

CREATING A NO-KILL COMMUNITY IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

**Report to Maddie's Fund
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Presented by:

BERKELEY ALLIANCE FOR HOMELESS ANIMALS COALITION

**Berkeley Animal Care Services
Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society
Home at Last Rescue**

DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS

Berkeley Animal Care Services

The City of Berkeley's Animal Care Services (BACS) is a division of the Office of the City Manager. We provide a wide range of services to our cities' residents and their pets. We provide field services, seven days a week, to the cities of Berkeley and Albany. These services include the enforcement of city ordinances related to animals, removal of killed or injured wildlife, impoundment of stray pets, and investigation of animal-related neglect, cruelty, nuisance and bite cases. At our shelter, we house domestic animals from the cities of Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville, and Piedmont. We provide not only a safe haven for these homeless pets, but also adoption services, advice on animal-related topics, lost and found pet reports, and free or low-cost spay/neuter vouchers for Berkeley residents' dogs and cats.

Adoptions

Several species are available for adoption at BACS: dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, and rodents. All cats and dogs adopted from the shelter are neutered or spayed before going home as a new pet. Once adoption papers have been completed for a cat or dog, BACS transports the cat or dog to a veterinarian. The adopters pick up their new pet at the veterinarian after surgery. The cost for this procedure is included in the adoption price.

Spay/Neuter Your Pet (SNYP)

Berkeley's Low-Cost Spay & Neuter Voucher Program

There are six participating veterinarians (including the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society) working with the SNYP voucher program. Eligible individuals make an appointment with a participating clinic and take the appointment information to BACS to pick up their voucher. Vouchers are \$15.00 for cats and \$25.00 for dogs. Upon request, vouchers are free of charge for animals belonging to low-income, disabled, and senior residents, and for bully breeds, Rottweilers, and chow chows.

Volunteers

Volunteers work in the following areas:

Dog Friend - Dogs are always grateful for a walk or game of ball. Dog Volunteers provide exercise, practice walking on-leash and off-leash, and play-time to available dogs and puppies. Volunteers also learn how to socialize the dogs and promote good behavior, making them more adoptable.

Cat Friend - Petting and playing with BACS cats greatly relieves the stress and confusion of shelter life. A scared or shy cat will often blossom with a little attention. Cat Volunteers have the opportunity to offer care and affection to adoptable cats and kittens.

Community Events - Promoting BACS services in the community brings new adopters, volunteers and donors to the shelter. Community Events Volunteers help to plan and participate in special events such as festivals, fairs and fundraising events.

Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society

In 1927, three citizens who had concern for homeless animals in Alameda County formed the “Animal Rescue Haven” and converted a building into kennels. Over the years, the group broadened its range of services to include humane education and animal control, and was instrumental in getting legislation passed to prohibit dog racing, bull fighting and the sale of live Easter pets.

In 1957, the Animal Rescue Haven was renamed the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society; further building expansion took place, including the addition of a hospital. In the 1970’s the organization declared a “no-kill” mission, allowing adoptable animals more time to find homes.

BEBHS serves a large community in Berkeley and the East Bay region. The range of services we offer provides many areas of support to both current and prospective pet owners, as well as special programs for children, low-income individuals, and seniors. The following services are provided to the Berkeley-East Bay community:

- **Adoption Center:** Our shelter guests receive specialized attention including three walks a day for dogs and socialization for cats, which includes hand-feeding, grooming, and assistance with behavior issues.
- **Veterinary Hospital:** Our on-site hospital provides our shelter guests with continuous medical oversight and care during their stay. The hospital is also open to the public and serves approximately 3,000 clients per year.
- **Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Clinic:** Every Tuesday, the BEBHS veterinary hospital provides low-cost spay and neuter surgeries including additional reduced pricing to those clients with financial hardship. Feral cat spay/neuters are free.
- **Community Outreach Programs:** Several important services are provided to strengthen the human-animal bond between people and their pets, including PAWS/East Bay, Pet Loss Support Group and monthly lecture and workshops.
- **Mobile Outreach:** Our weekly mobile outreach unit brings animals and the public together in locations around our community so that more animals may find loving homes.
- **Training Classes:** Our comprehensive training program is based on positive reinforcement methods.
- **Behavior Program:** Staff behaviorists work with shelter dogs needing socialization to make them more adoptable, and consult privately with current pet owners needing help to keep themselves and their animals safe.
- **Humane Education:** Our Humane Education Department offers programs promoting the humane treatment of animals to classrooms, libraries, and after-school programs.

