



The Pet Rescue Foundation

Is There A No-Kill Blueprint?

Although it would be handy to have a standardized, no-kill blueprint, the fact is each community must come up with its own plan for getting to the no-kill goal.

But in most communities, it starts when one shelter makes the decision to stop killing adoptable and treatable animals. When a no-kill shelter is in place, it's easier to build a no-kill community.

Getting to the no kill goal takes strong leadership; people who are not just dedicated to doing good work but who are willing to set quantifiable, lifesaving goals and commit to reaching them within a given time frame.

It takes a can-do spirit, creativity and community support and involvement. The broader and more inclusive the collaboration, generally, the easier the success.

Then come strategies for implementation. Some great ideas are already in play and can be found on this web site under No-Kill News From Around The Nation and Our Funded Projects. But without a doubt, one way many communities are saving more lives is by increasing adoptions. We've summarized some adoption programs that a lot of folks are using. They are both volunteer and shelter programs. And while they may not be new, they are effective.

Volunteer-Based Programs

It doesn't take a shelter or even paid staff to boost adoptions. An incredible amount of new homes can be found through volunteer-based efforts.

- **Foster Programs:** Some rescue groups take animals from shelters and temporarily house them in a network of foster homes until permanent placement can be found. The Animal Rescue Foundation of Walnut Creek, California annually places more than 750 cats and dogs largely through foster homes.
- **Adoption Outreach:** Some rescue groups take shelter animals to shopping malls or community centers so the animals can be seen by large numbers of perspective adopters. A very creative group in Phoenix, People Saving Pets, has worked with animal control agencies at one end and local synagogues and churches at the other to set up Pet Adoption Days in the church parking lots. As many as 30 animals per day are adopted at these sites. Rescue groups can also take advantage of pet retailers like PetsMart and Petco who generously open their doors to showcase available animals.
- **Events:** In some cases, all-volunteer organizations stage their own adoption events outside of the shelters. *FidoNYC*, founded by Mary Tyler Moore and Bernadette Peters, takes cats and dogs from various New York City shelters and makes them available for adoption at their own Animal Fairs.
- **Promotions:** Volunteers can organize advertising campaigns to promote shelter adoptions or come up with interesting twists on promoting adoptions. One volunteer group made up post cards of available shelter animals and sent them to everyone they knew.
- **Department/Specialty Store Windows:** Department stores and upscale specialty stores may be willing to offer volunteer groups window or in-store space to showcase adoptable animals. Once a year, PAWSChicago enlists 20 retailers on Chicago's elite Michigan Avenue and 28 retailers on the upscale Armitage Street to show off homeless animals from the city's animal control shelter. The publicity for these Angels With Tails events is fantastic and about 100 animals are adopted at each one-day event.

Shelter Programs:

Shelters can significantly boost adoptions with their own creative programs:

- **Adoption Outreach:** As with volunteer outreach programs, shelter staff can take available animals to shopping malls, community events and downtown businesses for greater exposure to potential adopters. An Adoption Outreach program is also a perfect “vehicle” for fundraising and public awareness.
- **Volunteer Program:** Volunteers are invaluable as adoption counselors, dog walkers, cat socializers, foster parents, groomers, behaviorists, and adoption outreach workers,
- **Awareness, publicity, advertising:** TV, radio and newspapers are good about helping shelters with free pet adoption spots. Local sports teams might work with a shelter on an adoption promotion. Shelters can hold a pet walk, a Halloween costume party, an Easter pet parade, a Black Tie and Tails Ball. They can generate heart warming feature stories about shelter pets and adoptions, table at local shopping centers and partner up with a local business to get sponsorship for advertising.
- **Website:** A web site complete with digital photos and good descriptions is a good way to bring attention to needy animals awaiting adoption. Nowadays, shelters without web sites can be included at no cost by a variety of national sites such as Petsville.com, Petfinder.org, Petshelter.org, Petadoptions.org and Pets 911.
- **Catchy Promotions :** Shelters can participate in national Adoptathons, Adopt-A-Dog/Cat months or make up wild and crazy promotions all their own to enlist the support of local media and bring the plight of homeless animals to the communities’ attention.

Shelter Animals:

Improving shelter animals’ looks and behavior are other ways to increase adoptions.

- **Grooming:** No one wants to adopt a scruffy, stinky pet. Beauty makeovers for shelter animals can be accomplished either with volunteer assistance or by a mutually beneficial arrangement with a

local groomer (e.g. in exchange for grooming service, the shelter provides advertising in adoption packages or gives the groomer a rent-free space in the shelter to groom the animals of private clients).

- **Behavior:** Sweet and lovable dogs and cats who are out of control, jumping up, or are extremely shy or timid, are frequently passed over in shelters. Behavior training and dog walking (to burn off excess energy, reduce stress and improve kennel presentation) can be accomplished with trained volunteers or by a mutually beneficial arrangement with a local dog trainer or dog training club. It's also effective to teach cute and adorable tricks to hard-to-place animals, sure to melt the hearts of potential adopters.

Shelter Facilities

Sometimes, finding more homes is as simple as expanding hours or providing incentives.

- **Hours:** Is it convenient for people to adopt? Facilities should be open all day on Saturday and Sunday and weekday evenings as well.
- **Environment:** The shelter should be a place people want to visit. A homey lobby with cozy settings for the animals is a great way to do it. It's also important that the shelter look clean, and smell fresh.
- **Customer Service:** Ideally, staff has had some professional training in customer service so that adopters feel valued and respected and get the advice and information they need to make a wise adoption decision.
- **Adoption Packages:** Freebies offered with adoptions are always good motivators. In addition to spay/neuter surgery, and vaccinations including FELV and rabies, these might include leashes, collars, id tags, and a first free medical exam.
- **Adoption Incentives:** Special incentives may be needed for animals who have been in the shelter the longest. These can include cat cozys, free pet food, dog training classes, free dog grooming, or free routine medical care for three months, underwritten by local businesses.

