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President's Corner



Dear Animal Advocate,

You know the expression, “his eyes were too big for his stomach?” Some animal welfare organizations fall victim to it. In their effort to save lives, they try to start too many programs at once using too few resources. When this happens, they lose their focus, diffuse their energy, and fail to accomplish their goals.

I believe you have to be disciplined to achieve goals, and this starts by admitting that you can’t do it all—at least not in the beginning. Spreading staff and resources too thin over too many projects generally ensures that no single project will be done well.

I think it’s best to pick one major objective and then move towards it in single, deliberate steps. Make sure the first step is attainable so you can succeed. This is the way you build internal morale, and build external confidence in your organization. After you accomplish the first step of your objective, move on to the next.

If you'd like to read my full editorial, [click here](#).

Best regards,
Rich

Milestones: CVMA

The California Veterinary Medical Association's (CVMA) Feral Cat Altering Program (FCAP) and Low-Income Cat Altering Program (LCAP) have surpassed our wildest expectations—and then some.

FCAP Update

With a year and a half to go, FCAP has already met its three-year long-range goal of 60,000 surgeries. As of this month, its numbers were as follows:

Participating Vets: 967
 Surgeries: 77,286

LCAP Update

Started in August 2000, LCAP is also producing impressive results. The program's goal is to spay/neuter 10,000 cats within twelve months. As of this month, it was right on track and building momentum:

Participating Vets: 719
 Surgeries: 10,349



News Flash

UC Davis Shelter Medicine Update

The new Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at UC Davis is kicking into high gear. On April 2nd, more than 100 students attended the Program's first classroom lecture to hear Dr. Kate Hurley's talk on Herd Health (Dr. Hurley is the Program's first resident). Other topics for this weekly class will include Vaccines and Upper Respiratory Health, Animal Cruelty and more.

Much progress has been made on the Program's first research project, a study of the kennel cough outbreak that occurred in the Solano County Animal Shelter in January. A paper is being readied for publication.

Finally, the Shelter Medicine website is up and running at www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ccah/Prog-ShelterMed/ShelterMedicine.htm. Obviously, this site will grow by leaps and bounds as the Program moves forward, but it already contains a variety of excellent fact sheets on issues such as vaccination protocols for animal shelters, screening for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus in animal shelters, and home-based animals and infectious diseases.

New Articles on Site

In the past few weeks, a variety of new articles have been posted on the Maddie's Fund website. In the section, No-Kill Chronicle, Karen Medicus, Executive Director of the Humane Society of Austin & Travis County, describes her shelter's Road to No-Kill while Lynda Foro relates the history of the no-kill movement in How The No-Kill Movement Grew. In For Animal Organizations, look for Rich Avanzino's latest editorial, Saving Lives One Step At A Time.

Features

Turning Cars Into Cash

Bake sales, dog walks, and coin canisters are a few of the supplementary ways animal welfare organizations raise cash. But groups often put a lot of time and energy into fundraisers like these for very few dollars in return.

In recent years, a new fundraising strategy has gained popularity: used car donations. Donors like the program because they can support their favorite charity and get a tax deduction. Non-profits like it because used cars can bring in big bucks.

For example, one charity sold 32 cars in a month and grossed \$11,000 in revenue. The next month, it sold 63 cars and received \$38,000 in gross revenue. But before you embark on a scheme that seems too good to be true, read on. There's more to it than meets the eye.

- **Be Transparent**
- **Determine How Much Responsibility (and Money) You Want**
- **What's Involved in Do-It-Yourself?**
- **Getting the Goods**
- **Consider the Side Benefits**
- **The Bottom Line in Dollars**
- **A Case in Point**

Be Transparent. A few years back, a big car donation scandal hit the San Francisco Bay Area. A charity routinely promoted its car donation program on one of the most listened to local radio stations. Commercials told the poignant stories of how used cars were changing the lives of the charity's struggling clients. Then it came to light that of the \$8.5 million dollars the charity received in merchandise, only a small percentage actually went to clients. Lawsuits were filed alleging fraud, false advertising and diversion of funds and, ultimately, the courts ordered the charity to close its doors and liquidate its assets. The scandal not only shut down that particular charity but put all local car donation programs under a cloud of suspicion.