Home At Last Rescue (HAL)

Home At Last Animal Rescue (HAL) was incorporated in 1999 specifically to reduce the high kill-rate for dogs and cats in the Berkeley area and especially at Berkeley Animal Control Services (BACS).

Home At Last is the primary rescue group transferring animals from BACS into foster homes and promoting their adoptions. HAL has a contract with the City of Berkeley. For the years 2006-2009, HAL has agreed to pull between 200-250 animals per year from BACS, especially kittens and dogs that will be difficult to adopt. Quarterly reports are provided to BACS that give detailed information on number of animals rescued, fostered, and adopted along with financial information and mortality statistics. HAL has been instrumental in lowering the euthanasia rate in the Berkeley municipal shelter to a level where no adoptable animals are euthanized.

HAL uses multiple strategies to find loving and responsible homes for its animals: a community of volunteers provide foster homes as short term relief with socialization, training, and health care as needed; a lively website with photographs and biographies of adoptable animals (www.homeatlastrescue.org); postings are also made on Craigs List and other websites; mobile adoption events are held weekly at Berkeley's busy 4th Street shopping area and other locations; and, of course, through word-of-mouth. Appointments are made for adopters to view HAL cats, kittens, and dogs in their foster-homes or HAL will bring the animal to an adopter anywhere in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In addition to healthy and friendly animals, HAL has rescued many dogs and cats with special needs that require some extra attention, including many that are in need of extra socialization and cats that are FIV-positive but asymptomatic. There are also some older cats, almost all of them abandoned by their previous owners, who need loving humans to care for them in their twilight years.

All animals handled by HAL are spayed/neutered before they are adopted.

ACHIEVING A NO-KILL COMMUNITY

The Berkeley community achieved no-kill status in 2002. There were many different actions taken which allowed us to achieve this goal. This section outlines the activities of the three organizations that led to this unique accomplishment for Berkeley.

In the 1970's, the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society (BEBHS) made the public announcement of a no-kill policy for their shelter. BEBHS was the first East Bay shelter to make this commitment to animals. The commitment at that time, however, was only to animals at BEBHS and did not cover the broader community.

In 1997, the City of Berkeley made the controversial, yet progressive, decision to have their Animal Services Department stop trapping wildlife and to discontinue aid in the trapping or killing of wild animals. This single act freed up considerable resources for Berkeley Animal Care Services (BACS) to begin saving the lives of more dogs, cats and other small pets in their service area of Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville and Piedmont.

Home At Last formalized their operations in 1999 and began actively transferring animals from BACS in 2001 with a small amount of financial support from the City of Berkeley. In the same year, the City transferred BACS from the Police Department to the City Manager's Office and hired a civilian director.

Supporting Activities:

Visibility

By 2002, all three agencies were becoming more visible in the community through events promoting the concept of animal adoptions as well as operating mobile adoption sites throughout Berkeley and the surrounding area. BACS, HAL, and BEBHS all had an increase in adoptions during 2001 to 2002. The number of animals adopted continued to rise until recently, when the number of dogs and cats entering shelters in our coalition's community began to decline. Adoption rates have continued to increase.

With the continuing expansion of the internet, all three organizations have taken advantage of creating websites that display photographs of animals available for adoption with short descriptions of each one. There are also several other websites made available for free to agencies in order to highlight their adoptable animals. Agency newsletters promote community involvement and volunteerism, and tell compelling success stories to encourage adoption from shelters and rescue groups. Short features on adoptable animals are also included in local newspapers and on local television stations.

Spay/Neuter

The decrease in the dog population entering the shelter system is attributed primarily to an aggressive spay/neuter effort by both BACS and BEBHS. Since 2000, BACS has operated the SNYP program, which subsidizes spay/neuter surgery at participating veterinarians, including BEBHS, at low cost or no cost to the pet owner. In 2005, the

BEBHS veterinary hospital began operating its own very low-cost spay/neuter clinic for local residents.

Euthanasia Policy

BACS developed a euthanasia policy with strict and specific guidelines for determining which animals will be euthanized. This policy greatly restricted the number of animals euthanized by requiring extensive consideration of the animals' conditions.

BEBHS and HAL are also committed to a very strict policy that requires extensive consideration prior to euthanasia. At BEBHS, several staff including animal behaviorists and our medical director meet to discuss possible options other than euthanasia. It is HAL's policy to have the Board of Directors explore all options before an animal is euthanized.

