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Letter from Maddie's Fund



Dear Animal Advocate,

Transparency in shelter operations is something Maddie's Fund is very vocal about. In this month's editorial, Rich Avanzino lays out the reasons why transparency is so important.

This issue also features innovative feral cat programs that have long been active in the San Francisco Bay Area. To build upon such efforts, Maddie's Fund is initiating a new pilot feral cat project with the University of Florida's Julie Levy, DVM. The research project will attempt to prove that focusing an intensive TNR campaign in an area with historically high admission rates of cats to the animal shelter will result in a decrease of cat admissions from that area over time.

Lastly, PAWS Chicago provides an update on the Lurie Spay/Neuter Clinic. The 2005 data serves as a positive footnote to a lengthy article that first appeared in the Maddie's Fund newsletter last September.

Those of you working on grant applications might also want to check out our recently updated materials and to see if you qualify for a starter grant.



The Pet Rescue Foundation

Best regards,
The Maddie's Fund Team



Features

Why Transparency?

by Rich Avanzino

Transparency is one of the cornerstones of the Maddie's Fund philosophy.

Although transparency in the non-profit world generally refers to financial information, when Maddie's Fund talks about transparency, we are referring to shelter data. Transparency to us means tracking and publicly reporting the outcome of every live dog or cat who crosses the shelter threshold.

To achieve transparency, I think shelters should start by collecting and publishing the kind of information contained in the Asilomar Accords [Animal Statistics Table](#). By publish, I don't mean share internally with staff, I mean promote on websites and in newsletters so the whole world can see what you're doing.

Many shelters say they don't want to publish their statistics because the organization will look bad. If an agency fears looking bad, something is going on -- perhaps it's not getting enough funding to do the job well, or it's not properly supported by other animal welfare groups or the community. But if the organization isn't getting the resources or backing it needs and large numbers of dogs and cats are dying as a result, shouldn't the public know that? Don't we owe it to the animals to tell the community what's happening in the shelter system, especially in public animal control facilities?

Not only does the public have the right to know what's going on, but once the information is exposed, there is greater opportunity for solutions to be found to reduce the killing. If the community doesn't know what's happening, it can't help.

There was a huge flap in San Antonio awhile back when the local newspaper revealed a 91% euthanasia rate at Animal Care Services. Angry and embarrassed at their city being labeled one of the worst in the nation for animals, politicians and government officials took immediate action. Among other things, the city bolstered its resource commitment to the animals with a \$900,000 budget increase for 2006, and then invited animal welfare groups to participate in the lifesaving effort. As a result, impounds have gone down, adoptions have gone up, and euthanasia has dropped to 82%.

While some shelters worry that publishing statistics will tarnish their image, other shelters and communities that are leading the way in lifesaving aren't publishing their statistics either. Isn't it time for the leaders of our movement to step forward and set an example? By publishing good statistics, they will spur lifesaving efforts nationwide as shelters across the country strive to reach the bar they have established.

In my opinion, real transparency means *no fudging allowed*. If an organization saved all of its healthy animals except for 25 friendly, healthy pit bulls that were killed because of a local mandate, those animals have to be accounted for and listed as healthy deaths. They can be asterisked (e.g., "the Humane Society saved all of its healthy shelter dogs and cats except for 25 pit bulls who were killed because of a local ordinance prohibiting



pit bull placement"). But the organization has to be transparent and account for those deaths.

Another situation that tends to go unreported is owner/guardian requested euthanasia. It's not uncommon for shelters to euthanize animals at a guardian's request then exclude them from overall shelter intakes and deaths. In other words, the animals simply don't show up in public records. I expressed my opinion on this topic a few months ago in one of my editorials.

Rather than fearing or fighting transparency, animal welfare organizations should embrace it.

When an organization is forthcoming and demonstrates it has nothing to hide, its vulnerability to exposés and allegations is substantially reduced.

If there *is* a problem, the best way to address it is to talk about it. Cover-ups cause people to lose faith and question an organization's honesty. Refusals to disclose information only make people assume the worst.

Transparency is a big plus even if an organization is less than perfect, because it allows the community to monitor improvement. Going back to San Antonio, 82% euthanasia is not good, but at least the public can see the agency moving in the right direction.

When the public can see that an agency is saving an increasing number of dog and cat lives, it enhances the organization's reputation, which builds community trust, which increases financial support, which saves even more lives -- and the positive momentum keeps building for the animals.



Features

Feral Cat Advocacy & New Efforts to Document Its Impact

Feral Cat Advocacy: Deep Roots Continue to Spread in the Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area has a long and proud history of feral cat advocacy that continues to this day.

