him back into a cage with his siblings, he will shake head and start to get on with his kittenish business. Then he starts to look woozy, and begins to stumble around. He licks his lips, tasting the chemical absorbed into his system. Soon, he becomes too sedated to stand. The animal collapses, and when his lungs become too sedated to inflate, he stops breathing.*

*The killings begin shortly after 10am on a Wednesday in early October; by 10:32 the shelter is down about a dozen cc's of pentobarbital, and 20 cats are dead.*

That was the world of the then-pound director who oversaw the killing with ruthless efficiency. During her tenure, she killed over 100,000 animals, tens of thousands a year, hundreds per month, dozens per day, one animal roughly every 12 minutes the shelter was open to the public. That was also the world of the ASPCA which—through a local spokesperson—not only backed, defended and promoted the shelter director, but worked to ensure that progress would not be made. While the shelter's director and her staff were busy killing animals in the back, the ASPCA was telling legislators, the media, and the community up front that efforts to save more animals were not worthwhile, that the animals themselves were not “desirable” or “placeable” and that the director should not be questioned.

But reformers fought back and they won. It took several years, but they succeeded. They stayed in it for the long haul, and today, the clouds have parted and the only thing as “blue as a summer sky” is the sky itself.

interim director. In other words, Austin achieved its 90 percent save rate goal without even having hired a permanent replacement. They have been saving 90 percent or better ever since. The ASPCA's systematic attempt to derail the No Kill initiative was finally defeated. So what is the ASPCA saying about Austin now?

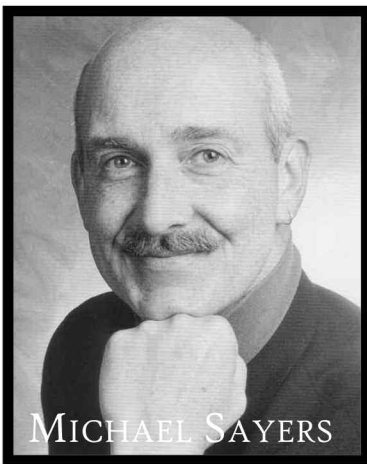
## INFORMATION PURIFICATION PROGRAM

According to the Chair of the Austin Animal Welfare Advisory Commission, “The ASPCA was against the No Kill plan the entire way. They rallied the troops around the director who was committed to killing. If we did not have the opposition of the ASPCA, we would have achieved success earlier.” But when Austin finished the year saving 91 percent of all the animals, with save rates hitting as high as 96 percent during some months, the writing was on the wall.

With both the Austin City Council and the general public thrilled to learn that the effort was in fact succeeding, the ASPCA knew it could no longer fight the tide of history. And so they began to rewrite it. Casting themselves as the saviors of Austin's animals and the group responsible for success, today the ASPCA argues that they have both the experience and credibility to lead No Kill efforts in other cities, “just like we did in Austin, Texas.” Austin's success, they claim, is their success, despite having fought the effort every step of the way.



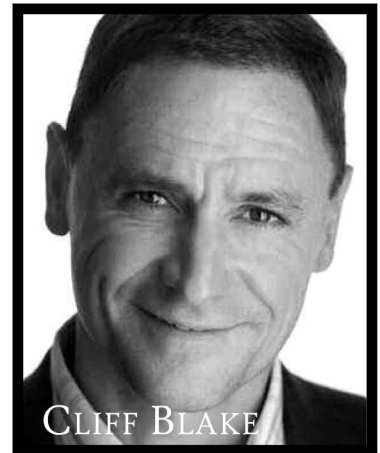
# THE ACTORS



MICHAEL SAYERS



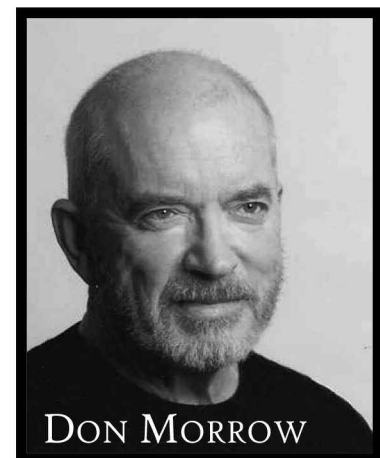
DOROTHY McKEON



CLIFF BLAKE



MATTHIAS LUPRI



DON MORROW





## MICHAEL SAYERS

Michael G. Sayers, who plays Henry Bergh, has been seen and heard on stage, screen, radio, and television for over 40 years. He is an actor, director, producer, writer, ringmaster, emcee, voice-over artist, game show host, murder mystery detective, instructor, and acting coach, and has been heard as countless characters in many live radio dramas. Michael also has over 60 mystery titles to his writing, producing, and acting credits featuring his alter ego "Detective Chester Hadlyme."



## DOROTHY MCKEON

Dorothy McKeon, who plays Catherine Matilda Bergh, has performed on and behind the stage, television and film cameras across the country. She has numerous stage credits of which two of her favorite roles are Sonia in "They're Playing Our Song" and Lottie in "Enchanted April." She is most proud of her two wonderful daughters and currently resides in Connecticut.



## MATTHIAS LUPRI

Matthias Lupri, who plays Mayor Hoffman, has been pursuing the arts for the majority of his life in various forms. First with music, then painting, photography, woodworking, and now credits in film and television. He has played various roles in his career.

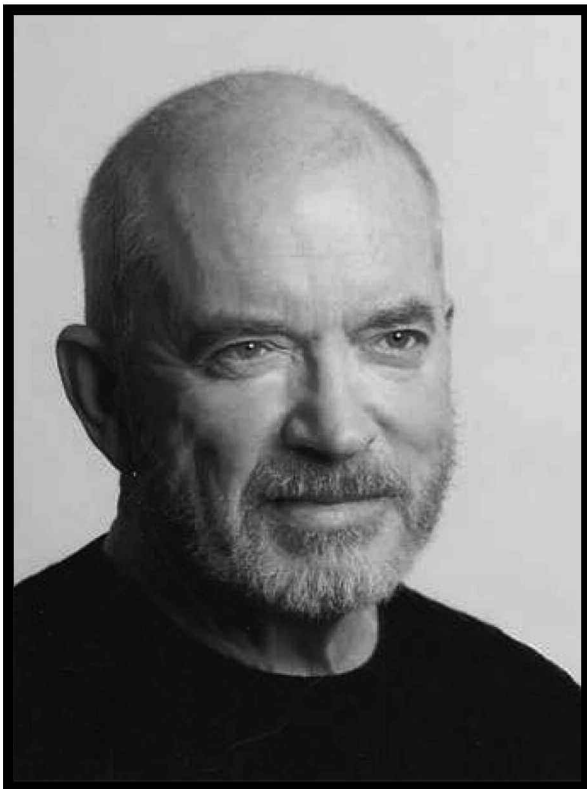
Matthias is very proud to have worked on *Redemption*, a film that supports animal rights. He is a member of Phinney's Friends, an animal protection organization in Lincoln, MA.



## CLIFF BLAKE

Cliff Blake, the Russian peasant, is a playwright, songwriter, and professional actor working in Boston and New York. His critically acclaimed independent film work includes "Wind through the Cradle," "Every Little Thing You Love," "The Final Sentence," "Surge," and "Shipwrecked." His theater credits include a diverse assortment of roles from Atticus in "To Kill a Mockingbird" to George in "Of Mice and Men," among many others.





# NARRATOR

## DON MORROW

Don Marrow, the narrator, is a nationally known American actor and announcer. From films and film trailers including Clint Eastwood's "A Fist Full of Dollars," James Cameron's "Titanic," and Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan," to commercials for such well-known brands as IBM, Ford Motor Company, and Sun Microsystems, he has been the spokesman and on camera for over 20,000 national and international commercials and motion picture campaigns. Don has also been the narrator for hundreds of documentaries on A&E Biography, The History Channel, NBC, PBS, and more. A World War II veteran, Don is the author of *Forsaken Heroes of the Pacific War*, a book about the oldest living survivor of the infamous Bataan Death March during that war.



# COMPOSER

## SEAN HATHAWAY

Sean Hathaway is a film composer who has provided the music for numerous films, television shows, documentaries, and advertising campaigns. He graduated with a degree in Film Scoring from Berklee College of Music before moving to Los Angeles to work as a composing assistant for Hans Zimmer. He has written commercial music for companies like Coca-Cola and Audi, worked on blockbuster video games such as "Borderlands 2" and "Company of Heroes 2," and has worked with a ten-time Emmy award winning production company to provide music for their large variety of national TV shows.



# THE FILMMAKERS

## SAGACITY PRODUCTIONS



### BONNIE SILVA

Bonnie Silva is an Emmy and multiple award winning writer and producer who currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Boston chapter of the Children's Media Association. Her work has aired on PBS, Discovery, Animal Planet, The Pet Network, Fox, and other media outlets.

Over a period of three years she personally interviewed a multitude of people who believe the lives of homeless animals are worth saving. Her labor resulted in *Fifteen Legs*, a CINE Golden Eagle Award winning PBS documentary and companion book.

Prior to establishing her independent company Sagacity Productions, Bonnie was Program Developer for Boston's WABU-TV. During her five year tenure with the three station network, she also served as Producer on two live action preschool television series, and developed programming for tweens. Bonnie graduated from Emerson College with honors, and later earned a graduate certificate in management from Tufts University.

In 2013, Sagacity Productions acquired rights to tell the story of an artist who discovers a horrifying reality, and commits to using art for social change. Also in production at Sagacity are stories that shine a light on prolific 19th century Americans. "These are irresistible people who can still inspire us with their unflappable determination, their unselfishness, and their excitement for life," says Silva. The company pursues stories that have the capability to entertain, embolden, and brighten peoples' lives.

### RUSS BARRY

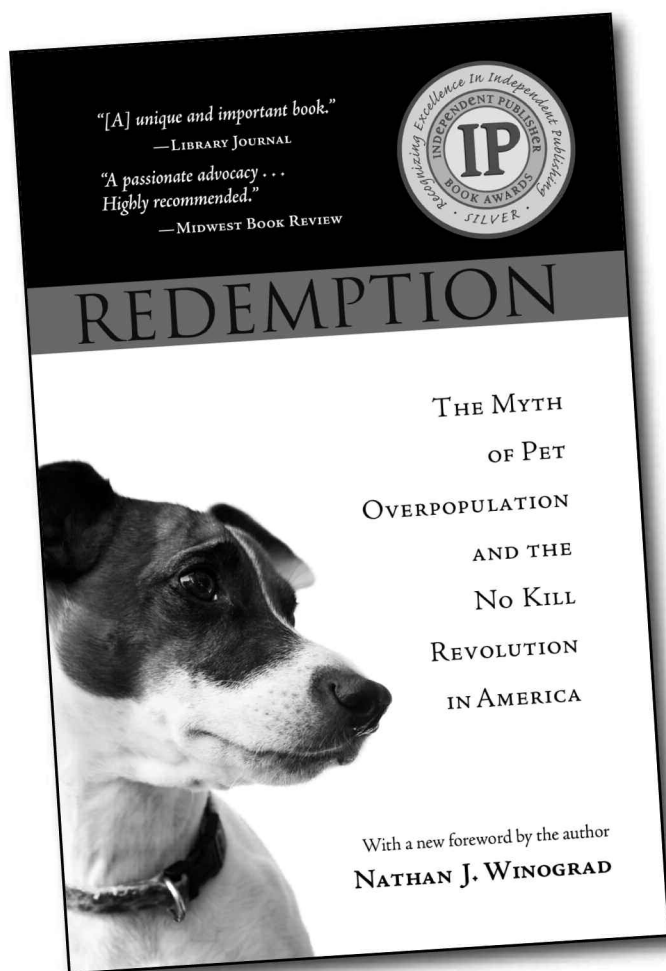
Russ Barry currently serves as director/editor for a documentary reality series called "An Act of Dog" and is a writer on a television drama series being developed and adapted from 19th century memoirs. He directed and edited the story told in *Redemption* by Nathan Winograd, and the documentary "Fifteen Legs." Prior to that he edited episodes for a primate conservation non-profit, directed and edited the short film "Rich Harvest," and served as Supervising Editor on "House Lift," a home renovation series that aired on the Discovery channel.

Russ is an AVID certified Master Editor and has worked with Boston's WHDH (NBC), WABU-TV (IND), The Monitor Channel, and WGBH (PBS). His producing, editing, and directing career spans work in live and documentary programming, magazine style series, interactive talk shows, children's live action programming, and professional sports.

Early in his broadcast career, Russ developed and independently produced 52 episodes of "Home Improvement Magazine," which aired nationally. While at WABU-TV, he directed and edited the National Emmy award winning spot featuring U.S. General Norman Schwarzkopf, and has CINE Golden Eagle, Cindy Gold, Boston/New England Emmy, and Massachusetts Broadcaster Awards to his credit.

# THE BOOK

2014 MARKS THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF  
*REDEMPTION: THE MYTH OF PET OVERPOPULATION  
AND THE NO KILL REVOLUTION IN AMERICA*



When I first submitted the *Redemption* manuscript to literary agents, like every first-time author, I received my fair share of rejection letters. Most were form letters: very short, very polite, variations of “It’s not the right fit for us,” and wishing me the best of luck. But one I can remember almost verbatim. Though I hold no animus, of all the rejection letters I received, that was the only one I’ve kept for posterity. He suggested I ask myself how many people would pay \$20 to read it. “Very few,” he said, before warning me to “rethink my desire to publish it.” Not only was he not interested in the book, he assured me that no one else would be, either.

Of course, such rejection certainly stings, and from time to time I have considered writing him, though I know I never will. For though the industry considers a successful non-fiction book as one which sells between 5,000 to 7,500 copies, *Redemption* surpassed 100,000 copies in print in March of 2011 and it continues to sell in large numbers. On top of those sold, I’ve also given away tens of thousands of copies, too. That’s because I did not write *Redemption* to make money, but rather, to save animals. I was prepared to buy copies of *Redemption* myself and hand them out for free, if need be, believing that the story it

BY NATHAN WINOGRAD

told and the information it contained were vital to reforming our nation's broken animal sheltering system. And history has borne that out. That little book has saved tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of lives, and has completely redefined animal sheltering in the U.S. and abroad. Shelters from coast to coast, and even across the world, have ended the killing thanks to *Redemption*.

When the Tompkins County SPCA in Ithaca, New York became a No Kill community, I understood that the innovative, new approach we had brought to sheltering had the potential to radically transform every shelter in America, just as it had transformed ours. I knew that there was nothing unique about our community that differentiated it from any other, and that by using the same formula we had used, every shelter in America could become a No Kill shelter. Ours was a story of hope and inspiration, and one I knew I had to share with others to ensure similar results nationwide. Putting "pen to paper," I told our story in a book, one I originally began writing while I was still the Executive Director of the Tompkins County shelter. But it became a radically different book based on my experiences after leaving Ithaca and after the founding of the No Kill Advocacy Center, my organization dedicated to spreading the No Kill Equation model of sheltering across the country.

At the time of its initial founding, there were several ways in which I intended to spread the good news about what we had accomplished in Ithaca and the promise it held for every shelter in America. Not only was I going to do assessments for shelters, I was going to hold national conferences, and create a training academy for shelter managers and directors on No Kill sheltering. But I quickly found out the extent to which the status quo was not interested in changing.

Today, the No Kill Advocacy Center's annual No Kill Conference brings together over 900 people from nearly every state in the U.S. and from across the world, from as far away as Switzerland, Thailand, France, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, of whom roughly half come from shelters. The others include many professionals: lawyers, veterinarians, legislators. But it wasn't like that in the pre-*Redemption* days. The No Kill Advocacy had its first conference back in 2005, followed up by another in

2006. We specifically marketed those conferences to shelter directors and others in decision making positions in city government that oversee them. The schedule and workshops were ambitious. And it included one-on-one time for community-specific private consultations. But very few people showed up. That first year, we had less than 50 people; the second one, even less than that. Almost all of them were rescuers who held full time jobs doing other things.

But I was not deterred, and I began visiting animal shelters nationwide, not at the invitation of shelter directors, but over their objections. I documented what I saw and offered recommendations they did not want. And while I was familiar with many of the realities of killing in U.S. sheltering, having experienced them firsthand through my work as a rescuer, with the Stanford Cat Network, the Palo Alto Humane Society, the San Francisco SPCA, in Tompkins County, and others places, what I came to learn during that time not only confirmed my worse suspicions, but introduced me to a depth of dysfunction occurring at animal shelters about which I was previously unaware. For though I had already determined that much of the killing was needless, I was not adequately prepared for what else I found: the rampant neglect and abuse.

I would go into a very cosmopolitan city, a progressive city, a city that likes to think of itself as ahead of the curve culturally, socially, and politically, a city like Los Angeles or New York, and the pound system would be medieval in its barbarity. Across the country, it was largely the same: filth, animals wallowing in their own waste, untreated medical conditions, lazy and inept managers, and neglectful and abusive staff. The mythology that no one wants to kill was not only off the mark, it was a wholesale lie. And the numbers—the staggering number of animals losing their lives in shelters despite so many readily available, easily implemented alternatives—began to make sense. I began to understand that the traditional excuses used to explain the killing were not only misinformed, they were dead wrong, literally.

Before *Redemption*, there was a singular narrative to explain, and condone, the killing occurring in American shelters: a crisis of overpopulation brought on by an uncaring, irresponsible American

public. It was a rationalization repeated by almost every shelter director, animal activist, and even by No Kill advocates who wanted that killing to end but believed that the key to doing so was to reform the public, and not the shelters that were actually doing the killing. Despite being involved in the animal protection movement for many years already, it was not until one afternoon shortly after I met my future wife, Jennifer, that I had ever heard any one question the belief that the killing was necessary and argue that it could be brought to an end if we simply refused to do it. After insisting to her that, "There were too many animals and not enough homes" and asking her, "What were shelters supposed to do with them?" she correctly argued that even if it were true, killing animals was still unethical and that as animal activists, it was our job to find alternatives, not to blindly accept that the killing was a *fait accompli* about which we could do nothing to change. She argued that if we took killing off the table, human ingenuity and human compassion would find a way to make it work. But, more importantly, she asked me how I knew it was true that pet overpopulation was real and that killing animals was therefore inevitable.

How did I know? Because I had heard it repeated a thousand times. Because I took the fact of killing in shelters and then rationalized the reason backward. But I was too embarrassed to admit so. Here I was: a Stanford Law student who wore my 4.0 department GPA, my highest honors in Political Science, my Phi Beta Kappa, and my Summa Cum Laude, as a badge of my smarts and I came face to face with my own sloppy logic and slipshod thinking about the issue. "It just is," I said (lamely).

Like so many before me, I had accepted that the killing must be necessary for the simple fact that it was occurring. Who would ever want to kill animals if there was any other choice? I asked myself rhetorically. But therein began a journey that started in the San Francisco Bay Area, then Tompkins County, then visiting and working with hundreds of shelters across the country only to discover that my first hand experiences did not conform to this narrative: that animals, in fact, were being not being killed as a last resort, but the first one. Killing was easy and killing was convenient, so shelter directors and their staff made no effort to come up with alternatives.

In shelter after shelter, I would find animals being killed so that cages did not have to be cleaned and the animals inside them wouldn't have to be fed, sparing staff the effort of doing the job they were being paid by the public to perform. In shelter after shelter, I found empty cages, sometimes banks and banks of them. And so I began reviewing data. I reviewed statistics on animal intakes and studies on available homes. I studied the data reported by over 1,000 shelters nationwide. I reviewed the data from the states that mandate shelter reporting. And I compared it with national studies on birth, death, and acquisition rates for companion animals. The conclusion became not just inescapable, but unsailable: the number of homes in America vastly exceeds the number of shelter animals in need of a home. The animal protection movement had gotten it wrong. We could be a No Kill nation today.

Since that time, cities and towns across America have ended the convenience killing and they did so through adoptions; the vast majority in six months or less and some before a comprehensive sterilization program was even in place. In the case of Tompkins County, it was literally overnight. And since that time, other studies have not only proved I was right, they showed I was conservative. To be sure, millions of animals are being killed in our nation's shelters every year, and that is nothing short of a national tragedy. But they are not being killed because of the reasons we have been told. They are not dying because of a lack of homes. They are dying because of a lack of caring and a lack of innovation, a failure to embrace proven methods of lifesaving. As I state at the end of *Redemption*, animals are dying in shelters for primarily one reason: because the people in shelters choose to kill them in the face of readily-available lifesaving alternatives.

Tragically, my appeals to the sheltering establishment, and the large, national non-profits which claim to be serving in a leadership capacity for our shelters, to acknowledge and address the true causes of shelter killing and its proven cure fell on defiant ears. I came to realize that groups like the ASPCA, HSUS, and AHA were not interested in the truth because they didn't need to be. They had grown large, wealthy, and powerful merely lamenting the killing and portraying it as a necessity to the American public, and so there was simply no reason to rock the boat, to change course, or to upset the balance of power which favored them and



their friends and colleagues operating kill shelters. Their indifference to a proven solution, their failure to respond to overtures to work collaboratively together, and their unrelenting misrepresentation of No Kill and No Kill advocates taught me that it was futile to continue to appeal to people who were not interested in changing, and that if I was to succeed, I needed to change the climate of public opinion in which shelters and these groups were forced to operate. I needed to take my message of hope to those who truly cared about the fate of our nation's homeless animals: the American public. And so I wrote *Redemption*.

Immediately after *Redemption* was published, I borrowed money and went on a 20 city coast-to-coast book tour, appearing in Boston, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Indianapolis, Portland, and elsewhere. At the time, there was only a small number of people with whom I could have a knowing conversation about the myth of pet overpopulation, about how utterly needless the killing was, about the very real ability to end it today. As I prepared to stand up in front of crowds of rescuers, animal activists, and animal lovers and tell them that everything they had been taught to believe about shelter killing was wrong, I was not sure how I would be received. How would people react to my telling them that pet overpopulation—the false narrative to which the animal protection movement had been prostrating itself and sacrificing animals by the millions for—did not exist? How would people respond to the news that we had all been living in Plato's cave, mistaking shadows for reality by convincing ourselves that killing was a "necessary" evil, when in reality, it was just evil?

The first city I visited (outside of the friendly turf in Ithaca) was just outside of Boston in Lexington, Massachusetts. Poetically, my speech and book signing were held at a museum located on the very site of the first battle of the American Revolution. It may not have been the "shot heard round the world," but there, I fired my first public volley at the myth of pet overpopulation. I told the crowd to stop using the term "euthanasia" to describe shelter killing, to stop using the term "pet overpopulation" when it does not exist, to stop portraying shelter killing as the fault of the public, to stop seeking laws that empower animal control to impound and kill more animals, and to stop portraying the prob-

lem as insurmountable and not in the direct control of shelter managers. When I was done, I held my breath and waited... And then it came as it would in every city I would visit: thunderous applause. My faith in my fellow rescuers and animal activists was not misplaced. In Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Kansas City, Austin, San Antonio, and every other city I visited, animal lovers, so weary of the killing, the killing apologia, and the false cures that never delivered, welcomed and celebrated what I had to say with unbridled enthusiasm. And as word began to spread, the crowd in each city I spoke in was larger than the one before until by the end of the tour, I was speaking to standing room only crowds of many hundred.

The response I received during that six-week book tour showed me that the mood of the nation had shifted and even if they did not know it, the national groups were speaking a dying language. And despite the attacks from the so-called "leaders" of the movement who maligned me as a heretic, mail and e-mail brought something very important to me: proof of *Redemption's* impact on my true constituency, the animal lover with a troubled heart, the rescuer who has to pretend to be friends with the cruel and corrupt shelter manager because they hold animals hostage, the shelter volunteer forced to look away from abuse for fear of being barred from the facility if they spoke out. *Redemption* gave these people hope not only because it prescribed a kinder form of animal sheltering, but because it broke the code of silence within the animal protection movement, ending the taboo against criticizing shelters no matter how many animals they kill nor how inept or uncaring their staff may be. It is these letters and expressions of gratitude that kept me going and, in recurring moments of exhaustion, still keep me going.

When it was first published, nearly 100 copies of *Redemption* were being sold every day. It climbed to the top 500 at Barnes & Noble and became the best-selling animal rights book in the country. And then, a bit later, came something else. The letters and e-mails from shelter directors and government administrators who wrote that *Redemption* turned them around. And they, in turn, turned their shelters around. One spoke of how she used to look for reasons to kill animals in her shelter and, after *Redemption*, she now finds ways to save them. An-

other spoke of taking a shelter with a 20-year reign of killing under his watch to No Kill overnight. Letters like these arrived from across the country, proof that the book was not just changing minds, but saving lives.

The No Kill movement in New Zealand is also born of the book. It is the basis for emerging success in Australia. From North America to Europe, *Redemption* is reforming shelters and putting No Kill on the agenda of communities around the world. Not only did it spark a worldwide movement, it is directly responsible for the achievement of No Kill communities across the globe.

When truly caring people read *Redemption*, it gives them hope. They follow the model it advocates. And they achieve No Kill overnight. The lives saved rather than killed in places as diverse as Kentucky, Indiana, Nevada, Minnesota, and elsewhere are testament to the power of the pen, and the compassion of most people. Seven years after it was first published, we are now harvesting the seeds *Redemption* has planted. Killing shelters and the national organizations that legitimize them are on the defensive. Governments are passing laws demanding reform. Communities are increasingly embracing the No Kill paradigm. As I wrote in the foreword of the second edition,

The Humane Society of the United States' (HSUS) favorite misnomer "euthanasia" has lost its cache. Rescue groups and animal advocates have stopped using it and other HSUS euphemisms such as "putting them to sleep" to describe the abhorrent practice of systematic shelter killing. People are more aware of widespread mistreatment of animals in shelters. And they are less tolerant of the poor care and the killing, the excuses built up over the decades to justify it, and the legitimacy that groups like HSUS give to it. This has put the large national humane groups on the defensive, trying to take credit for the decline in killing nationally even as they opposed and in some cases continue to oppose the programs responsible for it, and by softening their anti-No Kill positions.

*Redemption* debunks the myth of pet overpopulation and puts the blame for the killing where it belongs: on the shoulders of the very shelter directors who find killing easier than doing what is necessary to

stop it, on the local governments who continue to place them under the regressive oversight of health and police departments (and even under sanitation!), and on shelter managers who protect uncaring and even cruel staff members at the expense of the animals.

More than all of that, average people are now aware that shelters kill. And they are aware that there are some shelters and communities that do not kill. After reading the book, one animal lover in Los Angeles, California, told me: "At least now we know what—or more accurately, who—the problem is." We also know how to make them stop. And in more communities nationwide, we have.

It seems everywhere I turn, there is yet another reason to celebrate. Austin embraces the No Kill Equation in a unanimous vote by the City Council. Delaware unanimously passes shelter reform legislation that reduces killing in that state 78 percent. A Kentucky community celebrates its sixth No Kill year. A Canadian community reduces killing by 70 percent. A New Zealand shelter finishes the year with a 99 percent rate of lifesaving. In 2012, it is discovered that a new U.S. community has achieved a 90 percent save rate by following the No Kill Equation model of sheltering every week, on average. Unthinkable, just a few short years ago. And it is now happening all the time, all over the world. A No Kill nation is truly within our reach and getting closer with each passing day.

## WHERE REDEMPTION GETS IT WRONG

Yet despite its tremendous influence and the many positive developments that have resulted from it, as with any book of first impression written about a movement that was in its infancy, the book was based on a limited dataset and some of the conclusions that were drawn in the book have therefore not withstood the test of time. In addition, I believed that the political climate of the animal protection movement when the book was published demanded a pragmatic approach to discussing certain issues that not yet a decade later already seem antiquated, just as I had hoped back then, and I explain below, they would someday become. Therefore, I am the first to admit that *Redemption* is not without its errors and if I were to write *Redemption* today, it would be a different book; in some cases, a radically different book.

