



Maddie's Institute

***Secrets to Pet Foster Program Success***  
**Webcast Transcript**  
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*[Beginning of Audio]*

*Lynne Fridley:* Good evening everyone. I'm Lynne Fridley, program manager for Maddie's Institute<sup>SM</sup>. We're very happy you were able to join us. Welcome to tonight's webcast: "Secrets to Pet Foster Program Success." I would like to introduce our speakers from Muttville Senior Dog Rescue.

Sherri Franklin, founder and executive director. She began working with other animal agencies in the San Francisco area in 1994, but she had a dream to create a senior dog rescue, and did so in 2007. Since then, Muttville has saved over 2,700 senior dogs. Laurie Routhier, director of operations, is responsible for the development and implementation of best practices and processes to support Muttville's strategic goals

Marie Macaspac, director of marketing and communications, is a marketing professional and a foster volunteer. She's been instrumental in bringing widespread attention to the senior canine cause. We'll be starting the presentation in just a few moments. But before we do, we have some housekeeping items to go over. If you need help with your connection during the webcast, you can click on the help icon at the bottom of your screen.

Since you are joining us for the live webcast tonight, you can download and print your certificate of attendance with no quiz required. Just open the green file widget at the bottom of your screen, click on the certificate of attendance, and print or save the document. Other resources that we wanted to share with you tonight are also in that file.

You can ask questions in the Q&A window on the left-hand side of your screen. We will try to answer as many questions as we can at the end of the presentation.

Before I turn things over to Sherri, Laurie, and Marie, I want to say a few words about Maddie's Fund<sup>®</sup>. We are the nation's leading funder of shelter medicine education, and it is our goal to help save the lives of all of our nation's health and treatable shelter dogs and cats.

Our founders, Dave and Cheryl Duffield, were going through a difficult time in their life, but they were sustained by the unconditional love of their little dog named Maddie. She gave them such joy that they promised her that if they ever made any money, they would give back to her kind.

Their dreams did come true, and they made good on their promise by creating Maddie's Fund in honor of their cherished companion, and the special bond that they shared. We hope that you will be inspired by what you learn here tonight. Sherri, Laurie, Marie, thank you for being here with us.

*Sherri Franklin:* And thank you, Lynne, and thank you Maddie's Fund for having us here. We love Maddie's Fund, and we love Dave and the whole family there. Hi, I'm Sherri Franklin, and I am the founder and director, executive director of Muttville Senior Dog Rescue in San Francisco. And just so that I can introduce my two fellow presenters here tonight, there is Laurie Routhier. She is our director of operations at Muttville. Laurie, why don't you say hi?

*Laurie Routhier:* Hi everyone. I'm really happy to be here tonight.

*Sherri Franklin:* And Marie Macaspac, who has been – who is our social media queen and design queen and branding queen, and everything else. Say hi, Marie.

*Marie Macaspac:* Hi everyone. We are so excited to be with you tonight.

*Sherri Franklin:* So why are we here tonight? I think it's really important for everyone to know how we feel, and Muttville really truly believes that the future of rescue lies in a foster-based organization. Number one, animal sheltering is going through many changes, and we're looking at ways to save more lives and keep dogs happier, or animals – also cats, happier and healthier when they are awaiting new homes.

And we really, truly believe that having dogs in foster homes is the way to keep them more adoptable, much more comfortable than any shelter can. So I'm really happy that you're all here tonight to hear what we've done, and hopefully you'll learn a few little gold nuggets to take to your organizations. A little bit about Muttville. Well, we started small in my house. Actually, we're in my house now, where over 1,500 dogs have come and gone.

We now have a shelter, but for the first five years, we did work out of my house. The first year, we only saved – well, we saved 27 dogs, and we had three foster homes. Since then, it's changed quite a bit, and we actually have a shelter. We've had a shelter for the past two years. We are a senior dog rescue. We rescue dogs over seven years old.

A lot of them come with health issues, and they come in all sizes. We have a three-pound Yorkie right now. We've had a 150-pound Mastiff. We have Pit Bulls and Cockapoos, and you name it. You name almost any breed; we had through our shelter. One thing about Muttville is that the dogs that we take, so they can have health issues when they arrive. We stay very committed to them.

We do only take dogs that have good behavior. They have temperament tests. So we are only taking dogs that are people and dog friendly. So that is our one requirement that we hold dear to our heart actually. We wish we could say yes to more, but this is what we can do now. So you can see the statistics on the screen right now. We are just hitting our milestone of 2,700 senior lives saved.

And we do have 65 very active foster homes, but within that, we have over 100 foster homes that we can call in for short-term or they may foster once a year. But we do stay connected with them because you never know when somebody is willing to take a foster dog. But we also have – I mean this is the most important thing is that we have over 30 foster homes that have fostered over 40 dogs.

And that's something that's really important to know is – and what we are going to try to talk a lot about tonight is once you get the foster home, how you keep the foster home. So I'm glad you're all here. I think it's a time for a poll question.

*Lynne Fridley:*

Yes, it's our first poll question. So we'd like you to answer on your screen, not in the Q&A section, and the question is how many foster homes does your organization have? Approximately ten foster homes, 30 foster homes, 50 foster homes, 100 or more foster homes, don't know, or not applicable. So please answer on your screen, and then scroll down for the submit button.

We sure would like to find out what's going on out there with your attendees tonight, and this is your chance to participate. So how many foster homes does your organization have? We'll go to the results. Okay. Well, that's interesting. What do you think, Muttville team?

