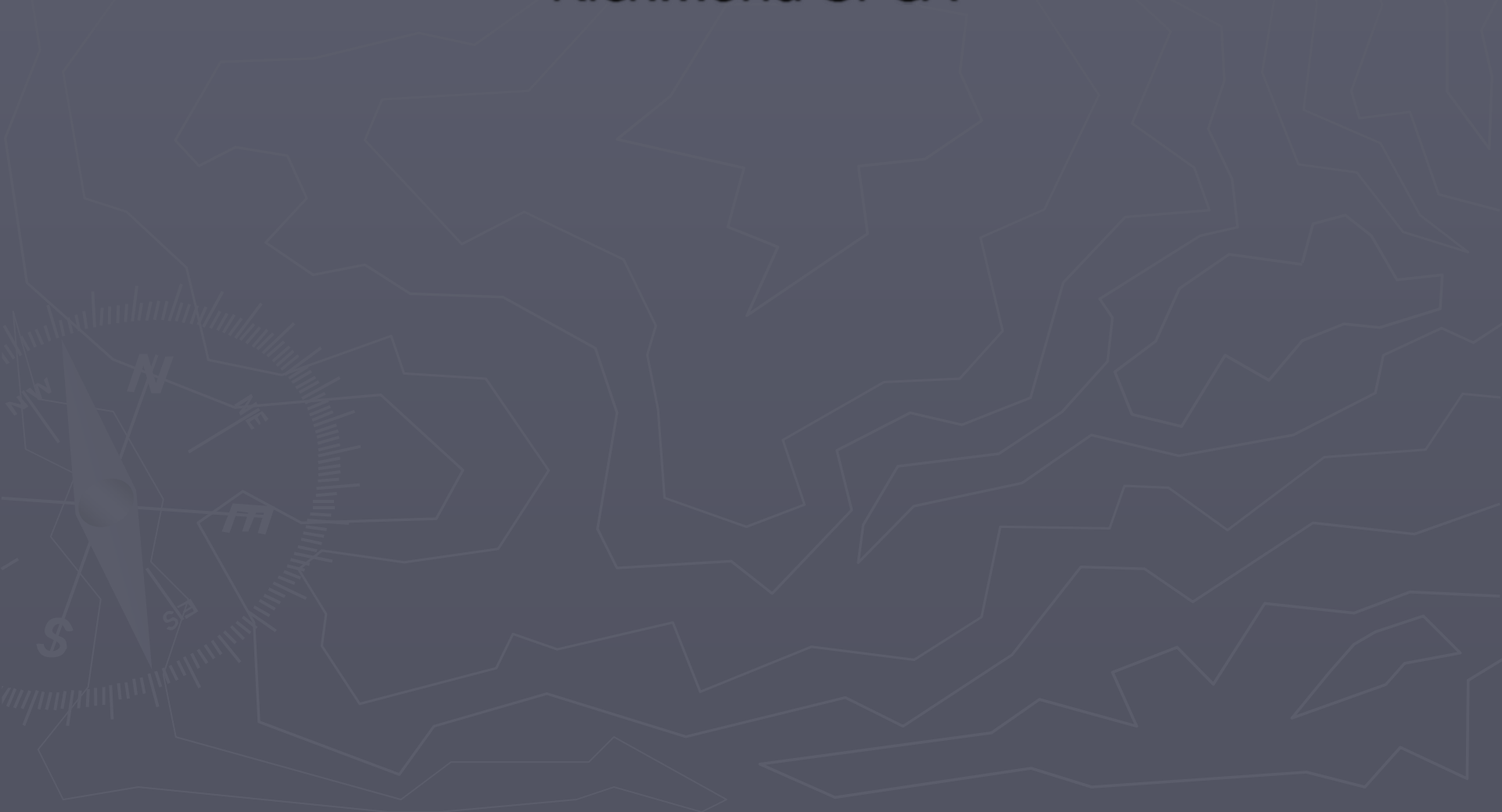


Making the Move to Adoption Guarantee: Transforming Resistance into Support

Robin Robertson Starr, CEO
Richmond SPCA



Why embrace adoption guarantee for your organization and your community?

- ▶ Because it saves lives.
- ▶ Because it is the future of our field.

An essential prerequisite: Getting the Board's Buy In

► Strategic Planning is essential:

- Allow enough time for them to research and learn
- Choose committee members who are open to change and have courage
- Have an uninvolved and preferably professional facilitator
- Set a tone of willingness to examine and challenge old notions.
- Keep bringing the rest of the Board members along with regular reports
- If you are the CEO or ED, be sure that you allow your supportive Board members to carry the ball rather than you.
- You must be able to accept that this presents risks for you and the organization.
- This process is not for the faint of heart.

Get your votes for the new plan lined up ahead of time.

- ▶ Understand that 100% support from your Board is not likely. Get supporting board members comfortable with that.
- ▶ Be respectful but do not give in to continuing the status quo. Be persistent.