More comprehensive statistics combined with tremendous gains in veterinary medicine, behavior rehabilitation, and the development of life-affirming programs to address the needs of behaviorally challenged dogs and terminally ill animals, have opened up exciting new possibilities—possibilities that the widening success of the No Kill movement and its resulting shift in the climate of public opinion now allow to be debated and discussed in a far more straightforward and less theoretical manner, without the concomitant danger of enabling disingenuous distractions by No Kill critics.

At the time I finished writing *Redemption*, there were only a handful of communities known to me that were saving above 90 percent of all animals, and the excuses used to justify the killing of millions of animals every year were still fully entrenched and beyond debate, chief among them that No Kill jeopardized public safety by placing dangerous dogs into a community and that No Kill meant keeping animals who were dying alive to suffer. With healthy, treatable, and friendly animals dying in shelters by the millions and making up the majority of animals being killed, I deliberately chose to focus much of the book's attention on the ability of shelters to immediately save these animals, not because I felt the others to be less worthy, but because I hoped that by doing so I would deny the entrenched interests championing the traditional "catch and kill" form of sheltering the ability to deliberately misrepresent my intention and with it, perpetuate harmful stereotypes about the No Kill movement that would detract from my message. It was also my hope that as more and more shelters embraced the No Kill paradigm and were able to bring an end to the killing of healthy and treatable animals, the cracks in the safety net for these other animals would become more glaring, and programs would naturally evolve at such shelters that would allow for life-affirming responses to the needs of "aggressive" and terminally ill animals that were more consistent with their new and more enlightened values. That is to say, I believed that the philosophical reorientation necessary for shelters to achieve No Kill would inevitably lead to more humane responses to caring for those animals at greatest risk, but whose needs were more challenging and, at the time, tragically, far more controversial. Thankfully, at many No Kill shelters, that is exactly what has occurred, but

in ways I regret I failed to anticipate; ways that now cause some of the statements I made in *Redemption* to make me wince.

I welcome and celebrate these exciting developments not merely as an extension of the No Kill philosophy, but as integral to its core paradigm, as essential as saving the lives of healthy and treatable animals. I hope that the groups experimenting and succeeding with these new approaches continue to do so and to share their important discoveries with others seeking to emulate their success so that they may spread and themselves become the status quo. So that my words and advocacy never stand in the way of this important evolution, I want to discuss several things I wrote in *Redemption* that today I now categorically reject. Here's where I went wrong.

## RETHINKING EUTHANASIA

In a discussion of what animals were savable, I wrote: "No one wants hopelessly ill or injured dogs and cats kept alive while irretrievably suffering, because that is cruel. No one wants truly vicious dogs placed into the community, because that is dangerous." Admittedly, I wrote extensively of the need to put rigor in those determinations, that behavior and veterinary medicine advances would change the nature of who fit into these categories, and the importance of embracing both sanctuary care for truly aggressive dogs and palliative/hospice care for terminally ill animals. But even with all the caveats, I think the statement as written was far too emphatic. As to the latter, shelters are now proving that we can rehabilitate dogs even with multiple bite histories and while I predicted that such advancements would occur and that their absence did not render the killing of these dogs by any means ethical, but rather entirely expedient, I should have also been more open to the possibilities of creative, alternative placements for aggressive dogs as I was already doing for cats with behavior issues. As for the former, the growing fields of veterinary palliative and hospice care for terminally ill animals are indeed putting greater rigor into the process by which we make end of life decisions for our animals, while simultaneously working to lessen the suffering that results from the process of dying.

Until recently, I've never had an ethical dilemma

with euthanasia for end of life in my irremediably suffering animal companions. I never hastily made the decision and have always waited until the very end, using “euthanasia” to prevent my companion animals from experiencing what I hope are only the last hours or, at most, day or two of suffering before they would die naturally. I do not believe it is acceptable to kill an animal at the point of a grave diagnosis or when death is not imminent; the open question is at the end-stages of a terminal disease when the animal deeply suffers. Only under those circumstances have I ever believed in the morality of such a decision. In other words, it is only when I have been certain that a natural death was about to occur anyway that I have chosen to “euthanize”—to spare my animals what can often be the last, painful moments of their bodies shutting down. But the truth is that we tend to be clumsy at making those determinations and so we have to be very careful and very vigilant.

I also can’t help but think of larger implications; that if hospice care were the norm and people no longer killed their companion animals even at the end-stages of their lives, or at the very least, if doing so was not the common choice, the ramifications for the sanctity of animal life would be tremendous. If the discussion were to unfold as a movement, as a society, within the larger veterinary community and carried the same weight and gravity that it evokes when the topic relates to the same issue, but concerns our human family members, the impact on society’s tolerance for the mass killing in what we euphemistically call “shelters” (but are often little more than death camps) would be sea-changing.

It has been said that rare is the individual who can see beyond the mores of his or her own time. I’ve always admired such people and try to emulate them. Even if I never get there, I strive to. I struggle to. That is why I read history; to remind myself that those in our past who have moved us forward were those who continually questioned the accepted values and beliefs of their time, and never let custom or the pervasiveness of a practice—or the controversy that inevitably results from doing so—deter them from championing what they deduced to be right. In doing so, they laid out a vision for a more compassionate and ethical future for all of us. And so I continually question, and will con-

tinue to question, regardless of what may seem like a practical imperative, whether we go far enough in our actions for and in defense of our companion animal friends and family. It is a tremendous responsibility to speak for the interests of someone else—especially when that someone else cannot speak for themselves, when it involves life and death, and when it is someone you care about, relying on you to champion their best interests when they cannot. Is any of this ever entirely knowable? Perhaps yes; perhaps no. But with so much left to be discovered on this topic, making emphatic statements in defense of either position seem not only foolhardy, but irresponsible, and I therefore regret having done so.

## THE NUMBERS

At the time *Redemption* was published, very little research into the number of available homes in the United States had been done, and the figures I cited have since been revised, further substantiating my claim that the demand for companion animals in this country vastly exceeds shelter “supply.” In other words, the news for animals on this score which was already good has gotten even better. In *Redemption*, I wrote that there are more new homes available for cats every year than cats being killed in shelters and about two times as many homes for dogs than dogs being killed. We now know, thankfully, that even those numbers were deeply conservative. The magnitude is far greater as discussed in detail elsewhere in this book (see page 92). In other words, the positive picture I painted that we can adopt our way out of killing is so much better for the animals.

But some of the numbers I used turned out to be wrong, such as the number of free-living cats in the U.S. The ultimate conclusions do not change, but they are still worth correcting. The truth is we do not know how many cats (and dogs) live on the streets. Estimates vary widely from 12,000,000 on the low end to 100,000,000 on the high end. Even the word “estimate” is a misnomer; these numbers are guesses, even wild guesses. In the best case scenario, they are the result of unwarranted extrapolation: multiplying small amounts of data gathered from often extreme circumstances. Although we do not know how many cats live on the street, the low-end of 12,000,000 may itself be too high.



The other number that needs revisiting is the notion of a “90 percent rule” I promulgated as a determination of when a shelter achieves No Kill. I wrote in *Redemption* that ending the killing of healthy and treatable animals is achieved when shelters save roughly 90 percent of the animals. Specifically, I wrote, “A shelter succeeds at saving all healthy and treatable dogs and cats, including feral cats, when it is saving roughly 90 to 95 percent of all impounded animals.” Not only was I wrong about that number, but my biggest regret is that it has been used by some shelters to claim No Kill “victory” even when they are still taking the lives of healthy and treatable animals, which was, of course, never my intent. In order to understand why, I need to explain how it came about and why I believe it needs revising.

In 1998, the California legislature enacted a comprehensive shelter reform package that, among other things, increased holding periods, incentivized adoptions, made it illegal for public and private shelters to kill animals who rescue groups were willing to save, and made it the policy of the state of California to end the killing of healthy and treatable animals. The legislation was sponsored by a very liberal Senator in partnership with a very conservative Assembly Member. It passed 96 to 12, winning a majority of both Democrats and Republicans, as close to unanimity as possible in a state as large and as diverse as California. It was signed by the state’s Republican governor. Except for a few curmudgeons, regressive shelter directors and large, national animal protection groups like HSUS, everyone wanted to save more lives.

As part of the reform, it defined “treatable” animals as those animals who could be rehabilitated with “reasonable efforts.” The goal was to increase the number of animals being saved. But increasing the number of animals being saved was not the goal of the leadership of those pounds, especially since their budgets were sometimes determined by how many animals they killed. So they did what unethical people who have no regard for the lives of animals do: they sought ways to exploit loopholes in the language of the state law to continue killing. The fact that the people overwhelming demanded a commitment to lifesaving was of no moment. They were accountable to no one, least of all those who paid their salaries with their tax and philanthropic dollars.

Never mind that they were running institutions that were supposed to reflect the values of their constituents, that the killing was being done in the name of the people of the State of California, and that the people were being blamed for it. Never mind that the very same people, through their elected representatives, provided a framework for lifesaving. Directors who killed with impunity before the law was enacted were committed to killing afterward by flouting it, both in letter and spirit.

Some shelters simply ignored the law, ignored the holding periods, ignored the rescue and other mandates and defiantly continued doing what they always did. (Kern County was sued six years after enactment and had no choice but to admit “guilt.”) Other directors throughout the state employed, with the blessing of their superiors, definitions and protocols to twist the meaning of statutory language beyond recognition. Despite the fact that the new law required shelters to provide dogs with regular exercise, the high killing pounds of San Bernardino County claimed that walking a dog from the front desk to his kennel during impound and from his kennel to the killing room four days later constituted the exercise demanded by the people, an obvious absurdity; for why would the state legislature pass a law intended to create reform that merely mandated what these pounds had already been doing? It wouldn’t. And San Bernardino officials knew it. It was dishonest, dishonorable, illegal, and immoral to be sure. But for scofflaws in agencies committed to a paradigm of neglect, abuse, and killing, it was business as usual.

In order to ignore the legislative policy that no treatable animals be put to death in California, these and other pound directors employed equally Orwellian definitions and policies. For example, many California pounds defined a “treatable” animal as one suffering from only those conditions that could be fully cured within the state mandated holding period of four days. In one fell swoop, kittens with conjunctivitis (eye infections), diarrhea, or simple colds, side by side with dogs who had kennel cough and other objectively and easily treatable medical and behavior conditions were now considered “unadoptable” and “untreatable,” an excuse to continue putting them to death. In fact, the American Humane Association, seeking to provide these killing pounds with the political cover they needed to ensure that their killing paradigm was



not upended, even held a workshop where they told shelters that if they do not budget any money for medical care, they could say the animals were not treatable because they had no money allocated to treat them. In other words, a pound could claim they had no treatable animals simply by refusing to buy antibiotics. It was not what drafters or supporters of the law intended.

But with national organizations telling communities that they were each permitted to define for themselves which animals were healthy or treatable, that each community must determine for itself the lifesaving commitment, shelters were claiming or alluding to the fact that they were No Kill by defining the animals away (one shelter, for example, claimed it was saving all “adoptable” animals despite putting to death 80 percent of the cats and half of all dogs).

In response, my organization, the No Kill Advocacy Center, sought a more rational, objective, and honest standard. By looking at save rates of the best performing shelters in the country, it found that shelters were zeroing out the killing of healthy and treatable animals at roughly between 91 percent and at the time 93 percent of all the animals. Rather than allow pounds and killing shelters to define “healthy” and “treatable” or “adoptable” and “unadoptable” which they proved they could not be trusted to do with integrity, the No Kill Advocacy Center promulgated the 90 percent rule, arguing that upwards of 10 percent of the animals entering shelters were either hopelessly ill or injured, irretrievably suffering, and in the case of dogs, truly vicious with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. Given that almost all communities across the country were killing the majority of all impounded animals, including healthy puppies and kittens, the goal was to increase the number of animals saved in shelters. Since that time, the number of known communities that have exceeded a 90 percent rate of lifesaving has grown to hundreds. Compared to those such as the pound in Vermillion Parish, Louisiana which refuses to allow any adoptions or the pound in Memphis, Tennessee, which starves animals to death, this is a monumental milestone and a cause for celebration. But it is not the finish line and was never intended to excuse any killing.

The fundamental tenet of the No Kill philosophy is

that our commitment is to each individual animal and that each individual animal is therefore entitled to individual consideration. For the healthy free-living cat who is killed in a community boasting 90 percent save rates, the safety net has failed. For the healthy dog who may be killed for being untrained, the fact that nine out of ten other dogs are being saved is meaningless. And for the rabbits and other animals still being killed in large numbers because of the movement’s preoccupation with dogs and cats, it offers them no protection of any kind. It is not meaningless per se. Indeed, far from it. But it is meaningless to these animals. They are entitled to their very lives, a right that is not being honored. The 90 percent goal was never intended to be an excuse to kill either healthy or treatable animals, so long as the 90 percent threshold remains intact and in fact that is what some shelters are doing.

So why is this no longer an accurate way to measure success? For four primary reasons. First, the “90% benchmark” was promulgated with a very limited data set. We now have hundreds of cities and towns across America saving above 90% of the animals and, of those, there are communities saving 97%, 98%, even 99% of them, proving that in citing 90%, my original benchmark, was far too low.

Second, advancements in veterinary medicine have made some commonplace, once fatal illnesses in the shelter no longer so, such as parvovirus. Parvovirus has a good to great prognosis for recovery. In the past, it was a death sentence in a shelter. Moreover, advancements in our understanding of dog behavior have also allowed us to rehabilitate dogs who we once considered nonrehabilitatable and dangerous. Today, greater save rates are possible, so our duty to animals demands that we no longer measure today’s performance by yesteryear’s now antiquated veterinary standards.

The third important thing that has changed since I first began promulgating the 90% benchmark a decade ago is the climate of public opinion in which shelter directors once operated. The first No Kill communities were achieved by bold leaders with the courage to challenge the status quo at a time when virtually every shelter and every large, national animal protection group was openly hostile

to No Kill. These were people who were willing to embrace a new way of operating, and that meant being motivated by truly saving lives rather than simply placating disgruntled, animal loving citizens who organized for and demanded change. A growing awareness of the viability of No Kill and the exponential growth in communities achieving unparalleled levels of lifesaving for their communities has stripped regressive shelter directors of the political cover they once enjoyed. There is no longer the same safety in numbers they once found when they resisted change, and that, combined with large, national groups likewise under pressure to evolve (and evolving), it isn't as easy as it once was to resist or forestall positive improvement. And so we are now seeing a more widespread implementation of many of the programs and services of the No Kill Equation by shelter directors who once tenaciously fought such innovations—not because of an innate drive to do better for the animals and people they serve, but because with an increasingly savvy No Kill movement stripping them of the myths and excuses they once used to justify their resistance to greater lifesaving, many of them simply have no choice but to evolve their practices. (On a different but equally important note, this success proves how easy it is to bring the vast majority of shelter killing—done primarily out of habit and convenience—to an abrupt end. When shelters stop compulsively reaching for the needle as they have done for most of the history of animal sheltering in this country and instead implement simple, common sense alternatives to killing such as foster care for sick and orphaned, neonatal animals, TNR for community cats instead of killing, and actively promoting and marketing animals for adoption instead of passively impounding and killing them, much of the routine killing stops. These successes prove that shelter killing is not, as has been argued for over half a century, the fault of the public, but rather, the fault of shelters which choose to kill in spite of other options.)

Fourth, the large, national groups are embracing methods of reducing killing that allow shelters to do so without any additional work on their part by telling them to simply stop taking in animals if they don't plan to do anything other than kill. In what is no doubt terribly appealing to shelter directors who lack the internal compunction to save as

many lives as possible and do not want to do the hard work of cleaning cages, medicating animals, socializing them to keep them happy and healthy, promoting them for adoption, and actually finding them homes, the large, national groups are giving them permission to respond to calls for shelter reform by working even less, not more. Campaigns like the Million Cat Challenge and the California White Paper invite shelters simply not to take animals in or only to take them in for purposes of sterilizing and rerelease, rather than adoption. And while I welcome shelters not taking in animals if they plan to kill them in lieu of offering the care they are being paid by taxpayers to provide and while I acknowledge that not all cats outdoors are in need of shelter assistance, this move to encourage shelters to simply abdicate their responsibilities to animals instead of putting in the effort necessary to not only take in animals but to care for them in a life-affirming manner is a false choice, one that, just as before, often places the interests of lazy shelter directors before the welfare of the animals they are tasked by the community they serve to care for. In essence, the large, national groups promoting this agenda, groups like HSUS and the ASPCA, are telling shelter directors that in light of public pressure being generated from nationwide No Kill success, the best thing to do is not to innovate and modernize operations, but to simply close their doors, ironically prescribing that kill shelters become the very thing that was once the backbone of their efforts to publicly malign and disparage No Kill shelters: the false accusation that they were successful only because they turned their backs on animals.

Because of changes such as these, no more does a 90% save rate necessarily hinge on a comprehensive change in leadership that replaces the director who dug in her heels with one eager to save lives and personally unwilling to kill any healthy and treatable animal. Today, many shelters which are achieving 90% save rates are doing so with the same directors who once oversaw the shelter when it was little more than an assembly line of killing. Shelter directors of this sort find the same sort of shield to enable and defend their needless killing in the 90% benchmark that they once found in the collective resistance to No Kill by the entire humane movement. When you are an individual who is

motivated not by what is right and by doing the best job possible, but by putting in only the amount of effort as is necessary to reduce public scrutiny and complaint, there is no intrinsic motivation to save the remaining ten percent of animals if saving only 90% gets you off the hook. And as the last 10% may be more challenging, why bother when the movement is willing to say you have already crossed the finish line?

Of course, while I celebrate the fact that shelters that use to kill 50% of the animals are now saving 90% and while I celebrate the hundreds that now do so, allowing the last ten percent of animals who are still being killed at these shelters to be swept under the rug was never what I intended when I began promoting the 90% benchmark almost a decade ago. And while, until somewhat recently, the “90% Rule” was an incredibly powerful tool for inspiring change, one that motivated activists, and highlighted—by the sheer contrast it afforded—just how poorly our nation’s shelters were performing, changing circumstances have tragically allowed it to morph into a tool that is being misused and abused by unscrupulous shelter directors to justify needless killing. The time has come to reach higher.

While the “90% Rule” is my progeny, it is one necessity and ethics compel me to reject and to urge others to reject in favor of a more accurate and fair gauge: the answer to the straightforward question: Has a shelter fully and comprehensively ended the killing of all healthy and treatable animals, whatever the species? Likewise, I encourage animal lovers to reject the false answer of “Yes” when the save rate is in the low 90s. We must change with the changing times.

## THE LEXICON

In addition to these issues, there’s a need to revisit some of the language used. *Redemption* correctly states that a No Kill shelter can be public or private, run by a municipal government or a humane society, large or small, and either limited admission (meaning it does not take in more animals than it finds homes for) or open admission (meaning it takes in all animals from its jurisdiction). *Redemption* further states that it is possible for all shelters to be open admission No Kill shelters. These are accurate statements. When shelters and national

organizations claim “open admission” animal control facilities cannot be No Kill, they are not being truthful. The ASPCA, for example, has written that, “A no-kill shelter really can’t have an open admission policy. It must limit its intake if it wants to adopt out animals and not kill them.” This is false. A No Kill shelter can be either “limited admission” or “open admission.” And there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it. *Redemption* got that right. But it got the lexicon wrong.

The term “open admission” itself is problematic and I regret accepting it at face value. For one, if a shelter performing animal control for a community has an appointment system for surrendering animals, does that mean it is no longer “open admission”? I think the question is somewhat of a red herring if the shelter has an exception for animals needing immediate admission, as when the person relinquishing the animal simply refuses to wait. While my first two years in Tompkins County were a free-for-all, meaning anyone in our jurisdiction could bring in an animal at any time, we did put in place an appointment system in my third year (although we took animals in when people could not wait). Managing intake allowed us to better serve the animals. Moreover, it allowed us to assist people with trying to resolve any challenges they were facing which caused them to call upon us in the first place. It was very successful, consistent with data in other jurisdictions that shows managing intake for non-strays does not lead to abandonment, does not lead to people taking the animals to surrounding shelters, gives people time to find a home themselves, and in fact, when combined with assistance, results in people working out their challenges and keeping their animals.

In 2009, for example, the Lynchburg Humane Society in Virginia instituted an appointment system for people wanting to surrender animals to the shelter, with an exception for emergencies. At the same time, it contacted shelters in neighboring counties and told them that if a Lynchburg resident tries to surrender an animal, they would come pick the animal up immediately. In 2012, only three animals ended up at neighboring shelters and it is not clear they even tried to surrender them to Lynchburg before doing so. At the same time, the number of stray animals continued to decline, rather than

increase as predicted by killing apologists who claim that shelters that do not unconditionally accept every animal put those animals at risk for abandonment. In other words, managed intake does not increase abandonment rates or cause other shelters to have to “pick up the slack.”

The problem comes when the term “open admission” refers to shelters that kill. In that circumstance, the term is a misnomer because there is no such thing as an “open admission” kill shelter. Why? Kill shelters are closed to people who love animals. They are closed to people who might have lost their job or lost their home but do not want their animals to die. They are closed to Good Samaritans who find animals but do not want them killed. They are closed to animal lovers who want to help save lives but will not be silent in the face of needless killing. Indeed, for the animals these shelters kill, shelter is by no means what the animals receive. On the contrary, such shelters do not shield animals from harm, but rather, they inflict it.

Here’s just one example. One morning after Tompkins County became a No Kill community, a woman brought in a stray cat she had found. She explained to me how this was the first time she had ever brought an animal to the shelter. In the past, whenever she found an animal in need, she took the animal home. She explained how she often felt overwhelmed by the amount of animals she had to care for, but she didn’t have a choice because the shelter would have killed any cats she found and brought in, something she would never allow them to happen. She then expressed relief and gratitude that Tompkins County was now No Kill, and had a shelter she could turn to for help.

Ironically, kill shelters are so enmeshed in their so-called “open door” philosophy that they are blind to any proactive steps that might limit the numbers of animals coming in through those doors, like pet retention programs, or that might increase the numbers of animals adopted, like comprehensive marketing campaigns. “Open door” does not mean “more humane” when the end result is mass killing. In fact, even HSUS has recently told shelters in California not to accept healthy cats if all they are going to do is kill them and that they should switch to an appointment-based surrender

system. I no longer use the term in these circumstances.

## WHO IS AN “ADOPTABLE” ANIMAL?

There’s little doubt that San Francisco was ahead of its time in the early to mid-1990s. At a time when the city was saving three out of four animals, many cities of its size were killing that many. It was pioneering new programs which have since redefined and even revolutionized sheltering in America. And, like Tompkins County, it electrified the movement nationally. But as I made clear in *Redemption*, it never achieved No Kill. I regret, however, that I did not go into the details of those challenges enough. One of those challenges was the definition of which animals were “healthy” and “treatable.”

As discussed in the film, the head of the city shelter fought the San Francisco SPCA’s effort virtually every step of the way. One of the claims he made was that the SPCA would use a self-serving, narrow definition of which animals were considered “adoptable” and which were not, and thus claim to do a better job than it was, in fact, doing. This begs the question of why he killed those animals, rather than finding them a home himself, but he was less interested in doing that than fighting the SPCA’s efforts to do so. (At the time, he had allied himself with the heads of other regressive shelters in the Bay Area who felt deeply threatened by the SPCA’s success and what it was proving to be possible.) The SPCA, nonetheless, did not want the appearance of mislabeling animals, so it gave the city pound exclusive authority to determine which animals were healthy and treatable.

Unfortunately, the pound did not act with integrity. Initially, no dogs classified as “Pit Bulls” made it into those categories. It was arbitrary, wrong, unethical, but wholly consistent with many shelters at the time which had enacted their own bans on the adoption of any dog they considered a “Pit Bull.” Of course, when I got to Tompkins County, as I ran the pound and was not reliant on others, we saved them all, including dogs classified as “Pit Bulls.” San Francisco, however, had to contend with a regressive pound structure. It took some time, some advocacy, and some pressure, but these dogs did start to come to the SPCA, not many at first, but increasingly over time. The



process was never allowed to come to fruition, and No Kill was never actually reached as I discuss in the book and the film when all pretensions to No Kill were finally abandoned by a new President and I left the organization.

## WHO WAS FIRST?

There are other problems with *Redemption*, but I'll leave it at that. It opened up a conversation that has dramatically changed the movement and I remain very proud of it. It got a lot right. It is still highly relevant, problems and all. And, of course, this film is born of that book. But there is one last open question that has resulted from the publication of *Redemption* that deserves discussion: Was Tompkins County the first No Kill community?

Let me begin by saying that if in fact it was not, that is actually great news. If other communities had done it before, it means two things: 1. Animals were saved, instead of killed; 2. It is further proof that No Kill works and, to the extent they are No Kill to this day, sustainable. What has never been questioned, however, was the important role Tompkins County's success played in electrifying the No Kill movement nationally. It was the lodestar which activists across the country used to achieve the same success in their own community. It was the shelter which established the No Kill Equation as a national model responsible for similar success in other communities. It proved No Kill was possible in a largely rural community. It was directly responsible for future success in communities like Austin and Charlottesville. Nationally, the movement was unaware of other such communities at the time. And, of course, it led to *Redemption* which helped change everything.

Moreover, the discussion of who was first, which may be interesting from a historical perspective, is decidedly uninteresting from our advocacy for a No Kill nation. It is a distraction, one more in a long line from critics of mine who are intent on discrediting me and are willing to sacrifice the hard work and achievements of the deeply passionate people who made a lifesaving difference in Tompkins County. I suppose we should take comfort that the discussion has shifted from "No Kill is a lie" to "Tompkins County wasn't the first No Kill community" among the Naysayers. That is progress, for in engaging in such an argument they

are now admitting No Kill is possible. That alone is victory for the animals. But is it true? Truth be told, there may be a community we simply do not know about, but I do not think so.

At the time, there were a handle of communities nationwide with at least a 90% save rate and I contacted the ones we knew of (three in Colorado and one in Michigan, for example). They either killed healthy and treatable "feral" cats, did not adopt out "Pit Bulls," or did not take in or save non-dog and cat species. The biggest contender among the revisionist history crowd, however, is Otsego County, Michigan. According to one critic of my work, "the first shelter to report a 90 percent+ save rate appears to have been Otsego County, Michigan, where credible reports give 1999 as the date that they achieved a 90 percent+ live release rate." Putting aside the notion that 90 percent does not necessarily equate with No Kill as discussed earlier, this critic also admits that they were not able to supply full, and in some years any, statistics prior to 2007. But let's look at the evidence anyway.

Otsego is a small community of less than 30,000 people and takes in several hundred animals a year. The shelter is only open until 4 pm Monday through Friday and for three hours on the weekend. Until very recently, Michigan had a quirk in its state reporting structure that only required shelters to report animals they considered "adoptable." It is why another shelter was reporting a 100 percent rate of lifesaving until the law was changed and then it dropped into the 30th percentile. I am not suggesting that Otsego did this. I just do not know and my efforts to get comprehensive data for the 1990s and early 2000s were also unsuccessful. In addition, the 1999 No Kill resolution by that shelter specifically describes the policy as "No Kill for adoptables." In fact, the safety net of care did not then and does not now include all healthy and treatable community cats, as it did during my tenure in Tompkins County. Although a local rescue group offers TNR and occasionally relocates "feral" cats to barns, to this very day, if someone brings in a "feral" cat, shelter staff ask them to fill out what they call a "euthanize card." While the No Kill resolution specifically excludes animals, including cats, deemed "aggressive" which is how they classify frightened "feral" cats, in a telephone call to the shelter this year, staff admitted that cats



who are not socialized to people are killed. That is not No Kill by any reasonable definition.