If you decide to run a car donation program, be prepared to publicly explain how much money you spend on outside services (advertising, commercial fundraisers etc), how much money you actually take in, and how much money goes directly to help the animals.

Determine How Much Responsibility (and Money) You Want. There are a variety of ways to incorporate used car programs, depending on how much staff time you want to invest.

A few charities run programs totally in-house—they do their own advertising, handle all the paperwork, bring the cars to their facility, and sell them from their own used car lots. These programs are very labor intensive, but the organizations reap 100% of the income they receive.

Some charities do their own advertising (write the ads and determine their placement), handle all the transaction paperwork and then turn the cars over to an auction house to do the actual selling.

In these situations, the auction house gets a cut of the car sale (10% seems to be common) and also charges ancillary fees for things like detailing, smog certificates, repairs and bill of sale transactions. The charity will also have to pay a fee to get the car to the auction house and this will vary, depending on distance.

Some organizations choose to turn the whole program over to commercial fundraisers who contract with charities to solicit on their behalf. Here, the charity may actually receive only 5% to 50% of the car sales. There is no investment in staff time but you don't have much control over how the program is marketed and run, either.

There are other mix and match options. For example, one charity turns the program over to an auction house to handle the paperwork and sell the cars, but the charity does its own advertising and sends out its own thank you notes to the donors.

What's Involved In Do-It-Yourself? Let's assume you want to do everything in-house except actually auction off the cars. What's involved?

First, you'll need to find an outlet for your cars. Look in the Yellow Pages under Auctioneers. Interview a few companies, go to their auctions, ask for references (satisfied customers) and carefully review and compare terms.

Next, you'll want to get some paperwork from the Department of Motor Vehicles. In California, this includes a Transfer Form and a Bill of Sale, but call your local agency. Paperwork may vary from state to state.

Then, assign a staff person to take car donation inquiries over the phone (to best capture interest in the program, offer a direct line so the potential donor doesn't have to wade through endless voice mail or wait for a return phone call). You'll want to ask the donor a variety of questions such as the make, model, year and mileage of the car. You want to know if it's running and if not, why not (sometimes this could be for something as simple as a dead battery). You want to know when the car was serviced last, if the donor has service records and if he's the original owner. You want to know if there's collision damage, if the car is registered in your state, if the registration is up to date. You want to know if the car needs repair and, if so, what kind of repair it needs. You ask all of these questions because if the car is a total lemon, you might want to turn it down. You can go in the red if you start paying to send all your cars to the junkyard.

Assuming you go forward with the transaction, send the donor the DMV paperwork and have him fill it out. The car owner will need to provide the Certificate of Title and Registration when the car is turned over. You can ask the donor to bring the car to your facility, or you can have the car picked up and taken to the auction site.

At the end of each month, the auction house will send you a check along with a statement, showing all of the cars that were auctioned, what they sold for, and the cost of any repairs or ancillary fees.

Getting the Goods. So how do you get the cars, anyway? The first place to start is with your own membership. Ask for used cars in an ad in your next newsletter (and every newsletter thereafter). You might want to only do this much advertising for a while. It's free and it enables you to test the waters and get the kinks out of the program.

When things are running smoothly, place a small ad in the Classified section of your local newspaper and try running it seven days a week for a month to determine its impact. These ads are generally quite affordable and some newspapers even have non-profit rates. Look at other ads soliciting cars and try to make yours catchier, bigger, or more compelling.

Once the program is humming, you may want to branch out with your advertising. Consider placing your ads when new car models come out and people are thinking about buying new cars, or at tax time when tax deductions are on people's mind.

Try to determine which magazines, radio stations, newspapers or tabloids appeal to animal lovers in your community. Ask your staff and volunteers what they listen to and read. Talk to ad salespeople at the various media outlets to get ad rates and a demographic profile of their audience. Talk to media buyers at advertising agencies for advice. Then experiment and see if your ad placements bring in results (this can be easily tested if you take the inquiries in house and ask the callers how they heard about the program).

