Best Practices Discussion Groups

The final component of the conference was a series of small group discussion sessions on Evaluation and Research, Program Content and Participants, Program Management and Training and Building Support: Community Partnerships, Funding, and Public Awareness. Using the report of the Survey of Best Practices in Dog Training Programs as a starting point, these sessions sought to identify what works in animal assisted programs. To facilitate the cross-fertilization of ideas, we paired as co-facilitators of these sessions program administrators who run different types of programs. For example, administrators of equine assisted programs were paired with leaders of dog training programs. Representatives of service dog training programs were paired with their counterparts in shelter-based dog training programs.

**Evaluation and Research**

Co-facilitators:
Barbara Boat, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Cincinnati
Martha-Elin Blomquist, Ph.D.
KC Henry, Project Director, Humans and Horses Foundation

Barbara Walling Boat, Ph.D. is Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and Executive Director of The Childhood Trust at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. She has conducted research on the use of anatomical dolls in sexual abuse investigations and currently is interested in relationships among violence to children and animals and domestic violence, including dog bites. Her special clinical interests are treatment of dissociative disorders and the training and utilization of evidenced-based interventions in treating traumatized children.

KC Henry has been working with therapeutic riding programs in nearly every possible capacity for over thirty years. In fourteen years of work with Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center, she was the first paid staff member and moved from instructor to Executive Director. Under her leadership, Fieldstone Farm completed a $4.5 million capital and endowment campaign, built a state-of-the-art Therapeutic Riding Center, developed a staff of 31 people and served 200 students weekly. Ms. Henry is the Executive Director of the Horses and Humans Research Foundation and Principal of Transitions Unlimited, a consulting firm that provides strategic planning, board development and project management for non-profit organizations.

As an educator and researcher, Martha-Elin Blomquist, Ph.D. has over 25 years of experience studying the causes and prevention of juvenile delinquency, focusing in particular on legal and social policies and institutions that affect child and youth welfare. She received her MA and Ph.D. in Jurisprudence and Social Policy from the University of California, Berkeley and Boalt Hall School of Law. Dr. Blomquist was a Senior Fellow with the California Attorney General, Department of Justice Targeted Research Fellowship Program, Bureau of Criminal Statistics, undertaking research using the Bureau’s various longitudinal arrest and disposition data bases. Dr. Blomquist has served on the Board

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of Directors for the Alliance Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault in Bakersfield, CA, where she also provided training for volunteers and assisted as a volunteer rape crises counselor. Her involvement with the Western Society of Criminology includes her terms of office as vice president and president. Dr. Blomquist’s research and consulting experience include projects with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law and the American Prosecutors Research Institute. Currently, Dr. Blomquist is a lecturer with the University of California, Irvine.

The main points from the Evaluation Research workshop are as follows:

- Evaluation and research have different goals and requirements. All agencies should do basic program evaluation, but not all organizations need to be involved in research. For program evaluation, “does it work” is not necessarily the focus. Program evaluation is also concerned with process and fidelity of implementation. Experts in program delivery are not necessarily the personnel who should do research.

- Well-done case studies are a viable strategy to help build the case for animal assisted interventions.

- Research needs to be focused and not diffuse.

- Research is necessary to gain the respect of the scientific community and acceptance for programs to secure funding in order to make programs more available.

Building Support: Community Partnerships, Funding, and Public Awareness Co-Facilitators:

Rick Yount, Director of Therapeutic Interventions, Assistance Dog Institute
Carolyn Clark-Beede, Executive Director, Assistance Dogs of the West

Rick Yount is currently the Director of Therapeutic Interventions at the Assistance Dog Institute in Santa Rosa, CA. Mr. Yount, a licensed social worker, received his BA at West Virginia University and is earning his MS degree in Assistance Dog Education at ADI. Rick has worked with children for 20 years as a social worker in specialized foster care and residential programs. Rick is a certified High Schooled Assistance Dog instructor and founder of Golden Rule Assistance Dogs in Morgantown, WV.

Carolyn Clark Beede brings 20 years experience in business management, program design and development, sales, marketing and non-profit management to Assistance Dogs of the West, where she serves as Executive Director. She has worked with corporate and non-profit entities in leadership, global team management, marketing/business development and educational program management. She served on the ADW Board for 6 years prior to taking the ADW Executive Director position in January 2006.
The main points from the Building Support: Community Partnerships, Funding, and Public Awareness workshop are as follows:

* Best practices include close collaboration with community partners, outreach to internal and external constituents, internal and external PR, program participation in community events, opportunities for student programs beyond educational programs, volunteer recruitment and involvement, and multiple funding sources.

Mr. Yount and Ms. Beedle’s powerpoint presentation is in Appendix S.