Once your Board has adopted a new plan for the future:

Move swiftly to:

- ▶ First, present the news to your staff, donors and volunteers before they hear it from elsewhere.
- ▶ Get the support of other respected people and organizations quietly.
- ▶ Consider carefully how to present this to the public – distill messages.
- ▶ Have people lined up to write supportive letters to the editor, etc.
- ▶ Understand that the community will need time to embrace this new way – have patience but do not delay making needed changes .
- ▶ You should have a single spokesperson and no one else talks publicly!

Your philosophy should be clear to you and to your community and you must be true to it.

► The Philosophy of the Richmond SPCA:

- We are committed to creating a no kill community.
- We will take no more animals than we can responsibly care for without euthanizing any that are healthy or treatable.
- We will provide our community with the programs and services it needs to end the loss of life of healthy and treatable animals.
- We will not participate in or facilitate their reliance on lethal methods of pet population control.
- We believe that every private organization has the right to determine what role and how extensive a role it plays.

If yours will be an adoption guarantee shelter:

- ▶ Your spokesperson must be able to:
 - Clearly and succinctly explain why having a private adoption guarantee shelter that limits admissions is crucial and why the new approach will save lives.
 - Keep repeating:
 - ▶ that euthanizing animals is not an obligation of any private organization,
 - ▶ that this plan will ultimately end the loss of life of healthy and treatable animals community wide,
 - ▶ that the plan will not increase the burden on other agencies – there is much empirical evidence that refutes that notion and none to support it,
 - ▶ that the assumption that there always must be just as many animals to kill is unfounded.

Dealing with Staff Resistance

- Understand that most people resist change.
- Recognize that they may see this as a commentary that what they did in the past was wrong.
- Help them to understand why this will save more lives and make clear that you do not think what they did before was bad or wrong.
- Give them a reasonable period of time to embrace the change.
- **Here is The Hard Part:** After a reasonable time and effort, you must make clear that the Board determines the vision and the direction of the organization and they must support and embrace it or leave.

Seek out partnerships with any other groups you can work with.

- ▶ Most valuable of all are public/private partnerships – ours with Richmond Animal Care & Control and Hanover Animal Control have been essential to our success.
- ▶ To work with others you do not need to agree with them, nor they with you, but you do need to be able to treat each other respectfully. If others cannot do that, just leave them alone.
- ▶ Report statistics collectively so there are no bad guys.

Understand that there will be those who will continue to
harass you forever – learn to ignore them.
Do NOT engage with them.



Share every success with the
community and make them feel a
part of what you are accomplishing.



Provide accessible statistics and performance updates on your website – see handout for ours.



**Richmond Combined Statistics:
Our Partnership was agreed to in 2001 and began in operation
at the beginning of 2002.**

2001 Calendar Year – The Baseline Year

Richmond SPCA			RACC		
Total Intake	4287		Total Intake	3782	
Intake from RACC	38		Transfers to RSPCA	38	
Other Intake	4249		Other Live Releases	1247	
Live Releases	3255	76%	Total Live Releases	1285	34%
Total Euthanized	887	21%	Total Euthanized	2336	62%

Combined

Intakes	8069	
Live Releases	4540	56%
Euthanized	3223	40%

First year of New Model: yielded improved results for both organizations

2002 Calendar Year

Richmond SPCA

Total Intake	2504	
Intake from RACC	660	
Other Intake	1844	
Live Releases	2247	90%
Total Euthanized	167	7%

RACC

Total Intake	4034	
Transfers to RSPCA	660	
Other Live Releases	1183	
Total Live Releases	1843	46%
Total Euthanized	1717	43%

Combined

Intakes	6538	
Live Releases	4090	63%
Euthanized	1884	29%

2006 was our first full year of no healthy homeless animal dying anywhere in Richmond.

2006 Calendar Year

Richmond SPCA

Total Intake	3426	
Intake from RACC	851	
Other Intake	2575	
Live Releases	3344	98%
Total Euthanized	33	1%

RACC

Total Intake	4234	
Transfers to RSPCA	851	
Other Live Releases	1750	
Total Live Releases	2601	61%
Total Euthanized	1581	37%

Combined

Intakes	7660	
Live Releases	5945	78%
Euthanized	1614	21%

And, last year, we achieved a CITYWIDE euthanasia rate of less than 20%.

2008 Calendar Year

Richmond SPCA

Total Intake	3007	
Intake from RACC	928	
Other Intake	2079	
Live Releases	2917	97%
Total Euthanized	23	<1%

RACC

Total Intake	4574	
Transfers to RSPCA	928	
Other Live Releases	1975	
Total Live Releases	2903	63%
Total Euthanized	1435	31%

Combined

Intakes	7581	
Live Releases	5820	77%
Euthanized	1458	19%

Final Thoughts

- ▶ Transitioning to Adoption Guarantee is challenging but the lives it will save will be your reward.
- ▶ Success is all about tenacity. Just keep on despite resistance.
- ▶ Conduct yourself with dignity.
- ▶ Never attack your detractors; ignore them – your ultimate success will silence them.
- ▶ Be inspirational – never underestimate the value of inspiration.