As you'll quickly discover, advertising can be very expensive. Start slowly. Don't over commit your resources and carefully monitor your results. You'll want to pull your ads in a timely fashion if they're not working for you.

Consider the Side Benefits of a Car Donation Program. A car donation program can be a good way to attract first-time givers. It can also be a good way to enhance public relations. "I really like visiting with the donors when they call about the program," says one animal welfare staff person. "I always encourage them to bring the car here and then I offer to give them a tour so they can see first hand what their money will be used for. To me, this is a chance not just to get a car but to make the donor feel good about what we're doing—and to encourage more support. You never know when that contact will lead to a big donation in the future."

An Executive Director at another agency really appreciates the ability to use car donation advertising to sell the organization's mission to the community. "In our radio ads, we talk about the individual animals whose lives we save as a result of this program. We wouldn't be able to afford this kind of advertising if the cars weren't bringing in the revenue."

The Bottom Line in Dollars. Clearly, the money you make on car donations will be dependent on several variables: the number of cars you acquire, the quality of the cars, and the amount of money you spend on outside services like commercial fundraisers, advertising, auction houses, towing or paperwork/processing. One large animal welfare organization nets a couple hundred thousand dollars per year on car donations. It's not uncommon for smaller organizations to annually net \$40,000-\$60,000 after paying for advertising and other outside expenses. That's a whole lot of cupcakes!

A Case In Point. Pets In Need (PIN) is a no-kill animal shelter serving the Peninsula/Silicon Valley region of the San Francisco Bay Area. The staff of fifteen full-time employees finds homes for approximately 750 cats and dogs per year and operates on a one million dollar budget.

Says Marketing and Development Director Marguerite Judson, "*Our car donation program combines a visibility campaign with fundraising. Since the inception of the PIN Car Donation Program, adoptable PIN animals have been the focus of newspaper and radio advertisements. In the second year of the program, not only have \$81,000 in car preparation and auctioneer fees and \$36,000 in advertising expenses been covered, but \$40,073 net profit was realized. PIN also gained 72 first-time donors through the Car Donation Program.*"

In April 1999 we assumed responsibility for the advertising—to more accurately convey our own message and to test advertising venues—and increased the percentage of sales proceeds that we receive from the auctioneer from 50% to 70%. This is probably a higher percentage than usual for the volume of cars (115 in 2000) that are donated to Pets In Need.

The advertising strategy we have developed is to always have newspaper ads running and periodically do radio ads. The timing of the auctions means that we see the results of changes in our advertising strategy at least one month later.

Print: In addition to our newsletter ad, we get excellent results from the San Francisco Chronicle. When we advertised in the San Jose Mercury News, we noticed an increase in low value cars and no longer advertise there.

Radio: We chose KCBS as our only radio station because it has the most responsive, affluent listening audience. We invest in KCBS ads in the fall, when new car models are being sold, and in the spring, when people are doing their taxes and want to improve their taxes for the next year. In 2000 KCBS offered a special promotion for the last week of the year and we added an extra week of advertising. The corresponding increase in auction proceeds was evident in the January 2001 auctions. The ads are usually recorded by our Executive Director, which has increased visibility of the agency's leadership. In 2000, Rich Aurilia, the San Francisco Giant's popular infielder, recorded one of our KCBS radio ads. This year, Giants first baseman J.T. Snow did a spot for us. ”

***Before implementing a car donation program, be sure to consult with an attorney as differing local, state or federal regulations may apply.**

Features

How to Start a Feral Cat Program

By Leslie Wilson

Strategies for saving feral cats are different from those for saving adoptable and treatable pets. Ferals need community-based programs that humanely reduce their numbers while allowing them to live out their lives side-by-side with the rest of us.

Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) is not only humane; it is the most effective way to reduce the number of homeless cats. Programs built around TNR reduce births, save lives, and support community efforts to compassionately care for cats.