According to the No Kill Advocacy Center:

*Conditions such as fleas, ear mites, or pregnancy do not change the animal's status from being healthy since they are resolved through professionally standard routine shelter care or, in the case, of pregnant animals, through*

*giving birth. Healthy also includes animals who are exhibiting behaviors considered normal for the species such as house soiling, territorial marking, barking, chewing, digging or scratching behavior. Likewise free-living community cats who are inhibited in social interactions with humans are not exhibiting abnormal behavior for the species...*

Achieved "No-Kill"		Municipal Shelter's Annual Intake		Municipal Shelter
→ Tompkins County, NY	2001	2,177	2010	Tomkins County SPCA
2010 Maddie's Fund Statistics Attached.				
Charlottesville, VA	2006	3,737	2010	Charlottesville Albemarle SPCA
2010 Maddie's Fund Statistics Attached.				
Terre Haute, IN	2008	3,487	2009	Terre Haute Humane Society
2009 Maddie's Fund Statistics Attached.				
Berkeley, CA	2009	2,306	2010	Berkeley Alliance for Homeless Animals Coalition
2010 Maddie's Fund Statistics Attached.				
Marquette, MI	2009	1,716	2010	Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
→ Otsego County, MI	2009	710	2010	Otsego County Animal Shelter
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
Grosse Ile, MI	2009	363	2010	Grosse Ile Animal Shelter
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
Kansas City, KS	2009	2,445	2011	Kansas City Kansas Animal Control
According to the website for the Humane Society of the Greater Kansas City, they pull the "adoptable" animals from the municipal shelter every day. The municipal shelter run by Kansas City Kansas Animal Control doesn't post their statistics, and the office manager I spoke with over the phone advised that she did not have access to those statistics. An email was sent to the facility's manager, Captain Angell, requesting the statistics. - Recieved statistics for 2011 on 3/14/2012.				
Benzie County, MI	2010	411	2010	Benzie County Animal Control
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
Chippewa County, MI	2010	1,000	2010	Chippewa County Animal Control
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
Boulder, CO	2010	359	2011	Boulder City Animal Shelter
Acquired stats by speaking with the manager of Boulder City Animal Shelter, Mary Jo Frazier, over the phone.				
King George County, VA	2010	571	2011	King George Animal Control and Pound Facility
Statistics from the King George Animal Control website, a print out of which is attached.				
Healdsburg, CA	2010	601	2011	Healdsburg Animal Shelter
2010 Maddie's Fund Statistics Attached.				
Fluvanna County, VA	2010	1,100	2010	Fluvanna SPCA
Statistics not posted. Their 2011 newsletter states that they received 1,100 animals during their 2010-2011 annual fundraiser campaign, which I believe ran from October 2010 to October 2011.				
Duluth, MN	2010	2,721	2010	Duluth Animal Control and Animal Allies Humane Society
The attached statistics for the municipal shelter are only available in combination with the Humane Society's.				
Houghton County, MI	2010	781	2010	Copper Country Humane Society
Michigan 2010 Annual Animal Shelter Activity Report Attached.				
Williamsburg, VA	2010	1,710	2010	Heritage Humane Society
Heritage Humane Society is the contracted municipal shelter for the city of Williamsburg. Statistics attached.				
Southampton, NY	2010	1,000	2010	Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation
Southampton Animal Shelter Foundation runs the municipal shelter for the city of Southampton. Statistics are not posted, however Edward Fritz, the Executive Director for SASF, in July 2011 stated an annual intake of just over 1,000 animals (website attached).				
Shelby County, KY	2010	1,700	2010	Shelby County Animal Shelter

In other words, free-living community cats (“feral cats”) are considered healthy, despite their lack of socialization to humans. In order to achieve No Kill, a shelter or community must “zero out” deaths for these healthy or treatable cats as well. A shelter is not No Kill if it is still killing healthy cats. And Otsego County admits that they do. In fact, they ask people to fill out a “euthanize card.”

Back then, there was also an open question about animals surrendered by their families. While they now accept them without restriction, that was not always the case as I learned back in the mid-2000s. And while I am a proponent of managed intake to save lives and do not believe shelters should take in any savable animal they intend to kill, during the first two years of the Tompkins County No Kill initiative, we accepted all animals without restriction, without waiting lists, and without appointments. We were open seven days a week until 5:30 and we took them in by the thousands.

Finally, in no way is this discussion meant to take away from their incredible achievements or the hard work of Otsego County’s animal lovers. They deserve our thanks and admiration. But when I asked a spokesperson from that shelter several years ago about this issue, before the achievement of being the first became a source of pride, they told me that they first achieved “No Kill,” with full intake of strays and surrenders, in 2009. They said the same thing to a municipal administrator in another jurisdiction who was doing research on No Kill sheltering policies for his city, as he documented in the graphic on the previous page.

Putting all that aside, when Tompkins County achieved success, I specifically stated that we were, as I believed and continue to believe, the first full service No Kill community, where no savable dogs, cats, including feral cats, rabbits, birds, mice, guinea pigs, hamsters, rats, chickens, goats, horses, lizards, fish and others were killed. Otsego only accepts dogs and cats (and still kills cats deemed “feral”). To this day, given the movement’s sole preoccupation with dogs and cats, therefore, that may still be the case.\*

The last contender for which was the first No Kill community is Kanab, Utah, home of Best Friends Animal Society. It has only recently emerged as a contender on a theory posited by a critic of my

work who is largely driven by spite. Although this critic first posited Otsego County as the first, and then when the facts did not back that up, changed it to several communities in Colorado, claims which are also contradicted by the facts, she now suggests it was the City of Kanab in 1986. She writes that Best Friends “reports they informally took over animal control and sheltering” and “had a live release rate of well over 90%.” Of course, a 90% save rate does not mean a community is No Kill as amply demonstrated throughout. But that isn’t the main problem with this latest, novel theory.

The first is that the people who started Best Friends and would have known if they were No Kill never claimed they were, until, according to my critic, recently. For example, they celebrated when I announced that Tompkins County achieved No Kill in 2001. They published an article I wrote highlighting it as the first in their magazine. And the leadership called to congratulate me; several of its founders (including those now claiming it was them) telling me that they thought it would take years before it happened. They even produced a No Kill timeline, distributed widely, that marked 2001 as the year No Kill was achieved and in Tompkins County. And they celebrated it as such at their annual conferences.

After Best Friends and I split when Oreo was killed by the ASPCA and they backed the ASPCA’s effort to defeat rescue rights legislation (see pages 131-132), the timeline was changed to claim that San Francisco was the first No Kill community and Tompkins County the second. Moreover, at the time, Kanab was killing healthy dogs and, in fact, was killing them cruelly: by heart stick. Now, as my criticism of Best Friends’ many betrayals intensify, it seems history has been rewritten once again as some of them—the very people who called to congratulate me, who produced the timelines, who published an article I wrote recounting our success, who celebrated it at their conferences, and who have the same knowledge now that they did then—have decided to make the claim that *they* were the first.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the most important thing is ending the killing in communities across the U.S., not splitting hairs in what often

seems like monomaniacal attempts to discredit me through rewriting history and the selective use of data and even, as during some years, in the absence of it.

Who was first? The answer doesn't really matter. But for anyone choosing to make such a claim for any community other than Tompkins County, the 90% threshold is not enough. Fairness and accuracy demand that not only do any such claims carry the assurance that no healthy and treatable animals were killed, including all community cats and other savable animals, but that both history and facts support such a claim and not merely the appetite of a spiteful vendetta.

In sum, despite all that *Redemption* got right and all that I would change if I were writing the book with hindsight, the bottom line is that the book was a game changer and its underlying message of hope and (wait for it) redemption, remains the same:

We have a choice. We can fully, completely, and without reservation embrace No Kill as our future. Or we can continue to legitimize the two-pronged strategy of failure: adopt a few and kill the rest. It is a choice which history has thrown upon us. We are the generation that questioned the killing. We are the generation that has discovered how to stop it. Will we be the generation that does?

Thanks, in part, to *Redemption*, that answer is an unequivocal and resounding, "Yes."

\* While the Tompkins County SPCA still maintains 90%+ save rates, staff killed some feral cats after I left, something I would never have allowed. When I was there, moreover, the shelter held animal control contracts for all 10 towns and municipalities that made up the county, as well as the county itself and the health department. Today, they only retain contracts with some of them.



"Next year, the Tompkins County SPCA will be one hundred years old. And next year, we'll be the first traditional shelter that serves as an animal control agency and assumes the responsibility for every stray animal, where no feral cat or sick or injured treatable animal is euthanized. That has been the case since my first day of work, June 11, 2001. And that includes goats, chickens, bunnies, guinea pigs, and other assorted critters, too."

- Excerpt from an article entitled "Diary of a No Kill Shelter Director," published in *Best Friends Magazine*, March/April, 2002



**Above:** The Dorothy Park Pet Adoption Center at the Tompkins County SPCA. Completed in 2004 during the third year of my tenure as Executive Director, it was the nation's first green certified animal shelter.



Creating, expanding & promoting innovative sheltering protocols that have already ended the killing in progressive shelters nationwide

**If every animal shelter in the United States embraced the No Kill philosophy and the programs and services that make it possible, we would save nearly four million animals who are scheduled to die in shelters this year, and the year after that. It is not an impossible dream.**

Henry David Thoreau once wrote that for every thousand people striking at the branches of evil, there is but one striking at the roots. The No Kill Advocacy Center strikes at the roots of shelter killing: exposing the myths and misperceptions upon which the edifice of shelter killing now rests, while providing an effective, proven, long term solution to that killing. It is seeking a paradigm shift in shelters across this country, one that will reorient our shelters away from killing and back to their founding purpose: to provide our nation's neediest companion animals with a helping hand and second chance.

Since its inception, the No Kill Advocacy Center has been promoting the No Kill Equation model nationwide. Today, shelters serving hundreds of American cities and towns are following this model, and for them, the approach has been transformative. These communities have ended the killing of healthy and treatable animals and as a result, hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved.

In addition to providing guidance for shelter directors who want to change, the No Kill Advocacy

Center also provides assistance to activists who are fighting for change in their local shelter against directors who are hostile to their demands for No Kill. It is working to pass laws mandating that shelters follow the No Kill Equation, has pursued litigation in defense of shelter reform laws and to protect the rights of rescuers, cosponsors *Just One Day*, a campaign to introduce shelters to the No Kill Equation which has already saved the lives of tens of thousands of animals, and its annual No Kill Conference in Washington DC - attended by over 900 rescuers, shelter directors, shelter veterinarians, animal lawyers, and animal activists across the nation - arms them with the knowledge and tools they need to save lives.

In these ways, the No Kill Advocacy Center saves lives not one at a time or two at a time or even three, but by the thousands every time another shelter director rejects killing in favor of the No Kill Equation, or grassroots activists, armed with the power of democracy and guidance from the No Kill Advocacy Center, bring the killing to an end in yet another of an ever-growing number of American communities.

**A NO KILL NATION IS WITHIN OUR REACH**

# HOW DOES THE NO KILL ADVOCACY CENTER PROTECT OUR NATION'S COMPANION ANIMALS?

- ✓ By promoting the only sheltering model that has ever successfully ended the killing, the No Kill Equation
- ✓ By assisting activists fighting for change in their own hometowns
- ✓ By seeking laws mandating that shelters embrace lifesaving innovation
- ✓ By providing assistance implementing the No Kill Equation to progressive shelter directors
- ✓ By providing legal assistance to activists whose rights to rescue and shelter access have been violated
- ✓ By litigating to ensure compliance with existing animal protection laws
- ✓ Through it's annual No Kill Conference which brings together the nation's top shelter directors, rescuers, veterinarians, and animal lawyers to share their knowledge and expertise

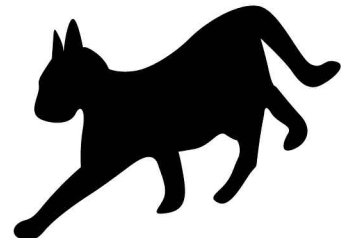
## The No Kill Advocacy Center

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nokilladvocacycenter.org





# The MYTH of Pet Overpopulation



Why the myth that there are too many animals and not enough homes is false, and how this myth enables the atrocity of shelter killing.

Today, an animal entering an average American animal shelter has a 50 percent chance of being killed, and in some communities it is as high as 99 percent, with shelters blaming a lack of available homes as the cause of death. But is pet overpopulation real? And are shelters doing all they can to save lives? If you believe traditional sheltering dogma, the answer to both those questions is “yes.” The next logical question is: *How do we know?* To adherents of the “we have no choice but to kill because of pet overpopulation” school, pet overpopulation is real because animals are being killed, a logical fallacy based on backwards reasoning and circular illogic. As to whether shelters are doing all they can, the answer here too, is long on cliché and short on evidence: because “no one wants to kill.” Data, analysis, and experience—in short, evidence—have no place. Tragically, neither do ethics.

In truth, and at the heart of the No Kill philosophy, is the understanding that the reasons we have historically been given for why animals are being killed in shelters—there are too many for too few homes available, that shelters are doing all they can, and that the American public is uncaring and irresponsible—have been proven wrong in the face of irrefutable evidence: data, experience, and communities that are achieving No Kill level save rates not by changing the habits of the people within a community, but by changing the culture, policies, and procedures of the shelter itself. In other words,

we know pet overpopulation is a myth because both statistics themselves and the experience of progressive shelters in communities across the country prove it is.

## THE NUMBERS

Some eight million animals enter shelters every year and while shelter killing apologists state that we cannot adopt our way out of killing eight million animals, the truth is that we can, but we do not have to. The actual number of animals needing homes is so much less. Some animals entering shelters need adoption, but others do not. Some animals, like community cats who are not socialized to people, need neuter and release. Others will be—and many more can be with greater effort—reclaimed by their families. Still others are irremediably suffering or hopelessly ill. And many more can be kept out of the shelter through a comprehensive retention effort, helping people overcome the challenges which have caused them to seek the surrender of their animal companion to the local shelter in the first place. In truth, shelters only need to find homes for a high end of 65 percent of total intakes. While estimates claim between three million and four million animals will be killed in pounds and shelters this year, roughly 2.7 to three million will be killed for lack of a new home. Can we find homes for three million animals? Yes, we can.

Using the most successful adoption communities as a benchmark and adjusting for population, U.S. shelters combined have the potential to adopt almost nine million animals a year. That is about three times the number of animals being killed for lack of a home. In fact, it is more than total impounds; and of those, over one-third do not need a new home. But the news gets even better because the number of people looking to get an animal is so much larger than the shelter “supply.”

According to one national study, there are about 23.5 million people who get an animal every year. While some of those are already committed to adopting from a shelter and others from a breeder or other commercial source, some 17 million have not decided where that animal will come from and research shows they can be influenced to adopt from a shelter. That’s 17 million people potentially vying for roughly three million animals. So even if 80 percent of those people acquired their animal from somewhere other than a shelter, we could still zero out the killing.

Another analysis looked at current rates of households with animal companions and compared them to death rates and the number of households who would acquire another animal when their resident animal died. The analysis put the number of new homes at a very conservative low end of 12 million a year (if animals averaged a 15 year lifespan) and a more liberal estimate of about 30 million a year (if animals averaged a seven year lifespan). This analysis further assumed no animals would run away or get lost, no households would get another animal if they currently had one, and that the number of homes was not growing, but rather stagnant. Indeed, the analysis assumed attrition in homes (that 15 percent of households with animals would not get another animal when the current companion died). Since the number of households is growing and markets for animals must take into account both new homes and replacement homes (including homes which currently have an animal but get another one anyway)—what statisticians call “stock” and “flow”—these assumptions underreport the outcome. In layman’s terms, what this means is that some of the market will be replacement life (someone’s dog or cat dies or runs away) and some will be expanding markets (someone doesn’t have a dog or cat but wants one, or someone has a dog or

cat but wants another one). In other words, the low end of 12 million per year is too low, as could well be the high end of 30 million.

Still other studies looked at actual acquisition rates. In other words, they looked at how many people *actually* acquired an animal in the last 12 months. That analysis put the number of new homes at a low end of 9.1 million per year (dogs and cats in the household less than one year) and a high end of 37.3 million (including all dogs and cats who have been in the household up, and including, one year). And still others looked at both death and loss rates (the animal dies or runs away) and subtracted birth rates, putting the number of new homes at a very conservative 10.8 million annually.

The answer as to whether there are: 1. too many animals and, 2. not enough homes, requires a comparison of both supply and demand. With about 2.7 million animals being killed in shelters but for a home annually (supply), regardless of which analysis is used (a low end of 9.1 million and a high end of 37.3 million) for demand, the calculus is not even close: Pet overpopulation is a myth. We can adopt our way out of killing. In fact, many communities already have.

## THE EXPERIENCE

A before and after snapshot of the hundreds of cities and towns which now have save rates between 90 percent and 99 percent shows that their shelters achieved that rate of lifesaving by changing the way they operated. Contrary to what conventional wisdom has prescribed for decades, they did not change the public. That’s because animals are not being killed in shelters because of the choices made by the public. Instead, they are being killed because of the choices made by the people overseeing those shelters.

In traditional U.S. animal shelters and despite decades of public assurances to the contrary by our nation’s shelter directors and animal protection organizations, animals are killed primarily out of habit and convenience. Visit an animal shelter run in line with traditional sheltering protocols, and this will become evident in a variety of ways. You will see animals killed rather than placed in available cages so staff doesn’t have to clean those cages or feed the animals inside them. Not only do shel-

tering policies promoted by large animal protection groups recommend keeping cages and kennels empty, in shelter after shelter where animals were being killed allegedly “for space,” many of those shelters in fact had plenty of empty cages, sometimes entire rooms of them. On a day No Kill Advocacy Center attorneys visited the Carson shelter of the Los Angeles Department of Animal Care & Control, for example, a shelter where roughly eight out of 10 cats were being put to death, 80 percent of the cages were intentionally kept empty. During a visit to a shelter in Shreveport, Louisiana, only one cat was available for adoption despite a 92 percent death rate for cats at the time. In Eugene, Oregon, at a time it was killing 72 percent of cats and claiming to do so for lack of space caused by of pet overpopulation, only six cats were available for adoption. The rest of the cages were empty.

At a traditional animal shelter, you will find animals being killed despite offers from other non-profits and rescue groups to save those very animals. In fact, 71 percent of New York rescue groups and 63 percent of Florida rescue groups reported shelters killing the very animals they had offered to save. And the large national groups believe this is as it should be, as they have worked to defeat legislation which would have made it illegal for shelters to kill animals who qualified rescue groups are willing to save—legislation that has already saved hundreds of thousands of lives in other states. Since California passed such a law over the opposition of HSUS, the number of animals transferred to rescue groups rather than killed went from 12,526 to 58,939—a 370 percent increase because shelters were now required to work with rescue groups.

Animals in shelters are also killed because the shelter director refuses to implement a comprehensive foster care program for neonatal puppies and kittens, choosing to kill those animals instead. At one such shelter, the director fired staff and volunteers who were bottle-feeding orphaned baby animals on their own time and at their own expense. And at traditional shelters, animals are killed because shelter directors do not want to make the effort to implement all the other alternatives that already exist: neuter and release, offsite adoptions, pet retention and field service programs to reduce impounds, as well as medical and behavior rehabilitation programs, to name just a few.

In the end, killing is occurring in our nation’s shelters not because there are too many animals, but because killing is easier than doing what is necessary to replace it. As heartless as that reason is, shelter directors have been allowed to get away with it anyway. Why? Because the people who should be their fiercest critics—those within the animal protection movement itself—have provided them political cover by falsely portraying the killing that they do as a necessity born of pet overpopulation. In fact, the lie of pet overpopulation is at the heart of the killing paradigm. It is the primary excuse that allows shelter directors to shift the blame from their own failure to stop killing to someone else. And it is the excuse that has, for decades, kept the animal protection movement wringing its hands, spinning in endless, hopeless circles, trying to “solve” the problem of shelter killing by attacking a phantom cause, rather than the one that is truly to blame.

There are now No Kill communities across the U.S. and abroad: in New York and in California, in Michigan and Kentucky, in Nevada, and across the globe, including areas suffering from high rates of unemployment and foreclosure. All these communities did it virtually overnight, by implementing proven strategies to lower impounds and relinquishments, increase redemptions, return animals to their responsible caretakers and return community cats who are not social with people to their habitats, while adopting out the remainder.

From both the perspective of animals and the perspective of the true animal lover, the fact that pet overpopulation turns out not to exist can only be described as welcome news. That the main excuse historically used to justify the need to systematically poison or gas to death millions of dogs and cats turns out to be a fabrication should be cause for celebration. Indeed, one would expect that the leadership of the animal protection movement and those within the grassroots who defer to them would not just embrace this news but would shout it from the rooftops. Tragically, that has not been the case. Rather than accept and then evolve their approach to this issue in light of new information (a study conducted by HSUS itself proved that demand for animals vastly exceeds the number of animals being killed in shelters), they have instead tenaciously clung to and even jealously guarded the idea of pet overpopulation, working to stall its rap-

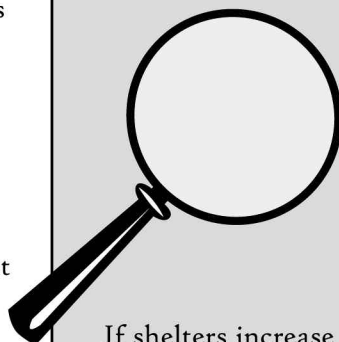
idly diminishing sway over animal lovers by repackaging pet overpopulation with “new and improved” labels such as “Regional Pet Overpopulation,” “Shelter Overpopulation” or re-asserting the efficacy of pet overpopulation by redefining the terms of the debate in a specious manner.

**REGIONAL PET OVERPOPULATION:  
SAME ARGUMENT,  
SAME INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION**

According to these groups, regardless of whether pet overpopulation exists nationally, it does exist regionally in areas with higher rates of poverty, particularly the South. Not only does this argument ignore the experience of economically distressed areas with No Kill level save rates, communities with high per capita poverty rates, foreclosure rates, unemployment rates, transiency rates, and shelter intake rates; it ignores the fact that each of the communities that have succeeded were also once steeped in killing, claiming at one time they had no choice but to kill by using the same excuses that have been proven false by virtue of their own success (almost always after a shelter director resistant to No kill was replaced with a progressive one). It ignores the growing number of communities with save rates between 90 percent and 99 percent in the South. And it ignores that while each of our nation’s successful communities are demographically and geographically diverse, the one thing they do share is that their success was not the result of a very specific set of circumstances which set them apart from other American communities, such as their geography or affluence.

In fact, an analysis of per capita funding rates found no correlation between spending on animal control and save rates. A separate analysis found no correlation between unemployment and foreclosure rates and save rates. And a third found no correlation between intake rates and corresponding save rates. In other words, communities with high foreclosure and unemployment rates also had high save rates, while communities with low foreclosure and unemployment rates killed a lot of animals. Communities with high per capita intake rates also had high save rates, while those with low per capita

## CASE STUDY



### Disproving Claims of “Regional Pet Overpopulation” in Michigan

If shelters increase the number of animals who come from shelters by a few percentage points, we would be a No Kill nation. Today, there are about 179 million dogs and cats in homes. Two percent of 179 million equates to 3.6 million, more than all the animals killed in shelters but for a home. A two percent increase would replace all killing with adoption. Take a state like Michigan, where some claim that regional pet overpopulation exists because of economic distress and high rates of unemployment. Today, roughly 85,000 animals statewide are losing their lives annually. Of those, just over 80,000 animals are healthy and treatable. Of those, at least another 4,000 can and should be reunited with their families. On average, Michigan shelters have 10 percent reclaim rates, a figure that is far below the national average, and a fraction of the most successful communities in the nation, but a statistic that could be dramatically improved if the reclaim protocols of the No Kill Equation were followed. For example, 59 percent of stray dogs and 22 percent of stray cats are reclaimed in Colorado and at least one shelter there has a 90 percent reclaim rate for dogs. If community cats who are not socialized to people were neutered and released rather than killed as the No Kill Equation also mandates, then under a worst-case scenario, about 70,000 additional homes need to be found for Michigan to become a No Kill state. That amounts to just over 1/2 of one percent of Michigan’s 10,000,000 residents. Even if one is looking at the number of households instead of the number of people, it’s less than two percent. How is that evidence of a “regional pet overpopulation” problem? It isn’t. In fact, the evidence reveals that the opposite is actually true.

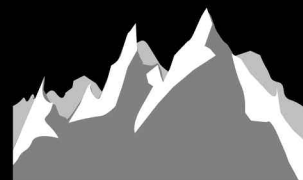
intake rates had low save rates, too. Likewise, communities with low per capita animal control spending had high save rates and some communities spending four times the rate of these communities were saving less than half. What these analyses found was that each of those communities which were succeeding were succeeding for one reason and one reason alone: the shelter itself changed the way it operated, by rejecting killing in favor of existing alternatives and rejecting the false premise that they can't save them all because of pet overpopulation. In other words, what mattered was what the shelters themselves were doing, whether they were putting in place the cost-effective, lifesaving alternatives of the No Kill Equation. If they did, they saved lives, regardless of other factors such as intake rates, adoption rates, poverty rates, or, as it relates to the current argument, the region of the country in which they are located.

In the end, the regional pet overpopulation argument has the same flaws as the traditional pet overpopulation problem. With no statistical analysis to support it and the experience of communities with extremely high per capita intake rates proving that No Kill can succeed in spite of such challenges (today there are No Kill communities with per capita intake rates 20 times higher than New York City, the most densely populated city in America), regional pet overpopulation is the same argument with a new label and every bit as devoid of verifiable, concrete data to back it up.

#### **SHELTER OVERPOPULATION: IT'S DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN**

One proponent of the pet overpopulation argument has gone so far as to admit there is neither national pet overpopulation, nor regional pet overpopulation, but instead claims that killing is necessary because of "shelter overpopulation." Under this argument, if a shelter has 100 cages, when the 101st animal comes in, there is "shelter overpopulation" which justifies the killing of that animal. Not only does this argument lack any threshold or standards to ensure

## **CASE STUDY**



### **Disproving Claims That Adoption Rates Cannot Keep Pace with Intake Rates in Colorado**

Nationally, in order to adopt their way out of killing, shelters would have to find homes for roughly 65 percent of the high end of eight million animals entering their facilities annually, or about 5.2 million animals. That is an adoption rate of about 16 animals for every 1,000 human residents. If one uses the low end estimate of six million intakes, it is an adoption rate of only 12 animals for every 1,000 human residents. Is this possible? Yes. Many of the hundreds of cities and towns with save rates in the 90th percentile or better have matched or exceeded these figures. The ones that have not are achieving those save rates despite lower adoption rates because they are saving lives in other ways, such as higher reclaims or more TNR. In other words, it is not that they cannot adopt more, only that they were not required to do so to save lives.

In 2013, for example, the state of Colorado had a statewide save rate of 88 percent despite an intake rate of 31 dogs and cats for every 1,000 people, more than double the national average and about four times the rate of Los Angeles. This included transporting in thousands of animals from outside the state (17,408 dogs and over 2,000 cats). It had an adoption rate of about 64 percent (of unreclaimed intake), roughly 16 animals for every 1,000 animals. With a save rate of 90 percent for dogs and 79 percent for cats, Colorado is notable for several things: 1. They could achieve save rates in the 90th percentile for cats with very little effort, 2. They disprove the claim that jurisdictions with high per capita intake rates cannot have high save rates or adopt out more than 15 animals per 1,000 people, 3. Jurisdictions with high per capita intake rates can even impound tens of thousands of animals and still save the vast majority of animals, and 4. Regional pet overpopulation does not exist.



protections for animals of any kind, there is no killing that cannot be justified. If this same community dismantled 95 of the 100 cages, they would be justified in killing the 6th animal who came in. Moreover, the argument does not take into account foster homes, temporary cages and kennels, doubling up animals, pet retention programs and adoption campaigns—all the alternatives to killing that successful communities use to replace killing when cages get full. And it presupposes that No Kill communities never have more animals than cage space when it is a given that, at some point, every shelter will face such a scenario, especially during peak intake times such as spring and summer. Indeed, when Tompkins County became a No Kill community, one out of every four animals spent time in foster care.

