



ANIMAL FRIENDS CONNECTION

Promoting Compassion Toward All Creatures

Humane Education & Adoption Referrals

PO Box 2314 Lodi, CA 95241

(209) 365-0535

September 30, 2001

Lodi Pet Saving Connection
A Maddie's Fund grant project
Lodi: a community of 60,000 in Northern California

We encountered many challenges this past year and we were able to meet all of them.

Increasing adoptions and adoption sites:

This past year we more than doubled our previous year's adoption schedule. We held mobile adoptions in a minimum of three different locations every Saturday (excluding some holidays; some Saturdays we were in as many as six locations). We also held adoptions on three Sundays a month. We sponsored special adoption festivals throughout the year in local shopping malls, and participated in more school and church carnivals (with adoptions) than ever before. Naturally this meant recruiting and training more volunteers to become adoption counselor / deliverers. It also meant recruiting more volunteers to sit with the animals at the adoption sites.

During the first 8 months we experienced challenges with adoption paperwork being turned into our office on a timely manner from our adoption counselors. With a little training and a few adjustments, it is no longer as much an issue, nor as time consuming with reminders. With so many new adoption sites we needed to implement new procedures for cross checking records:

1. At which location did the adoption take place?
2. Was it a midweek or shelter pull adoption?
3. Was the adoption paid for by cash or a check and what is the check number?
 - a. The check or cash now needs to be stapled to the adoption contract.
 - b. All the above are to be written on the adoption contract.

On a number of occasions we have helped the department of aging and mental health with animal situations. To say thank-you, they have opened their site and allowed us to hold several fundraisers with adoptions that have been very successful. We are always working to form new friendships that will help the animals in our community.

Shelter Pulls, without a shelter:

This was and is the most difficult – where will we put the animals? We have had one pet food store that has allowed us to put four large, two-level cat cages in their store full time to house our shelter pulls. That has created new issues:

Who would go over six days a week to clean litter boxes and feed them?

What about holidays?

We held adoptions at the store every Saturday and the adoption counselor took care of everything that day. A schedule needed to be set up for the other six days, and reminders given as the volunteers would sometime forget.

As a security measure, padlocks had to be put on each cage (people were removing cats from cages with no authorization). When someone wanted to adopt a cat, they needed to come to the office to be interviewed and sign the adoption contract. Most were willing to do that. An AFC trained adoption counselor would then have to go to the store to pick up and deliver the cat.

We received daily calls from one employee that was 'concerned' about everything that happened with the cats (i.e.: the bedding isn't clean; the cat is sneezing, etc.). Most of these calls were unfounded but took time for someone to respond to each call. Extra bedding needed to be left at the store, which created a new job – dirty laundry! Now we have dirty laundry not only from the AFC office, but also needing to be collected from the store. Sometimes we've had as much as 18 loads at one time to take to the Laundromat.

Un-planned for sick animals:

Our office is on the second floor, and carrying heavy laundry and cages with cats in them has been physically hard on everyone (the escalator is permanently out of order, and the elevator is on the opposite side of the building). We would have preferred not to keep cats at our office, however, we have had no choice.

The cats and kittens we pull from the shelter all appear healthy. After taking them from the shelter, we have them FELV and FIV tested, de-wormed, treated for fleas and spayed or neutered, and vaccinated. During a six to seven month period beginning in mid November, within one to three days many of the cats became sick. At one time we had 12 kittens and 8 adults in the office either being treated for illness or who had spent too much time in our adoption cages at the store. (We initially said that the cats would only stay at the store for 3 weeks.)

This also created new jobs – who would clean, feed, water, change litter and medicate the cats? The office volunteers were those that had volunteered at the office to do clerical work, not be kennel workers. Although they all love the animals, they have many duties that don't allow time for cleaning litter boxes and tending to animals. They do what they can to help, however, there is not enough time to do all of the new 'chores' and still perform their clerical duties.

We have had to learn to deal with different 'odors' and cleaning habits in our office, due to litter boxes and convalescing cats. Volunteers bringing dogs, which are bathed and vaccinated at the office, now need to call before coming up. We are in the process of pulling up the carpeting to help with the odor problems. Adoption counselors pick up healthy cats from the office on Saturdays and take them to adoption sites. This person

cleans, feeds and medicates the others. Finding volunteers to work on Sundays is often difficult. About 90 of the 118 shelter pulls were adopted through the store and the AFC office. **With all the challenges it has been well worth it!**

Our relationship with Animal Control (now Animal Services in our city) is built on trust and communication. When we thought communication needs may not be being met, we held a team building workshop to help in understanding each other needs. Animal Services has worked hard to change their image and AFC is trying to help get that message out. If they are short on space, we loan them our portable cages. If they need us to take out more animals, we try to do that. At the very least we have one person that makes regular weekly contact.