Organizations on even the smallest budget can start a feral cat program. It's as simple as starting a feral cat caregiver support group, offering free spay/neuter to just one caregiver or lending out a humane trap. Start small, and as your program gains support and interest, expand accordingly.

Part 1: GETTING STARTED

Support Colony Caregivers

Build trust with local cat caregivers by respecting their privacy and seeking their input. Meet with caregivers, colony feeders, people with "backyard" cats, and other community members when planning your feral cat assistance program. You will gain valuable insight: are there any existing feral cat spay/neuter services? What other types of resources do people need? This information can help you target your program and outreach efforts more effectively.

Keep Statistics

While it is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day work of running a program, it is important to take time to keep track of your efforts and analyze your results. To help evaluate your program and to tell the community about your success, monitor the following information:

- How many spay/neuters you subsidize or perform.
- The decline in cat impounds and euthanasias at your local shelters.
- How many volunteers you have.
- Any especially compelling situations you work on. These stories come in handy for press releases, newsletter articles, and "thank you" mailings.

Part 2: THE BASICS

Volunteers

Volunteers are key to the success of any program. Your community's needs and the design of your program will determine what kinds of volunteers you require. Volunteers can do everything from answering the phone, to helping people trap cats, to ear tipping, vaccinations, and scheduling people for clinics.

One animal welfare organization has teams of volunteers organized in various neighborhoods. The group refers calls from the public to volunteers in their neighborhood who can help with different parts of the job: teaching people how to trap, lending traps, transporting cats to the clinic, and holding the cats for post-surgery recovery.

Spay/Neuter

The core element of a feral cat program is low-cost or free spay/neuter. It is the most significant way to help feral cats and the most effective place to allocate resources.

Studies have shown that the primary barriers to spay/neuter are cost and lack of access to services, and these factors are particularly important for feral cat caregivers. While it takes high-volume spay/neuter to impact the feral cat population, even one free or subsidized spay/neuter surgery once a month is a start. Not only will it prevent one or more litters from being born, it can be the beginning of a relationship between your organization and feral cat caregivers.

[Most feral cat spay/neuter programs either notch or tip each cat's ear to show that the cat has been altered. Depending on your resources and needs, a spay/neuter program can also include routine medical care, more complex medical care, and/or vaccinations. Because FeLV and FIV testing is costly—financially and emotionally—and because the incidence of these diseases in the feral cat population is no higher than in pet cats, many organizations opt not to test and to put the money saved into spay/neuter instead.]

In designing your spay/neuter program, there are a number of existing models to consider. (See Resources section for more information):

- Low- or full-cost vouchers can be purchased from local veterinarians and distributed to cat caregivers. Meet with local veterinarians and request their assistance and participation. If they are not familiar with handling feral cats, put them in touch with veterinarians experienced in this area.
- High-volume monthly clinics, run by volunteers. Under this model, developed by the San Diego Feral Cat Coalition, lay and veterinary volunteers handle over 100 feral cats one weekend a month at a different veterinary office borrowed for the day. All supplies are provided by the organization. Operation Catnip, an organization in Gainesville, Florida, also uses this method. Both organizations offer detailed manuals on how to set up and run such a clinic.
- The California Veterinary Medical Association has started a free Feral Cat Altering Program (FCAP) with the assistance of Maddie's Fund. If you are in California, encourage your local veterinarians to participate in the program. Also, let cat caregivers know the program is available.
- Veterinary schools. Find out if students and faculty can provide spay/neuter services.
- An in-house clinic with a staff or contract veterinarian to handle surgeries.

Tools of the Trade

Humane Traps

Humane traps make the job of catching and transporting feral cats possible. And access to free trap rentals can exponentially improve a caregiver's spay/neuter efforts. For example, with free spay/neuter and humane traps, one caregiver had over 130 feral cats altered in one year!

If loaning out traps is too labor-intensive for your group, put traps into the hands of a few dedicated volunteers and ask them to serve as contact people for humane traps, loaning them out and keeping them in use.