**Program Content and Participants**

**Co-facilitators:**

Kenna Graunke, Humane Educator, Southern Oregon Humane Society  
Alex Hollo, East Coast Assistance Dogs

Kenna Graunke, RN, has been the Humane Education Coordinator at Southern Oregon Humane Society for 4 years. She serves on the APHE (Association of Professional Humane Educators) board. Much of her 27-year nursing career has been spent working as an emergency dept. trauma nurse. She was involved in the Oregon Trauma System for 3 years while working as the Trauma Coordinator at a rural hospital. Ms. Graunke is currently a contract clinical instructor in the nursing program at Rogue Community College in Medford, Oregon.

Alex Hollo began tutoring at-risk kids in 1991 during the school year and taught outdoor education and horseback riding in the summer. She received her Master’s degree in Special Education from Vanderbilt University in 1996, specializing in teaching children with emotional and behavioral disorders. While teaching at Green Chimneys with her own social therapy dog, Ms. Hollo saw the benefits of involving at-risk children with animals. In March 1999, she began training under East Coast Assistance Dogs founders Dale and Lu Picard, and has now realized her dream of applying her educational background to her passion for animals and troubled kids.

The main points from the Program Content and Participants workshop are as follows:

* Initially, residential treatment institutions viewed participation in ECAD programs as a reward for good students, and sent their best students to the programs. When they began to understand the benefits of the program, they sent students with worst behavioral problems. Since training service dogs requires a certain level of cognitive functioning, ECAD developed a series of additional programs to accommodate students with different levels, needs, and abilities, including a kennel management program and programs with therapy dogs.

* Neither ECAD nor LEAP staff review history or diagnoses of participants. However, institutional records including grades and attendance could provide some data for researchers.
• LEAP empowers participants by letting them know that they are making a difference to the dogs. LEAP uses massage of dogs as opportunity for both dogs and children to relieve stress. The program matches kids with dogs and kids with other kids. LEAP teaches youth dog and human body language, responsible pet care, dog bite prevention. LEAP modified TLC program to better match their constituency.

• Teachers are always present during LEAP sessions. Teachers need to know what students are being taught. They also are responsible for discipline. Following the end of the program, teachers share with students news of dog adoptions.

Program Management and Training
Co-facilitators:
Lynn Thomas, Executive Director, Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association
Beth Shapiro, Director of Humane Education, SPCA of Erie County

Beth Shapiro is the Director of Humane Education at the SPCA Serving Erie County and has been with the shelter for three years working with the Humane Education Department, Investigations and the Infirmary. She has a BS in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from Buffalo State College and has been in the education field for almost twenty years serving as a day care director, teacher and humane educator.

Lynn Thomas, LCSW, is co-founder and Executive Director of EAGALA, a non-profit association for professionals providing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. Founded in 1999, EAGALA provides certification training and has over 3,500 members worldwide. Ms. Thomas has also worked as Executive Director of two youth residential treatment programs and has provided counseling and mental health services for youth and families for over 15 years. Her love and focus involve experiential approaches to helping youth, including work in wilderness treatment settings and animal-assisted therapies.
The main points from the Program Management and Training workshop are as follows:

Staff can make or break a program. Staff play a key role in shaping the programs success. Evaluation needs to measure staff impact. Important criteria for staff selection include trustworthiness, education degrees, and ability to work with kids and animals. Identifying dog trainers who also can work with kids can be a challenge. Teams are important such as therapists working with dog trainers or equine specialists.

- Programs for volunteers should include applications, orientation, and job descriptions. Staff need to be prepared to reassign or let go of volunteers who are not working out.

Both staff and volunteers should be able to model the positive behaviors that the program seeks to teach the children. The application process or orientation for both staff and volunteers should include role play as clients. Manuals also are important to program quality.
Concluding Remarks

Randall Lockwood, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Anti-Cruelty Initiatives and Legislative Services, ASPCA

Randall Lockwood is Senior Vice President for Anti-Cruelty Initiatives and Legislative Services for the ASPCA. He received his Ph.D. in Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis. He frequently provides training on issues of animal cruelty and human violence for law-enforcement, social service, mental health, education and veterinary professionals. Dr. Lockwood is co-author of Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence and Forensic Investigation of Animal Cruelty: A Guide for Veterinary and Law Enforcement Professionals, and author of Animal Cruelty Prosecution.

The following are the main points from Dr. Lockwood’s concluding remarks:

- A major concern has been the realization that the strength and effectiveness of many of these programs lie in the personal qualities and dedication of the founders of those efforts. It is important to capture as much information as we can about the specific qualities that effective program managers bring to a program.

- We need to be more attuned to what it is we are trying to do and what our funders or potential funders want to see us accomplish. Are we interested in treatment outcome measures, attitudinal change, behavioral change, knowledge change, all of the above? Are we interested in risk to society, quality of life? Do we have a clear sense of what populations are best served by animal interactions, and who might be inappropriate.

- We should avoid defining our outcome measures so narrowly that they become disconnected from the bigger picture of integrating animals into interactions that allow people to function more safely and happily in society.

