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By Valerie Richardson

# Going to the Dogs:
# David Duffield's Costly Vision of a "No-Kill" Nation

On the surface, at least, David Duffield bears no resemblance to one of those kindly old souls who leaves his entire estate to a cat. Duffield, founder of PeopleSoft, is a Silicon Valley success story who made his first billion by developing and delivering human-resources management software. His company is known for a laid-back corporate culture that, among other things, bans secretaries and mandates that employees have fun.

But Duffield had a dog once, a loyal miniature schnauzer named Maddie who stood by him in his lean years when he mortgaged his house to launch his business. "She was the lighthouse during the stormy period," he says. Thanks to Maddie, who died in 1997, he's committed a considerable chunk of his $1.9 billion fortune to revolutionizing how the nation?s animal shelters treat stray cats and dogs.

In 1998, he sunk $200 million into Maddie's Fund, a foundation dedicated to the spread of "no-kill" shelters. In the lexicon of animal welfare, a "no-kill" facility is one at which no adoptable animals are euthanized to free up cage space. As described in its funding criteria, the foundation sees as its long-term goal the creation of "no-kill communities and ultimately a no-kill nation.

"It's an ambitious goal. About eight million of the nation's stray dogs and cats are euthanized at shelters annually. But Duffield is clearly serious. The gift's sheer size--it was the third largest of 1998--has already shifted the momentum toward the no-kill movement as animal-welfare organizations jockey for a share of Duffield's largesse.

"It's made a major impact," said Linda Foro, president of Doing Things for Animals, a Long Island-based no-kill advocacy group. "It's speeded up a movement that was already in progress. Before, there was no financial incentive to do no-kill, and it's very hard for these guys to get funding because they tend to know zip about grantmaking. Then Maddie's Fund comes along and says, 'I've got $200 million for people to work together and save animals' lives," she said. "Maddie's Fund has done what needed to be done. The money talks. It has really gotten our attention."

## Pet "Condos"

Whether that attention is deserved is another matter. Those in the animal welfare community are far from unanimous on whether no-kill is the most humane approach to dealing with strays.

Meanwhile, the Alameda, California-based fund has drawn criticism from some Bay Area activists, who say that spending that kind of money on animals in a region struggling with AIDS, homelessness, and other social ills borders on the obscene.

"It makes you look and swallow hard and say, 'Where are our priorities?'" said Claire Rappoport, an AIDS activist who chairs the community advisory board of the University of San Francisco's Community Consortium, an AIDS research group. "In this area, where you have such gaps between rich and poor, where you have thousands of homeless people, to see this as a priority is kind of jarring.

"It's his money," she said, "but it's too bad he didn't try to help humankind."

Then again, this isn't the first time Duffield's philanthropic impulses have come under public scrutiny. In 1998, he raised eyebrows as the primary benefactor behind Maddie's Pet Adoption Center, home of now-infamous "pet condos." Run by the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the facility keeps its cats and dogs not in cages but in comfortable, spacious apartments complete with sofas, rugs, and even television sets as they wait to be adopted.

The center soon became joke fodder for talk-show hosts, but Duffield was undeterred. Shortly after his decision to pursue no-kill, Maddie's Fund hired as its president Richard Avanzino, former president of the SF/SPCA and the nation's foremost no-kill advocate. Thanks largely to his efforts, San Francisco became the first no-kill city in the nation in 1994. It has since been followed by Bozeman, Montana, and Knabb, Utah.

Long regarded as visionary in the animal-welfare movement, Avanzino has undertaken his mission with the no-nonsense single-mindedness of an Oppenheimer racing to build the A-bomb. He's not interested in rewarding well-meaning animal lovers with feel-good grants: he wants results. Anyone seeking one of the fund's multi-million-dollar grants must agree to transform their area into a no-kill community in five years.

"It can't be done overnight, but it can be done in five years," said Avanzino. "If it can't be done in five years, then we're not willing to fund that community."

## Strings Attached

The grants also come with some lengthy strings attached. Before the first check goes out, the grantee must put together a coalition of every private and public animal-welfare facility in the area to work toward no-kill, a daunting task in a field where many shelters have wobbly finances and live on their latest grant, and where turf is jealously guarded.