The argument also ignores the fact that a shelter can always add more cages to accommodate population. In Tompkins County, New York, for example, shelter staff and volunteers converted the garage, which housed two vans, into two rooms: an overflow infirmary and a nursery for kittens. Prior to this, the shelter's transport vans, tools to help them in their mission, enjoyed protection from the elements while sick animals and kittens, who *were* their mission, were being killed for "lack of space." There was nothing preventing prior directors from doing the same thing. But by the "shelter overpopulation" argument, the killing of kittens rather than sending them into foster care or adding more cage space was entirely justified. Is that really the standard of care we want our nation's shelters to follow—in essence, no standards at all? In the end, the proponents of "shelter overpopulation" have simply taken the excuses used to justify killing on a macro-scale and reduced it to the micro. But it is the exact same argument, flawed for the same reasons, and equally as unethical.

### **MAKING THE NUMBERS FIT THE CONCLUSION**

Given both the data and experience of successful communities, there is simply no way to rationalize a supply and demand imbalance in shelters. But regardless of the facts, that doesn't mean that shelter killing apologists are no longer arguing that killing is "necessary" because of pet overpopulation. In fact, to overcome the evidence, they have taken to arguing that when calculating the number of animals in need of homes nationally, we must include

all the animals living on the street as well, not just the ones being killed in shelters. When you include all the animals living on the street, they argue, pet overpopulation is real.

There are many flaws inherent in this argument as well; the first being that it introduces into the equation a whole category of animals who, while their well-being is important, are not relevant to the very specific discussion of shelter killing for the simple fact that they are not in shelters. While adding the number of animals in shelters combined with the number of animals living on the street would provide a statistic of how many animals in America might not have a human address, that number would not reflect how many animals are under an immediate death threat at their local shelter which is, after all, the killing pet overpopulation has always been used to justify. Their argument thus becomes absurd: because a cat lives on the street, you must kill a cat in the shelter even though there are homes available for the cat in the shelter. Moreover, the existence of such animals does not impact the demand side of the equation which, as already explained, so vastly exceeds the supply of animals in shelters that it can even accommodate homes lost to commercially-sourced animals such as those from breeders and pet stores, as well as those adopted from the streets. In short, while expanding the supply side of the pet overpopulation argument in this way is an attempt to obscure and confuse the issue, it does not change the conclusion supported by both fact and experience: every year, there are more homes available than there are animals being killed in shelters.

Nor does the implied corollary to their argument stand up, either. Are those who make this argument implying that all animals living on the streets should be brought into shelters and therefore, if they were, pet overpopulation would in fact exist? That, after all, is the inference of their argument. First and most significantly, arguing that pet overpopulation would be real if all free-living animals were admitted to shelters is to introduce a hypothetical and irrelevant scenario into a discussion about a very real problem. For roughly three or so million animals every year, shelter killing is a grave and immediate danger. To argue for the existence of the disproven but primary excuse used to justify that killing based not on what is happening

but what might happen based on an improbability—that all free-living animals to be admitted into shelters—reduces a serious and weighty discussion to the realm of make believe.

A genuine commitment to animal welfare requires an honest assessment of reality and the genuine threats which animals entering shelters face. Admitting extraneous, unrelated issues into the discussion is an attempt not to illuminate, but to obscure. And analyzing the validity of historical claims used to justify the systematic killing of millions of animals should not be a sophomoric exercise in rhetoric or debate, but a serious discussion that seeks to inform and influence our positions and actions on behalf of animals in a responsible, thoughtful and fact-based way.

Moreover, those who advocate for animals should oppose any suggestion that animals on the streets would be better off in those places that present the greatest threat to their lives: *the local animal shelter*. Nor would loss of life, though the greatest harm, be the only one such animals would likely face if admitted to shelters. Although the animal protection movement has perpetuated the fiction that our nation's shelters provide a humane and compassionate safety net of care for our nation's homeless animals, the facts tell a very different, very tragic, story. In truth, the first time many companion animals experience neglect or abuse is when they enter a shelter.

Until we reform our shelters, the last place an animal advocate should wish an animal to end up, including those animals who live on the streets, is the local kill shelter. Not only is life on the street safer than a stay in an animal shelter that kills, but the very thing animal shelters are supposed to provide to homeless and stray animals—reunion with their home or adoption into a new one—are more likely to happen to an animal on the street than one entering a shelter. The likelihood of an animal being reunited with their human caretakers is greater for cats, for example, if they are allowed to remain where they are rather than being impounded. In one study, cats were 13 times more likely to be returned home by non-shelter means (such as returning home on their own) than through the pound. Another study found that people are up to three times more likely to adopt cats as neighborhood strays than from a shelter.

Nor is life outside a human home the tragedy it is so often painted to be by shelter killing apologists seeking to justify killing by portraying the alternative as even worse. The risk of an untimely death for street cats is extremely low, with outdoor cats living roughly the same lifespan as indoor pet cats. In a study of over 100,000 free-living cats, less than one percent of those cats were suffering from debilitating conditions. The risk of death is lower and the chance of adoption higher for cats on the street than cats in the shelter. And in countries outside the U.S., neuter and release of dogs is not uncommon and regarded, as it should be, as an infinitely better alternative than impound and death.

Like pet overpopulation, the argument that animals are better off dead than living on the street flies in the face of actual evidence. And just as significant, it also flies in the face of our common experience as living beings who, if given the choice between death at a shelter and survival by our wit, instinct and the chance of benefiting from the kindness of strangers, would choose the latter without a moment's hesitation. Not only would this choice be our natural impulse, the facts show it would be the smart one, too.

With shelter killing being the leading cause of death for healthy animals in America (and therefore the cause of the greatest possible harm to befall homeless animals), the No Kill movement is focused on bringing this very specific harm to an end. We do not need to keep killing shelter animals because there are other animals living on the street. That is a *non sequitur* that groups that defend and promote killing conveniently ignore when they perpetuate this false choice and fallacy in order to justify the killing of those they theoretically exist to protect.

But even if we ignored the illogic, their argument also falls apart in the absence of any concrete data to support their case that when the number of animals living on the streets is factored into the supply side, pet overpopulation exists. No one knows for sure the number of animals living on the street. If those who continue to claim pet overpopulation is real because the number of animals exceeds demand for animals and that this supply-demand imbalance requires shelters to kill animals, the burden is on them to prove it: what is the supply side of the equation? When you are preaching death, when

you are promoting death, when you are excusing death, and when—in the case of groups and supporters that actually kill animals—you are paying for and actually doing the killing, the burden to prove its “necessity” is on you. In short, one better know the supply side of the equation before using an argument dependent upon it to justify a mass slaughter. Predictably, just as is true with the traditional notion of pet overpopulation which they have perpetuated for decades, they do not.

In fact, the estimates are, at best, completely made up, ranging as they do from the impossible to the absurd, including the claim that there are 1.2 million stray dogs in Houston alone, about 50,000 in Detroit, and 100 million nationwide. Though the claim that 50,000 free-living dogs could be found in Detroit was claimed and repeated by many, no one could cite the source of where the figure came from. And then the dogs were actually counted. Preliminary results indicate there are 1,000 to 3,000 dogs living on the streets of Detroit, a fifty-fold reduction in the actual number. In Houston, likewise, the leadership of the city pound told a newspaper reporter that there were 1.2 million homeless dogs roaming the streets of Houston, which requires them to kill those in the shelter, a *non sequitur*. If there were that many dogs, there would be 2,000 homeless dogs per square mile in Houston, an absurdity. Now when city leadership is asked for the source of that number, they cite the newspaper article which was quoting them! So what is the actual number of stray animals in the U.S.?

Let’s look at a worst case scenario. Imagine if the entire country was like Detroit, a city where the infrastructure provided by government has more or less begun to break down. It is poor, bankrupt, suffering from incredibly high unemployment and foreclosure rates, criteria usually associated with lack of spay/neuter and, according to some, high rates of abandonment. Using this extreme example as a norm, there would be just shy of 1,000,000 stray dogs in the entire U.S.—less than what pound leadership claims for Houston alone. Assuming 10 times the number of cats, we’re still looking at a number that is less than total demand. And, of course, Detroit is an aberration. It has an unemployment rate twice that of the nation, six out of 10 kids live in poverty compared to two in 10 nation-

ally, and one-third of the city is empty or described as “heavily blighted.”

On top of that, many community cats do not need a home and are not “homeless” as they either have homes but are allowed outside or they are not social to humans (the outdoors is their home). In the case of the latter, recent studies from the veterinary community confirm that they are in no way suffering because of it. Nonetheless, when you add these cats and dogs to the total numbers, we’re still dealing with a figure that is less than total demand, so the math still does not hold up. Even so, it is irrelevant. For those who do actually enter shelters—an estimated three million animals a year who are dying but for a home—there are plenty of homes available if, instead of killing them out of convenience, shelters better promoted the animals and then actually kept them alive long enough to find homes through comprehensive adoption campaigns.

#### ACCEPTED ON FAITH

So given that there is so much information and experience working against the notion of pet overpopulation and given that to believe in pet overpopulation is to accept the excuse that allows for the killing of millions of animals every year, why do people who claim to be animal lovers not only cling to it and either work so hard to maintain it or to try to revive its fading supremacy through rebranding? There are three primary reasons.

First, until very recently, pet overpopulation was an unquestioned gospel within the animal protection movement. Repeated *ad infinitum* as means of explaining shelter killing and distinguishing it from other forms of animal-killing, such as hunting, by virtue of its “necessity” (especially since this form of killing was being done by those who claimed to be a part of the animal protection movement itself), its prevalence and undisputed authority for so many decades gave it the appearance of truth rather than what it was all along: a mere hypothesis, and one that, when subjected to scrutiny and weighed against the evidence, collapses like a house of cards. Nonetheless, the universal acceptance of pet overpopulation that dominated the animal protection movement at one time—a groupthink mentality that accepted it as an *a priori* truth outside the bounds of investigation or analy-

sis—meant that to ultimately question its precepts was regarded as heresy, opening up those who exposed its fallacies to condemnation, scorn, and allegations of fraud.

The motives of those who seek to expose the lie at the heart of the killing have been maligned and misrepresented, creating a climate of suspicion within the animal protection movement not only about those who question the doctrine, but the very act of questioning it at all. Why? Because if pet overpopulation is a myth, then the killing being done in shelters is unnecessary, and those who do that killing—friends and colleagues within the animal protection community itself—are behaving unethically and irresponsibly towards animals, a troubling and deeply unsettling conclusion that for many people within the animal protection community is better left unreached. Sadly, for many people who know and support organizations and individuals doing the killing or which provide them political cover, such allegiance is more important than the lives of the animals they are supposed to represent. To them, pet overpopulation, the historical narrative which has shielded those people from accountability, must not be exposed as a lie, and anyone who tries to do so should be condemned.

### THE LIMITS OF SPAY/NEUTER

The second—and probably more ubiquitous—reason that some animal activists are resistant to the idea that pet overpopulation is a myth is because they irrationally fear that if the public finds out the truth, the public will no longer spay/neuter their animals, which they view as critically important. Why do they believe sterilization is so critically important? Because, like the belief in pet overpopulation, they have been told over and over again, and for years on end, that it is.

In fact, spay/neuter has been the cornerstone of companion animal advocacy for decades precisely because it does not threaten those running shelters. Whereas the other programs of the No Kill Equation—such as foster care, comprehensive adoption programs and proactive redemptions—place the responsibility for lifesaving on the *shelter*; spay and neuter places the responsibility on the *public*. Unlike those other programs, therefore, sterilization has been and continues to be the one program of

the No Kill Equation to which every shelter director and every large national group pay homage. And that is also why so many animal activists argue, as they have been schooled to do and despite no evidence to prove it, that spay and neuter alone is the key to ending the killing. But is it true? In fact, it is not.

That does not mean that spay and neuter is not important. It is. While it is true that statistics show that there are enough potential homes for the animals in shelters, this does not undermine the life-saving impact of such services. Indeed, regardless of the number of potential homes, the fact remains that the animals are not getting into those homes. Shelter killing currently claims the lives of 2.7 million healthy and treatable animals every year and shelter killing remains the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States. Low-cost, high-volume spaying and neutering helps to decrease the number of animals entering shelters who would face an unnecessary and untimely death. Such programs therefore should be supported.

Moreover, continued promotion and availability of high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter is a means to reach stasis in shelters where adoptions equal intakes, making the achievement of a No Kill nation even easier to achieve. This is important because the lower the intake, the easier it is for even unmotivated, ineffective and uncaring directors to run a No Kill shelter. We want to eliminate those communities with high intake rates needing thoroughly committed and hardworking leadership to stop killing. Moreover, if spay/neuter allows a community to drop intakes significantly enough that they are unable to meet adoption demand, they can begin importing animals from high-kill rate jurisdictions and save those lives, too. Until all communities are No Kill communities, this is a very good thing to have happen.

But despite the role spay and neuter plays in helping a community more easily achieve and sustain No Kill, the fact remains that despite the privileged position spay/neuter has historically enjoyed within the animal protection movement, it alone has never created a No Kill community. In fact, communities with very high per capita intake rates have achieved No Kill without a comprehensive



public spay/neuter program. We cannot neuter our way out of killing and no U.S. community ever has. That honor belongs to the No Kill Equation as a whole, a series of programs and services which require a shelter to harness a community's compassion and which therefore also prove that in order to succeed, a shelter must embrace rather than alienate and condemn the people in the community it serves.

The No Kill philosophy recognizes that far from being the cause of shelter killing, the community is the key to ending it. It recognizes that while some people are irresponsible, most people are trustworthy and will do right by companion animals if we explain how they can do so. To the extent that spay and neuter is one of the programs that helps a shelter more easily achieve No Kill, that positive outcome is enough to encourage most people to do right not just by the animals, but by the shelter which shares their values and which they want to support and enable in its success. We need not fear monger with pet overpopulation and by extension, the threat that animals will be killed—or even actually kill them—to get people to do the right thing. When we make it easy for the public to do so—such as making spay/neuter affordable—most will. And studies and experience prove it.

Finally, believing that spay/neuter alone holds the key to ending the killing fails to recognize the most essential and tragic truth about animal sheltering in America today: we already have alternatives to killing, alternatives that the vast majority of shelter directors simply refuse to implement. And how can you save animals in a shelter run by a director who simply refuses to stop killing? Moreover, lamenting that we would be finally able to end the killing if only everyone sterilized their animals or could be forced to do so is like wishing that a historically popular but ineffective remedy for a particular disease would work when a cure has already been found. Not only does such an attitude perpetuate ignorance and helplessness by failing to acknowledge a genuine solution that already exists, but it siphons energy that should be directed towards implementing the real remedy into mourning the failure of a hopeless one. How does that help animals?

It doesn't. Indeed, the notion that we must continue to promote the myth of pet overpopulation—

which condones and enables killing—in order to encourage people to spay and neuter—which has only ever been important because it is a means to prevent killing—is an inversion of priorities. It is to encourage the disease and forsake the cure in favor of the medicine.

And not only does spay and neuter ignore the needs of the animals who are already in the shelter and under an immediate death threat, leaving them with no protection from killing of any kind, but reducing every issue to a failure to spay/neuter is exactly what the regressive shelter director and the large, national groups which fight No Kill want animal activists to do: point the finger of blame anywhere but on those who are actually doing the killing. Those who love animals must stop giving them the luxury of this out. We don't need animals to disappear from the Earth before we can do right by them. Instead, we should be demanding that those we pay to care for homeless animals with our tax and philanthropic dollars provide them the care, kindness, and a loving home that is their birthright.

Every animal lover has a responsibility to recognize that we don't need to figure out how to end the killing anymore. It is no longer a mystery—the No Kill Equation provides the answer. Our job now is to make sure the roadmap we already have is implemented in every shelter in America.

#### **PET OVERPOPULATION AS POLITICAL COVER**

The third and final reason that people cling to the myth of pet overpopulation is because they have a vested interest in an excuse which condones killing. This includes directors who run poorly performing shelters. It includes government bureaucrats in these communities who are supposed to oversee these shelter directors but refuse to hold them accountable for their performance. It includes national organizations whose companion animal divisions are staffed by or run on the advice of former shelter directors and employees who themselves failed to save lives when they worked in shelters. They are therefore not only threatened by No Kill success, but they are also committed to shielding their friends and colleagues still working in shelters from greater accountability. It includes the supporters of those groups whose identity is so wrapped up in that support that they not only re-



ject any criticism of the groups no matter what the evidence, but take such criticisms as a personal affront, thus willfully enabling killing through an unhealthy, codependent relationship that puts their own narrow self-interest before the lives and well-being of animals. And lastly, it includes the heads of organizations who claim to support No Kill, even claim to be striving toward No Kill, but who rely on the myth of pet overpopulation to justify their five- and ten-year No Kill plans in light of communities which have achieved it virtually overnight.

For such groups, pet overpopulation is a tool used to distinguish their community from those that are already successful, a means of obscuring the truth by portraying their community as more challenging than those that have already succeeded, even though, in truth, the thing that sets successful communities apart from theirs is a greater commitment to implement alternatives to killing and a greater determination to overcome the resistance of those who stood in the way.

### THE CONCLUSION

We can end the killing and we can do it today. And in hundreds of cities and towns across America, we've done exactly that. A true advocate who loves animals does not respond to that news with indignation, scorn, anger, apoplexy, by shooting the messenger, or by attempting to obscure the issue

for others with irrelevant and unrelated tangents, all of which have characterized the response by some within the animal protection to this seminal, groundbreaking, and what can only be described as good, news. A true advocate celebrates and then shares that message with everyone they know who loves animals, too, so that the pernicious and persistent myth at the heart of the killing—the lie that is responsible for a systemic slaughter of millions of animals every year—will finally be recognized for what it is. Anything else is unethical. It is enabling shelter killing. And it is turning a blind eye to a solution that will spare millions of animals from losing the one thing that is, as is true for each of us, more precious to them than anything else: their lives.

**About the data:** The data for this analysis came from a number of sources, including national surveys and studies conducted by or on behalf of Maddie's Fund, HSUS, Intel, draftFCB, the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, Out the Front Door, and Petsmart Charities. It includes data from shelters that have statewide reporting such as Virginia, Michigan, North Carolina and California, among others, and a database of about 1,100 organizations, almost one-third of the U.S. shelter total.

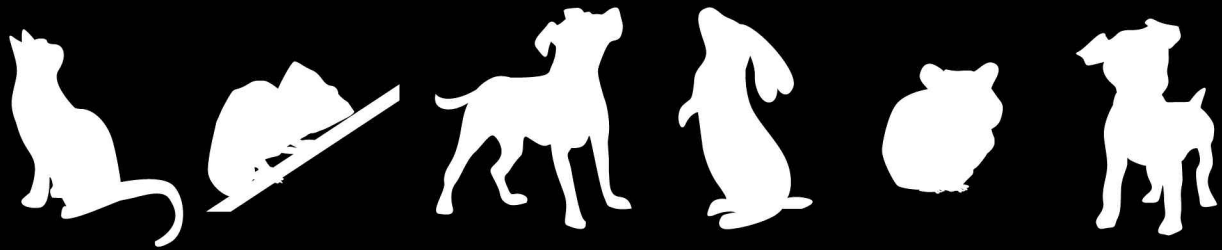


# NO EXCUSES

The numerous No Kill communities throughout America achieved lifesaving success virtually overnight, by adopting their way out of killing. There is no reason why every shelter in the nation cannot do the same.

# HOW IT'S DONE...

# THE NO KILL EQUATION



In the last two decades, shelters in hundreds of communities have comprehensively implemented a bold series of programs and services to reduce birthrates, increase placements, and keep animals with their responsible caretakers. As a result, they are achieving unprecedented results, with some saving up to 99 percent of all impounded animals in open admission animal control facilities. Some of these communities are urban, others rural, some are politically liberal, and others are very conservative. Some are in municipalities with high per capita incomes, and others are in those known for high rates of poverty. These communities share very little demographically. What they do share is leadership at their shelters who have comprehensively implemented a key series of programs and services, collectively referred to as the “No Kill Equation.”

Animals enter shelters for a variety of reasons and with a variety of needs, but for over 100 years, the

“solution” has been the same: adopt a few and kill the rest. The No Kill Equation provides a humane, life-affirming means of responding to every type of animal entering a shelter, and every type of need those animals might have. Some animals entering shelters are community cats who are not social with people. At traditional shelters, they are killed, but at a No Kill shelter, they are neutered and released back to their habitats. Some animals entering shelters are motherless puppies and kittens. At traditional shelters, these animals are killed as well. At a No Kill shelter, they are sent into a foster home to provide around-the-clock care until they are eating on their own and old enough to be adopted. Some animals have medical or behavior issues. At a traditional shelter, they are killed. At a No Kill shelter, they are provided with rehabilitative care and then adopted. Whatever the situation, the No Kill Equation provides a lifesaving alternative that replaces killing.

While shelter leadership drives the No Kill initiative, it is the community that extends the safety net of care. Unlike traditional shelters—which view members of the public as adversaries and refuse to partner with them as rescuers or volunteers—a No Kill shelter embraces the people in its community. They are the key to success: they

volunteer, foster, socialize animals, staff offsite adoption venues and open their hearts, homes and wallets to the animals in need. The public is at the center of every successful No Kill shelter in the nation. By working with people, implementing lifesaving programs and treating each life as precious, a shelter can transform itself.

## THE PROGRAMS & SERVICES OF THE NO KILL EQUATION

### VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers are a dedicated army of compassion and the backbone of a successful No Kill effort: they walk dogs, socialize cats, assist potential adopters and more. Volunteers make the difference between success and failure and, for the animals, life and death

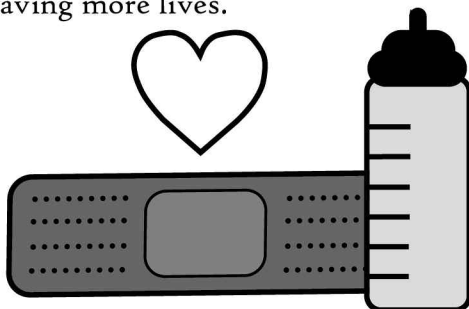
An adoption or transfer to a rescue group frees up cage and kennel space, reduces expenses for feeding, cleaning and killing & improves a community's rate of lifesaving.



### RESCUE PARTNERSHIPS

### FOSTER CARE

Volunteer foster care is a low-cost, and often no-cost, way of increasing a shelter's capacity and caring for sick and injured or behaviorally challenged animals, thus saving more lives.



Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs provide community cats a way out of shelters which might otherwise choose to kill them.

### TNR

## COMPREHENSIVE ADOPTION PROGRAMS

By implementing comprehensive adoption programs—including more convenient public access hours, offsite venues and incentives—shelters can replace killing with adoptions.

**Yes! We're  
OPEN**



Shelters need to keep animals happy and healthy and moving efficiently through the facility. To do this, shelters must put in place thorough vaccination, handling, cleaning, socialization and care policies to prevent illness and rehabilitative efforts for those who come in sick, injured, unweaned or traumatized.

## MEDICAL & BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION

## PUBLIC RELATIONS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Increasing a shelter's public exposure through marketing, public relations and partnering with community groups and businesses increases adoptions, volunteers, donations and other support.



Some of the reasons people surrender animals to shelters can be prevented if shelters work with people to help them solve their problems. Saving animals requires shelters to embrace innovative strategies for keeping people and their companion animals together.



## PET RETENTION

No-cost and low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter programs increase the number of animals sterilized and reduce the number of animals entering the shelter by removing the primary barrier preventing more people from having their animals altered: cost.



## HIGH VOLUME, LOW-COST SPAY & NEUTER

One of the most overlooked opportunities for reducing killing in animal control shelters is increasing the number of lost animals returned to their families. This includes matching reports of lost animals with animals in the shelter, rehoming animals in the field and use of technology such as posting lost animals on the internet.



## PROACTIVE REDEMPTIONS

## COMPASSIONATE, HARD-WORKING DIRECTOR

The final element of the No Kill Equation is the most important of all, without which all other elements are thwarted—a hard-working, compassionate shelter director who is not content to continue killing while regurgitating tired clichés about “public irresponsibility” or hiding behind the myth of “too many animals, not enough homes.” Such a director implements the programs and services of the No Kill Equation comprehensively and with integrity while holding his or her staff accountable to results and high standards.



## COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

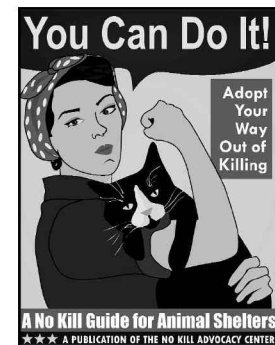
To succeed fully, however, shelters should not implement the programs piecemeal or in a limited manner. If they are sincere in their desire to stop the killing, animal shelters will implement and expand programs to the point that they replace killing entirely. Combining rigorous, comprehensive implementation of the No Kill Equation with best practices and accountability of staff in cleaning, handling, and care of animals, must be the standard.

In 2004, for example, one SPCA in a city of 1.5 million people conducted fewer than 200 free spay/neuter surgeries for the pets of the community's low-income population. Shelter leaders can boast of a low-cost and free spay/neuter program, but 200 surgeries in a large city, with one in four people below the federal poverty line, will not impact the numbers of animals entering city shelters. By contrast, another city with roughly half the population performed approximately 9,000 surgeries a year throughout the late 1990s, roughly 84 percent of them were free.

Similarly, animal control in yet another community allowed only employees to participate in its foster care program. The shelter can say it is implementing the programs of the No Kill Equation, but it is excluding thousands of animal lovers from participating in the effort, seriously limiting its lifesaving potential.

A shelter committed to No Kill does not send neonatal orphaned kittens into foster care “sometimes,” but rather every time. A shelter committed to No Kill does not merely allow rescue groups access to animals “some of the time,” but every time a legitimate rescue group is willing to take over care and custody of the animal. Indeed, a No Kill shelter actively seeks these groups out and contacts a particular rescue organization whenever an animal meets its criteria.

In short, shelters must take killing off the table for savable animals, and utilize the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time. A half-hearted effort isn't enough. It is primarily the shift from a reactive to proactive orientation and from a casual, ad-hoc, limited implementation to a comprehensive one, which will lead to the greatest declines in killing, and fix our broken animal shelter system.

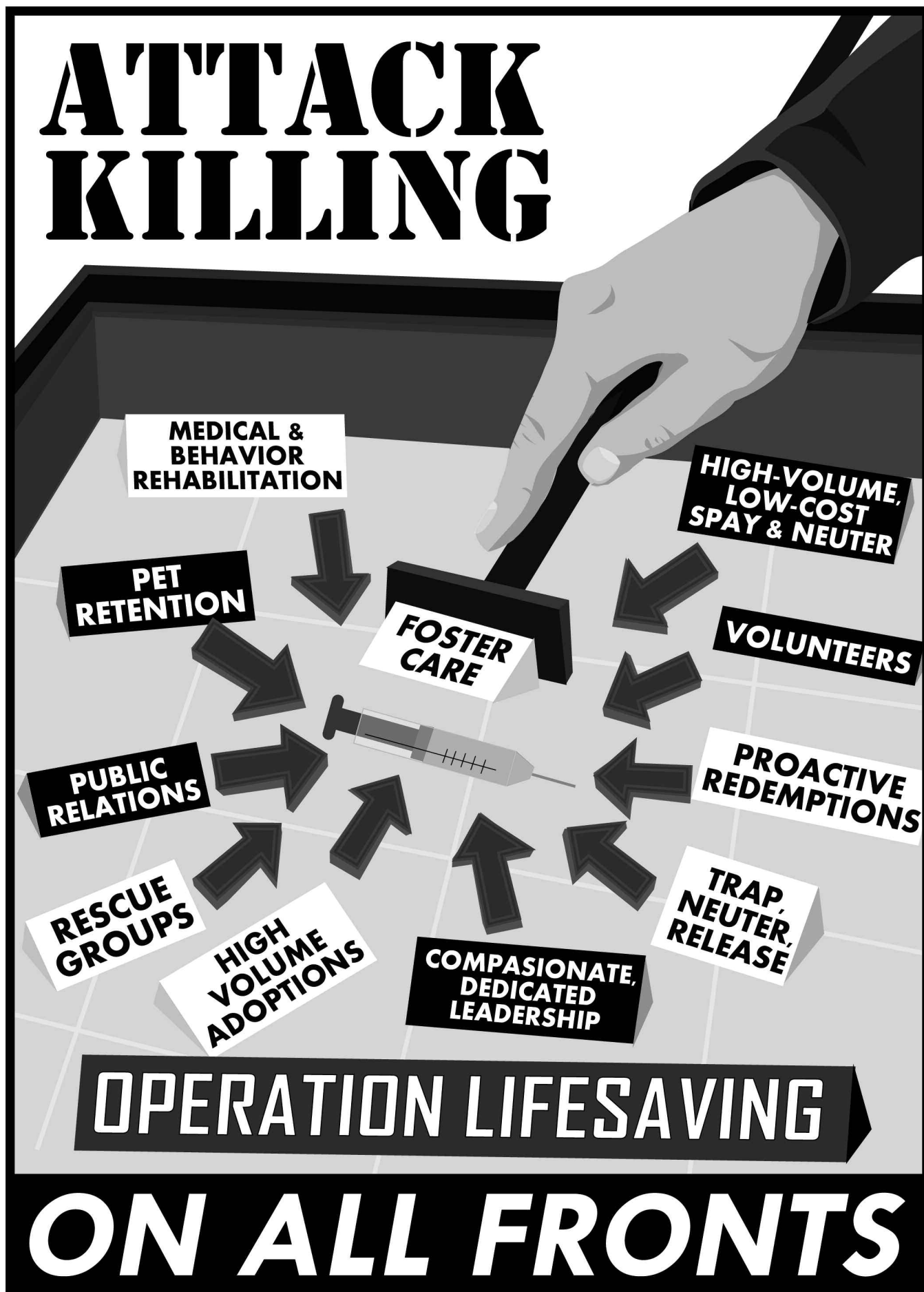


For a free, downloadable No Kill guide for animal shelters and rescue groups, visit the No Kill Advocacy Center online.

