Protecting Our Best Friends

Many four-legged residents in our nation’s 71 million pet-owning households live the high life. They benefit from sophisticated veterinary care, browse nose-first in the treat aisles of stores tailor-made for them, and sprawl contentedly across the living room sofa.

Nonie is one of those lucky dogs. The coddled companion of Marsha and C.J. Stevens-Pino, the Maltese relishes car rides in the Florida sunshine and playtime with the family’s shih tzu. She proudly demonstrates new tricks and comforts her canine sibling during thunderstorms.

Nonie’s life wasn’t always a fairy tale. Just a year ago, her knees were partially dislocated. The pads of her yellow-stained feet burned from standing in her own urine. Leashes and collars baffled her and made her gag. Afraid to accept food from human hands, she repeatedly soiled the floor in confusion.

Until she was rescued in 2009 by The HSUS and Wayne County Animal Control, the 4-year-old dog had spent her days birthing puppies in the filthy cage of a large-scale breeding facility in North Carolina. Nationwide, factory-style puppy mills profit from such misery by selling dogs through the Internet and to pet stores.

As The HSUS celebrates the human-animal bond, we must also combat this dark side of the relationship, the systemic cruelties that land millions of animals in the streets, at shelters, and on backyard chains.

While we rescued many from heartbreaking situations in 2009, we continued to target the root causes of their suffering. Ten states enacted laws to improve conditions in puppy mills, and we pushed a federal ban on horse slaughter. We assisted feral cat colony caretakers and provided sanctuary for cats in mortal danger. We worked with Maddie’s Fund, the Ad Council, and local organizations to launch a national advertising campaign to promote adoption. We answered the call of local animal shelters for resources and hands-on assistance. And we partnered with organizations like the SPCA Tampa Bay, which took in Nonie and prepared her for adoption following several days of emergency care provided by HSUS staff after the North Carolina raid.

As The HSUS continues to unite the animal welfare movement against those who value profit over compassion, we are determined to win the decades-old fight on behalf of our best friends. They deserve no less.
Neglected No More

Rescued from a North Carolina puppy mill where she’d spent her first four years as a breeding mother in a barren cage, Nonie could barely walk. Her foot pads were burned from standing in her own urine. But today she “has moved on up to the joys of tummy scratches and eagerly enchanting everyone who passes by into petting her head,” reports adopter Marsha Stevens-Pino.
OUT OF HARM’S WAY

Rescued from a urine- and feces-laden pen during the August 2009 raid of a Staunton, Va., puppy mill, Brandy was so pregnant she looked like a beach ball. But aside from her swollen belly, the Boston terrier was all bones. Dehydrated and ill, she underwent an emergency Caesarian section but lost two of the three puppies she was carrying. Later, she developed pneumonia and needed surgery to correct an enormous cherry eye.

Today, Brandy is the companion of Puppy Mills Campaign manager Kathleen Summers, who helped care for the quiet dog during the hours following the raid. Upon learning later that Brandy was still up for adoption after months of care by the Norfolk SPCA, which volunteered to help place dogs after the rescue, Summers decided to give her a home.

Brandy is happy to fill her new role as the campaign’s “canine survivor outreach coordinator,” crawling into the laps of visitors to HSUS headquarters. “She’s wanted to be someone’s baby all her life,” Summers says. “And you’d never know that this dog lived outside for three years; she hates to be out in the cold for even five minutes.”

Thanks to compassionate citizens around the nation willing to give abused and neglected animals a chance, thousands of dogs like Brandy are getting to know life outside a cage for the first time.

Sign of the Times

At Rocklin Family Pet Shop and Self Serve Dog Wash, the question is no longer “How much is that doggie in the window?” — but rather “Why aren’t there any doggies at all?”

By the end of 2009, the California store had joined almost 500 others around the country that now display a simple answer prominently in windows and on cash registers: “We love puppies. That’s why we don’t sell them.”

“Hopefully, those people who wouldn’t come in here [before] because we sold puppies would come in here now and buy things for their dogs,” says co-owner Alyce Glazer, who is filling the void by adding self-serve grooming areas, further emphasizing the high-quality food she sells, and inviting rescue groups to showcase adoptable animals.