*Sherri Franklin:*

Wait, I'm just getting there. I want to know. Oh, here we go. Well, I want that 6.8 percent of 100 foster homes or more to come join us. We need to know your secrets too. But the rest of you, and everybody, we all have stuff to learn, and it looks like we are going to get to a lot of this tonight. So hopefully all of you that have 30 foster homes will have 50 foster homes by the end of the year, right? *[Laughter]*.

*Laurie Routhier:*

All right, and this is Laurie speaking. I want to talk a little bit about the joys of fostering, and this is one of our first slides because it's super important. When you are running a foster care program, it's always important to really make sure that you spend time investing in the relationship with the foster parents to make sure that they are getting out of it what they want, that they're feeling the joy, they're feeling the support, they're really getting out of it what they need.

And that's so important because if you invest that time in them, hopefully they're going to continue to invest in your organization for many years to come, as foster parents, as advocates for your organization, donors, you name it. And so of course everybody is an individual, but I think one of the things that we always have to slow down and take the time to do is build those relationships.

And some of that is just listening, listening to what they're getting out of it, listening to the stories about their dog, really helping to connect the work they're doing with their dog to the overall lifesaving goal that your organization has.

*Sherri Franklin:*

Hi, this is Sherri again. And I just want to tell a little story. You can see that gorgeous dog name Rhett that's up on the screen right now. He's a senior Brindle-Pitt Bull mix. I'm sure we've all had a few of those in our organizations. A little bit harder to place. And I had a great new foster dad, who really wanted to make that commitment to work with Rhett to get – to foster him.

And Rhett was a bit of a challenge. Though he was friendly with people and dogs, he had not been in the city before. He was a backyard dog. The sounds, the street noise, everything. And we're in San Francisco, so it did take a long time. In fact, we set the foster dad up with one of our dog trainers. We did weekly check in with the foster dad. He sent us pictures and updates, and we really made sure that he felt connected and supported by Muttville.

And Rhett finally found an incredible home. It did take six months, which is a long time for us. And it was a love at first sight thing. A woman that adopted Rhett is actually still friends with the foster dad, so it was a really wonderful situation. But one of the best parts about this story is that the same night that Rhett went home, the foster dad contacted me because he wanted to pick up another foster dog right away. And that's what we like to do is we want to make sure that we keep filling those homes with dogs so that we can save more and more.

*Lynne Fridley:*

And we have another poll question. Look there. Okay. Please answer on your screen, on the screen that has the poll questions on it, and not in your

Q&A box. Okay? Here we go. As a shelter or rescue group, what is your biggest challenge with your foster homes: retention, keeping your existing fosters, communication with foster families, getting the interest of potential fosters, and signing them up, or don't know.

So please answer on your screen right on the poll question, as a shelter or a rescue group, what is your biggest challenge with your foster homes: retention, communication, and getting the interest of potential fosters and signing them up. Let's see what our results are going to be. Well, it looks like getting the interest in signing them up is the biggest category. Any comments on that?

*Sherri Franklin:* Surprise, surprise. *[Laughter]*. We're going to be getting to that tonight, and I wanted to let you know that we've had every single one of these challenges. So it's not uncommon to have every single one of those challenges, but first you got to get them right. And we'll be talking a lot more about that during these evening's webinar, so stay tuned.

*Laurie Routhier:* All right. This is Laurie again. I want to talk a little bit about how one applies to become a foster parent at Muttville. One of the things that we do at Muttville with fosters and with really just about anything and everything is we try to make it really easy. We don't want to make it cumbersome to get involved with Muttville. We want to make it work. That's really what we're all about. And so we have a few different things that we found really helps to make that a reality.

One thing is that we try to get them with a dog right away. So if someone is reaching out and saying, "Hey, I might want to foster with your organization," try to make that happen. Try to get them in an actually send them home with a dog. I think the fewer barriers you can put up to doing that, the more likely you are to actually get those dogs into homes and actually get those folks, who've shown an interest, engaged.

We also believe that through our own experience that even though we have a shelter full of kind of special dogs that we know that we would like to get out of the shelter environment and into a home, it's really important to start your new fosters with a really easy dog. Make it easy because it's always, you know, there is some challenge in bringing a new dog into your home, and so people need to acclimate to that.

They need to set up their house, set up their routine, get used to the fact that the dog is transitioning into their family. So give them somebody easy, and then after that, that dog hopefully will get adopted fairly quickly, and then they'll be ready to take another dog. And the longer they're with you, perhaps the harder dog, you can send home with them in the future.

But if you send a brand-new foster home, a foster parent home with a dog that's a challenge, you might just run the risk of burning them out before they really get started. So give them a chance to just recognize that they can do it. Fostering is something that fits for them, and also that they actually enjoy doing it. They get those rewards right away, and that they'll get to know your organization and realize that they have – there is a really friendly support system out there for them.

So how does one actually become a foster parent at Muttville? We've set it so that folks can go onto our website – and by the way, all of you listening to this webinar tonight, we would encourage you to do this as well. We are open for you stealing anything and everything that we have. Make it your own; make it work for your organization. So, again, people can go to our website and fill out a foster questionnaire.

Once they submit that, we will get back to them within 24 hours to set up a time for them to come in and meet with the dog and take a dog home. We also – when they submit that, those applications, those foster questionnaires are actually received by a very fabulous mentor group. Because I know everybody who works in rescues and shelter has one problem that we all share, and that is there is a lot of work to do, there is a lot to be done, but not a lot of time to do it.