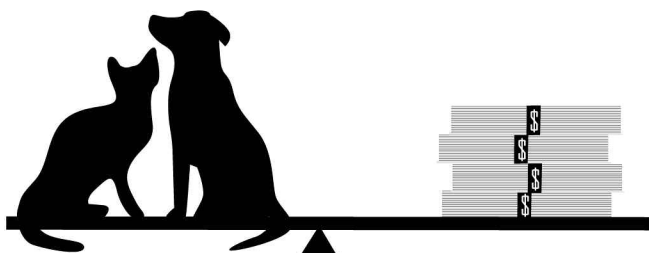
[nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)



# ATTACK KILLING



# The COST of No Kill



Yes, we can afford to save them all.  
But more importantly, how can we  
afford not to?

The experiences of many communities prove that No Kill animal control is cost-effective, saves municipalities expenses associated with killing, and brings badly needed revenues into public coffers and community businesses. And while some of the communities which have embraced No Kill have also increased funding for animal services, not all of them have. Achieving No Kill does not necessarily require increased expenditures on animal control.

Although costs vary somewhat, impounding, caring for, and ultimately killing an animal and disposing of his/her body costs approximately \$106.00 (\$66 for impoundment and \$40 for killing and disposal). The process is entirely revenue negative to the municipality in contrast to the No Kill approach which transfers costs to private philanthropy, brings in adoption revenue and other user fees, and supports local businesses. In just one community, a No Kill initiative yielded \$250,000 in increased revenues at a time the shelter also significantly reduced expenditures. In addition, the positive economic impact to businesses due to subsequent spending by adopters on those animals totaled over \$12,000,000 in sales annually. Over the course of the lifetime of those animals and subsequent adoptions, it is estimated that these

animals will generate \$300 million, bringing in over \$20,000,000 in sales tax revenues.

Does it make more economic sense to adopt out animals, transfer animals to private non-profit rescue organizations, and increase the number of stray animals reclaimed by their families, all revenue positive activities that save the costs of killing and bring in fees and other revenues? Of course it does. At a time when dozens of communities across the country have achieved No Kill, including those with per capita intake rates up to 20 times higher than New York City, shelters which continue to kill in the face of lifesaving alternatives are not only engaging in morally bankrupt conduct (killing animals who have a place to go), they are bankrupting community coffers. No Kill animal control not only makes good sense. It makes dollars and cents.

## ECONOMIC COSTS OF NO KILL

Many of the programs identified as key components of saving lives are more cost-effective than impounding, warehousing, and then killing animals. Some rely on private philanthropy, as in the use of rescue groups, which shifts costs of care from public taxpayers to private individuals and

groups. Others, such as the use of volunteers, augment paid human resources. Still others, such as adoptions, bring in revenue. And, finally, some, such as neutering rather than killing feral cats, are simply less expensive both immediately and in the long-term, with exponential savings in terms of reducing births.

In addition, a national study found no correlation between per capita funding for animal control and save rates. One community saved 90 percent of the animals, while another saved only 40 percent despite four times the per capita rate of spending on animal control. One community has seen killing rates increase over 30 percent despite one of the best-funded shelter systems in the nation. Another has caused death rates to drop by 50 percent despite cutting spending. Nationally, per capita funding ranged from \$1.50 to about \$6.30. Save rates ranged from 35 percent (\$2.00 per capita) to 90 percent (\$1.50 per capita), but their lifesaving rates did not follow any predictable pattern. There were shelters with an 87 percent rate of lifesaving spending only \$2.80 per capita, and shelters with a 42 percent rate (less than half of the former) spending more than double that (at \$5.80 per capita).

In other words, there was no correlation between success/failure and per capita spending on animal control. The difference between those shelters that succeeded and those that failed was not the size of the budget, but the programmatic effort of its leadership: the commitment of shelter managers to comprehensively implement a key series of programs and services. While communities should provide adequate funding, simply throwing money at the problem of shelter killing will do very little without leadership committed both to lifesaving and to accountability. Between 2007-2009, commissioners in one county spent millions of additional dollars on the animal services program after three independent evaluations revealed rampant illness, deplorable conditions, and high rates of killing. In fact, during this period, the County Commission never denied a funding request for the agency. But no improvement in animal care resulted despite the allocation of millions of additional dollars. In another community,

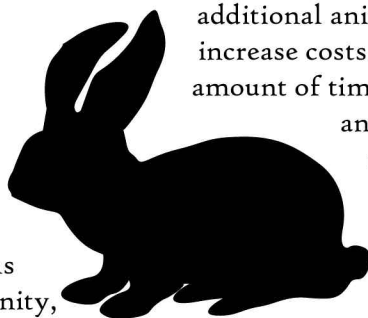
an analysis of shelter expenses to lifesaving found that:

*Over the course of the past few years... a period during which the total number of animals brought into the shelter increased by only 5 percent and the agency's budget increased by 50 percent ... nearly every measure of the agency's performance documents failure.*

*Adoptions are down by 40 percent (dogs) and 18 percent (cats). Nearly half of the dogs not returned to owners are killed; so too are nearly two-thirds of cats. The "kill rate" is now well above rates in neighboring counties facing far more severe budget limitations. Thousands of dollars are squandered on adversarial enforcement efforts that have achieved no meaningful improvement in the public's safety. The number of animals saved by cooperating with life-saving organizations and individuals, a number widely recognized as a key measure of community support, has dropped by 40 percent.*

That doesn't mean that governments should continue underfunding their shelters. Shelters with low per capita spending claimed more effort was required to sustain programs. As a result, the study should not be used as an excuse to reduce shelter budgets. It does mean, however, that to really make an impact, communities do not generally need to allocate millions of dollars more to animal control. By investing in progressive leaders willing to embrace the cost-effective and revenue-producing programs and services which make No Kill possible and to embrace public-private partnerships which save lives and save money, communities that provide funding within national norms can end the killing of savable animals (upwards of 99 percent of all intakes) without necessarily requiring increased funding.\*

Moreover, as most shelter costs are fixed, keeping additional animals alive does not dramatically increase costs. Since it takes roughly the same amount of time to clean a kennel as it does to kill an animal, staff increases often prove unnecessary, with the added financial benefit that cleaning requires less-skilled, less-expensive labor and can be augmented through unpaid volunteer support.



Not only do the cost-effective programs that make No Kill possible benefit a municipality's bottom line, they can be enhanced with the free support of non-profit organizations and volunteers. In San Francisco, for example, volunteers spend over 110,000 hours at the shelter each year. Assuming the prevailing hourly wage, it would cost the agency over \$1,000,000 dollars to provide those services. All too often, however, volunteers and rescuers are prevented from assisting by regressive policies in shelters across the country. Even in those communities that allow volunteers, traditional shelters find it difficult to recruit and retain volunteers who do not want to work in an environment of killing. By adopting the No Kill philosophy, shelter volunteer rates increase dramatically, allowing more lives to be saved. In one county, the local shelter increased the number of volunteers from 30 to over 7,000 after launching its No Kill initiative. In addition, the number of foster homes increased from a handful to almost 2,500, all of whom help save lives at little cost to the shelter. The services volunteers provide reduce expenses, while increasing capacity, and the animals they save are then adopted out, bringing in adoption revenue to the shelter.

## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Municipalities which invest in prevention programs also realize short and long-term economic benefits, such as programs to proactively reclaim more animals, pet retention initiatives to keep animals from entering the shelter, as well as subsidized spay/neuter.

**PREVENTING SURRENDERS:** In one community, a full-time staff member and volunteers manage an "Animal Help" desk where people calling to surrender their animals are offered no-cost advice and guidance on solving the challenges relating to their animals. A survey found that of those who agreed to participate in the program, 59 percent did not surrender their animal after one year, saving the shelter from having to take in and care for those animals and more than offsetting the cost of the program.

**INCREASING RECLAIMS:** A proactive effort to ensure that lost animals are reclaimed has led to stray redemption rates in that community that are

seven times greater than the national average for cats and over three times the average for dogs, reducing the costs of care, killing, and destruction of remains. Over 60 percent of stray dogs are being reclaimed by their families—compared to the national average of roughly 20 percent and less than 10 percent for poorly-performing communities—because the agency has invested in pro-active efforts to get more animals home.

This includes officers going door-to-door to locate the home when animals are picked up in the field thereby avoiding the costs of impound, holding, and potential killing; waiving fees or billing citizens rather than holding their animal on threat of execution if they cannot afford the fees or fines; uploading photographs and full descriptions of found animals onto the agency's website so that people can identify their animals online from any computer 24 hours a day/seven days a week; and more. By returning thousands of animals every year to their homes in the field and helping thousands more get home after they have been impounded, the shelter does not spend additional money caring for and potentially killing those animals. Moreover, those animals no longer compete for kennel space or homes with other animals, allowing more resources to be allocated to those remaining animals.

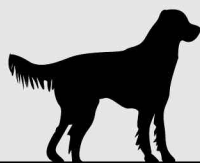
**REDUCING BIRTHS:** Research shows that investment in spay/neuter programs not only provides immediate public health and public safety benefits but also long-term financial savings to a jurisdiction as well. Reductions in animal intakes, fewer animals killed, and fewer field calls associated with free-roaming, unaltered animals have been reported in communities which have invested in spay/neuter. Moreover, spay/neuter and release of community cats has an immediate measurable lifesaving impact, in addition to immediate cost savings.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF NO KILL

Beyond the increased revenues and associated savings of No Kill animal control, there are even wider economic benefits to the community. Americans spend roughly \$60 billion annually on the care of their companion animals, an amount which is growing every year even as other

economic sectors decline. Spending on animal companions is now the seventh largest sector of the retail economy. And giving to animal related charities is the fastest growing segment in American philanthropy. This embrace of animals cuts across all political, economic, and social demographics. And communities which adopt a No Kill orientation for animal control are reaping the economic benefits.

Before one community's No Kill initiative, the shelter adopted out less than 5,000 dogs and cats every year. The remainder was put to death at great cost to taxpayers and donors. In 2010, as death rates declined, the number of animals adopted doubled to just under 10,000 adoptions. In addition to a cost savings of roughly \$200,000 associated with killing, adoption fees brought in almost \$250,000 in additional revenues. Moreover, the positive economic impact of spending by adopters on those animals to community businesses totaled over \$12,000,000 in annual sales. With an average lifespan of roughly 11 years per animal, the total revenues to community businesses over the life of those pets could potentially top \$120,000,000. The number is substantially higher given that those impacts are exponential (in Year Two, businesses would benefit from two years worth of adoptions; in Year



## PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SAVE LIVES, SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT

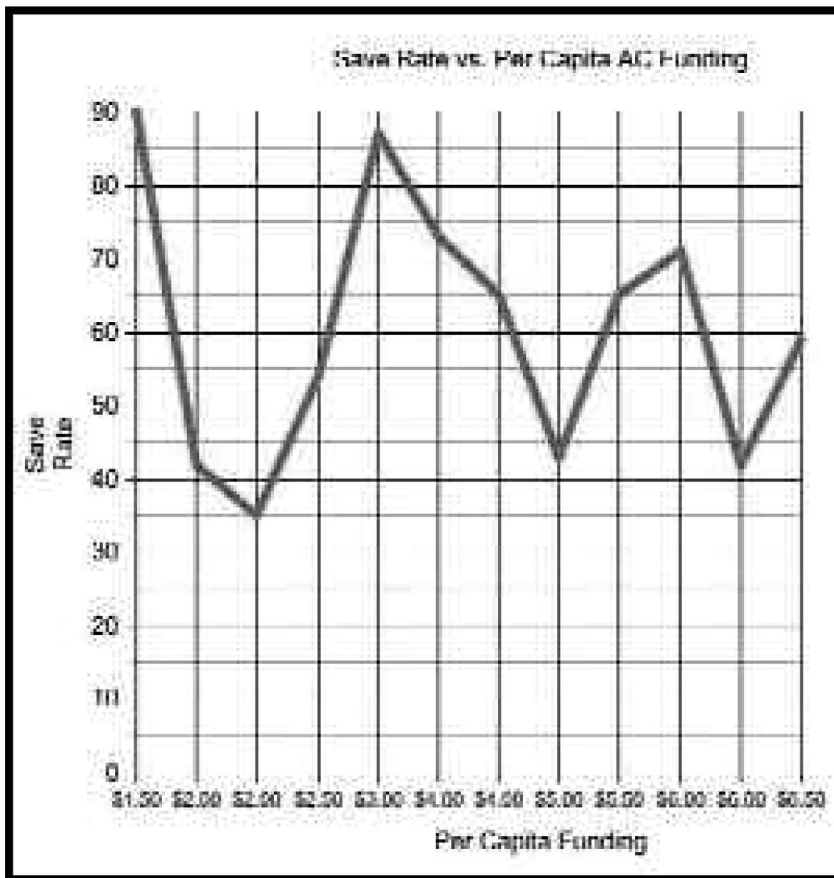
# A WIN - WIN - WIN

In 1998, California passed a law making it illegal for public (and private) shelters to kill animals when qualified rescue groups were willing to save them. It passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority—96 to 12, as close as possible to unanimity in a state as large as California. In 2010, a similar law passed both houses of the Delaware legislature unanimously, a law that has since reduced killing in that state by 78%. In both of these states, it made no sense to legislators of either party that taxpayers were paying to kill animals when qualified non-profit rescue groups were willing to spend their own money (private, philanthropic dollars) to save them. In just one California County, the number of animals saved, rather than killed, went from zero (before the law was enacted and enforced) to 4,000 per year. At roughly \$40.00 per animal killed, the municipality saved \$160,000 in expenses associated with killing. A similar study in the City and County of San Francisco found the City realized an annualized cost savings of \$486,480 by working with rescue groups and No Kill shelters, rather than killing the animals these groups wanted to save.

In fact, the number of animals saved, rather than killed, by forcing shelters to work cooperatively with rescue groups increased in California from 12,526 before the law went into effect to 58,939 in 2010—a lifesaving increase of over 370 percent, and a potential cost savings of \$1,856,520 statewide for killing and disposal (these savings do not include additional savings relative to cost of care). In addition, because the law specifically allows shelters to charge these organizations up to the standard adoption fee, partnering with rescue groups potentially brings in millions of dollars in additional revenues.

In New York and Florida, by contrast, statewide surveys found that 71 percent and 63 percent of non-profit rescue organizations respectively have been turned away from shelters, which then killed the very animals they offered to save. This is not only unethical—killing animals when those animals have an immediate place to go—it is economically irresponsible. Not only can these shelters save on the cost of killing and destruction of remains, they can bring in badly needed revenues to lower public expenditures on animal control or use the additional revenue to enhance services—also realizing the intangible benefit of improving public satisfaction with the job government is doing. In short, adoption programs resulting in increased lifesaving also increase revenues; while continued killing costs money.





A national study found there was no correlation between rates of lifesaving and per capita spending on animal control. The difference between those shelters that succeeded at saving lives and those that failed was not the size of the budget, but the commitment of its leadership to implementing alternatives to killing.

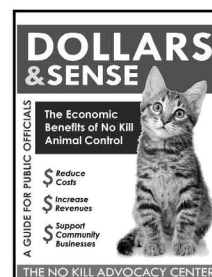
Three, they would benefit from three years of adoptions; etc.). In addition, not only do those businesses then employ people who turn around and spend even more, all these activities also bring in badly needed tax revenues. At an average 6 percent rate, adoptions over a ten-year period could potentially bring in over \$20,000,000 in sales tax alone.

While many of these economic benefits will be realized regardless of where people get their animals, cost savings and other revenues will not be realized. For one, many commercially-sourced animals come from puppy mills, which contribute to animal cruelty. In addition, the animals will not be sterilized before adoption, requiring the shelter to absorb the costs of taking in the offspring of some of those animals. Moreover, the municipality will not benefit from the decreased costs and increased revenue associated with adopting the animals to those homes.

Finally, a successful adoption marketing program not only results in citizens who are more likely to

adopt from a shelter, but it can increase the number of available homes as well by empowering and inspiring local citizens to feel like valued allies in the shelter's lifesaving mission, thereby encouraging them to open their homes to additional animals.

\*Municipalities that charge high adoption and reclaim fees in order to increase revenues as much as possible are working at cross purposes with their goals of greater lifesaving—the higher the fees, the lower the number of adoptions and reclaims that occur. Municipalities can balance their animal care with their animal control goals by lowering fees, but increasing volume.



For a free, downloadable guide on the economic benefits of No Kill animal control for public officials, visit the No Kill Advocacy Center online.

[nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)



# THE REWARDS OF A JOB WELL DONE

## How Success Fosters Success

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 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: in Tompkins County, public funding of animal control was roughly \$1.85 per capita and remained that way while the shelter cut killing by 75 percent, cut disease rates by 90 percent, and saved upwards of 95 percent of all the animals. At the same time, the shelter went from a \$124,000 a year deficit to a \$23,000 surplus.

The Upper Peninsula Animal Welfare Shelter (formerly the Marquette MI Humane Society, see page 62), likewise, runs animal control in its community of Marquette, Michigan. In 2006, UPAWS was killing 64 percent of animals and on the verge of bankruptcy when a volunteer asked them to read *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.

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 percent. It has been steadily increasing. In 2013, UPAWS saved 97 percent, 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.

When UPAWS was killing 64 percent of the animals, they spent \$190.85 per animal. Now saving 97 percent, 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 percent), so did revenue: an overall increase of 61 percent. As UPAWS, explains,

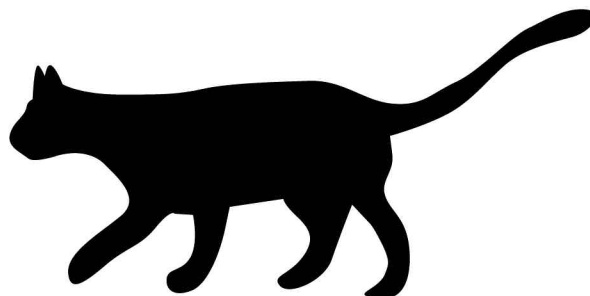
*"The ... component that cannot be ignored is that while the cost-per-animal rose 8 percent, we also saw an increase in donations of 43 percent and a net increase in fundraising efforts of 294 percent for an overall increase in revenue of 61 percent... Obviously, the increased revenue more than makes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

They further state: "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 turned Marquette into one of the safest community for homeless animals in the United States today, but they have resulted in a 61 percent 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.

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 as UPAWS says: "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."



# COUNTERING THE OPPOSITION



## Overcoming the Predictable & Recurring Excuses of the Entrenched Shelter Director

Fifteen years ago, No Kill opponents argued that No Kill was simply impossible. They called it a “hoax,” a “marketing ploy” and nothing more than “smoke and mirrors.” With No Kill success throughout the nation, these claims have lost traction. With an increasingly informed public and the pressure for reform mounting across the country, those who defend killing have evolved their tactics in several ways.

Some of them are adopting the language of No Kill, but not the programs and services that make it possible. Prior to the achievement of No Kill communities across the country, virtually all shelter administrators readily admitted to killing for reasons such as lack of space, antipathy to certain breeds, because the cats were feral, the animals had highly treatable illnesses like upper respiratory infection and kennel cough, or because the director claimed there were too many black dogs or cats in the shelter. Some shelter directors today would never be so

blatant, so unapologetic for the killing. They still kill at an alarming rate, but many are now doing it with a difference. They are falsely claiming they too are No Kill—or very nearly there—and the only animals they kill are “unadoptable.” When one county’s notoriously abusive shelter claimed to embrace the No Kill philosophy, the death rate did not decline; the number of animals they claimed were “unadoptable” merely skyrocketed. No Kill is not achieved by recategorizing animals; No Kill is achieved by actually saving their lives. Others deflect blame, misrepresent what No Kill is, or tell outright lies.

As animal lovers work to overcome the crisis of cruelty and uncaring endemic to animal shelters, the entrenched opposition—both shelter directors themselves and their allies at animal protection organizations—invariably respond to demands for reform with the excuses highlighted on the following pages.

# OVERCOMING THE PREDICTABLE & RECURRING EXCUSES OF THE ENTRENCHED SHELTER DIRECTOR

## OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: DEFLECT BLAME

Play #1: *"It's pet overpopulation."*

RESPONSE: Pet overpopulation is a myth. Every year, over 23 million people add a new dog or cat to their household, but only three million are killed in shelters for lack of a home.

Play #2: *"It's the irresponsible public's fault."*

RESPONSE: There is still a "public" in No Kill communities. The public did not change, the shelter did. In fact, In communities which have ended the killing of savable animals, it is the public which has made the difference in terms of adoptions, volunteerism, donations, foster care and other community support.

Play #3: *"It's too expensive."*

RESPONSE: Not only is there no correlation between a shelter's budget and its save rate, but the programs of the No Kill Equation are more cost-effective than killing: killing costs money; adoptions bring in revenue.

Play #4: *"No Kill threatens public safety."*

RESPONSE: Because the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that dangerous dogs be made available for adoption, it is consistent with public safety.

Play #5: *"We tried No Kill. It doesn't work."*

RESPONSE: Half-hearted efforts are not enough. The programs of the No Kill Equation have to be implemented comprehensively so that they completely replace killing.

## OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: NO KILL HARMS ANIMALS

Play #6: *"No Kill leads to warehousing."*

RESPONSE: No Kill is about valuing animals, which means not only saving their lives but also giving them good, quality care. It means vaccination on intake, nutritious food, daily socialization and exercise, clean water, medical care and programs to find them all loving, new homes.

Play #7: *"Animal rescuers are dog fighters and hoarders."*

RESPONSE: Rescuers do not harm animals, they seek to deliver them from it. By contrast, the first time most animals experience neglect or abuse is at the very place that is supposed to protect them from it: the shelter itself.

## OPPONENT'S MANEUVER: LIE

Play #8: *"Open admission shelters can't be No Kill."*

RESPONSE: Yes, they can. No Kill shelters can be public or private, large or small, humane societies or municipal agencies. And there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it. Something cannot be impossible when it already exists.

Play #9: *"Shelter reformers are seeking outrageous and unreasonable standards for shelters."*

RESPONSE: The programs of the No Kill Equation are reasonable and common sense provisions which most Americans would be shocked to learn are not already followed by every shelter.

Play #10: *"No Kill advocates are extremists working to undermine the humane movement."*

RESPONSE: No Kill activists are regular people from all walks of life, working to expose the hypocrisy between the animal protection movement's professed values and its actions which cause suffering and death. In so doing, they are working to strengthen the cause of animal protection, not weaken it.



## MYTH/EXCUSE:

### “There’s pet overpopulation.”

Pet overpopulation is a myth. Every year, over 23 million people add a new dog or cat to their household, but only three million are killed in shelters for lack of a home.

Until very recently, the notion that pet overpopulation was to blame for the killing of animals in shelters was undisputed, taken for the gospel truth within the animal protection movement. Why? Because it seemed to provide a logical explanation for the killing: generally, shelters impounded far more animals than they adopted, and this was regarded as the result of an imbalance between supply and demand that could only be addressed by decreasing the supply through spay and neuter programs. But what was conveniently ignored all those years were the facts: in reality, there are many more people looking to bring an animal into their home every year than there are animals being killed in shelters. The problem is not too many animals or too few homes; it is failure to compete effectively for the market share of those homes. Rather than adopting from shelters, people are getting their animals from pet stores, breeders, newspaper ads, friends and other places. In other words, the challenge is in getting those potential homes to adopt shelter animals through comprehensively implemented adoption programs and, it is now understood, forcing shelters to keep animals alive long enough to find new homes.

About eight million animals enter shelters every year. Can shelters find homes for that many animals? The good news is that they don’t have to. Some animals need adoption, but others do not. Some animals, like feral cats, need neuter and release. Others will be reclaimed by their families. Some animals will go to rescue groups. Others are irremediably suffering or hopelessly ill and need hospice care or sanctuary. And many can be kept out of the shelter through a comprehensive pet retention effort. While about four million will be killed in pounds and shelters, only three million will be killed for lack of a new home. Can we find homes for those animals? Yes we can.

Statistics show that shelters should be able to find homes for about nine million animals a year with reasonable effort, three times the number being killed for lack of a home. In fact, it is more than total impounds. But the news gets even better. There are over 23 million people who are going to get an animal next year. Some are already committed to adopting from a shelter and will already do so. Some are already committed to getting one from a breeder or other commercial source. But 17 million have not decided where that animal will come from and research shows they can be influenced to adopt from a shelter—that’s 17 million people potentially vying for roughly three million animals. So even if 80 percent of those people got their animal from somewhere other than a shelter, we could still end the killing.

Not only does the data prove it, but so does the success of the dozens of No Kill communities that now exist throughout the nation, including communities which take in 20 times the per capita intake rate as large metropolitan areas like New York City.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

### “It’s the fault of the irresponsible public.”

There is still a “public” in No Kill communities. The public did not change, the shelter did. In communities which have ended the killing of savable animals, it is the public which has made the difference in terms of adoptions, volunteerism, donations, foster care and other community support.

We have been told that the public is irresponsible and to blame for the killing. But is it true? Even while virtually all other sectors of the economy plummet, purchases for our companion animals increase every year and now stand at 60 billion dollars annually. On top of the billions spent on their own animals, Americans also give hundreds of millions more to animal related charities. They miss work when their animals get sick and they cut back on their own needs to meet the needs of their animal companions. Evidence of this caring is all around us, but even rescuers too often dismiss it as the “exception”—even when they are constantly seeing so-

# IT'S THEIR JOB



**Animal shelters are supposed to provide a safety net, just like other social service agencies which deal with the effects of human irresponsibility. The difference? The others don't use "public irresponsibility" as an excuse to avoid their obligation to put into place the necessary programs to respond humanely and effectively. Imagine if Child Protective Services took in abused, abandoned and unwanted children and then killed them. We should no more tolerate it for animals.**

called "exceptions." They get letters from people who adopt animals they rescued sharing how much they love their pets. They see people at the dog park or on their morning dog walks. They fail to recognize caring at the veterinarian's office—the waiting rooms always full, the faces of scared people wondering what is wrong, the tears as they emerge from the exam rooms after saying goodbye for the last time. They don't see that books about animals who have touched people's lives are not only being written in ever-increasing numbers but are often bestsellers because people do care, and the stories touch them very deeply and very personally. They don't see that the success of movies about animals is also a reflection of the love people have for them. And, more importantly, they fail to recognize that No Kill success throughout the country is a result of people—people who care deeply. Caring is not the exception; it is the rule.