"The organizations in the community must work together. That may sound easy, but it's the hardest part," said Merritt Clifton, editor of Animal People newspaper. "Lots of these guys are cutting each other's throats. But now Maddie's is saying, 'If you guys can get along with each other, you can get a million bucks,' and it's amazing how it's lowered the acrimony in the field."

The grantee must also report to Maddie's Fund every month and meet targets showing an increase in spaying and neutering and a reduction in animal deaths. No government or international agencies need apply, and the fund is interested only in shelters that handle dogs and cats, not rabbits or other pets.

Not every organization is equipped to meet Maddie's high standards: Since Avanzino took over in January 1999, many have applied but few--just two, in fact--have been approved for multi-year grants. The first was a coalition in Contra Costa County, California, headed by baseball manager Tony LaRussa's Animal Rescue Foundation, which is slated to receive $3 million over five years. The second went to the California Veterinary Medical Association's Feral Fix program.

Avanzino is sensitive to complaints that the Duffield fortune could be better spent on other causes. When the pet condos created a backlash among San Francisco's homeless, he invited them to stay overnight with the animals. But many homeless were offended by the offer, insulted by the thought of being the guests of dogs and cats, so Avanzino withdrew it. Instead, the SF/SPCA now offers free spaying, neutering, and medical care to the pets of homeless people.

As for complaints that the money should help humans, Avanzino points out that animal welfare is among the most sparsely funded areas in philanthropy. According to the Foundation Center, gifts to the joint category of "environment and animals" have totaled about 5 percent of all grants in recent years, with environmental causes receiving six times more funding than animals.

Even within the animal category, just 13 percent is dedicated to animal welfare, with the lion's share going to zoological programs and wildlife preservation.

"Something like $157 billion was spent on charity last year, and I'd be amazed if more than $1 billion was spent on animals," said Avanzino. "In our industry, $200 million is a huge amount of money, but in relation to what's spent on philanthropy in general, it's minuscule."

### Adopting a 100-Pound Rottweiler

Maddie's Fund has also faced criticism from other animal-welfare proponents for its promotion of the no-kill philosophy. Several organizations, notably the Humane Society and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, argue that for some animals, a quick, merciful death is a kinder fate than life in a cage with little prospect for adoption.

The term "no-kill" doesn't exactly mean that no animals are ever killed. In no-kill communities, those animals that are too infirm, sick, crippled, or temperamental to be adopted may be destroyed, but by the city animal control, not no-kill shelters. As a result, no-kill facilities tend to give the rest a bad name, said Carl Friedman, director of the San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control.

"The good guy can pick and choose. The bad guy, usually a municipal agency, has to take animals in whatever condition they arrive," said Mr. Friedman, who has reservations about no-kill even though he helped Avanzino draw up the city's pact. "It sends a message that the problem can be solved when it can't."

Adhering to the no-kill ideal can also be expensive. No-kill shelters like the SF/SPCA, for example, refuse to destroy "recoverable" animals, those that are wounded but can be successfully treated. As a result, the society's case studies show badly injured cats and dogs receiving extensive medical treatment and even therapy for bad habits, leaving critics to ask whether the thousands spent to rehabilitate one animal couldn't be better invested in the spaying and neutering of dozens more.

"The problem is, a 100-pound rottweiler is hard to adopt," said Mr. Friedman. "But [a no-kill shelter] has to take it, train it, spend lots of money and resources on it. Not that that's not a good thing--but if you could have saved ten others with that money, I think that's better."

Despite his qualms, Mr. Friedman says he supports no-kill's general thrust. Before the movement began to take hold in the 1970s, say animal advocates, most shelters were more concerned about how to destroy animals painlessly and inexpensively. Now, the emphasis is increasingly on how to find them homes.

Where no-kill shelters have taken root, animal deaths have dropped. San Francisco euthanized about 20,000 animals per year before the advent of no kill; now, the city puts to sleep just 2,000.

"The kill/no-kill controversy is the best thing that ever happened to our field," said Mr. Friedman. "Instead of trying to figure out better ways to kill, we're asking why we have to kill. Rich has started a movement, and who knows where it will go. But one thing he's established already is that killing animals is passe."

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