And so we found that setting up a mentor program with people who are professional and have a good head on their shoulders, and who are committed, they can take on those leadership roles and really make things happen, really be a support system. So they'll reach out to a new softer applicant, and orientate them, get to know them, kind of set the expectations, and also let them know that there is a buddy there.

If they need anybody, the mentor is really the first support that they have no matter what might be going on with their dog or their home or what have you, or with an adoption. And also Sherri mentions that she started this organization out of her house. It was here and a great idea, and a lot of good friends. And so from the beginning, she didn't have a lot in place.

But as the organization has grown, and it continues to grow, we always do a lot of networking with our community to see if we can add to the resources we have available. So we do have a group of dog trainers and health specialists, and so forth, who we can also call on when a foster parent needs a little added extra support.

So for example, somebody just took a dog named Aspen home recently, and Aspen was just doing a lot of barking and what have you when left alone, and it wasn't really dissipating with time. So we were able to call

in a pro bono dog trainer to really kind of help troubleshoot that and reduce some of that anxious barking in the home.

Which of course was great for the foster parent and it was great for the dog, and it helped then when Aspen actually got adopted and transitioned into his permanent home. And now we're going to talk a little bit about just making sure that fosters again feel like they have everything they need. I've heard that sometimes people get started with foster programs, they feel a little bit alone, a little bit unsupported, just because they're doing it out of their house.

And so we always want to kind of give that message that you're not alone. If you need us, we're here. And so one of the things that kind of helps communicate that is having a bunch of things that they may need available to them. And so of course that includes obvious things like medication, but also we had a bunch of care items available to our foster parents. And the way we got all of those really, for the most part, is donations.

So we have a really wonderfully organized storage room, all organized by volunteers of course, and folks can come in and get a whole host of different things that they may need from us. And sometimes some people need things that we just don't have, that's when us at Muttville, we contact Marie, who, as it was mentioned, is our Facebook queen. She can put something out on Facebook, and then we found that all those supplies just arrive the next day from Amazon. So it's fabulous.

*Sherri Franklin:*

This is Sherri. I was just going to say she was mentioning that we have a storage room. That storage room for five years was my garage. *[Laughter]*. So I'm really lucky that now I can actually pull my car into my garage. But that was filled to the brim with donations. So I just want to always remind people to ask.

I know every community is different, but a lot of people are going through their attics or their closets, or their dog passes away, and they end up with dog food and dog beds and blankets, and we reuse everything. So I just say please reach out to your community.

*Laurie Routhier:*

And the next slide – this again is Laurie; that I went to speak with you about is the invaluable role that Muttville's foster parents play in our adoption program. This webinar, it talks about working with a foster-based organization, and that's really what Muttville is. Foster parents not only care for the dogs in their home, and help them feel safe and comfortable and become more adoptable, but they actually are the people who often times are doing the adoption matchmaking with folks.

Helping give information about the dog and how to transition the dog into the new home, and, again, then kind of share a long-term relationship with a lot of the adopters with continued support. And so some of the things that we have, our foster parents do to support the adoption is after – this is something we actually just set up sort of recently, and it's been great.

We formalized it recently, I guess I should say, is that using Google, we have set up a system where if a dog is in the home for a week, the foster parents will receive a little questionnaire asking different questions about how the dog is, with different situations, activity level, other animals, people, things of that nature, houstraining.

And we take that information and then we put it on our software system, which is available then to all of our adoption team, again, which is mostly volunteers who make all this happen. That information is available. When people want to adopt a Muttville dog, they go to our website often times as a first base, and they can fill out an adoption application. And on that, they'll say, hey, I'm interested in Fido and Suzy.

Well, what we do is when we receive that adoption application; we'll send it to Fido's foster parent and Suzy's foster parent. They can get in contact then directly, again, within 24 hours is what we ask, with the potential adopter to share information and set up a time to meet and greet that dog. That meet and greet can happen at the foster's home or often times at Muttville's headquarters.

We really empower our foster parents to help with making that match, help with that decision-making. So folks who are foster parents can actually, what we call close the adoption without people even coming in to Muttville. When they pick up their foster dog, they get an adoption packet too. So then when we receive that adoption agreement back in the mail, we'll send an electronic file to the other doctor with all the dogs' records and so forth.

And we found that really works because there is nobody who is going to be looking out of the dog's interest more than the foster parents. They're not going to slack on that. And usually people are so invested in making sure that it's successful, that it's a total win-win. And, frankly, we don't have a lot of staff to do that, and I think that the value in the way in which our foster parents are handling it goes beyond what we could do even if we could double our staff.

*Sherri Franklin:*

I wanted to just mention an add-on to what Laurie just said. Before I started Muttville, I fostered for a lot of organizations, and some of them literally took the dog away from me and adopted it out. I never felt



rewarded from that. In fact, it broke my heart many times. And I vowed that when I started Muttville, that we would do this differently.

I think that is so important for the foster family to be involved and to know that that dog gets a great home. And we've actually have some foster families and adopters that have remained friends through the years through this program. So I just highly recommend doing this, doing it this way.

*Laurie Routhier:*

And so talking again about the role that foster parents play with adoptions, you know, they help get the dogs adopted, they help promote the organization. They're really representative. And so one thing that everybody goes home with when they take their foster dog is they'll go home with an adopt-me vest, and they'll go home with some marketing materials. And that's something that Marie is going to share in a minute. But I just want to quickly tell you about a story that happened recently. We sent a dog home with a brand-new foster parent, and said, remember, the deal is every time you take this dog out for a walk, she must be wearing her adopt-me vest. And so a fabulous foster parent, on the very first day, took the dog for a walk with the adopt-me vest.