There are now No Kill communities nationwide. Some of these communities are in the North, some in the South. Some are urban, some rural. Some are public shelters; some are private. Some are in what we call "blue" or left-leaning states and some are in very conservative parts of the country—at least one is in the reddest part of the reddest state. No matter the location, no matter the particular demographics of a community, No Kill success nationwide proves that there is enough love and compassion for animals in every community to overcome the irresponsibility of the few.

Moreover, in those communities which have ended the killing, it is the public which has made the difference: in terms of adoptions, volunteerism, donations, foster care and other community support. So defenders of killing need to put to bed, once and for all, the idea that dogs and cats—animals most Americans now consider cherished members of their families—need to die in U.S. shelters because people are irresponsible and don't care enough about them.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“No Kill is too expensive.”**

Not only is there no correlation between a shelter's budget and its save rate, but the programs of the No Kill Equation are more cost-effective than killing: killing costs money; adoptions bring in revenue.

With municipalities facing financial pressures across the nation and, as a result, cutting programs and services to their communities, arguing that No Kill is too expensive is a common tactic employed by regressive shelter directors to defray criticism and decrease lifesaving expectations. Yet thankfully, many of the programs identified as key components of saving lives are more cost-effective than impounding, warehousing and then killing animals. Some rely on private philanthropy, as in the use of rescue groups, which shift costs of care from public taxpayers to private individuals and groups. Others, such as the use of volunteers, augment paid human resources. Still others, such as adoptions, bring in revenue. And, finally, some, such as neutering rather than killing feral cats, are simply less expensive both immediately and in the long-term, with exponential savings in terms of reducing births (see page 108).

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“No Kill threatens public safety.”**

Because the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that dangerous dogs be made available for adoption, it is consistent with public safety.

When No Kill advocates were trying to reform their local shelter in Illinois, the shelter's director replied that, “We can't be No Kill because we can't adopt out vicious dogs who might injure someone, especially a child.” The fear mongering had its intended effect. Local politicians claimed that though they loved animals, they had to put the welfare and safety of people, especially children, first. It was,

they claimed, irresponsible to suggest otherwise. But no one was and the shelter's regressive director knew it.

A No Kill community is one where no healthy or treatable animals are killed. Unfortunately, there are some animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering or in the case of dogs, aggressive with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation. These animals need very carefully screened placements, unless shelters also embrace hospice and sanctuary care. And while many shelters are having great success placing animals many would have considered “unadoptable” in years past and those efforts will continue and accelerate in the coming years with greater innovation in veterinary and behavior medicine, because the No Kill philosophy does not mandate that vicious dogs be adopted out, it is consistent with public safety.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“We tried No Kill. It doesn't work.”**

Half-hearted efforts are not enough. The programs of the No Kill Equation have to be implemented comprehensively so that they completely replace killing.

Killing is a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs a shelter to take the easy, uncaring and inhumane way out. No Kill is also a choice. It is a choice made by the person who runs the shelter to replace that killing with alternatives. Its success is therefore directly proportional to the commitment that is made to it. A shelter director who claims to have “tried No Kill,” but who sent one litter of motherless kittens into a foster home and the other litter into the kill room, failed to make the necessary level of commitment required to replace killing entirely. In such circumstances, No Kill has not failed. It offered an alternative, a choice—in this case, foster care—that the director willfully chose to disregard in favor of killing. Likewise, a shelter committed to No Kill does not neuter and release some feral cats while killing others. Other than not allowing them to enter shelters in the first place as some communities have done, TNR be-

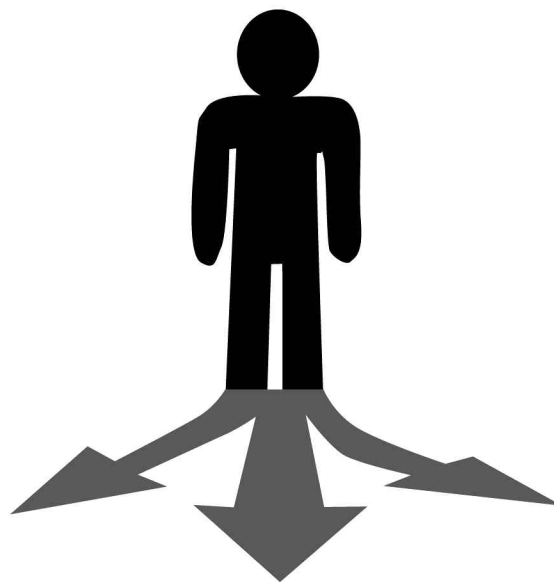
comes the primary lifesaving option for feral cats. A shelter committed to No Kill does not merely allow rescue groups access to animals “some of the time,” but every time a rescue group is willing to take over care and custody of an animal. Indeed, a No Kill shelter actively seeks these groups out.

Unfortunately, many shelters claim they have tried No Kill but that it did not work. This claim is based on the fact that they may have implemented some or all of the programs, but not enough of them or not to the point that they replace killing. In 2004, for example, one SPCA in a city of 1.5 million people conducted roughly 150 free spay/neuter surgeries for the companion animals of the community’s low-income population. The shelter’s director boasted of a low-cost and free spay/neuter program, but such a token level of surgeries in a large city where one in four people fall below the federal poverty line, will not impact the number of animals entering city shelters. By contrast, another SPCA, in a city with roughly half the population, performed over 9,000 surgeries a year, 84 percent of them for free.

Similarly, animal control in another community allowed only employees to participate in its foster care program. The shelter claimed it was already implementing the programs and services of the No Kill Equation, but it was excluding thousands of animal lovers from participating in the lifesaving effort, seriously limiting how many lives they saved. And a municipal shelter in yet another community boasted of an offsite adoption program, of which they do two a year, less than a No Kill shelter which does seven offsite locations each and every day.

At a well-managed No Kill shelter, the size and scope of programs are determined by one thing alone: need. Convenience and traditional sheltering dogma that excuse and condone killing are abandoned in favor of both proven solutions that don’t, and the flexibility and imagination to respond to extraordinary circumstances with similarly extraordinary determination. Successful No Kill shelter directors maintain a commitment to No Kill even in times of crisis or unanticipated circumstances (such as a dog fighting, hoarding or animal cruelty case that might result in a large influx of animals) with creative alternatives to killing that harness the power of the public’s love and compassion for animals. In short, they turn challenges into opportunities, rather than use those challenges as an excuse to kill.

# CHOICE



**Shelter killing is not an inevitability imposed onto shelters by outside forces. Whether animals entering shelters live or die comes down to one thing: the choices made by the people running those shelters.**

To achieve No Kill success, therefore, a shelter must implement the programs and services of the No Kill Equation not in a piecemeal or in a limited manner, but comprehensively. Shelters must take killing off the table for all savable animals, and utilize the No Kill Equation not sometimes, not merely when it is convenient or politically expedient to do so, but for every single animal, every single time.

# MYTH/EXCUSE:

## “No Kill leads to warehousing.”

No Kill is about valuing animals, which means not only saving their lives but also giving them good, quality care. It means vaccination on intake, nutritious food, daily socialization and exercise, clean water, medical care and programs to find them all loving, new homes.

In February 2007, a Las Vegas, Nevada, shelter that claimed to be “No Kill” was closed down due to filthy conditions and inhumane treatment of animals. According to reports, disease was rampant and sick animals were left to die in their cages. The animals were not vaccinated on intake, healthy animals subsequently grew sick and there was a complete breakdown of animal care. The Las Vegas shelter’s story is one of incompetent leadership, a Board of Directors that failed in its oversight mandate and a director who refused to put in place programs that actually save the lives of animals. What happened in Las Vegas is a tragic example of uncaring rampant in our broken animal shelter system.

Another example of institutionalized uncaring are shelters that recklessly kill the vast majority of animals in their care in the face of alternatives: in other words, run-of-the-mill high-kill shelters such as those that can be found across America. While the mechanics are different, the underlying dynamic is the same: both types of shelters are run by people who do not truly care about animals. The Las Vegas shelter’s “No Kill” claim is irrelevant. In the final analysis, it had more in common with its killing counterparts and the leadership and staff who run them, than those running truly successful and compassionate No Kill shelters.

Conditions at the Las Vegas animal shelter—rampant disease, filth, neglect and animal suffering—do not represent the No Kill movement. No Kill does not mean poor care and abusive treatment, and warehousing animals minus the intentional killing. It means modernizing shelter operations so that animals are well cared for and kept moving ef-

ficiently and effectively through the shelter and into homes. The No Kill movement puts action behind the words of every shelter’s mission statement: “All life is precious.” No Kill is about valuing animals, which means not only saving their lives but also giving them good quality care.

Predictably, No Kill opponents seized upon the tragedy in Las Vegas to promote their own agenda of defending an antiquated model of sheltering based on archaic notions of “adoptability,” regressive practices and the premise that animal life is cheap and expendable. They used the Las Vegas shelter to denounce the No Kill paradigm by intimating that the Las Vegas example is the natural outcome of trying to end the killing of savable dogs and cats in shelters today, and they used the “No Kill equals warehousing” argument to undermine shelter reform efforts nationwide.

In fact, roughly 1,000 animals lost their lives at the hands of the anti-No Kill team that came in, needles blazing, to “help” the animals in Las Vegas. To No Kill opponents, helping animals meant putting them to death. Today, by following policies that favor killing, that Las Vegas shelter kills many animals without offering them for adoption.

According to the National Animal Control Association,

*Dogs and cats linger for weeks, sometime months, in tiny, cramped cages with barely room to move... dogs are rarely walked. They may sit in their own waste because overworked kennel workers hardly have time to clean more than once a day. Cats face a similar fate. Shelter managers can boast of decreased euthanasia rates, yet from the animal’s point of view, is their suffering worth it?*

The article ends by asking the question whether it “is compassionate to force dogs and cats to live their lives in small, confined spaces for weeks or months at a time when their chances for adoption are slim to none?”

The calculus, however, is far from “slim to none.” First, it would be far preferable for an animal to endure a few “weeks or months” in a shelter before moving on to a loving, new home than to be killed out of convenience. Second, these animals are not in filthy, cramped cages at true No Kill shelters. At



well-run No Kill shelters, the animals are housed in clean, well-lighted environments, are fed nutritious food, receive good quality medical care, and are socialized daily by volunteers who walk them, groom them, pet them and play with them while they wait for a good home. And they are not waiting weeks or months or even years. At one open admission No Kill shelter, the average length of stay was only eight days and no animal ever celebrated an anniversary there. At another, it is 14 days, roughly the same amount of time as an average stay for animals at a boarding kennel while their families are on vacation.

By denigrating the movement to end shelter killing as akin to warehousing and abuse, and by ignoring the protocols of shelters which have truly achieved No Kill and are clean, well-run and successful, these naysayers embrace a nation of shelters grounded in killing—a defeatist mentality, inherently unethical and antithetical to animal welfare.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“Animal rescuers are hoarders & dogfighters.”**

Rescuers do not harm animals, they seek to deliver them from it. By contrast, the first time most animals experience neglect or abuse is at the very place that is supposed to protect them from it: the shelter itself.

Right now, the goals of the No Kill movement are two-fold: to save the lives of animals by reforming our nation’s broken animal sheltering system, and until we achieve that goal, to get animals facing death in these shelters immediately out of harm’s way. To do the former, some animal advocates focus on political advocacy to force implementation of the No Kill Equation at their local shelter or by seeking shelter reform legislation. To achieve the latter, other advocates focus their energy on rescue, saving animals from death row at their local shelter and finding them homes through organizations founded for this purpose.

Unfortunately, too many shelters are unwilling to voluntarily give animals to rescue groups. In 2010, opponents of rescue access legislation in New York



**Rescuers are animal lovers, many of whom have started their organizations after volunteering at their local shelter and realizing that if the shelter wasn’t going to do what was necessary to save lives, *they* would.**

argued that allowing animal rescue groups to save animals on death row in New York State shelters would mean placing them in the hands of dog fighters and hoarders. It was an argument that the opposition to shelter reform bills in other states used the following year to dissuade legislators. And in Minnesota, it was the main claim made by regressive shelters which coordinated opposition to that state’s shelter reform bill, even going so far as to spend donor funds to hire a public relations firm to promulgate this view. In Virginia, Florida, Georgia and elsewhere, efforts to empower rescue groups to save the animals shelters are intent on killing have been defeated using the same arguments.

Animal hoarding, however, is the result of mental illness and is not as common as many animal protection organizations would have us believe. Psychologists estimate that only two percent of the population suffers from hoarding, and of those, not all of them “collect” animals—many collect inanimate objects. And only four percent of animals in shelters are there because of abuse or dog fighting. By contrast, an animal at an “average” shelter has a 50 percent chance of being killed. In places like Montgomery County, North Carolina, the odds are more extreme: 99 percent of animals are killed. And because rescue groups generally only save those animals scheduled to be killed, there is a 100 percent chance the animal will die without them.

To suggest that we must protect animals from rescuers is backward thinking. If we care about saving animals, we must save them from shelters by putting them in the hands of rescuers. Moreover, logic and fairness—both to rescuers and the animals—demand that altruistic people who devote their time and energy to helping shelter animals stop being equated with mentally ill people who cause them harm.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

### “Open admission shelters can’t be No Kill.”

Yes, they can. No Kill shelters can be public or private, large or small, humane societies or municipal agencies. And there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it. Something cannot be impossible when it already exists.

No Kill shelters can be public or private, large or small, humane societies or municipal agencies. But national organizations like the ASPCA, HSUS and PETA routinely mislead people that so-called “open admission” animal control facilities cannot be No Kill. The ASPCA has written that, “A no-kill shelter really can’t have an open admission policy. It must limit its intake if it wants to adopt out animals and not kill them.” This is false. A No Kill shelter can be either “limited admission” or “open admission.” And there are plenty of No Kill animal control shelters and thus No Kill communities which prove it.

An “open admission” shelter does not have to—and should not—be an open door to the killing of animals. In fact, using the term “open admission” for kill shelters is misleading. Kill shelters are *closed* to people who love animals. They are *closed* to people who might have lost their job or lost their home but do not want their animals to die. They are *closed* to Good Samaritans who find animals but do not want them killed. They are *closed* to animal lovers who want to help save lives but will not be silent in the face of needless killing. And so they turn these people and their animals away, refusing to provide to them the service they are being paid to perform.

Ironically, kill shelters are so enmeshed in their so-called “open door” philosophy that they are blind to any proactive steps that might limit the numbers of animals coming in through those doors, like pet retention programs, or that might increase the numbers of animals adopted, like comprehensive marketing campaigns. “Open door” does not mean “more humane” when the end result is mass killing.

# YES!

“Open admission” shelters *can* be No Kill.

# NO!

“Open admission” does *not* mean “more humane” when the end result is killing.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“Shelter reformers are seeking outrageous & unreasonable standards for shelters.”**

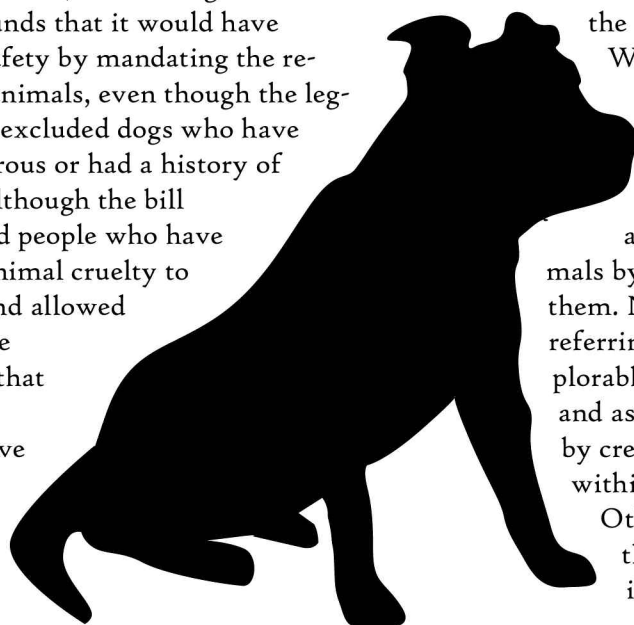
The programs of the No Kill Equation are reasonable and common sense provisions which most Americans would be shocked to learn are not already followed by every shelter.

Shelter reform laws mandating the No Kill Equation already exist, in part, in states such as California and Delaware, in local communities such as Austin, Texas, and have been introduced in Virginia, Florida, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Texas, Georgia, New York and elsewhere.

One of the key tools No Kill opponents use to defeat such laws is to lie about what the bills require. Their goal is to make such laws appear unreasonable and a threat both to public safety and the animals themselves.

Although in places where these laws are already in effect, lifesaving has increased and none of the predicted fears have come to pass, that has not stopped the opposition from repeating their claims over and over again. In New York, a rescue rights law was opposed on the grounds that it would have threatened public safety by mandating the release of dangerous animals, even though the legislation specifically excluded dogs who have been deemed dangerous or had a history of vicious behavior. Although the bill specifically excluded people who have been convicted of animal cruelty to qualify for rescue and allowed inspections of rescue groups, they stated that the law would have forced shelters to give animals to animal abusers.

One shelter direc-



tor opposed to shelter reform legislation in Florida went so far as to claim that the bill pending in that state was unfair to rescue groups because it required those rescue groups to take animals from shelters at their own expense even if they did not want to. Of course, the legislation did no such thing. Such a law would be unconstitutional and illegal. But these false claims had their intended effect, and in both cases (and others), legislators—even well-meaning legislators who love animals and thought they were doing the right thing because these groups, in their minds, represented the best interests of animals—listened to these “experts,” believed their misrepresentations and opposed the laws.

## MYTH/EXCUSE:

**“No Kill advocates are divisive extremists working to undermine the humane movement.”**

No Kill activists are regular people from all walks of life, working to expose the hypocrisy between the animal protection movement’s professed values and its actions which cause suffering and death. In so doing, they are working to strengthen the cause of animal protection, not weaken it.

It is an age-old story: if you can’t attack the message, attack the messenger.

When animal lovers try to reform their local shelters, these shelters—and the animal protection groups which defend them—often create a distraction by arguing that No Kill activists themselves are harming animals by criticizing the groups which help them. No Kill opponents have a history of referring to people who want to reform deplorable sheltering practices as “divisive” and asserting that such people hurt animals by creating strife and fostering discontent within the animal protection movement.

Other opponents tell their followers that No Kill activists are not really animal lovers at all, but people with a

hidden, secret agenda to destroy the animal rights movement.

These groups, as well as shelter directors under scrutiny in their own communities, frequently respond to concerns about their own sordid actions by arguing that everyone should work together to defeat “our common enemy”—those who exploit animals. What this argument conveniently ignores, however, is that in causing the needless killing and suffering of animals in shelters, they are the enemy. To fail to take them to task, therefore, is to abandon the cause of No Kill itself. It is to admit and accept defeat and to condone the unending slaughter of innocent animals who can and should be saved.

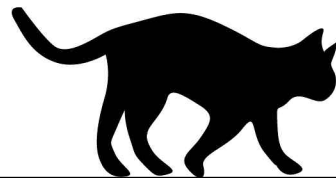
Moreover, their argument ignores that movements for social justice are not about organizations or the individuals who work at them. They are, first and foremost, about ideals. Authentic and effective advocates are duty-bound to recognize that it is not who is right, but what is right and orient their advocacy accordingly, regardless of what label an organization may claim: SPCA, humane society, shelter or animal rights group. Indeed, standing up to those who claim to be “friends” of animals—the very shelters and animal protection organizations that kill, defend the killing and are working to thwart the reform that would end it—is the only way the No Kill movement can ever hope to fully succeed, and the only way the animal protection movement as a whole can ever reach its fullest potential.

For in practicing and condoning shelter killing, the animal protection movement opens itself up to valid censure for its own hypocrisy. Right now, there is a double standard within the animal protection movement, one that (rightfully) condemns the abuse and killing of animals, except (wrongfully) when that abuse and killing occurs in our nation’s shelters. This position weakens the movement’s credibility and gives those who exploit or kill animals in other contexts a convenient means of deflecting criticism. Moreover, it blinds activists to the important gains that could be easily made for all animals through No Kill if only the animal protection movement stopped getting in its own way.

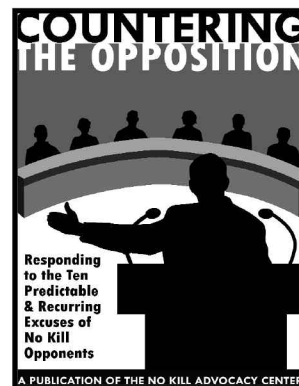
Today, not only do we have a solution to shelter killing, but we also have an American public ready and willing to make it happen. Through the No Kill movement, we can create a country in which it is illegal to kill animals who enter shelters. We can create a country in which children are raised with higher expectations for the treatment of animals—and an understanding and acceptance that animals have legal rights. And we can establish powerful advocates for the well-being of animals in every community by reclaiming the thousands of shelters across our nation, and reorienting them away from killing and back to their founding missions: to advocate for and save animals.

In failing to fully exploit this stunning potential, we are failing all animals who would benefit from the powerful legal, philosophical and societal precedents the animal protection movement could realize through the achievement of a No Kill nation. Yet we are prevented from harvesting this low-hanging fruit by the very groups who should be leading the charge to reap it.

In the end, those who defend the paradigm of killing are betraying not just animals in shelters, but the entire animal protection movement and by extension, all animals in need of effective advocacy. They are the ones harming the animal protection movement, not those who are seeking ethical and philosophical consistency and all the benefits that would come of it.

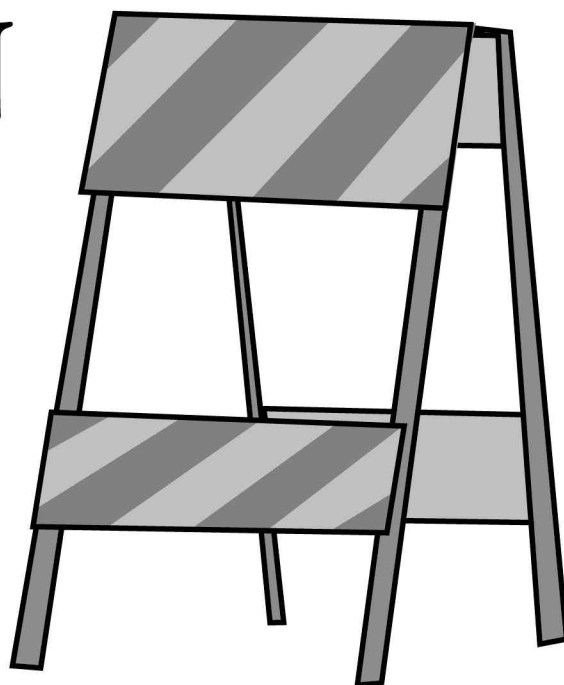
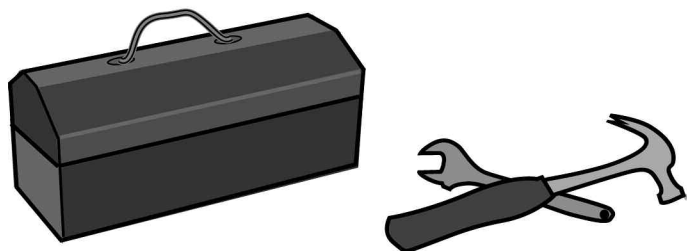


For a free, downloadable guide on how to counter the opposition to No Kill, visit the The No Kill Advocacy Center online.



[nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)

# PARDON OUR DUST



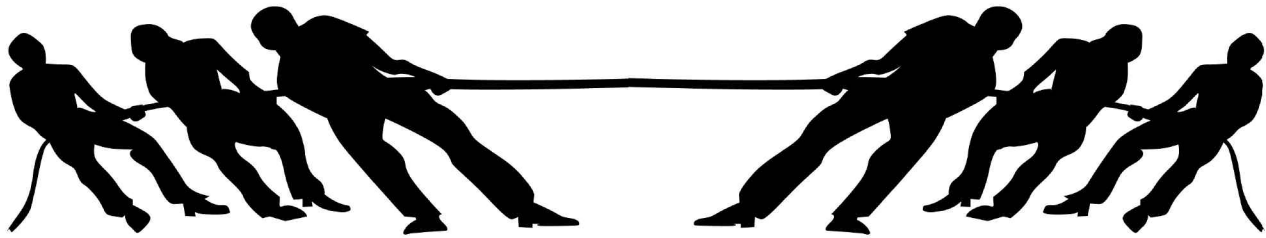
For those on the outside looking in, the divided nature of the animal protection movement can be frustrating. “Why can’t they put aside their differences and get along?” they ask. Indeed, it is tempting to dismiss these conflicts as nothing more than bickering or battles of ego. But they are nothing of the kind. There is a deep and truly contentious dichotomy within the movement today, a difference of philosophy, a clash of values that is considered and conscientious and reflects an irreconcilable divide in who we are and what we believe.

Right now, the animal protection movement is in the throes of an important evolution. What might seem like self-destructive behavior is actually evidence of progress. For the first time in more than a century, some in the animal protection movement have recognized that we have a serious crisis in our nation’s shelters—rampant neglect, cruelty and unnecessary killing—which others have chosen to ignore, downplay, excuse and obfuscate. More importantly, we have recognized that there is a solution. The animal protection movement is awakening from a long slumber, and the old-guard animal protection groups which grew very wealthy and powerful in spite of delivering very little progress for shelter animals, are deeply threatened and fighting back. As history shows, this is what happens in every social justice movement and the animal protection movement is no exception.

Social progress is rarely made in a steady, linear fashion. Often, it proceeds in fits and starts, depending on leadership. When a movement is founded by strong, sincere and determined leaders with a clear vision, measurable goals and the will to achieve them, people become inspired and motivated, the movement grows and change ensues. Over time, however, the organizations these leaders founded can become bureaucratic, with none of the zeal that once characterized them. Instead, they become complacent, content to bemoan the sad state of affairs, raise money doing so, but not seek the substantive change that might solve the problem upon which they fundraise.

Since 2001 when the nation’s first No Kill community proved that a better, kinder and gentler form of animal sheltering is possible—where shelters are temporary way stations to a better life, rather than death camps—that success has grown into a nascent revolution, one that offers a solution to shelter killing that the large national organizations, for all their decades of existence and all the millions in their bank accounts, never have. Rather, they have assured us that such a notion—a No Kill nation—was so impossible, even the act of considering it was of no value; or, in their own words, “not worthy of a passing daydream.” As No Kill advocates struggle to bring change to a stagnant movement plagued by calcified, harmful





and disproven dogma that, quite literally, kills, we are fighting the same battle as other successful reformers in history who, likewise, had to start their work by first cleaning house.

It is the battle William Lloyd Garrison, the founder of the movement to abolish slavery and grant equal rights in the United States, had to fight when he called for immediate emancipation in spite of powerful so-called “anti-slavery” societies that in reality preached racism and condoned the status-quo. It is the same battle faced by the suffragist Alice Paul when she was condemned by the leaders of her movement for the “indecentcy” of protesting in front of the White House, action which, after years of capitulation to politicians by suffrage leaders, finally ended with the 19th Amendment. And it is the same struggle faced by Martin Luther King, Jr., whose “Letter From Birmingham Jail” to his fellow clergymen revealed his own struggles with the leadership of the civil rights movement, powerful people who were threatened by the urgency and immediacy of his

calls for equality and his bold actions to achieve it, people who had become power brokers selling an agenda for the future, and not today. And so it is with the No Kill cause as well.

When the early founders of the animal protection movement died and their organizations took over the job of killing those they had been formed to protect, a fiery zeal was replaced with a smoldering ember that gave little light or warmth and the humane movement went to sleep. People like the tirelessly devoted ASPCA founder, Henry Bergh, were replaced with individuals who care so little for animals as to allow tremendous cruelty and killing to continue unabated, even when they could use the power their positions afford to stop it. After over 100 years of this antiquated and deadly paradigm, the grassroots of the animal protection movement is finally waking up.