“The Vouchers”:

Lodi has a large Hispanic population so our voucher is in English and Spanish. When we first started the voucher program we ran classified ads and put a few display ads in our local paper. With proper permission we have also put the vouchers on car windshields at local shopping centers. We have the voucher on our web site and made sure the local pet food stores have them on their counters. We have inserted the voucher in our city of Lodi utility bill going out to 38,000 people. That was not as successful as we would have liked, but we learned from this so our future endeavors will be more successful. We also have the vouchers at all community events and at all of our adoption sites. We pass them out at local shot clinics. With the permission of Lodi Unified School district we sent out 14,000 vouchers to students on two of the three tracks. To get the schools to distribute the voucher for us, we had a double-sided flyer (on one side the voucher and on the other side humane education information). This helped to fulfill the schools requirement for humane education. At the bottom of the voucher was a cut off admitting one youth free to our fund-raising Pet Fair. The original goal for the first year of our project was 560 vouchers. Three months into the project we asked for an additional 560 making our new goal in year one 1,120 vouchers!

Since the Maddie’s Fund grant began the same person visits every veterinary office and the animal shelter on a weekly basis. She is there every Monday at approximately the same time of the day, picking up the report and giving each office their new weekly form. If they don’t have their paperwork ready she offers to help them finish it, or suggests that they can fax it in a day or two. She is always available to answer questions and help whoever is doing the paperwork. We give the veterinarians and animal control a monthly status report so that they can share in the success of the project and understand it. To show our appreciation we also give them occasional token gifts, such as pastries for their office staff. If someone is even the slightest unhappy we strive to communicate and resolve any situations. **We make sure that the veterinarians get paid timely every month; our treasurer has been very busy staying on top of this.**

One of our veterinarians had a personnel change, and the new person did not understand the forms. She informed the veterinarian that the forms were too complex and time consuming. When our AFC person went to collect the paperwork she was told that this veterinarian office would no longer be participating. Our AFC person asked to speak to the Doctor and offered to show him how to fill out the form. Together they pulled it up on the computer and in 3 minutes had it all done. The next week the new girl had called in sick. Our person expected to have to call back in a few days to get the paperwork. The doctor came out to speak with her, with a big smile on his face and pronounced very proudly “Its ready: I helped her fill it out on Saturday!”

Fund Raising

This has always been AFC's weak area. Two smaller fundraisers were cancelled due to lack of volunteer help. Our annual Pet Fair was a success with increased profits by over \$5,000. A new fundraiser, the "Garden Tour" held only three weeks after the Pet Fair, also proved to be a tremendous success. We found pet loving gardeners and formed a committee that is looking forward to next year's event. We had originally projected about \$2,000 in the first year and made over \$4,000. We already have eleven gardens lined up for next year and need only six. Now that we have a little experience at this type of fundraiser, we feel we will top out at over \$10,000 within the next few years. (For the minimal amount of work involved in the Garden Tour fundraiser, it gets an "A+").

We are currently working on another new event for the second year. We have found that we need to come up with ideas that committee members will enjoy putting together.

Fostering:

Recruiting more foster homes and keeping them for any length of time has always been a challenge. We have few good long term foster families, and are constantly looking for more.

Advertising:

With the increase in adoption locations and events, the time required to write classified ads, displays ads, and free advertising spots, has more than doubled. We also solicit more sponsorship advertising to help pay the bills. We started a business sponsored animal photo display ad once a month in the area's largest newspaper. We began this last November; AFC has to sell those spots. This has been a great way to advertise our animals in need and the adoption location.

We are pleased with the success of the project's first year and feel ready to accept any challenges for the second year.

Patricia Sherman
President, Animal Friends Connection

Year One Performance			
	Annual Goal	Actual	Actual as % of Goal
AFC Adoptions	730	803	110%
AFC & Animal Services Adoptions	1,144	1,368	120%
Adoptable Deaths	447	145	308%
Total Deaths	1,352	1,302	104%
Voucher Surgeries	560	1,256	224%