And it was because that dog was wearing the adopt-me vest, somebody interacted with her, fell in love with the dog. The dog was adopted the very first day. *[Laughter]*. And of course, the foster parent was over the moon and took another dog home. I'm going to now send it – oh no, I'm going to continue, I'm sorry, to the next slide. I'm so sorry. I'm skipping over things.

So yeah, Marie, our marketing queen is going to share a little bit more in a little while about some of the marketing and promotional materials that we give to our foster parents to utilize and to really advocate further for the dogs.

*Marie Macaspac:*

Hi. This is Marie. I'm going to be focusing on our marketing efforts that we include in our foster programs. As you see listed in this slide, and Laurie had mentioned some of the things that have been very effective, and we've received that feedback from our foster families are things like palm cards, flyers, stickers, brochures. I'm going to show you some examples of that coming up.

But just I want to touch on the fact that these things sometimes are overlooked, but because we listen to the feedback from our fosters, they are so important and they appreciate that type of advice from us. So moving onto supporting their efforts. I've listed a few items here. They are key items that fosters have told us that were really valuable in them being able to get their dogs adopted.

The first one on the list, we have professional photo shoots. I'm going to actually show you a couple examples of our photos. You can see what we're talking about. But we find this so invaluable, and I'm going to get into more detail ahead, but I want to let you guys now that if you do not have a volunteer photographer now, we feel it is a must have, and definitely something you should consider.

And our photographers are volunteers. We want to really emphasize, they donate their time and services. And we want to talk a little bit more about how we set up our adoption events. Now adoption events, sure, their main point is to bring new adopters. But, you know, we like to make them fun and creative, and we like to open it up for everyone to enjoy. So I have an example.

Every weekend on Saturday, we have an adoption event, but we gave it a fun and creative name. We call it Love a Senior Saturday. And in fact, we market it with an invitation message that's open to everyone. We want to welcome everyone to stop by. In fact, we tell people to come and hang out and socialize in the doggie loft, you know.

We want people to not feel like necessarily obligated to adopt, but guess what happens? We get a lot of people in the door, and, yes, we do get great adoption numbers. But also the fosters are motivated to stick around and not just come drop off their dogs. They actually end up socializing also and meeting potential adopters, other fosters and volunteers, and it becomes a really cool event that people look forward to on the weekends.

And then I'm going to show an example coming up too about how we spotlight boxer dogs and feature them in our marketing material. E-mail blasts, printed and digital ads, and of course Facebook, are all great ways to help your fosters get their dogs adopted, but also a really great way to show your appreciation of your foster families.

So here is a screen of some of our professional photos. They are many professional and student photographers out there willing to donate their time and talents, and they need us too. They need the experience; they need images for their portfolio. Muttville, at this time, we're really fortunate. We actually have six professional photographers, and they are all donating their time. And we really value it.

And one way that we can give back is we actually thank them and mention their name all the time. And they tell us that it really makes a difference. And honestly just that as a thank you for them is more than enough, especially when you have a website and a Facebook page that gets high traffic, they are really just blown away when a photo of theirs is used in an ad, and it gets thousands of likes.

So what I want to say is that these photos, there are so many uses. We use them of the dogs' profiles. We use them for ads, flyers, and then of course social media. And I have a tip for you. If you have adopted pet that are proving to take longer than others to find homes, a great use of their photos is we actually choose them to be the models for the next like Facebook cover photo or the next event flyer.

And we actually do look at the long timers, and they end up being like the poster kids for the month. And trust me, your fosters will appreciate that effort and that extra marketing that you're giving for their foster dog. So here is an example of our most popular marketing tool. We call them palm cards. They're three-inch-by-three-inch two sided cards. Feedback from our fosters actually tell us that they really find these useful and they appreciate them, and I'll tell you why.

So as you see, we have a whole variety, and we intentionally do that. We want to feature big dogs, little dogs, brown dogs, white dogs, because everybody has a different tastes and we want to make sure we capture everyone's attention who is out there looking for dogs. So these information cards, we make it easier for your fosters when you meet potential adopters because not everyone can talk it up with people.

But you know what, everyone can hand out a palm card with a cute face on it that includes all the essential background information that they need to know about your organization, and then fosters can just focus on talking about how awesome their foster dog is. Hey Laurie, didn't you tell me that you have a really great palm card success story?

*Laurie Routhier:*

Yes. I had a foster parent come in and tell me this great story. She had this foster dog named Danny, and she got out of the car with Danny, and first he was wearing his adopt-me vest, and I guess the second his paws hit the sidewalk, someone said, "Is that Danny from Muttville?" So I think the adopt-me vest can highlight it in that way, and she had been following him, which is so funny.

Then on that same walk down the beach, somebody else saw Danny wearing his adopt-me vest, and he said, "You know my mom's dog that was of a similar breed had recently passed away, and she needs another dog. She might be interested in Danny." And so because she had the palm card, she just wrote Danny's name on it, and gave it to the man. The man gave it to his mom, and his mom then got in contact and adopted Danny.

*Marie Macaspac:*

That's a great story. So we want to show an example of how we like to use our Facebook posts. And you know what, we like this one because it's

really cute, and actually is very successful. We love to encourage our fosters to send us photos and videos that they've taken.