In the feral cat dark ages, The San Francisco SPCA was among the nation's first humane societies to champion feral cats, and, with the help of a dedicated corps of passionate volunteers, implement comprehensive programs on their behalf. The SF/SPCA started its Feral Fix Program in 1993, offering free vaccinations and spay/neuter surgeries, no strings attached, no questions asked, for any feral cat in the city. Skilled feral cat volunteers mobilized into Cat Assistance Teams (CAT Teams) to humanely trap the ferals, transport them to Feral Fix, provide post-surgery recovery care, socialize feral kittens and find them loving homes. CAT members also traveled to feral cat hotspots around the City to provide expert advice and assistance to new caregivers or to intervene with upset citizens. These efforts were supported by superbly crafted *white papers* and magazine articles asserting the merits of Trap Neuter and Return (TNR) policies and proclaiming the right of feral cats to live their lives freely among the two-legged residents of San Francisco.

Thirty miles south of San Francisco, another group of advocates at Stanford University came forward to save feral cats.

Faculty and students formed the Stanford Cat Network in 1989 to stop a "round up and kill" program aimed at the growing population of homeless cats on campus. The Network's TNR alternative won the day, and the group's commitment to on-going care and spay/neuter, feeding and adoption programs for free roaming cats on campus assured the cat's future protection.

Fast forward to Foster City, California, 2004. In what could be an unprecedented show of solidarity among traditionally hostile organizations, a coalition consisting of the Homeless Cat Network, the Sequoia Audubon Society and the City of Foster City joined forces to form Project Bay Cat to reduce the feral population and protect the birds along Foster City's Bay Trail. (The Foster City shoreline is part of the Pacific Flyway, a route used by migratory birds in spring and fall. It also includes areas inhabited by the endangered California Clapper Rail.)

When Project Bay Cat began, 170 feral cats were living along the sensitive walking trail. The Homeless Cat Network mustered its volunteers to undertake an intensive TNR program while two local private veterinary hospitals, San Mateo Animal Hospital and Crystal Springs Pet Hospital, provided vaccinations and spay/neuter surgeries.



At the same time, ten feeding stations were established to keep the cats well-fed and well-away from avian nesting sights.

Informational signs were posted along the trail to inform the community about Project Bay Cat, remind trail walkers about pet abandonment laws and enlist their cooperation in reporting any suspicious activities.

Two years later, Operation Bay Cat can proudly point to impressive results:

- 92% of the cats living along the trail have been spayed or neutered (only nine remain unaltered).
- The cat population along the trail declined to 129 cats, a reduction of 30%.
- Over 60 kittens and friendly adult cats have been placed in loving homes.
- The California Clapper Rail is thriving.

Volunteers will continue to feed and monitor the cats and try to sterilize the remaining nine animals.

(For more information about Project Bay Cat and a step by step tool kit, e-mail info@homelesscatnetwork.com.)

Santa Clara County, California, better known as Silicon Valley, has its own Cat Coalition in full swing.

Nearly 80% of the animals euthanized in Santa Clara shelters are cats, and the majority of them are either feral or too young to be adopted. Comprised of seven organizations, (the Humane Society Silicon Valley, San Jose Animal Care & Services, Stanford Cat Network, Silicon Valley Friends of Ferals, Town Cats, Silicon Valley Animal Control Authority and Peninsula Fix our Ferals), the Santa Clara Cat Coalition aims to radically reduce the intake and euthanasia of unowned or feral cats at animal shelters through a public awareness campaign and targeted TNR programs.

Jon Cicirelli, Director of San Jose Animal Care & Services, has been laying the groundwork for some time. "Over the past two years, we've been evaluating stray cat intake and have broken it down by zip codes; we've pinpointed the zip codes where most of the cats are coming from—the most prolific one was responsible for 1,000 cats in one year. We can even identify particular neighborhoods. This year, we'll target specific apartment and mobile home complexes in high-volume neighborhoods and approach the managers and owners with the hope that they'll work with us. We'll conduct feral cat classes for residents where we'll explain the problem and the TNR approach, then teach them how to trap (we'll provide the traps). We're hoping to get one or two people within each complex who will support the program long term. Cat rescuers who already manage a colony will act as a liaison for each complex. We'll also try to pull in service groups like Boy Scouts to help trap cats. And we'll distribute flyers in our lobby and to the public to recruit others to get involved."

Spay/neuter surgeries will primarily be performed at Animal Care & Service's newly opened spay/neuter clinic.



In the meantime, the Humane Society Silicon Valley has produced a 30-minute documentary on homeless cats. The film will be shown at Town Hall meetings around the county this summer to generate public participation and support for TNR programs.

Enlightened public officials have given the Coalition added weight. In March, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution declaring 2006 "The Year of the Homeless Cat" and officially recognized TNR as the best method for managing homeless cat colonies. The Board also approved an additional \$25,000 (on top of the \$65,000 it currently provides) to subsidize homeless cat surgeries.

Maddie's Outdoor Cat Program: Documenting the Effects of TNR

Despite two decades of growth of trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs, no data exists to document the effect of TNR on shelter admissions. Julie Levy and a team of researchers from the University of Florida are setting out to assess feral cat sterilization projects as a method for reducing the homeless cat population and the resulting burden on animal control facilities, and Alachua County, Florida will be their testing ground.