Today, we are a movement in transition, struggling to reach our fullest potential by overcoming internal forces that for years have prevented

progress and substantive action behind what until now has been mere empty rhetoric. The battle now raging within the animal protection movement is a battle not of degree, but of kind—evidence of hopelessly incompatible contradictions within the movement itself: one championing death, and the other, life. This tension is vital to help the movement reclaim the determination, spirit and goals of its early founders. And it will end only when the need to distinguish between “No Kill” and “the animal protection movement” no longer exists, because both sides will have finally become what they should have been all along: *one and the same*.

**The battle now raging within the animal protection movement is a battle not of degree, but of *kind*—evidence of hopelessly irreconcilable contradictions within the movement itself, one championing death, and the other, life.**

# What YOU Can Do to Help Shelter Animals



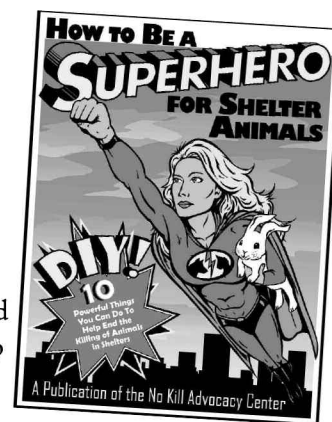
## THE POWER OF ONE

Shelter killing is the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States. Today, an animal entering a shelter has only one chance in two of making it out alive, and in some places it is as low as one in ten, with shelters blaming a lack of available homes as the cause of death. And yet, statistics reveal that there are over ten times as many people looking to bring an animal into their home every year as there are animals being killed in shelters because they lack one. Half of all animals who enter our nation's shelters go out the back door in body bags rather than out the front door in the loving arms of adopters despite the fact that there are plenty of homes available. And when animal lovers question the excuses used to justify this killing, shelters and their national allies respond, "We are all on the same side," "We all want the same thing," "We are all animal lovers" and insist that criticism of shelters and staff is unfair and callous because "No one wants to kill." The facts, however, tragically and frequently tell a very different story. How can you fix a problem you refuse to admit exists? How can shelters reform their practices when they refuse to have standards and benchmarks that would hold them accountable to the best performing shelters in the nation? They can't. They don't. And they won't.

In fact, the large animal protection groups have never created a single No Kill community in the U.S. because that has never been their goal. But smaller organizations have. Individuals have. If you want to help animals, do it yourself: like the activist who started a No Kill movement in his community where he took on not only an entrenched shelter director, but also the mighty ASPCA—and won. Or the animal lover who became informed about the No Kill movement and immediately walked into his local shelter, announced, "There will be no more killing in the shelter," and then proceeded to make it come true. Or the animal rescuer who singlehandedly created the infrastructure necessary for her local shelter to go No Kill. Or the husband-and-wife team that began marketing shelter animals, resulting in adoption rates of over 95 percent. Or the long-time animal welfare professional who took over a shelter known for cruel treatment of animals and high rates of killing and overnight turned it one of the nation's safest communities for homeless animals. No Kill advocates come from all walks of life. In one Kentucky community, a critical care nurse spearheaded the effort. In a Texas community, a police officer led the charge. In California, it's a college professor. In Nevada, it's a marine working

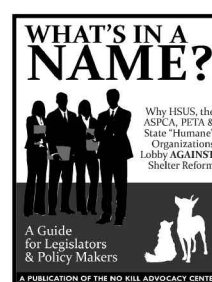
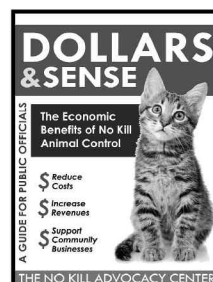
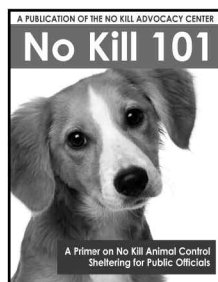
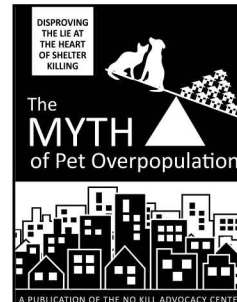
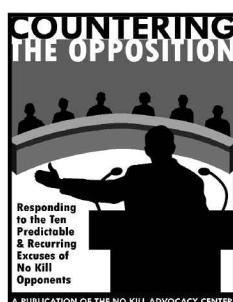
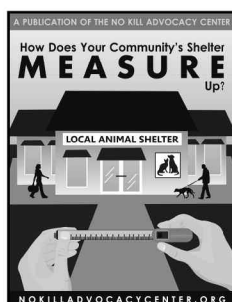
with a corporate retail buyer. Though they have different backgrounds, different skills and a different focus, these activists shared a commitment to end the killing in their community and the determination to see it through. Their story can be your story. You'll be amazed at what you can accomplish if you grant yourself the authority to try.

There are many ways to join the No Kill revolution: you can lobby for reform and legislation, you can help elect pro-No Kill candidates to local office, you can start a blog, you can take over a shelter, you can lead an advisory group, and much more. To download the following free guides that empower YOU to stop the killing, visit: [nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org).



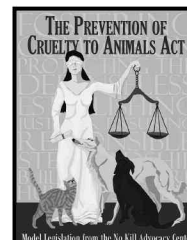
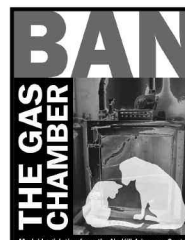
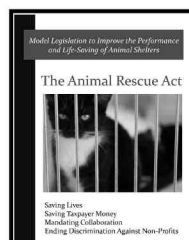
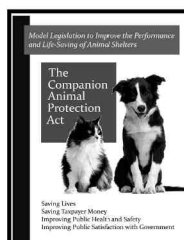
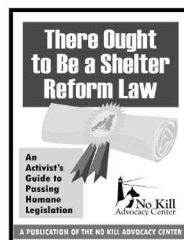
# A NO KILL ADVOCATE'S TOOLKIT

## PREPARE



## EDUCATE

## FIGHT



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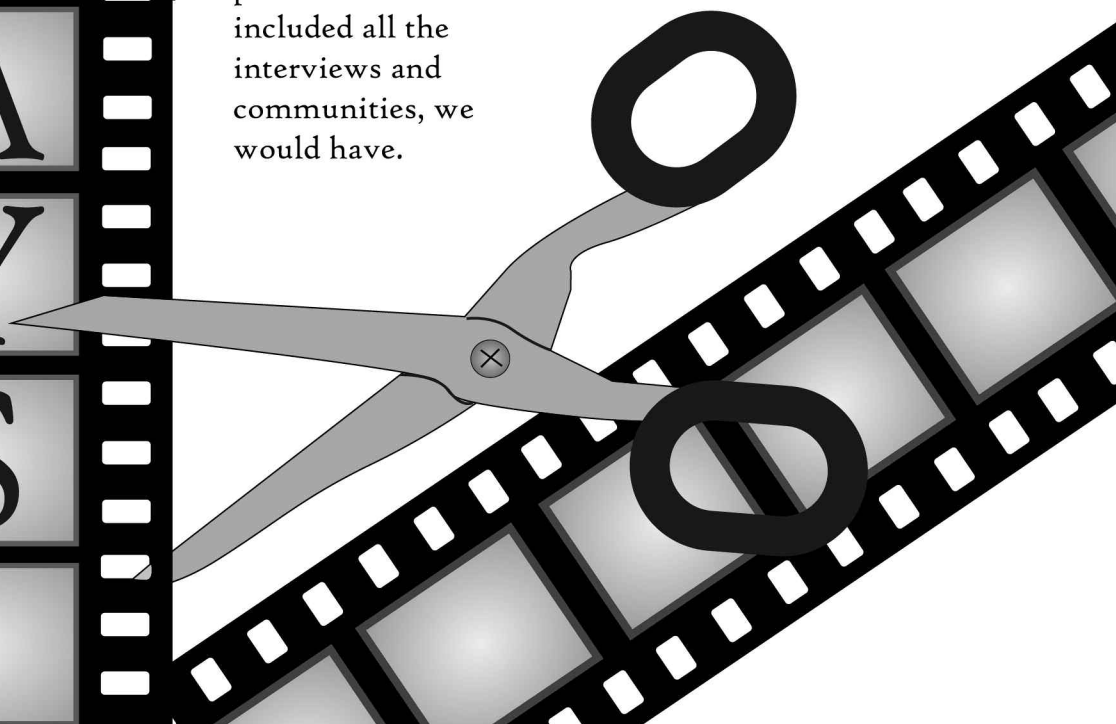
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# A Glimpse at the Cutting Room Floor

It's not easy taking hours of film footage and edit it down to a one hour documentary. A lot of great interviews and highlights of successful communities taken for the film ended up on the cutting room floor. One of those communities, Shelby County, Kentucky, has a 99 percent save rate and has maintained a save rate higher than 90 percent for six years. Also falling to the editor's ax was the story of the ASPCA's killing of Oreo, an abused dog, despite offers to save her by rescue groups, as well as an interview with the Delaware Governor about the state's Companion Animal Protection Act, legislation which has reduced killing in that state by 78 percent. Given its importance to the film, the founding of the San Francisco SPCA, like the founding of the ASPCA, was also recreated, but ultimately did not make it into the final product. If we could have included all the interviews and communities, we would have.



CUTAWAY

# The Tragedy of OREO



**NARRATOR:** Oreo was a one-year old dog who was intentionally thrown off a sixth floor Brooklyn roof top. Oreo suffered two broken legs and a fractured rib. She also appeared to have been beaten in the past—several of the neighbors in the building where Oreo lived reported hearing the sounds of the dog being hit. The ASPCA nursed her back to health and arrested the perpetrator. They also dubbed her the “miracle dog,” and fundraised off her story. But the miracle was short-lived.

According to the ASPCA, when Oreo recovered from her injuries, she started to show signs of aggression. After the money was counted and safely deposited into ASPCA bank accounts, they made the decision to kill her. If it was true that Oreo was still traumatized and untrusting, who could blame her? She had been abused and thrown off a building. She needed time. And even though progressive shelters have successfully rehabilitated dogs like Oreo, the ASPCA refused. But others came forward to offer what the ASPCA would not: time and space to learn that humans are not all bad.



A No Kill sanctuary near the ASPCA which specializes in rehabilitating aggressive dogs and, if that proved impossible, safely caring for them for the rest of their lives, contacted the ASPCA to ask if they could save Oreo. They made numerous phone calls and sent numerous e-mails. They were ignored, hung-up on, and lied to. They even came to the ASPCA but were escorted out after those in charge of Oreo's fate refused to meet with them.

On a cold, November morning, Oreo was killed. Not by her abuser, but by those whose mission it was to protect her. The kennel the sanctuary had readied in anticipation of her arrival lay empty and unused that day, filled with a soft bed, a bowl of water, and several toys for her to play with. Instead, Oreo's body was discarded in a landfill.



**Left:** Oreo after her surgery and while the ASPCA was raising donations to pay for her care and rehabilitation.

**Right:** The kennel readied in anticipation of Oreo's arrival by a sanctuary in Upstate New York specializing in the care and rehabilitation of traumatized dogs. The ASPCA refused to relinquish care of Oreo to this sanctuary or to care for her themselves with the vast money donated to the ASPCA on her behalf, choosing instead to kill her.



**Left:** After the tragedy of Oreo, a New York legislator introduced a bill to prohibit a shelter killing from killing an animal another non-profit wants to save. Dubbed "Oreo's Law," the bill was defeated after the ASPCA lobbied for its demise, condemning an estimated 25,000 New York animals who have an immediate place to go to certain death every year.

# C U T A W A Y

## SAN FRANCISCO SPCA FOUNDER

# James Sloan Hutchinson

**NARRATOR:** On weekday mornings in the late 1860s, a horse-drawn van made its daily pilgrimage along San Francisco's streets rounding up stray dogs. Not only were city dogcatchers authorized to seize any dog wandering the streets, but police officers were authorized to shoot dogs on sight. According to the local newspaper:

**VOICE OVER:** The pound keeper makes the arrests, and keeps the records, while the executioner takes the unredeemed to some dark and lonely spot, and dispatches his victims. They are then buried without ceremony or pomp—the dainty poodle and the mangy cur, the bristling terrier and the sleek spaniel, all lie in one common grave, and are soon forgotten.

**NARRATOR:** But dogs and other animals soon found a voice in a friend of Henry Bergh's, successful San Francisco banker James Sloan Hutchinson. In April of 1868, Hutchinson witnessed two men dragging a squealing boar off to market along the street's rough cobblestones. Hutchinson described the incident:

**HUTCHINSON:** Two vaqueros mounted on spirited horses [were] attempting to lasso a boar which had been separated from its drove and was running up Washington Street. Both vaqueros caught the animal about the same time, one about the fore and the other about the hind legs, and started dragging him over the cobblestones toward the city front.

**NARRATOR:** Hutchinson sprang into the street and

stopped them, with many passersby coming to his aid. And like Henry Bergh's epiphany in St. Petersburg under similar circumstances, the incident affected Hutchinson very deeply and moved him to call together a group of fellow humanitarians to found the San Francisco SPCA.

On April 18, the San Francisco SPCA received its charter from the State of California, becoming the fourth independent SPCA in the nation and the first west of the Rocky Mountains. Taking its lead from the great Henry Bergh, Hutchinson's SPCA fought to protect dogs from corrupt dog catchers.



**HUTCHINSON:** The public pound as then conducted was a disgrace to the city. The pound-men grabbed pet dogs from the arms of women and children in broad daylight and broke down fences in order to take [dogs] to the public pound. They made a practice of stealing animals, and greatly mistreated them after being impounded.

**NARRATOR:** Eventually, the SPCA in San Francisco would follow the ASPCA in unfortunate ways, too. It accepted the pound contract from the city and took over as pound master. Of the 4,139 dogs impounded by the SPCA in one year, 3,004 were killed—almost three out of every four dogs. Cats were also impounded for the first time in San Francisco. The San Francisco SPCA rounded up 5,936 stray cats and killed each and every one, even though they were neither paid nor asked by the city to do so.

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**WRITTEN BY**

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**PRODUCED BY**

Bonnie Silva

**NARRATED BY**

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**ORIGINAL MUSIC****COMPOSED &****PERFORMED BY**

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**HENRY BERGH****RECREATIONS****WRITTEN BY**

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No Kill Advocacy Center

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**ARCHIVAL PHOTOS**

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*New York Times* Archives

**ARCHIVAL ASSISTANT**

Emma Brin

**CAST:****Henry Bergh**

Michael G. Sayers

**Mrs. Bergh**

Dorothy McKeon

**Russian Peasant**

Cliff Blake

**Mayor**

Matthias Lupri

**Carriage Driver**

Steve Provizer

**Judge**

Jesse Kamien

**Maid Nellie**

Maeve Power

**Dog Catcher**

L. Hastings

**Young Thief**

Gabriel Soule

**Rail Operator**

Mark J. Millman

**Criminal**

Larry Hastings

**Fiery Aristocrat**

John W. Watson

**Dog**

Mozart

**BACKGROUND****ACTORS**

Sail Earle Beith  
Quinn Burgess  
Heidi Gennaro  
Barbara Menard Pugliese  
Veronica McClure

**VOICE ACTORS**

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Kevin McNamara  
Christopher Polack  
Joseph Manganello  
Vera Farina

**THE COMMONWEALTH****VINTAGE DANCERS**

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Catherine Bishop  
Nick Bishop  
Quinn Burgess  
Laura D. Eisener  
Paul Kenworthy  
Mark J. Millman  
John O'Brien  
Antonia Pugliese  
Barbara M. Pugliese  
Julia Pugliese  
Julia Rampone  
Lisa Thibault

**Shelter Manager**

Kimberley Miller

**Kitten Adopter**

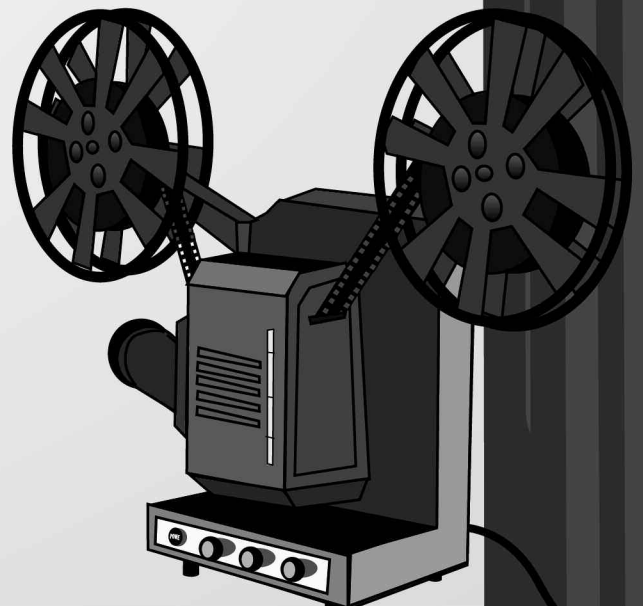
Vera Farina

**Shelter Assistant**

Lisa Roche

**Man on Street**

Richard Zawbroski



# SPECIAL THANKS

Delaware Governor Jack Markell  
New York Assembly Member  
Micah Z. Kellner  
Nicole Bagley  
Susanne Bagley  
Amber Ballam  
Michael Baus  
Sally Berger  
Lauren Boccanfuso, DVM  
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Amanda Fowler Brown  
Bonney Brown  
Beth Brunelle  
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Owen Bryant  
Sue Budge  
Sarah Carpenter  
Christie Carr  
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Kerry Clair  
Ryan Clinton  
AJ DeBee  
Karen Delise  
Susan Dewey  
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Tianna Faith Evans  
Deborah Falamino  
Mike Fry  
Brian Gold  
Nigel Graves  
Ellen Haith  
Nicolle Hansen  
Lisa Harmer  
Kim Hawkins  
Savannah Hawkins

Valerie Hayes  
Jesse Horton  
Jennifer Jackson, DVM  
Kelly A. Jedlicki  
Ellen Jefferson, DVM  
Bradley King  
Robyn Kippenberger  
Reva Laituri  
Karen J. Lieberman  
Michael Linke  
Eric Mahl  
Megan MacNeill  
Mike Martinez  
Veronique Michalik  
Lucy Morquecho  
Kevin Murphy  
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Rusty Newton  
Veronica Novelo  
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Karen Stark  
Pamela Stonebraker  
Lynn Tilley

Larry Tucker  
Nancy Ueda  
Linda Vaccari  
Rachel Ward  
Jay Williamson  
Laura Williamson  
Bob Wise

The Gore Place Society  
UCLA School of Law  
George Washington University  
Law School  
Historical Society of Old  
Newbury  
Massachusetts Department of  
Conservation and Recreation  
Tompkins County SPCA  
Washoe County Regional Animal  
Services  
Nevada Humane Society  
City and County of San  
Francisco  
Austin Pets Alive  
Town Lake Animal Shelter  
Faithful Friends Animal Society  
Metrowest Humane Society  
Pets Alive  
Live and Let Live Farm

*The Ithaca Journal*  
*The Common Good Watchdog*  
*The Trumansburg Free Press*



# FILM TRANSCRIPT



**Narrator:** We are a nation of animal lovers. Collectively, we share our homes with 90 million cats and 80 million dogs. We talk to them, keep their pictures in our wallets, celebrate their birthdays, travel with them, and greet them upon coming home even before we say hello to our spouse and kids. We include them in holiday celebrations and take time off from work to care for them when they are sick. And when it is time to say good-bye, we grieve.

Every year, Americans spend more than 50 billion dollars on their animal companions and donate hundreds of millions of dollars more to charities that promise to help animals, with the largest of these having annual budgets in excess of 100 million dollars. And in a national poll, 96 percent of Americans—almost every single person surveyed—said we have a moral duty to protect animals and we should have strong laws to do so. But the very agencies that the public expects to protect animals are instead killing millions of them annually.

**Nathan Winograd:** Animal sheltering is the one industry where you can fail 80 percent of the time, 90 percent of the time, meaning every time you put an animal to death. There are some communities in the United States that are killing 60 percent, 70 percent, 80 percent, even 90 percent of the animals.

**Narrator:** From the shores of California to the skyscrapers of New York; from the upper peninsula of Michigan to the banks of the Rio Grande; shelters in the United States are killing animals by the thousands and in some cases, by the tens of thousands. It doesn't matter if the communities are large or small, Northern or Southern, rural or urban, rich or poor, animals who enter shelters in need of a caring hand, some tender care, and a loving home don't find it. Instead, they are killed.

Today, an animal entering an average American animal shelter has a 50 percent chance of losing his life. Some four million lose their lives every year,

with shelters blaming a lack of available homes as the cause of death.

**Nathan Winograd:** For too many years, we've been relying on the fiction that there are too many animals and not enough homes and that is why we kill animals.

**Bob Wise:** The party line among animal shelters in the United States is the only way to balance the arithmetic is to kill animals.

**Narrator:** And yet over seven times as many people acquire animals every year as there are animals being killed in shelters. Half of all animals who enter our nation's shelters go out the back door in garbage bags rather than out the front door in the loving arms of adopters, despite the fact that there are plenty of homes available.

Shelter killing is the leading cause of death for healthy dogs and cats in the United States. And for far too long, the American public has been led to believe there is no other way.

**Reva Laituri:** Our shelter was a pretty sad place to visit. We had a kill rate of up to 63 percent. The belief was that there were not enough homes for all the animals that came into the shelter. So many of them that came into the shelter were automatically killed especially the elderly. Dogs, usually ages five and older, were never even given a chance. They were taken in the back and given the needle.

**Narrator:** While some shelters have used the excuse of pet overpopulation to kill, other shelter administrators seeking to do better have turned to national organizations like the Humane Society of the United States for advice.

**Reva Laituri:** We pretty much depended on the national organizations. What we were taught at the time was that if you had upper respiratory running

through the cat population, you killed them all. And you started fresh. You just disinfected everything, got new cats in and away you went.

**Narrator:** But there is hope. Over the last two decades, a growing number of shelter directors across the nation have implemented an innovative new approach to animal sheltering: the No Kill Equation, a bold set of programs and services to increase adoptions, reduce birthrates and keep animals with their responsible caretakers. And they are achieving unprecedented success. Today, Marquette, Michigan is a No Kill city. Instead of listening to large national organizations, shelter administrators turned to the animal lovers in their own community.

**Reva Laituri:** They were ready to jump in with both feet and they just totally, absolutely believed that the public and the community would be behind us and they would support the changes. Because we had been hearing a lot over the years, people who were not happy with the fact that we were killing so many animals. And they had a lot of faith in that and I'm really glad that they did. It was their voices that carried the day.

**Narrator:** Marquette is not alone. No Kill communities in which no healthy or treatable animals are killed can be found throughout the United States. They are part of a growing revolution in sheltering which has the potential to end, once and for all, the century-old notion that the best we can do for homeless dogs, cats, rabbits and other animals is to adopt out a few, and kill the rest.

This is the story of animal sheltering, which was born of compassion and then lost its way. It is the story of the No Kill movement, which says we can and must stop the killing. It is about heroes and villains, betrayal and redemption. And it is about a social movement as noble and just as those that have come before. But most of all, it is a story about believing in the community and trusting in the power of compassion.

A story that begins in New York City, 150 years ago.

**Nathan Winograd:** Henry Bergh was the aristocratic son of a wealthy New York ship

builder. His entire ambition seems to have been to serve his country in the diplomatic service. And it was a dream that he thought he had realized when he was appointed to the Czar in St. Petersburg by then President Abraham Lincoln.

**Matilda Bergh:** Secretary to the American Legation in Russia. Such a great honor Henry.

**Nathan Winograd:** He thought he had realized his dream when he joined the diplomatic service, but he actually found his duties tiring and mundane, and he found himself spending less and less time on official duties, and more and more time taking aimless rides around St. Petersburg. It was actually on one of the rides where Henry Bergh found his true calling in life.

**Matilda Bergh:** That poor beast cannot sustain another blow.

**Narrator:** On one such ride, he witnessed a peasant beating his horse.

**Henry Bergh:** Stop. Stop.

Driver, stop.

**Nathan Winograd:** Henry Bergh ordered the man to stop, which the peasant did in deference to this well-dressed man of official position. Henry Bergh later wrote in his diary that it was exactly at that moment where he found his true calling in life.

**Henry Bergh:** At last, I've found a way to utilize my gold lace.

**Narrator:** Bergh returned to his native New York City, now filled with a million residents, and discovered—on every street, in every corner, as part of virtually every industry—a city built upon the suffering of animals and in desperate need for reform. At the time, New York City had the distinction of having more animal residents than any other city. Twenty thousand pigs and countless sheep roamed the streets, eating garbage on behalf of the cleaning department. Cows lumbering through the streets on the way to the slaughterhouse were as commonplace as the stray dogs and cats who made New York City their home. Even wild pigeons were peddled from wagons and carts at a few cents a dozen. But no

animal was such an integral part of the New York City landscape, so responsible for the city's meteoric rise in size, and perhaps so consistently abused, as the working draft horse.

At the time, all inland travel was done by horse—on horseback, in wagons, or in carriages. Horses straining under heavy loads, starving and dying in the streets or being beaten by caretakers, were a fact of New York City life, and scarcely resulted in a passing glance. Henry Bergh set out to change that. On February 8, 1866, to a well-filled room of attendees including the mayor, Bergh delivered the first lecture on animal protection in the United States. He called upon the gathering to undertake a moral fight on behalf of animals:

**Henry Bergh:** This is a matter purely of conscience. It has no perplexing side issues.

**Mayor Hoffman:** You and the Society have my full, unfettered support Mr. Bergh.

**Narrator:** One hundred signatories signed Bergh's Declaration of the Rights of Animals, pledging themselves to suppressing cruelty and showing mercy. Armed with the Declaration, Bergh secured a charter from the State of New York, incorporating the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the country's first SPCA.

**Nathan Winograd:** And a few days after that, the legislature passed an anti-cruelty law, and Henry Bergh went to war.

**Narrator:** Bergh would spend the better part of the next two decades in daily struggle for the animals in and around New York City.

**Henry Bergh:** Day after day, I am in slaughterhouses; or lying in wait at midnight with a squad of police near some dog pit; through the filthy markets and about the rotten docks; out into the crowded and dangerous streets; lifting a fallen horse to his feet, or perhaps sending the driver before a magistrate...

... Beating a mangy, slowly starved cart horse...

... penetrating dark and unwholesome buildings where I inspect collars and saddles for raw flesh;

then lecturing in public schools to children, and again to adult Societies. Thus my whole life is spent.

**Narrator:** Turning to the event in the streets of St. Petersburg that inspired him, his first order of business was to better the plight of New York City's much abused working horses. In 1832, New York had established the first horse railway in the world. By 1863, 16 lines of horse railways crisscrossed the city and 500 horse-drawn cars made their way through traffic daily. Sickly and uncared for horses struggled to pull over-laden cars through the streets, often weighted down beyond their capacity, while impatient drivers lashed at them to proceed. With his new anti-cruelty law, Henry Bergh was determined to immediately stop such practices. The annals of the ASPCA describe the first such encounter:

**Voice Over:** The driver of a cart laden with coal is whipping his horse. Passersby on the New York City street stop to gawk not so much at the weak, emaciated equine, but at the tall man, elegant in top hat and spats, who is explaining to the driver that it is now against the law to beat one's animal. Thus, America first encounters "The Great Meddler."

**Nathan Winograd:** Horses would be pulling carriages beyond their capacity, through sleet and snow with noses bleeding, not being very well cared for and it was not uncommon for Henry Bergh to stop an entire line of horse drawn carriages asking everybody to unload to protect a single horse.

**Narrator:** A man of great courage and conviction, Bergh believed in always doing what he thought was right regardless of public clamor to the contrary, even when that clamor was, as it often was, unrelenting.

**Members of the Public:** Mind your own business. It's my horse. It's a ridiculous idea Bergh.

**Henry Bergh:** Two or three years of ridicule and abuse have thickened the epidermis of my sensibilities, and I have acquired the habit of doing the thing I think right, regardless of public clamor.