Showing them in a setting of a home, and where you can really tell that this was taken by a foster or taken, you know, actually proving that it is an amateur, it lends to how genuine the moment is. Here is Hamilton, yes, adorable in his ducky hat. As you can see, he got over 22,000 likes, over 400 shares; you bet this encourages sharing. His foster families were so proud that their photo or video got so many likes and shares, and, yeah, of course, as you may have guessed, Hamilton did get adopted.

*Lynne Fridley:* Well, time for a poll question. Yes, it's time for a poll question. And I'd like to encourage the audience while we're looking at this poll, to submit your questions to the speakers in the Q&A box, you should do it early before we get to the end of the presentation because we might not be able to address them then. So get your questions early.

However, for this poll question, please answer on your screen. Please answer where the poll questions are in your view. What do you think your foster homes appreciate the most; check all that apply: lots of resources available to them, hands-on training, recognition, and communication from your organization, or it's not applicable.

So what do you think your foster homes appreciate the most? Please check all that apply. And we'll look, and you'll have to scroll down to get your submit button to show, and then we'll go ahead and look at the results.

*Laurie Routhier:* All right. Here are the results. Oh, wow.

*Lynne Fridley:* Oh wow. *[Laughter]*.

*Sherri Franklin:* Okay. So there is no wrong question here. I think every single one of these things is applicable to all foster families. I think they need all of the above. So I'd like to see that really sort of stretched out and it's so important to make sure that your foster families are happy, and not out on a limb. So let's talk about keeping them happy.

We have – as we said, I think you talk about not having enough foster families and trying to find new ones and I think one of the ways we're going to get a little more deeply into that later, but one of the ways that you're going to get more foster homes is by having really happy foster homes already out there talking about their dog, their experience, their situation.

So I think from my own experience and from other foster family's experiences, is that a lot of people get a dog from an organization, and they take it home and that's it. There is not a lot of communication. There is not a lot of checking in. There is not a lot of help in trying to find a home for their foster dog. They feel that they're responsible for the whole thing.

And we want to make sure that foster families don't feel that way – that we do stay involved like Marie said, like putting their photos that they take up on Facebook, and making sure that if they are having a problem – that we get a trainer to talk with them. We also have every July, we have a big volunteer – it's a volunteer month.

And I think a lot of foster families don't feel as involved with the organization because they're home with their foster dog. They're not at – they're not walking dogs, and they're not in the offices with us. So we make sure that they come to the volunteer party. We also make sure that they get t-shirts and other swag to go with it so that they can really make sure that they feel a part of Muttville.

And I think that also makes their friends want to foster. So we may have five or six people that all know each other that are now all foster parents. So really keep that in mind when you bring in a new foster.

*Lynne Fridley:* Oh, we got another poll question.

*Laurie Routhier:* All right.

*Lynne Fridley:* This is fun, isn't it?

*Laurie Routhier:* Yes.

*Lynne Fridley:* Here we go. All right. What is the average length of stay in one of your foster homes? So that's one of your foster homes, is it under 30 days, two to three months average, up to six months maybe, most don't leave, yep, i.e., it's a failed foster who became adopters, or not applicable.

So what is the average length of stay in one of your foster homes, under 30 days, two to three months, up to six months, or most don't leave, failed fosters who become adopters, not applicable. Please answer on your screen. And we will go to the poll results. Well, the majority is two to three months.

*Sherri Franklin:* That's actually pretty good. Well, actually I just added this question in because we were just wondering. So, good, just curious. Thanks for your input. Laurie, take it away.

*Laurie Routhier:*

Thank you. So what about the “what ifs”? We always have a lot of these come up of course, and so the first one I want to talk about is what if my foster dog and I are not a good match? And that’s totally okay. It’s all about matchmaking. Foster matchmaking, adoption matchmaking, it’s kind of the same thing. And really the goal is we want it work for everyone. We want everyone to have positive experience, and, again, we want our foster parents to stay.

A lot of you guys brought up earlier that it’s hard to get people to sign up. Well, once they’re signed up, keep them. So if it’s not the right match, totally fine. And so we really let people kind of pick the dog that they think will be good for them. We had this just come up this week. We had a foster parent come back with a dog,

I’ll call her Sassy, and they loved Sassy, but the foster mom shared with me that she needed to get a different dog, and the reason was because she wants her husband to be as onboard with this for the long-term that she is. So she was really aware that she didn’t bring home the right dog. And the way she knew that was her husband was obsessively vacuuming. She said that the dog shed too much. So not a problem.

We tested a few dogs out, and she went home with a Shih Tzu. So we expected that family will be with us for the long-term. And so what about I might want to adopt my foster dog. And it says, Muttville loves failed fosters. Foster failures are fabulous. Probably maybe even upwards of a third of our adoptions are failed foster parents. And a lot of those guys continue to be foster parents with us.

So it’s a win-win-win-win all the way around. But we do have a golden rule, and this is something if, you know, if you don’t remember a lot out of this, what is one thing to take away. And I think that the golden rule is something to take away. And this was something that really came to be and something that we really highlight with our foster parents because we’ve had – we’ve learned the hard way.

And that is that before somebody takes a foster dog home, they really need to know that if, at any time, they want to adopt their foster dog, we’re totally supportive of that, but they must, must, must make that decision and communicate that decision before they introduce their foster dog to a potential adopter. It’s just never okay to introduce the dog and then say actually I’m going to adopt the dog myself.

Of course that can cause a lot of different issues with your adoption clientele and with the reputation of your organization. So, mostly, I would say for the most part, our foster parents, they know that upfront. It’s no

big secret. We make sure they remember it. And people really respect that. Recently, we had a gal, a foster parent named Mary, and she had Jimmy.