Alachua County is a mostly suburban/rural community in North Central Florida. In many respects, its demographics are typical of the South, with approximately 26% minority population and county-wide income that is below the national average. The county is also unique in that it houses the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College, a combined total of 53,000 college students (or 1/4 of the county's 223,000 residents).

For many years, the rate of admission of cats and dogs to the county animal shelter greatly exceeded the national average, and most of these animals were ultimately euthanized. Several community programs were established to address this problem, primarily by increasing adoptions and sterilizations. Maddie's® Pet Rescue Project focuses on adoptions, Maddie's® Spay/Neuter Program funds free sterilization of pets in Medicaid families, No More Homeless Pets funds free sterilization of pets in other low-income families, and Operation Catnip provides free sterilization of stray and feral cats.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, more dogs were admitted and euthanized than cats each year. Although dogs are still admitted more frequently than cats, the canine save rate is higher, such that fewer dogs are now being euthanized than cats. A total of 2,184 dogs were euthanized in 2004, whereas 2,659 cats were euthanized. The continued imbalance between cat reproduction and availability of homes for cats leads to the euthanasia of 66% of all cats that enter the shelter, compared to only 44% of all dogs.

Twelve percent of Alachua County households feed cats they do not consider their own. This amounts to an estimated 36,000 homeless cats, or 44% of the total feline population. While sterilization of pet cats exceeds 80%, virtually none of the unowned cats are sterilized. This suggests that unowned free-roaming cats are the most significant source of cat overpopulation in Alachua County. By focusing an intensive TNR campaign in this area, Maddie's Outdoor Cat Program hopes to bring about a decrease in the historically high admission rates of cats to the animal shelter. [Click here](#) to view the full proposal.





Making a Difference

PAWS Chicago Lurie Spay/Neuter Clinic: 2005 Results

PAWS Chicago is using targeted spay/neuter programs, aggressive adoption programs and humane education to help make Chicago a no-kill community. Lurie Clinic Director Laura Hinze recently passed along the final 2005 spay/neuter statistics to update the profile that first appeared in the Maddie's Fund newsletter last September.

The PAWS Chicago Lurie Spay/Neuter Clinic performed 8,796 surgeries in 2005 (3,343 on cats and 5,453 on dogs). This was an increase of 22% over the previous year with no major change in staffing levels, and it exceeded the aggressive goal of a 20% annual growth rate.

In 2005, the Spay/Neuter Clinic performed 5,593 fully subsidized (\$0) surgeries for qualified individuals living in a targeted "Free Fix" zip code within Chicago or for those on Public Assistance. The "Free Fix" zip codes represent neighborhoods with a high stray pet population and a lower income profile. 64% of our surgeries were fully subsidized, up from 58% in 2004. This confirms that the spay/neuter program is considered a valuable service by the individuals who are most in need.

The customer 'show-rate' for appointments increased from 70% in 2004 to 80% at the end of 2005. We attribute much of our growing success at the clinic to positive customer experiences.

The Clinic's Humane Education and Community Outreach team made a dramatic increase in presentations to targeted audiences in "Free Fix" zip codes for 2005. The Community Outreach volunteers made 63 presentations to over 3,900 children and 600 adults in schools, summer day camps, church groups, and police departments.

In addition, the team distributed over 94,000 flyers and participated in 50 events, all within the targeted community. This effort was made possible by a committed volunteer base. Our volunteers are paramount to our success in educating the community about the importance of spay/neuter, which will enable PAWS Chicago to achieve its mission of helping to build a "No-Kill" city.



Maddie's Adoptions

Maddie's[®] Pet Rescue Project in Alachua County, Florida
www.maddiespetrescueofalachua.org/links_partners.shtml



Sparky & Captain Crunch

(Puppy Hill Farm Animal Rescue) (Haile's Angels Pet Rescue)

Love comes in all shapes and sizes in Alachua County, Florida.
Go to the collaboration partners' websites to see the animals waiting to follow you home.

Maddie's[®] Pet Rescue Project in Maricopa County, Arizona
www.az4animals.com



Pokey & Maxine & Brita

(Foothills Animal Rescue) (Sun Valley Animal Shelter)

Thinking about adding to your family?
Come see about the furry friends Maricopa County has up for adoption.

Maddie's[®] Pet Rescue Project in New York City
www.bigapplepets.com



Cindy & Samantha
(For Our Friends) (Animal Haven)

Adopt a little New Yorker today!
Visit BigApplePets.com for the best companions the five boroughs have to offer.

Maddie's[®] Pet Rescue Project in Mobile, Alabama
www.maddie-alabama.org

Mobile's project website is meant to represent all of Maddie's[®] Alabama projects and will soon include a tab for Maddie's[®] Pet Rescue Project in Tuscaloosa. In the meantime, check the calendar of events for adoption fairs near you.