Among the hundreds of other store owners who’ve signed The HSUS’s puppy-friendly pledge is Janice McLain of Washington, D.C.-based PetMac. The success of her enterprise is a testament to the notion that a puppyless store is good business. “People want to buy healthy food, and they want advice on nutrition … and customer service, too,” says McLain. “I think they also like the fact that we work with a rescue group, and that it’s part of our business plan that part of every sale goes to the rescue.”
A PUBLIC GALVANIZED

Snow and frigid temperatures couldn’t keep Jonathan Gilbert and other hardy souls from protesting outside a Petland store in St. Paul, Minn., in early 2009. “With signs held high, we spoke for those with no voices,” Gilbert recalled after joining nationwide demonstrations coordinated by The HSUS and local organizations. “The dogs need every one of us, and…we are gonna show the Petlands of the world that their time is running out.”

Two months later, The HSUS’s litigation team filed a class-action lawsuit against the national chain for misrepresenting the source and health of the puppies it sells, and we later released the results of our second investigation confirming our original finding that “Petland’s claim that it gets dogs from reputable small family breeders is a sham,” says Stephanie Shain, senior director of the Puppy Mills Campaign.

Another notorious purveyor of mill-bred dogs was forced to close its doors in 2009, after a judge cleared the way for the first-ever class-action lawsuit against a U.S. puppy dealer. South Florida’s Wizard of Claws—accused in the HSUS-led lawsuit of selling sick and dying puppies to hundreds of unsuspecting consumers—was forced to sell its assets, including 32 puppies stranded in the store. Working with the Humane Society of Broward County, HSUS attorneys brokered a deal for their rescue and adoption.

I have always been an animal lover, and I have to say that I was shocked and embarrassed that I wasn’t aware of puppy mill conditions until the HSUS report came out. It is beyond sickening, and I intend to do anything I can to help with the cause.

—Angela Gerleman of Frisco, Texas, on why she joined a nationwide protest against Petland

They Came, They Saw, They Legislated

It would be hard to describe unless you saw it for yourself: a Maltese in a tiny cage, so depleted of nutrients that she had no teeth left to hold her dangling tongue in place. So Amanda Arrington, The HSUS’s North Carolina state director at the time, didn’t even try. Instead, she called lawmakers and asked them to join her.

Disturbed so much by what he witnessed upon arriving at the scene of the emergency shelter that night in February 2009, state Sen. Don Davis introduced a bill requiring any facility with more than 15 adult breeding dogs to be licensed, inspected, and held to humane standards.

Davis wasn’t the only one moved by a first-person look at the misery wrought by puppy mills. When Indiana state Sen. Linda Lawson volunteered to help rescue 215 dogs from a puppy mill in early June, one dog in particular caught her eye. “When you opened the cage, she would run to the back and stand there and shake,” recalls Lawson. “…But holding onto her, she just clung to you.”

Within the next month, that dog would be adopted by Lawson’s granddaughter and her family—and the puppy mill legislation she and The HSUS had pushed for the past year would take effect.

2009 Impact: 16 puppy mill raids and assists / 3,000+ animals rescued from these mass breeding facilities
10 new laws enacted to help improve conditions in puppy mills / 461 pet stores pledging not to sell puppies
Changing the Odds in the Gulf Coast

The question gnawed at Valerie Rachal as she drove around town: How many spaghetti dinners, bake sales, and dog walks would it take to raise $35,000 in two months? After working hard to establish a low-cost spay/neuter service at the Southern Pines Animal Shelter in Hattiesburg, Miss., Rachal was facing a hefty deficit that threatened to prevent it from opening.

Just when her worry began to turn to despair, she received the call from The HSUS’s Heather Cammisa that made her pull over to the side of the road and cry. “I was starting to sweat it, and HSUS saved the day,” says Rachal, the clinic’s director. “Our low-cost spay/neuter clinic could not have opened in July 2009 without the generous support of The HSUS. Other grant and donor funding left us with a $35,000 shortfall in needed funds—and The HSUS stepped in to fill the void.”

Intended to tackle the area’s tremendous overpopulation problem, the clinic performed nearly 3,000 surgeries during its first eight months. The number of animals coming into the shelter has also dropped for the first time ever, Rachal says. And when a fire destroyed the shelter’s central office and killed four cats at the end of 2009, The HSUS again provided financial assistance.

Our Gulf Coast initiative to end pet homelessness has included millions of dollars in grants to dozens of humane groups; in 2009, we gave $250,000 to help fund the construction of a sparkling new animal shelter in hurricane-devastated St. Bernard Parish. We also continued our research-driven advertising campaign to promote spay/neuter as a solution to pet overpopulation in the region. The campaign was effective in reaching the target audience, says Asunta Davis, executive director of Robinson’s Rescue, a low-cost clinic: “Many, many more people are aware of the pet overpopulation problem and the answer—spay/neuter—since the campaign.”