She introduced Jimmy to a few different interested folks, and each time she did that, she kind of realized more and more like, oh, he's happy with me. And so she did it the right way. The last people she introduced him to did not take him, and she immediately e-mailed Muttville and said, I want to keep Jimmy. And so we did that.

And now she's great because she fosters for us like during the holidays, or when other foster parents need to go on vacation. She said, "Hey, I'm totally happy to be a short-term foster parent." So we do that with her now on regular basis.

*Sherri Franklin:* So I'll be very quick. I see we're running low on time. We all had slacker fosters. Those are fosters that just don't show up for adoption events, don't get back to potential adopters. Well, there is obviously something going on with them. They may really just want to adopt their dogs. So what I usually do at that point is communicate.

And what I say is bring your dog to an adoption event, or sign this adoption agreement, and we'll call it a day. So don't keep the dog on the books and keep them – you know, it's taking the place of another dog that might be better on your website. So just don't let them slack. And then sort of take them off your list of foster families.

*Laurie Routhier:* All right. The overprotective foster parent, well, you don't see them a lot, but you do see them. And so this is something that, again, you want to set up the expectations early, and that is when you're a foster parent, you're taking in a dog with the complete understanding and idea that you're going to care for that dog and get them adopted, adopted, adopted, adopted.

But I'm just going to tell you a story that happened recently with one of our foster parents, who definitely fit into the overprotective category. I'm going to call the woman or foster parent Amber, and her dog Pumpkin. Amber is a retired woman, very lovely, who took Pumpkin home, who was pretty nervous and all of that. She did great. Pumpkin really came out of his shell, and became just a happy go-lucky dog.

She brought him to adoption events, and she actually met the couple who adopted him, and she shared information. Everything was great. Everything was a go. The adoption agreement was assigned, but the couple and the foster parent decided that she would actually deliver him to their house the next day because they did have plans that evening.

So the next day rolls around, and no Amber. So the adoptive parents call, very concerned, really excited to get Pumpkin at their home. I gave her a call, and she said, actually, I don't think that's a good home. I'm not delivering Pumpkin. She said he really likes it that I'm home all the time, and this couple is younger and they work, and I've just decided no.

I said, well, actually, we've already signed this adoption agreement, you've already gone the whole nine yards, we need to let go, and we need to fulfill the commitment we made to them. And she said no. I said, well, then I'm going to come to your house and get him. She said, no, hung the phone on me. So I did go to her house, and thankfully when I got there, she was much more settled. She gave me a hug, which was lovely.

So I took Pumpkin, and I did deliver him to the adoptive family. And the good news with this is that actually the foster parent and the adoptive family did connect, and they're stayed connected. And the foster family told me that – Amber told me that they're great. That Pumpkin is super happy, well-cared for, and so she did want to continue fostering with us, and we had a little come to Jesus about what that would look like the second time around, and she was great.

She said give me a dog you think is going to get adopted really quickly because I need to get used to giving the dog up. So of course we immediately gave her a Pomeranian, who was immediately adopted, and she continues to be a great foster.

*Sherri Franklin:*

*[Laughter]*. I love a good story. So I know this is the burning question. How do you find foster families? At this point, I mean in the first two or three years, this was really our biggest concern. Dogs coming in, dogs staying at my house way too long. So it was out of necessity that we really came up with some great tools for fostering.

Now we are receiving three to five foster applications a week. So it's really starting to take hold. So don't give up hope because I know it can be difficult. We do a lot of things, and you can read about some of these, and I'm just going to go through a couple things that I know have helped us a lot. Vet clinics, vet techs, awesome foster families. They really do love to foster and they're really great, especially if you have an older dog that's sicker.

Let your vet clinics know. Put up fliers in your vet hospitals. We put up a flier with a really cute dog, super cute dog, and we still use her. She was adopted four years ago. People still ask about her with little pull off e-mail address, little tags. And people say that they still – they want a foster her. That's the only bad thing, but we usually had a lot of dogs like her.

*[Laughter]*.



But we use a lot of flyers. The adopt-me vets have really helped because when people – when foster families are out walking their foster dog, people come up and they want to talk about it. And even if they don't want to adopt, our foster families are one of the first people to talk about the joys of fostering. So use your foster families to help find new foster families.

And another thing that I've just really started to work on is at our adoption events; we get a lot of "lookie loos." You call them "lookie loos." They come, they look at the dogs, but they don't want to – they end up being afraid to adopt. These are the perfect people to foster. They want to get their feet wet, they didn't want to make a huge commitment, and that's what you tell them.

Maybe you should try fostering because it's not a long-term commitment, and you're saving a life, and it'll get your feet wet. So many times those people end up adopting their foster dog because they were interested. So really strike while the iron is hot. I mean that is so important to ask, ask, and never stop asking. We really work long and hard on this.

I just want to share a story of one of our dogs that – look how cute that dog is. Tiger was a dog that was at the animal shelter, and we really just did not have the space to take him in. And I mean knew we ultimately would, but I wanted to make it pretty urgent. So with Marie's help and Facebook, we put up the cute picture, we made it an urgent plea saying, you know, we can save his life if we can find a foster.

And you know, look at how many we got. We got 1,500 likes, 864 shares, always put in there that you want to share this far and wide, and people then will share. The thing is we got five applications to foster Tiger, and that was just because we asked. So just make sure, always remember to ask. Always keep it at the front of your mind, that somebody – that these people can be foster families.