Where to get traps:

- Some trap distributors/manufacturers give discounts to humane organizations.
- ACES (800-338-2237) and Tomahawk (800-272-8727) are two companies who sell humane traps.
- Ask local hardware stores and pet supply stores to donate a trap (or traps) to your organization. Offer to display the store's name on the trap as a "thank you."
- Ask your members to donate traps or money for traps.

Cat Food

Free cat food can be a great help to colony caregivers and an incentive to attract volunteer participation. Plus, money saved on food is money a caregiver can use for spay/neuter or medical care for the cats.

How to get free cat food:

- Hold cat food drives—ask your members to donate to the feral cat cause.
- Approach local pet supply stores and ask if you can set up a bin for customers to donate cat food purchased at the store.
- Ask grocery stores, pet supply companies, and pet food manufacturers for donations. One group was able to get ten pallets of pet food donated by a distributor. All the group had to do was supply a truck to pick it up.
- Check with your local community food bank. If they receive more pet food donations than they need, they may be willing to share the extra with your organization.

* **Note:** Due to space constraints, we've only included Parts I and II of this three-part article. If you're interested in reading Part III, which discusses expanding the safety net through education, adoption, and advocacy, [click here \(link/anchor\)](#).

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

California Veterinary Medical Association Feral Cat Altering Program (CVMA-FCAP).
www.cvma.net

Operation Catnip.

www.operationcatnip.com

San Diego Feral Cat Coalition.

www.feralcat.com

San Francisco SPCA Feral Cat Assistance Program.

www.sfspca.org/Advocacy.html

University of California, Davis Feline Medicine Club.

www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/Clubs/Fmc/feral.html

About the Author: Leslie Wilson was the team leader in planning, developing and implementing the nation's first comprehensive feral cat assistance program in 1991 at The San Francisco SPCA. Leslie is currently a special projects consultant for several humane organizations in northern and southern California.

Making a Difference

"My husband and I are coordinators for High Country Basset Hound Rescue in Southern Colorado. We started in October of 1999 and to date have fostered and found homes for 28 Basset Hounds. Our local shelter calls us if stray bassets are not claimed. Some of these dogs have abuse histories, and some are simply no longer wanted. We make sure that all are in good health (we work closely with our veterinarian) and spayed/neutered before placing them in homes. In addition to Bassets we also rescue other dogs in need of help. We are also currently attempting to organize and fund an animal rescue referral service for all types of animals in the southern Colorado area, as well as attempting to create a truly no kill shelter in Pueblo, Colorado."

—*Theres and Carl Martini, Rye, Colorado*

"I teach obedience training and foster dogs/puppies for SICSA (Society for Improvement of Conditions for Stray Animals). I also foster for ARPH (Aussie Rescue and Placement Helpline).

I belong to a group of dog trainers who volunteer time (and some materials) to provide free dog training classes to all dogs adopted through SICSA. We are in the process of expanding our services and hope to develop relationships with more shelters and rescues that do not have access to training services for adopted animals. The five of us have almost 30 years of experience in dog training and all of us have fostered dogs and puppies, providing obedience, socialization and most of all love and affection to numerous canines over the years."

—*Joann Hughes, Xenia, Ohio*

"I have been rescuing animals for approximately six years. I enjoy doing it, but sometimes it can be very stressful and heartbreaking. I fostered for a non-profit group for five years, and this past year I have been paying for all the vet care and then finding homes for the animals myself. I have two vets that will do the spay/neuter at a low cost and vaccinations at a discount.

I am president of a non-profit group called Stray Cat Alliance. Our main focus is to implement a tnr program. Our group believes the real need is to target the feral and homeless cats and provide education to our community in the process! We are also coming across a lot of adoptable cats, and we are reaching out to other non-profit groups in our area to see if they will be able to help out.

We are in the process of starting our first fundraiser and collecting volunteers. I wish someday somehow that all the groups in our area would work together for the sake of the animals, pulling our resources together. That way, I believe we (they) could do an even better job in controlling the population and maybe cruelty of our animals."