Hurricane Katrina shined a light not only on the poverty and suffering of the people of Louisiana, but also on the plight of our animals. The HSUS allocated resources, people, and dollars to make sure the light did not go out. HSUS support has been priceless to Robinson’s Rescue. We are so proud to be the first spay/neuter clinic in Louisiana and so happy that five more clinics are opening soon. Together we begin a better day for animals in Louisiana.

—Asunta Davis, executive director, Robinson’s Rescue, Shreveport, La.
Answering the Call of Local Animal Shelters

Sara Pizano remembers the number: 578. That’s how many recommendations for improvements The HSUS made after conducting a thorough evaluation of Miami-Dade Animal Services in Florida.

One of the suggestions—that the agency hire an experienced animal services director—resulted in the appointment of Pizano, a veterinarian. She and her team soon tackled The HSUS’s other recommendations, addressing everything from removal and isolation of sick animals from the general shelter population to proper staff training.

Each year, our Shelter Services experts provide advice and hands-on assistance to local agencies around the country. For Pizano and her staff, the hard work bore fruit in 2009 when the Florida Animal Control Association named Miami-Dade the Animal Control Agency of the Year. Accomplishments included a 250-percent increase in adoptions, the creation of a rescue program involving more than 50 groups, a drastic reduction in disease rates, and a volunteer program that logged 11,000 donated hours. “This year we will save more animals than ever before,” Pizano says, “and are grateful for the framework the HSUS evaluation provided to improve the shelter.”

One Spay at a Time

Donald Kendrick, founder of Spay Alabama, trains feral cat caretakers to manage their colonies with the help of HSUS DVDs and educational materials—a resource that former stray and watchful companion Pinky surely appreciates.

As an animal control officer, Kendrick saw the tragic results of pet overpopulation, but now he tries to stop the problem at its source. After helping his state land among the top 10 for most number of spay/neuter surgeries during The HSUS’s annual Spay Day event, Kendrick funded almost 100 more through a $5,000 HSUS Doris Day Animal Foundation Spay Day grant. All told, nearly 400 dedicated partnering individuals and organizations completed or funded more than 40,000 surgeries in the U.S. and abroad.

Rescuing Ferals in Peril

Almost 60 cat castaways were saved from certain death on San Nicolas Island, after The HSUS worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove and transport them to sanctuaries. Now safe at The Fund for Animals Wildlife Center, our animal care center in Ramona, Calif., 52 of the cats reside in a spacious enclosure complete with trees, rocks, hiding places, logs, and plank walkways. At their former island home, the cats were in danger of being killed as part of a federal restoration project that aimed to improve the nesting success for seabirds and protect other native species.

Through education and one-on-one assistance, our Feral Cat Program strives to reduce cat overpopulation and increase the quality of life for feral cats. For colony caretakers like Lisa Blenden of Waco, Texas—who constantly struggled to find enough humane traps and funding for spay/neuter surgeries—our support provides a lifeline. “Thanks to The Humane Society of the United States for their grants distributed by the Waco Animal Birth Control Clinic and the Heart of Texas Feral Friends Society, my colony appears to have been completely neutralized,” says Blenden. “I cannot thank enough those who have contributed their time and funds to give such a beautiful gift to my beloved four-legged, furry friends.”

Ten of 12 kittens born during the rescue operation have now been adopted.
A Mission of Hope and Healing

Two hundred miles is a long way to travel for basic veterinary care, but people like Vincent Dave have no other choice. Living on an Indian reservation in McDermitt, Nev., he once made the journey for his beloved Denalah, after someone shot her in the face while they hiked a canyon together.

In the summer of 2009, Dave and other residents of Indian reservations didn’t have to take that long trip, thanks to the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association. A team of employees, volunteers, and students provided treatment and spay/neuter surgeries to animals living on 15 tribal lands. They served clients who’d begun lining up at 6 a.m., desperate for help.

“There is a common misperception that the animal welfare problems in one place or another are the result of some specific cultural beliefs about the value of animals,” says Windi Wojdak, director of U.S. programs for HSVMA’s Field Services, “when in reality it all comes down to access.”

Wojdak and other crew members worked feverishly at each stop to transform empty gyms and other community centers into fully functioning animal hospitals, laboring well into the night and getting up before the crack of dawn each morning to do it all over again.