- Effective programs help participants identify and make good (non-violent) choices, empower participants to gain power and control in pro-social ways, allow frequent opportunities to send, receive and interpret emotional communication, foster a sense of justice and fairness that extends beyond the individual, and provide the resources to continue to remain resilient in a toxic world.

Dr. Lockwood’s full remarks follow.
Randall Lockwood, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President, Anti-Cruelty Initiatives and Legislative Services
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

I am very pleased to have the last word at a gathering that began with a brainstorming session with Dr. Andrew Rowan more than five years ago, discussing our enthusiasm for many of the programs that have been highlighted during this conference, and our concern that they were not receiving the funding support they needed for longevity. We were also concerned that these programs were rarely seen as significant contributions to the field of violence prevention and intervention. They were often viewed as too warm and fuzzy in an era where the emphasis was on programs that emphasized punitive and coercive approaches - boot camps, DARE, "scared straight" programs and other politically popular but ultimately ineffective or counter-productive approaches. We are very thankful to the Laura J. Niles Foundation for providing the resources to study many of these programs in more detail - and to bring all of you together to share in the efforts to create a less violent society.

First, let me address the issue of program longevity. I feel I have some authority in speaking to this, as a representative of the Western Hemisphere's oldest animal welfare organization. The ASPCA was founded in 1866, largely through the courage, tenacity and clarity of convictions of Henry Bergh, labeled "The Great Meddler" by his contemporaries. While many organizations drift from the vision of their founder and become fragmented in their focus- I think the strength, growth and longevity of the ASPCA is directly linked to our immersion in its history. Our staff meets under Henry's gaze in our conference room, surrounded by memorabilia of more than 140 years of dedication to fighting cruelty to animals. Our agents enforce laws that he was instrumental in writing. We are guided by the past, but we are very aware of new challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to keep moving that vision forward.

Likewise, a major concern of the research that was supported by the Niles Foundation, and a major concern of this conference, has been the realization that the strength and effectiveness of many of these programs lie in the personal qualities and dedication of the founders of those efforts. At the risk of leaving out many pioneers, I want to mention that a driving force behind organizing this conference was the reality that many of the most influential figures cannot be expected to continue forever. We know that much of the effectiveness of Project Pooch lies in the personal dedication of Joan Dalton. The spirit of Forget-Me-Not-Farm embodies the values of Carol Rathmann. Green Chimneys would not be what it is today without the guiding principles of Sam Ross. Unfortunately, we cannot clone these wonderful people and the many others who have launched great programs. This is why it is so important to capture as much information as we can about the specific qualities that the activities of effective program managers bring to a program.

This brings us to the recurrent theme of this conference - the need for effective program evaluation. We need to be more attuned to what it is we are trying to do, and what it is that our funders or potential funders want to see us accomplish. Are we interested in treatment outcome measures, attitudinal change, behavioral change, knowledge change, all of the above? Are we interested in risk to society, quality of life? Do we
have a clear sense of what populations are best served by animal interactions, and who might be inappropriate. On the other hand, we should avoid defining our outcome measures so narrowly that they become disconnected from the bigger picture of integrating animals into interactions that allow people to function more safely and happily in society.

Another point that has been stressed in this meeting is the need to make sure that we focus on the positive changes these programs produce and the competencies they help develop in participants. I agree with Dr. Kazdin's admonition that we avoid too much emphasis on thinking of the target populations for such programs as "at-risk" and focus on the benefits that these programs can bring to a diverse audience, while recognizing that some populations are more in need of improvement in these competencies than others. This is consistent to how we talk about behavior change in applied animal behavior. We no longer focus on "treating" abnormal behavior in companion animals, but rather on finding methods to foster and preserve "behavioral health". Likewise the focus on the "Restorative Justice" model that has been adopted by modern for juvenile justice professionals is on defining the core competencies that help a young offender to get back on track and stay there.

In reviewing the effects Dr. Arluke and others have noted in some of the programs we have reviewed in this conference, I think we can identify the kinds of things that effective programs do to meet this need:

- They help participants identify and make good (non-violent) choices
- They empower participants to gain power and control in pro-social ways
- They allow frequent opportunities to send, receive and interpret emotional communication
- They foster a sense of justice and fairness that extends beyond the individual
- They provide the resources to continue to remain resilient in a toxic world

We are not asking those of you who have ongoing programs to scrap what you are doing and start measuring a few things that might indicate a positive change. What I am suggesting is that you try to bring greater clarity to documenting what you do and why, describing it in a way that allows those who follow you, or who want to replicate what you have done elsewhere, to be able share the vision of your program. Don't try to change the world, focus on your "best shot", the things you know make a positive change in the people with whom you work. If possible, offer quantitative measures of the qualitative changes that you know result from your program.

Again, thank you all for your dedication in your efforts to create a more compassionate world.