Let us dismiss and forget those that incriminate me.

**Narrator:** Bergh spent each and every night tending

to sick animals and hauling drivers who overworked them to the local justice for prosecution on charges of cruelty. Although the owners of the lines complained, Bergh would carry the day. Within two years of the ASPCA's incorporation, limits on passengers were common, horses were better cared for, and water troughs and buckets for thirsty horses could be seen throughout the city.

One chronicler of Bergh's life noted that it was horses that Bergh championed above any other animals. But, in truth, Bergh's ASPCA labored equally hard to protect stray dogs, particularly against abuses at the hands of city dogcatchers.

**Nathan Winograd:** Every summer for a period of 90 days the New York City dog pound would open its doors to rid the city of stray dogs.

**Narrator:** The payment of 50 cents for each dog brought to the pound led to a profitable trade in dogs. Dogs were rounded up off the streets, from yards, and from people's arms, and turned into the pound.

**Nathan Winograd:** The pound at the time was essentially just a rough shed, where dogs would be thrown in, left to their own devices. They would be held for a couple of days. In some circumstances, the owner would come forward and claim their dog. But they weren't provided food, they weren't provided water because all those things took away from the profits of city dogcatchers.

**Narrator:** Left lying in their own waste, the dogs suffered until they were killed.

**Nathan Winograd:** Those dogs that were not reclaimed by their families were drowned in the East River in what the local newspaper called the Terrible Iron Crate. And as many as eighty dogs at a time were put in this crate, with the largest dogs beaten on the head with a club so that they stayed underwater.

**Narrator:** The struggling dogs were dropped several times in the East River in front of a crowd of neighborhood children until all the dogs had drowned.

**Nathan Winograd:** It was that type of mistreatment of dogs that would focus so much of Henry Bergh's efforts.

**Narrator:** Bergh succeeded in making it unlawful for city dogcatchers to accept dogs from boys under the age of 18 in order to eliminate what he called "the thieving gangs of young dogcatchers." He forced the city to provide better housing for dogs. Because of intense ASPCA opposition, proposed laws modeled after those in other states banning certain breeds or requiring them to be muzzled in public failed to pass in New York. And in one year alone, the ASPCA prosecuted 12 cases of cruelty by city dogcatchers. As a result, the number of dogs killed dropped by 80 percent.

**Nathan Winograd:** Henry Bergh argued that the dogs didn't bother anyone and should be left alone.

**Henry Bergh:** Let us abolish the pound!

**Nathan Winograd:** Tired of fighting Bergh, New York City's Aldermen offered his ASPCA money to run the dog pound. But Bergh would have none of it.

**Henry Bergh:** This society could not stultify its principles so far as to encourage the tortures which the proposed give rise to.

**Nathan Winograd:** He didn't want his organization to do the city's bidding and kill dogs that they deemed unwanted.

**Narrator:** Whether fighting for the rights of horses or protecting neighborhood dogs, Bergh's ASPCA grew in both scope and influence.

**Nathan Winograd:** It didn't take long before other animal lovers in other cities began to model their own organizations after Henry Bergh's, and so these SPCAs and humane societies and animal protection organizations began to dot the American landscape.

**Narrator:** By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, virtually every major city in the United States had its own SPCA or humane society. And all of them owed their existence to one man, the Great Meddler, whose act of compassion in St. Petersburg changed not only his life, but the lives

of millions of animals. Toward the end of his life, Henry Bergh often lamented to his wife,

**Henry Bergh:** I hate to think about what might befall the Society when I'm gone.

**Narrator:** On March 12, 1888, as a storm whipped the city and gales tore the roofs off of houses, New York's horses pulled carloads of people through the snow. But for once, after two decades of policing the streets on their behalf, Bergh was not there to protect them. In the early hours of the morning, Henry Bergh had died. In a prophetic statement, the *New York Post* noted:

His society was distinctly a one man power. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was Henry Bergh and Henry Bergh was the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Shortly after his death, and against his wishes, the ASPCA accepted the pound contract, becoming New York's leading killer of dogs and later, cats. In cities across the country, SPCAs and humane societies followed suit, abandoning their traditional platforms of advocacy and cruelty prosecutions in favor of running the dog pound.

**Pound worker:** We keep all dogs we receive, unless very sick or vicious, five days; then those unclaimed are humanely put to death except a limited number of desirable ones for which we can find good homes. We keep from 20 to 30 of the best of the cats and kittens to place in homes and the rest are put to death... We do not keep a large number of animals alive.

**Narrator:** What started out as a movement of hope was replaced with despair. And despair turned to anger. Shelters began to blame the public, the very people whose help they needed in order to save the lives of animals in their care. They enacted laws that put a stranglehold on the community—pet limit laws, licensing laws, even laws making it a crime to feed stray animals. As a result, compassion became control. As animal lovers who did not want to kill animals fled these organizations, working at a humane society became a job, not a mission. And animals—the healthy and treatable side-by-side with the hopelessly ill—died in shelters by the millions.

Assuring themselves there was no other way, they generated workshops to help shelter employees cope with the killing. But innovation that would change the status quo got lost in the now all-too-familiar cliché that there are just “too many animals, and not enough homes.” Until one city recaptured its roots.

In the 1980s, the San Francisco SPCA was killing some 20,000 animals a year. Underfunded by the city, and because San Franciscans did not want to donate to an organization that did little more than kill animals, it had driven itself to bankruptcy. Facing financial ruin, the Board of Directors was forced to make a change.

**Nathan Winograd:** In 1989, the San Francisco SPCA gave up the animal control contract and returned it back to the City and the City built and ran its own pound.

**Narrator:** Freed from using donor dollars to subsidize the pound, the SPCA would use those funds to save, rather than end the lives of animals by implementing innovative new programs to increase lifesaving—programs such as foster care for orphaned puppies and kittens, medical and behavior rehabilitation for sick, injured and traumatized animals, and neutering and releasing free-living cats who are not socialized to people.

**Nathan Winograd:** The SPCA went back to its roots. It went back to the founding vision of Henry Bergh of focusing its efforts on protecting animals from people.

**Narrator:** These and other programs which the San Francisco SPCA pioneered not only transformed animal sheltering in San Francisco, it redefined it nationwide.

As the San Francisco SPCA opened its doors on July 1, 1989, it did so for the first time in nearly a century without the title of pound master for the City and County of San Francisco. It was a historic beginning of an altogether different future for shelter animals—not of certain death, but a future that held promise, protection, and a new chance at life.

To make that a reality, the SPCA offered to take every healthy dog and cat on death row at the city



pound and find them all homes. The SPCA also offered to save thousands of sick and injured animals. And it would do so at no cost to taxpayers, taking on all the expense and responsibility. In return, city shelter staff would not kill these animals. But the city pound refused.

**Jennifer Winograd:** They gave two rationales for why they thought it was a bad idea. The first was that if the citizens of the City of San Francisco knew that any shelter they surrendered to the shelter would be guaranteed a home, then the shelter would become overrun with animals; there would just be too many. And the second argument that they gave was that people would stop spaying and neutering. That people would think, “oh well things are under control, we don’t need to spay/neuter anymore.” And that they would stop doing that and that, again, they would be overrun with animals.

**Narrator:** Unwilling to allow the city pound to continue killing animals who had an immediate place to go, the San Francisco SPCA decided to seek legislation, the Adoption Act, which would have made it illegal for the city to kill animals if the SPCA or other rescue organization was willing to save them. But passing such a law would prove to be difficult.

**Jennifer Winograd:** The San Francisco Animal Welfare Commission was staffed by people who were also city bureaucrats. So you had not only the city pound which was opposed, but the city police department and the city health department and neither of those agencies wanted to go against what the city pound wanted.

**Narrator:** The director of the city pound also enlisted the support of shelters in other Bay Area counties to join in opposition. National organizations entered the fray, defending the right of the city pound to kill animals, even in the face of a rescue alternative.

**Jennifer Winograd:** Shelter directors from around the country came to that meeting and spoke out against it, parroting the arguments being made by the San Francisco city pound.

**Narrator:** Undeterred, the San Francisco SPCA fought back, threatening a public initiative if the

pound did not cooperate.

**Jennifer Winograd:** They believed if they could take this issue before the voters, it would be a no-brainer for the voters. If the San Francisco SPCA wants to save the lives of animals on death row at the city pound, the people of San Francisco would have overwhelmingly supported it. And the city pound knew that it would be a very difficult thing to try to defend their resistance to that idea in the public forum.

**Narrator:** The threat of a public referendum worked. The city pound backed down and a voluntary agreement was reached.

**Jennifer Winograd:** What was going to be the Adoption Act turned into the Adoption Pact, an agreement between the San Francisco SPCA and the city pound that any animal on death row would go to the San Francisco SPCA, where they would be guaranteed a home.

**Narrator:** While the city pound grudgingly accepted the new order, the animal loving public supported the effort enthusiastically with hearts, homes, and wallets. Disproving the excuses offered by the city as to why the agreement was a bad idea, people adopted San Francisco shelter animals in record numbers. After the first year of the Adoption Pact, the deaths of healthy animals in San Francisco shelters dropped to zero, and the deaths of sick and injured animals dropped by 50 percent. At a time when most major urban cities were killing the majority of animals, indeed some cities were killing over 90 percent of them, San Francisco’s death rate had plummeted.

**Michael Baus:** We had great leadership. Animals were number 1. The organization followed suit to do anything possible to help the dogs and cats in our community.

**Nathan Winograd:** If you were a homeless dog or cat in the mid-1990s, San Francisco was the place to be. It had the lowest death rate of any community in the United States. And you would have expected that the heads of shelters that still killed the bulk of their occupants would have sent teams to San Francisco to figure out what is it that they’re doing that we should be doing. How had San Francisco discovered the cure for the disease of shelter killing

that was still ravaging communities across the country. That is what you would expect them to have done because that is how ethical people would have behaved, but instead, they denigrated it. They claimed it was smoke and mirrors. They attacked it. They called No Kill a cancer. And they pledged to stop what was happening in San Francisco from happening in their own hometowns.

**Narrator:** Despite the backlash, in communities across the country, people were now demanding solutions like San Francisco had achieved—solutions these groups were not prepared to embrace.

**Jennifer Winograd:** We all grew up believing that if you worked at a humane society or an SPCA, it was because you loved animals. And we were also told that the killing was a necessary evil and that nobody wanted to do it. And they wouldn't do it if there was any sort of alternative and a lot of people believed it. But then when the San Francisco SPCA created an alternative model and showed them that, indeed it wasn't just a necessary evil, it was just evil and we could end it, they didn't want to hear about it, they didn't want to know and they felt so tremendously threatened by it that they did everything in their power to try and stop it.

**Narrator:** Nothing was so unique about San Francisco that its success could not be replicated elsewhere, in each and every American city. But that required leaders willing to embrace new thinking. And instead of following San Francisco's lead, the "old guard" rejected the programs that made lifesaving success in San Francisco a reality.

**Nathan Winograd:** When San Francisco [SPCA] was still killing, it was on the verge of bankruptcy. In fact, it was 90 days away from closing its door forever and its newfound wealth was not the cause of lifesaving in San Francisco, but it was a product of the lifesaving.

**Narrator:** By the end of the 1990s, the San Francisco SPCA was at the peak of its success. It was beloved and supported by tens of thousands of San Franciscans. It had the lowest death rate of any major urban city in the United States. A No Kill city was within reach.

**Nathan Winograd:** We were not only the only city

in the country saving health dogs and cats, but we were a whisper away from even ending the killing of all sick and injured and traumatized animals who could possibly be saved.

The leadership responsible for bringing San Francisco death rates to all-time lows left the organization and went on to other pursuits.

**Michael Baus:** This new leader came in and decided to really tear apart the programs and services that had worked so successfully over the years.

**Nathan Winograd:** And in a very short period of time, programs were gutted, deficits were created, passionate people left the organization, and this great experiment in compassion, that redefined sheltering for all time, that electrified the movement nationwide, turned around and rejected the very revolution that it had started.

**Narrator:** The crown jewel of the No Kill movement quietly passed into obscurity.

The question of whether or not No Kill could actually be accomplished was left for another community to answer.

**Bob Wise:** I complained to the management of the shelter at the time about the practice of killing dogs and cats.

**Allison Myers:** You were always afraid that you would come in to volunteer the next week and say, "Where's Cindy?"

**Ellen Haith:** I would come in to work on Sunday and some dog that I had seen the week before maybe wasn't there. And I really didn't want to know.

**Brian Gold:** We were told that no euthanasia questions should be asked of the staff.

**Valerie Hayes:** There was an isolation ward at the end of the hallway.

**Allison Myers:** It was basically first in, first out.

**Valerie Hayes:** The main practice that caused animals to be needlessly killed at the shelter was killing them. They were being killed left and right.

**Narrator:** The shelter in Tompkins County, New York was typical of those nationwide. It had a poor public image, it killed a lot of animals and it blamed the community for doing so. And even when people offered to help, management and the Board turned them away.

**Valerie Hayes:** We did talk with the shelter management and the shelter Board about making changes and we were met with opposition at practically every turn. When we presented new ideas, we were given all kinds of excuses.

**Brian Gold:** We knew it didn't have to be that way.

**Allison Myers:** Some of the other volunteers and I did approach the management, both the shelter manager and the Board of Directors.

**Bob Wise:** We simply kept on peacefully voicing our protest.

**Valerie Hayes:** And I think that we also knew that we couldn't abandon the animals to their fate.

**Narrator:** While employees socialized, it was the volunteers who cleaned the cages, fed the animals, counseled potential adopters and administered medication to sick animals who otherwise would not have received it. And they, as well as the animals, often paid the price.

**Valerie Hayes:** I had been interested in fostering kittens since I had heard about the program. I thought that it was a good idea. It was a way to save very young kittens that were too young to be in the shelter and too young to be put up for adoption.

**Narrator:** She fostered a litter of healthy kittens until they were old enough to find homes. When they were ready to be returned to the shelter for adoption, she made sure they would be safe.

**Valerie Hayes:** So I called and I asked if it was ok for me to bring my kittens back; if they had enough room for them. And I was assured that I would be called or emailed if they had a space crunch and they needed me to take any kittens back and I gave them all my contact info. I wrote it on each set of paperwork. I distinctly, you know I remember standing there and writing it down five times on

their paperwork. And so I put my kittens in their cage and said good-bye to them.

**Narrator:** Despite the assurances, two of them were killed.

**Valerie Hayes:** I was just devastated, I started crying. I never got the phone call to take them back, rather than have the shelter kill them.

**Narrator:** She was not the only one.

**Brian Gold:** One cat that I remember first seeing was a beat up, half of his ears were gone, a beat up orange Tom cat and one of the volunteers at that session decided shortly after that to adopt that cat. I mean she just was struck by him. She was going to adopt him. The day she came to pick him up, she came in the door and I remember her coming in the door and he had been euthanized, killed the day before. I'm sorry...

They did basically put down animals who had a guaranteed way out. All they had to do was phone a number, that person would come that day, get the animal, these animals were getting killed.

**Narrator:** Despite many roadblocks and many setbacks, despite being banned from the shelter, the volunteers continued to fight to reform the Tompkins County SPCA. Taking the fight to the community and increasing the public pressure for reform, Tompkins County picked up where the San Francisco SPCA left off.

**Brian Gold:** The executive director resigned; the Board hired the right person.

**Nathan Winograd:** I had just come from the most successful SPCA in the most successful city in the country and I believed in the model having seen first-hand how it brought San Francisco death rates to all-time lows.

On my second day, the cages got full and as someone brought in a litter of puppies, one of my staff members turned to me and said who are you going to kill to make room for this litter of puppies and I turned to them and I said what is plan B?

**Narrator:** There was none. But under the shelter's new leadership, killing was no longer an option.

**Nathan Winograd:** Because we were a rural shelter, we had these horse troughs. We brought them out and we filled them with shredded paper and we put them in the lobby and that's where we put the puppies.

**Ellen Haith:** People would come in and they'd see this galvanized tub full of fat, little puppies and nobody had to die to get those puppies a room.

**Nathan Winograd:** So everyone who came into that shelter saw the puppies, it gave them some badly needed socialization, and each and every one of them was adopted out very quickly.

**Brian Gold:** It was just, "we are going to do this. Period."

**Narrator:** From that humble beginning, the goal of creating a No Kill community electrified Tompkins County.

**Bob Wise:** Once our shelter declared that we were going No Kill, we had the support of the public. More people came to adopt animals. More people donated money. The public who loves animals beat a path to our door.

**Narrator:** Despite taking in all lost, homeless, and relinquished animals from the 10 towns and municipalities that made up Tompkins County, the results were dramatic.

**Nathan Winograd:** Tompkins County went from a community that killed healthy dogs and cats to killing none; that killed sick and injured but treatable dogs and cats to killing none; that killed unsocial community cats, alley cats, to killing none.

**Narrator:** Overnight, by harnessing the public's compassion and changing the way the shelter operated, Tompkins County, New York, became a No Kill community, saving not only all healthy animals as San Francisco had done, but going further: saving all sick and injured but treatable animals as well, including rabbits, hamsters, gerbils and others. Whether they were young or old, healthy or sick, unweaned, injured or traumatized; whether they were blind, deaf, or missing limbs, the animals were all guaranteed a home, and they all found one.

**Ellen Haith:** It was unbelievable.

**Valerie Hayes:** Everything changed and it was like you could finally breathe.

**Ellen Haith:** To know that I didn't have to look at that ledger and see the D-word for deceased.

**Narrator:** For years, groups like the Humane Society of the United States, the American Humane Association and the ASPCA had been fundraising, promising animal lovers that they were working to end the killing in U.S. shelters. And now the model to make that a reality had been achieved by others. But rather than celebrate, they ignored it.

**Nathan Winograd:** It's almost like the keys to end shelter killing have not been discovered.

**Narrator:** But for many animal lovers and some shelter directors, there was no turning back. Following the lead of Tompkins County, there are now hundreds of cities and towns across America that have also ended the killing of healthy and treatable animals and the numbers continue to grow. Shelters are increasingly embracing the No Kill Equation with unprecedented results.

**Nathan Winograd:** We have been killing animals for over a century and we have been saving lives for 15 years so our movement is relatively new, but even in that short period of time, we have completely redefined the agenda all over the country.

**Narrator:** Reno, Nevada bills itself as the biggest little city in the world. Little is a matter of debate. It, and the surrounding communities that make up Washoe County, have a population of over 400,000 people. But regardless of its size, Reno and Washoe County have big city problems and for the animals entering the local shelter, the consequences were once dire.

**Mitch Schneider:** Back then the euthanasia rate was quite high. A couple staff members would have to spend all afternoon euthanizing animals and filling up barrels full of dead pets and having the renderer take them away.

**Narrator:** Fifteen barrels of dead bodies were filled daily. Every evening the barrels would be emptied, only to be filled up again the next day.

**Mitch Schneider:** I was asked by one of the senior staff at the humane society when they first started talking about the No Kill philosophy and they asked me point blank, “Do you think it will work here?” and I told them quite honestly, I did not.

**Narrator:** Washoe County takes in roughly four times the per capita rate of dogs and cats than Los Angeles, five times the rate of San Francisco, and 10 times the rate of New York City. As a tourism-based economy, it was especially hard hit by the Great Recession: foreclosures were at record levels and it had the second highest unemployment rate in the nation.

**Mitch Schneider:** I really believed that it was only something that could exist in a very affluent community where the impounding and abandonment rates were much lower.

**Narrator:** If there was anywhere that No Kill could not work according to traditional sheltering dogma, it was Washoe County. Yet in spite of their skepticism, shelter managers were willing to try.

**Mitch Schneider:** At that time, we entered into a partnership with the Nevada Humane Society and things improved a little bit, but it wasn’t until the Nevada Humane Society adopted the No Kill philosophy, that’s when we saw a tremendous transformation.

**Bonney Brown:** Once you eliminate killing as an option, humans, we’re incredibly creative.

**Mitch Schneider:** To be given the opportunity at something different than euthanasia, or killing of the animals, was appealing.

**Bonney Brown:** Truly, it was public pressure here in Reno that led the Board to the conclusion that that was the direction they had to take here in this community.

**Mitch Schneider:** So it took a little work, I had to check some of my traditional thinking and surprise, surprise, here we are.

**Bonney Brown:** Creative thought and bringing creative solutions and not viewing anything as too far out to try has been a big part of our success.

**Mitch Schneider:** Would I like to happen faster for the other communities? Absolutely, because I know they would find tremendous happiness and pride in that change.

**Narrator:** For those working in shelters willing to go a new and different route, to not continue doing what they have always done just because they’ve always done it, the results have been dramatic, with lifesaving rates as high as 99 percent, a scale that could only be dreamed about just a few years ago. But most refuse to innovative.

**Kerry Clair:** I look at all these animals down on their luck because of humans or lack of care, but then when they get to humans, you know when they get to us, it has to be a place where they’re helped, where we can reach out a hand and say, hey buddy, come here, I’ll help you. I’ll put you in a good place, I’ll find you a home, someone will love you. I’ll give you food. I’ll give you shelter. I’m not going to take you in a back room and kill you because you had the misfortune of being in a bad place.

**Narrator:** In the United States today, there are no checks and balances to ensure that our shelters are run in line with the most up-to-date sheltering policies and procedures. Instead, our shelters are run on the honor system, and it is a discretion shelter directors abuse time and time again by failing to implement lifesaving alternatives or to work cooperatively with those who want to help them save lives. And not only are animals being needlessly killed, they are often denied basic medical care, food, water, and socialization, and sometimes, they are treated cruelly. And when animal lovers try to change this, they often face retaliation, as a young rescuer in Southern California learned the hard way.

**Rescuer:** I went to the shelter because I was told they had a mother cat and three kittens that they had scheduled to be killed even though they were healthy. When I arrived to pick up the cat and kittens, the shelter manager asked to see me. She told me that a member of our rescue group wrote a letter complaining about the shelter to the board of supervisors and that they didn’t appreciate it. She told me I could therefore only have one kitten. I begged her to let me take them all, but she said that I couldn’t. She told me to pick one and she was



going to euthanize the rest, including the mother cat. I didn't know what to do. And so I picked. My hand was shaking as I filled out the paper work. After I got the kitten, I went outside and sat in the car. Then I threw up all over myself.

**Narrator:** It is a tragic story true to cities and towns across America. And the large national animal protection organizations are as much to blame as the individual shelter directors themselves. For decades they have perpetuated the fiction that all is well in our nation's shelters. They have assured us that they are overseeing these organizations, providing guidance and assistance to make sure they are run humanely and effectively. In reality, they have ignored abuse and have remained deafeningly silent to the pleas of animal lovers for reform.

**Ryan Clinton:** Town Lake Animal Center was killing over 14,000 animals a year, that's over 30 animals every single day including weekends and holidays.

**Narrator:** A local newspaper described the killing as follows:

**Voice Over:** A 7-week-old kitten weighs about a pound; his veins are the size of vermicelli. So if you're administering a lethal dose of sodium pentobarbital, an anesthetic agent blue as a summer sky, you'll probably inject directly into his round, spotted belly. If you have five cages of kittens to kill this morning, you don't have time to go looking for slippery little veins.

A kitten with a hand gripping the scruff of his neck and a needle in his belly will squeal in terror, but once you've pulled out the needle and placed him back into a cage with his siblings, he will shake his head and start to get on with his kittenish business. Then he starts to look woozy, and begins to stumble around. He licks his lips, tasting the chemical absorbed into his system. Soon, he becomes too sedated to stand. The animal collapses, and when his lungs become too sedated to inflate, he stops breathing.

The killings begin shortly after 10 am on a Wednesday in early October; by 10:32 the shelter is down about a dozen cc's of pentobarbital, and 20 cats are dead.

**Larry Tucker:** We had a lot of employees in upper management that were entrenched in maintaining the status quo. They were not open to new suggestions.

**Mike Martinez:** We literally had a policy that said every few days, animals that had been here X amount of days get euthanized. Yet we had 20 and 30 open kennels and cage spaces.

**Larry Tucker:** We ran into all the typical excuses as to why they couldn't change, why they had to do it the same way over and over.

**Narrator:** Reforming Austin's shelter system would require No Kill advocates to fight back. Instead of helping them, the large national animal protection organizations—most notably an ASPCA no longer beholden to the vision of Henry Bergh—fought against them. But animal lovers intent on reform were unwilling to back down.

**Mike Martinez:** We had a night drop box. You could drop off a dog at night while nobody was there. So Helen was dropped off. Under our policies that existed at that time, she was defined as "unadoptable." Who's going to go and adopt a dog that has nine puppies in her belly? So she was put on the kill list.

**Ryan Clinton:** What it takes is a commitment, you have to draw the line in the sand.

**Narrator:** Refusing to accept the killing, refusing to take no for an answer, and holding elected officials accountable, reformers waged a political and media campaign. Helping to elect pro-No Kill candidates to the City Council, the reformers eventually prevailed. The shelter's director was reassigned and the City Council voted unanimously to embrace the No Kill Equation.

**Mike Martinez:** And it was that moment that something changed.

**Ryan Clinton:** It was light day and night.

**Mike Martinez:** Austin Pets Alive, they took Helen, found her a foster home, she had nine puppies and then they adopted all of her puppies. We adopted Chucho, the last one and two weeks later Helen was adopted by a family. There are 10

life companions in somebody's home right now that would not be there had it not been for something thinking outside the box and thinking a little bit differently about how we do things.

**Nathan Winograd:** Communities across the country have proved that there is enough love and compassion among the American public to overcome the irresponsibility of the few and to save all the lives at risk.

**Mike Fry:** By engaging our community to support animals, by reaching out to the community, people want to help animals.

**Narrator:** There is now a solution to shelter killing and it is not difficult, expensive, or beyond practical means to achieve. With a generous, compassionate, animal-loving American public ready and willing to help end the killing, only one thing stands in the way of doing so: a deeply troubled and dysfunctional animal protection movement that undermines the effort at every turn.

When the early founders of the movement died and their organizations took over the job of killing those they had been formed to protect, a fiery zeal was replaced with a smoldering ember that gave little light or warmth and the humane movement went to sleep. But after over 100 years, it is finally waking up.

**Mike Fry:** All the old excuses, all the old stories are falling by the wayside.

**Narrator:** Three out of four people believe it should be illegal to kill animals in shelters if those animals are not suffering.

**Dog Lover:** It's a crime. It's just a crime to let these poor critters be killed.

**Narrator:** No Kill is on the agenda of shelters nationwide. It is being debated in legislatures across the country. And there are now hundreds of cities and towns across America which have achieved save rates between 90 percent and as high as 99 percent, working in earnest to return the term "euthanasia" to its dictionary definition: "the act or practice of killing hopelessly sick or injured individual animals in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy." The tide is turning.

**Mike Fry:** When animal loving people find out how shelters are operating and that there is an alternative, there's only one way they are going to be able to go: they are going to have to stop killing.

**Larry Tucker:** I think it's really, the opposition is starting to realize that it is possible anywhere.

**Ryan Clinton:** I always thought it would be possible.

**Mike Martinez:** And you know, our lives are forever changed.

**Nathan Winograd:** When we tell people that there is actually a compassionate, life-affirming option that doesn't involve killing animals and it is a revolution that is sweeping across the country, we have every single one of them willing to follow us into that more compassionate future.

**Bonney Brown:** There is great public pressure to save the homeless dogs and cats and I think it is inevitable that every shelter will be a No Kill shelter and that will be the norm.

**Mitch Schneider:** People from all over the country, other cities, agencies, are contacting us on a regular basis wanting to know how they, too, can have what we have.

**Larry Tucker:** This is an unstoppable freight train that's moving across the country.

**Mike Martinez:** When you accomplish it, everybody wants to be on board; everybody jumps on that train.

**Nathan Winograd:** As more and more communities end the killing of animals now and forever, people in other communities are starting to ask the question, what is plan B?

**Bob Wise:** It was like the sun was behind the clouds for years and it came out.