—*Barbara Pugh, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*

Happy Endings

LCAP Caregiver Profile:

Rachel and Adele, Mother Daughter Duo

Like many pet guardians, Rachel and her daughter Adele were 'adopted' by two stray cats. Not long after they began caring for the abandoned animals they found themselves caregivers to a brand new litter of kittens as well. Rachel's mother, also a cat lover, adopted two of the kittens, while Rachel and Adele kept the third.

Rachel wanted to have all the cats altered, but with a limited income, she worried about the cost. She had her mother's cats altered first, and at \$80 each it nearly broke her budget. Rachel began saving up enough money to have her cats fixed, knowing it would take a while.

In fact, were it not for Dr. Nachhattar S. Sran, Rachel might still be saving. Dr. Sran, owner of Alta Animal Hospital in Clovis, not only signed up to participate in the California Veterinary Medical Association's Low Income Cat Altering Program (LCAP), he took it upon himself to promote it. He spread the word by running ads in local newspapers, arranging for public service announcements on television, posting flyers in his community, and partnering with the local social service agency to send notices about the program to MediCal clients in the area.

One day, while reading the paper, Rachel's sister pointed out Dr. Sran's ads, and Rachel immediately called to make appointments for her three cats. Since the surgeries were performed at no cost, Rachel was able to afford to have the cats vaccinated as well. As she put it, "I'm so glad my sister saw the ad. The cats won't have any more kittens, and we get to keep our pets. Now we're all happy."

Dr. Sran and his staff spay or neuter five to eight cats a day through LCAP and FCAP, the California Veterinary Medical Association's Feral Cat Altering Program. To date, Dr. Sran has altered nearly 200 cats under LCAP. It's not unusual to find him and his staff at work from 9:00 in the morning till 10:00 at night to make sure they can accommodate all the clients who need them.

While Dr. Sran has always been committed to community service and helping those who cannot afford spay/neuter for their animals, he explains that LCAP makes it feasible for a small, single veterinarian practice to provide free services to large numbers of people. "Thanks to LCAP, we are doing significantly more spay/neuters. It's good for the community and it saves lives." "And that," says Dr. Sran, "is what it's all about."

Fun & Games: Companion Animal Trivia

1. If a cat is holding his/her tail erect with the whole length quivering, what is he/she trying to say?

- Watch out—I'm mad as heck.
- Cha, cha, cha!
- You're making me nervous.
- Hi! Over here—I would like....
- You are getting very sleepy....

2. Which Romantic Poet had "*Beauty without vanity, strength without insolence, courage without ferocity, and all the virtues of man without his vices*" inscribed upon the tombstone of his beloved Newfoundland, Boatswain?

- William Blake
- Lord Byron
- John Keats
- Michael Bolton
- Rich Avanzino

3. The canine nose works how many times more efficiently than the human nose?

- 10 times
- 100 times
- 1,000 times
- 100,000 times
- 1,000,000 times

4. Which actress was named after her mother's cat, who liked to chase dogs and swim in the ocean?

- Uma Thurman
- Molly Ringwald
- Delta Burke
- Brett Butler
- Cher

5. Which Beatles' song ends with an ultrasonic whistle, audible only to dogs, recorded by Paul McCartney for his Shetland sheepdog?

- "A Day in the Life"
- "Hey Jude"
- "Eleanor Rigby"
- "The Long and Winding Road"
- "I Wanna Hold Your Hand"

For More Information

For more information about Maddie's Fund and what we're trying to accomplish, please check out our website at www.maddiesfund.org. We've posted a great deal of information about our funding strategy and how different organizations are working to save animal lives in their communities.

Also, please feel free to contact us—we'd love to hear from you. Here are five ways to get in touch:

Maddie's Fund

Address: 2223 Santa Clara Avenue, Suite B
Alameda, CA 94501-4416

Telephone: (510) 337-8989

Fax: (510) 337-8988

Web Site: www.maddiesfund.org

E-mail: info@maddies.org