*Marie Macaspac:* And I want to chime in about the importance of asking. I know we've said it about 20 times now. Sherri mentioned the importance of still using traditional marketing prints. Like she mentioned that we have tear off sheets with our e-mail address. We want to put our name and our dogs' faces in front of everyone in any way possible.

But I do want to talk specifically about the power of Facebook, and why you should spend the time to grow your numbers. Now, every time you ask, you know, if you're – the more your numbers grow, and the more that those shares increase, the more that that message is reaching people. So it

really is worth your time to have someone have a volunteer take the time to dedicate to building your Facebook fan base.

And I want to just *[inaudible]* on this example, I mean we really urgently needed to get a foster for this dog, and as you can see, in the same day, we actually already received somebody who was interested and were able to secure that. We already took care of it within hours, and it was something that it was really urgent. So I just want to emphasize that, that the power of your social media and your Facebook, and how asking, using that, is so powerful.

*Sherri Franklin:* So as you can see, the proof of our success, and I think I've just said it, I don't want to say that we've been more successful than anybody else. And just the tools that we use, we started small and everything was urgent. Everything is still urgent. In dog rescue and cat rescue, everything is urgent. There are never enough foster homes. There are always too many dogs. So I hope that you've been able to take away some tips from us, and I urge you to please feel free to go to our website. You're welcome to use our foster application. We also have a foster manual online. Please use whatever you need from us. We just want to see more lives get saved. And we know with everybody's help that that can happen.

*Laurie Routhier:* Muttville dot-org, that's our website address. Feel free to – we have applications actually all over our website for all of our various programs. And we really emphasize we want to share. We want you to copy what we do. It is how we go to where we are. As we say, when we ask a lot, we also ask for advice a lot. We really think that that is just so valuable.

*Sherri Franklin:* There you go.

*Marie Macaspac:* This is why we love our foster families.

*Sherri Franklin:* This is why we love our foster families. Don't forget to tell them how much you love them.

*Marie Macaspac:* Thank you, everyone.

*Sherri Franklin:* Thanks for being here tonight.

*Laurie Routhier:* Thank you. Here is a few of the URLs that you can go to download some of the materials we've just mentioned.

*Lynne Fridley:* And also those are in the resources at the bottom of your page in the green file down at the bottom. I want to remind you also that your certificate of attendance is there for you to download and print. And we have time for some questions. So let's take a few questions. I'm going to take the first

question here, and push it to the slide area. So our first question is have you ever run specifically foster recruitment events or programs like the month of October is foster month.

*Sherri Franklin:* I'll take that one. We have not actually held just a foster-only event. We've always included most with our full volunteer team, and we do have – we used to do a foster orientation, but we found that a lot of people showed up for that and left empty-handed. So we did find that the mentor working one-on-one with each foster person was actually more beneficial to us.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. Great. Here's the next question. Do you do home visits on applicants and foster homes before letting them foster or adopt?

*Sherri Franklin:* Sometimes we feel the need to do that, and sometimes we don't. We do have a very extensive questionnaire, and we'll end up calling their resources, other people, and their veterinarian. At this point, I have to tell you most of our foster families are – either we know somebody that's fostering with us or they know our veterinarian. And we will use home visits as a tool, but we don't always do home visits.

Actually, I do want to mention something about that. We have found that I've done home visits so many times and it doesn't necessarily mean that it's the best adoption. I had as many people return dogs after jumping through two weeks of hoops, as I've had when I've adopted out a dog straightaway. Well, of course after having them go through our extensive adoption questionnaire.

It has never proved to be a great indicator of a successful adoption. I do have some people that want us to do a home inspection, and we of course will do that.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. Great. Let's take another question. I was wondering if you could cover more on fosters writing bios, please.

*Sherri Franklin:* Oh, that's a really good one. Well, we have some good writers, and we have some not so good writers. What I usually tell foster families to do is they can send me a long bio, a short bio, send me a bio, and then we have other people in there that can pretty it up.

So we can turn somebody that says something like, "This needs to be the only dog in the house," to something that is a little softer, or just make things a little prettier. And some people are really good at it, probably better than I am, and other people aren't. And that's okay too.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. This next question is also a really good one. We have over 50 foster homes; communication is so difficult. We have a secret page for all of our volunteers, but have trouble finding foster coordinators to help get the info. Suggestions?

*Laurie Routhier:* Yes. That is the age-old problem, and one that doesn't ever go away. And I would definitely suggest if you can beef up your mentor pool, and really invest – if staff can invest more time and effort into a smaller group of highly committed and professional mentors, who are willing to really provide information and provide support, and regularly check in with the fosters. You're going to get way more bang for your buck than trying to do it all as a staff person.

And of course with that, it's really important to do a good job of keeping your data together. Make sure that your tracking who are you fosters, what are their household situations. What are their preferences, their challenges, so that you can also kind of reach out to the right person when you get the right dog? We do all the time, like, oh, a big fluffy, you know, fluffer muffin came in. we know exactly who to call, or, oh, a little, yeah, cat-friendly scared Chihuahua.

We always know, and a lot of that is about keeping the data together. But if you try to be somebody to everybody, you're always going to be behind the eight ball. So invest in a mentor program.

*Lynne Fridley:* Excellent. Here's the next question. How do you ensure that your foster parents are well qualified to evaluate a dog's behavior in adoption applicants? What kind of training, if any, do you provide to them?

*Laurie Routhier:* Well, at Muttville, of course, when a dog comes into Muttville, it's the Muttville staff that does do the evaluation of the dog and gets to know kind of some of the special needs or qualities of the dog. And then we try to match that dog's behavior and special needs with foster parents. And so, again, as I mentioned earlier in the slideshow, try to start your newer foster parents off with your easier dogs, and then kind of work up from there depending on someone's skill level and comfort level.