Partnerships

The cat population has not decreased as significantly as the dog population in our community, but there have been some noticeable declines in feral cats due to the collaboration between Fix Our Ferals, BACS, and BEBHS. Through a contract between BACS and Fix Our Ferals, volunteers trap/neuter/release feral cats for free and they loan humane traps to local residents so that they can also help with the program. Fix Our Ferals also maintains a Feral Cat Hotline to help Berkeley residents with feral cat issues. Fix Our Ferals helps to transfer feral cats from BACS back into the community, allowing more cat kennel space for adoptable cats.

BEBHS offers free spay/neuter to cats trapped through the Fix Our Ferals program. In 2006, BACS, BEBHS, and Fix Our Ferals began a "Winter Campaign for Cats" that brought volunteers from all three organizations together to trap ferals, have them spayed/neutered at BEBHS, and release them back into their colonies. The result has been a significant reduction in the number of feral cats in the community and in the shelters, and a marked decline in the number of wild-born kitten entering the shelter system each spring.

BACS also works through a contract with BAD RAP (Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pitbulls), who help to train and prepare pitbulls for adoption.

Prevention

Preventing animals from entering into shelters is just as important as moving them out as quickly as possible. All cats and dogs are microchipped prior to being adopted from BACS, HAL, and BEBHS, helping lost animals return home more quickly rather than taking up space in shelters.

Training programs at BACS and BEBHS help dog guardians to work on difficult issues with their dogs to prevent them from surrendering their dogs to a shelter. Enhanced adoption support, counseling, and advice on behavioral issues help ensure a low return rate for adopted animals.

Community education programs provided by all three organizations help owners understand their pets better and offer valuable resources to ensure a long happy life together. Increasing public awareness about pet care, spay/neuter, and resources available to them decreases the number of animals that end up in our shelters.

Resources

A no-kill community would not be possible without the hundreds of volunteers who work tirelessly to help the animals at HAL, BACS, and BEBHS. Volunteers foster animals awaiting permanent homes, work with animals in the shelters to increase adoptability, facilitate the adoption process, raise funds and promote public awareness, train newly-recruited volunteers, and help with the vast amounts of record keeping so crucial to the long-term success of our programs. Our location in a university town awards us with a very large source of volunteers.

Interactions and support from other organizations in surrounding communities has helped improve programs in this coalition.

SUSTAINING A NO-KILL COMMUNITY

All three organizations in this coalition are continuing to offer and/or expand the programs that allow us to ensure a no-kill community. BACS, BEBHS, and HAL are continually expanding their volunteer base, actively seeking new ways to promote adoptions and garner support for their organizations.

BACS will be building a new shelter, which will allow for better disease prevention with better isolation facilities, more space to exercise/socialize and retain animals, and more space for HAL to provide their assistance and support to animals at BACS.

The Fix Our Ferals' Winter Campaign is being expanded into a wider geographic area each year in order to further reduce the numbers of underage kittens that inadvertently end up in the coalition's shelters.

Forming this coalition will encourage efforts to share resources to enable all three organizations improve and enhance services, such as veterinary care for BACS animals at BEBHS, assistance with dog training, or joint advertising of adoptable animals. As one example, BEBHS and BACS are developing a shelter tour program for school groups, which combines the Humane Education program at BEBHS with access to the shelter facility at BACS.

Expanding our collaboration with other regional and national animal rescue agencies, including breed-specific groups and sanctuaries, will also help improve and sustain the coalition's activities. For example, HAL now has a "barter" program in which hard-to-adopt cats are taken to the Cat House on the Kings sanctuary near Fresno and in exchange HAL accepts some adoptable kittens from Fresno to find homes for in the Bay Area.

HIGHLIGHTING THE NO-KILL COMMUNITY

All three coalition members have openly publicized their no-kill status. BEBHS and HAL include this in their history and clearly state on their websites that they are part of the “no-kill” movement. BEBHS and BACS both publish their annual statistics collected for Maddie’s Fund on their website and BEBHS also publishes this in their newsletter.

If we receive a Maddie’s Fund Lifesaving Award, the coalition will hold a press conference and issue press releases announcing the continued efforts of the coalition members. On-going work with the media will continue after the press conference to ensure that good relationships are developed and maintained with the press.

BACS will work with the City of Berkeley’s Humane Commission to highlight the no-kill community as a unique and special status for this community and their pets. The Humane Commission consists of elected/appointed officials as well as citizens, and these individuals can actively work with other elected/appointed officials to communicate the importance of the no-kill community in Berkeley.

BEBHS and HAL will also expand the descriptions of the organizations on our websites to highlight the collaborations. We may also be able to provide more detailed information to other communities interested in achieving a no-kill status, acting as an informal consulting service.