

Going Beyond Animal Sheltering

Animal rescue and adoption organizations increasingly are focused on addressing the root causes of pet homelessness in addition to providing the core services of shelter, food, veterinary care and adoption. This holds true for private nonprofits as well as open admission and municipal shelters with the contracts for animal control in their communities. For many in the animal welfare world, model programs, best practices and “innovative” approaches that go beyond basic sheltering present the best opportunities for the greatest impact on saving more pets’ lives. Some of these include:

- 1) Keeping more pets in their homes
 - Pet food pantries
 - Low-cost veterinary services, including vaccinations and spay/neutering
 - Help with behavior issues
 - Temporary fostering in cases of illness or other emergencies
 - Advocating for and providing information on pet-friendly housing
- 2) Reducing pet overpopulation through spay and neuter programs. Low-cost procedures at the shelter, mobile clinics or services offered in conjunction with local veterinarians provide incentive for people to spay and neuter their pets, helping to prevent unwanted litters.
- 3) Implementing TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, return) programs for feral cats. This is proven to be effective in managing feral cat colonies.
- 4) Increasing training and education for shelter staff and classes/webinars/online information for adopters and the public. Targeted education at the time of adoption and after -- including managing expectations when you bring a new pet home to basic obedience – can go a long way in preventing returns.
- 5) Partnering with other organizations for programs including transports to locations where chances of adoption may increase.
- 6) Strong volunteer and foster programs.



- 7) Enrichment for shelter pets to help them cope in their environment and transitioning to new homes. There are many examples of enrichment programs – toys and chews, walks, play time, outings away from the shelter, music and videos, volunteers reading to the animals, nose work, lap time.
- 8) Community outreach. Many municipal shelters and private animal rescue and adoption organizations are integral members of their communities as they provide critical services for both people and animals. Connecting with community leaders, giving presentations at service organizations and clubs, participating in events and offering on-site activities at the shelter/your center can increase positive impressions of your organization and help you meet your goals.