But basically when people are having trouble because either they don't know how to deal with it, or because the dog they have is showing some challenges; deal with it on a case-by-case to see if you can actually provide some support and some education. Maybe that means bringing in a trainer to help them so that they do learn more, and can communicate about the dog's behavior and skills. And if it's not the right match, have them bring the dog back.

We just had that. We had a gal, who fostered a dog, who was started to bark a lot at other dogs on leash. And it was making her anxious, and the behavior was getting worse. So I said, no problem, just bring the dog back. We ended up getting that dog into a different home, and gave her a chill dog; everybody is happy. But with regards to adoptions too, we count on our foster parents to help people through that, but they're never alone, particularly when we have a more challenging dog.

So they can kind of go solo if that's appropriate for their situation, or they can count on us to assist too. And a lot times, if we are already know that a dog has got some behavioral challenges that are likely to follow the dog into the next home, we'll talk with the foster too about maybe throwing in a class or some private dog trainer, something post-adoption just to help with the success.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. Let's take another question. So often people say, "I can't foster, it would hurt too much to give up the dog." I explain that fostering is a loving, selfless act, is a lifesaving act, and the joy outweighs the pain. How do you answer this to convince kind people to foster?

*Sherri Franklin:* *[Laughter]*. Foster failure. I hear it. I heard it already. But actually what – I've had to deal with this over and over again. Actually usually what happens is the first foster dogs they take home is their hardest one to give up. And I explain that to them very well. And I think because we have the foster family really involved with the adoptive family, and see the dog go to its new home, it really makes it a much more enjoyable and enriching experience for the foster family.

And I do let them know that, yeah, sometimes I cry more over a dog going away, but really isn't it about saving more lives? Some people aren't set up to foster. They're going to fail, and that's okay too.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. Great. We'll take another question. And we are at the top of the hour for everybody out there in webcast land. We have several more questions that I think will be interesting if you'd like to stay to listen to them. They are very informative. So here is our next question. Do you think offering an adoption discount to foster families is a good thing to do?

*Laurie Routhier:* Well, you know, it's not probably a bad thing to do. But what we found at Muttville is we might waive a fee here and there if we think it's appropriate, but often times, our foster families just pay the adoption fee. And often times they become long-term donors too. So I wouldn't cross that off your list as an opportunity, but we haven't necessarily found that the adoption fee is somehow stopping someone from adopting the dog that they want.

*Lynne Fridley:* Great. Here's another question. How do you recommend finding a foster for a shy animal that needs extra time and special attention to find a home?

*Sherri Franklin:* Well, I make that dog special, and I also make the person really special. So the way I usually put that out on, say, Facebook is saying that we are looking for a really special person that has the patience and love to give a dog that really needs some extra special TLC. And I'm always amazed. I actually get more applications to foster a dog like that than any other kind of dog.

By making the person that's stepping up feel that they are being very special, and that they are really going to be part of this lifesaving possibility for this dog. So I actually find those to be easier to find foster homes than some of our other dogs.

*Lynne Fridley:* Okay. And this will be the last question. Let's take the final one. Does this process work for animals that are still undergoing treatment?

*Sherri Franklin:* Absolutely. We actually – we call some of these dogs, we came up with the name, it's called Health and Healing Foster Homes. Because we have senior dogs, and a lot of them have health issues and are needing to go through a little more treatment before we even get to the bottom of what their health issues are, we have a hospice program as well, which we call "fospice."

But this is called the gateway, Health and Healing. And people love the challenge. I mean we have a dog that should weigh ten pounds; she weighs 20 and can barely walk. We can't even figure out what's wrong with – we can't even have surgery on her at this point. But we will one day after she loses the weight. So we have spa homes. And people love that. They love the challenge of that. So it's actually really wonderful. You want to add to that?

*Laurie Routhier:* Yeah, we've also been able to – when a dog gets kennel cough, you got to put that dog in isolation for a couple of weeks, and that's kind of sad. We've had occasions again using Facebook where we've said, so and so has come down with kennel cough. If you don't have another dog, and you're willing to do a short term foster for this one that would be fabulous.

And people reach out and it's the best because it's always so sad to put a dog into isolation for two weeks when they're feeling under the weather. And so we utilize homes all the time, and they'll give medications and all sorts of things. And hopefully there is adoption interest happening during that time too, so it's not like they have to start over once they're healthy. That love connection might be happening somewhere.

*Lynne Fridley:*

Excellent. Thank you. Well, this concludes our event this evening. We want to thank the Muttville team, Sherri, Laurie, and Marie, and all of you for your time. Remember to print or save your certificate of attendance located in the resource widget at the bottom of your screen. We invite you to take a few minutes and complete our survey. Your feedback is important to us.

Click on the link on your screen to take the survey. If for some reason you don't see the link, it is also in the resource file at the bottom of your screen. A link will be emailed to you in a few days. This webcast will be available on-demand within a week, and we hope you will share this session on your social sites.

Please make plans to join us for our next webcast, How the Million Cat Challenge Will Help Save Cats' Lives on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Get more information and register on our website at [www.maddiesinstitute.org](http://www.maddiesinstitute.org). Since our next webcast is scheduled for January, all of us at Maddie's Institute would like to wish you a safe and happy holiday season. Thanks for tuning in. We have really enjoyed sharing our evening with you. Good night.

*[End of audio]*