“It gets kind of addicting,” says Bill Pomper, a Connecticut veterinarian who was pleased to tell Dave that Denalah’s body condition was ideal. Pomper has learned to relish the sleep-deprived days during his 10 years as an HSVMA volunteer. “One of the goals of the clinics is to instill an awareness of animal welfare. We’ll talk about how they can purchase certain vaccines as a follow-up. If they have parasites, we talk about what they might do about parasite control. I think we have an impact just making them think about the care the animals are getting.”

A Lifeline for Struggling Pet Owners

When Rocky’s owners lost their jobs and their apartment in the same week, the 11-year-old pit bull’s future looked dim. Living inside a van in the dead of winter while his human family decamped to a homeless shelter nearby, Rocky was on his way to becoming yet another pet victim of the recession.

Pets for Life NYC stepped in to help, locating a foster home that would care for the senior dog until his family got back on their feet. Dedicated to resolving problems that could otherwise lead to shelter relinquishment, abandonment, or neglect, the HSUS program enlists the help of area trainers, behaviorists, veterinarians, and boarding facilities to offer low-cost or free services to those in need.

Based at Animal Care and Control of New York City, Pets for Life NYC’s coordinators and volunteers are able to help people who have come to the shelter as a last resort. They offer advice on everything from controlling pet-related allergies to resolving landlord-tenant conflicts. The ultimate goal, says co-coordinator Joyce Friedman, is “to have a surrender prevention program at every shelter in the country, to make shelters a community resource and change the idea that pets are disposable.”

Among thousands of clients assisted last year, Rocky’s family had a happy ending. Reuniting with their dog eight months later, they were so pleased with the service that they signed on to foster other dogs in need.

2009 Impact: 23,000+ low-cost spay/neuter surgeries resulting from our ongoing project to strengthen local efforts in the Gulf Coast / 40,000+ spay/neuter surgeries performed by nearly 400 organizers in 24 countries during HSUS and HSI Spay Day events / $248,418 raised in pet photo contest for distribution to domestic and international participants in Spay Day / 8,057 animals treated in underserved communities in the U.S., Mexico, and South America by the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association / 19 animal care and control agencies caring for more than 63,200 animals per year evaluated and trained through the Shelter Evaluation program / 2,248 shelter professionals, volunteers, and rescue groups trained through Animal Care Expo and other events / 3,451 clients given guidance to prevent pet relinquishment through Pets for Life NYC / 89 state laws passed to address pet-protection issues such as spay/neuter, puppy mills, animal cruelty, pet trusts, humane euthanasia, antifreeze poisoning, and disaster planning / 33,000 media outlets given pet adoption advertising by the Shelter Pet Project, launched by The HSUS, Maddie’s Fund, and the Ad Council
Second Chances

After a decade of being trained to run as fast as possible, Miss Judge had nowhere left to go. She was virtually a goner, sold at the New Holland, Pa., auction to a buyer who intended to sell her for meat.

Saved in the nick of time by Angel Acres Horse Haven Rescue, the former racehorse was eventually adopted—but not before a session with natural horsemanship expert Pat Parelli. Partnering with The HSUS to hold seven training events in 2009, Parelli used his knowledge of the species to show packed arenas a kinder, gentler method of working with rescued horses.

The exhibitions are at the heart of an HSUS initiative to educate the public about the care of these animals, who all too often end up abandoned, neglected, or killed for their meat at slaughter plants in Mexico and Canada. The journey to get there is traumatic, the killing methods brutal. While slaughter facilities in the U.S. have been shuttered, a federal ban is needed to keep them closed for good and to stop the transport of American horses to plants outside our borders. An HSUS-backed federal bill to do just that, introduced in 2009, has garnered widespread support.

A Crackdown on Horse Soring

Tennessee walking horses have a unique gait, one celebrated by those who love these beautiful animals. But to exaggerate their natural movements for the show ring, some people apply caustic chemicals to the horses’ ankles, causing them to step higher to avoid the pain—a practice known as soring.

The federal Horse Protection Act of 1970 prohibits the participation of sored horses in exhibitions. But as The HSUS reported in a 2009 video exposé, the industry has been poorly self-policing, the law’s enforcement has long been underfunded, and USDA inspectors have never been able to make significant headway in curbing the practice.

The HSUS has been pushing for years for more frequent and stringent USDA inspections, and for the money needed to make enforcement effective. Signs that the USDA is beginning to crack down are growing. In September 2009, inspectors at the 71st Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration—the industry’s largest show, held annually—found more than 400 violations of the HPA. It was the greatest number documented at any show in recent memory and more than 200 higher than the number recorded the year before.