



Rescued pit bull Winston inspires owner Laurie Maxwell in her work to end animal fighting.

Canines in the Cubicles

Wander our hallways, and you'll see some of us working like dogs

by JOHN BALZAR

At the moment, 18 percent of the staffers in the Communications section of The Humane Society of the United States are dogs.

First-time visitors to our operations building are surprised to hear the fact. That's probably because of something they don't hear: barks, cries, growls, or yelps. Our cubicles, offices, and hallways are as calm as

any you'll encounter. Dogs, you see, quickly settle into the rhythms of the office setting. If you looked carefully, you might notice that we have water bowls on the floor in addition to the standard water cooler in the corner. You'll see that we've learned to keep our dignity, our balance, and our modesty as we step over those "baby gates" that de-

fine each dog's cubicle. And I'm sure that if you turned many of us upside down, dog biscuits would fall out of our pockets. But that's about it.

No remuneration is paid to dogs who show up each day, of course. Rather, in the way of these loyal creatures everywhere, they are content to serve for nothing more than an occasional treat, a pat on the head, and the chance to be at our sides.

Serve? Yes, that's the word. By their presence, they serve to boost workplace morale. They provide lessons in teamwork—when a human is called to a meeting, or to long-distance travel, the need falls first to an office mate to dog-sit. In the ancient manner of the canine, these white-collar office dogs provide a measure of balance to our hectic days and by so doing, they contribute to productivity.

Most important, dogs serve as warm-blooded, tail-wagging, funny-faced, shaggy-eared, all-day reminders of why animals are so important in our lives, and also how they are so vulnerable.

So thank you, Ardy, Bella, Cookie, Freasky, Gigi, Hank, Hobbes, Jack, Jaeger, Murphy, Pepper, Pyper, Sandy, Tabby, Tango, Yoda—and, yes, Louie, who acts enough like a dog that we don't object too strenuously to his actually being a cat. Let me also mention that calm, hairy fellow named Boss; and sweet little uncomplaining Tess, too. We lost them recently to old age, but they live in our thoughts.

These are tough times in the land, as we're often told. Well, they are less tough thanks to the companionship of our animals. Bringing dogs to the office is a perk that costs employers little but pays dividends in staff loyalty and workplace joy.

In our office family, there are last-chance dogs who were adopted from shelters only because they were welcome at work and would not have to be left home alone. There are staffers here who wind up commuting farther than they'd like for the call of our work and the privilege of being with their dogs. And I think I speak for many of my coworkers at The HSUS in recalling the wisdom of an old adage that is

particularly poignant in the office setting: The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail, not his tongue.

► **JOHN BALZAR** is The HSUS's senior vice president of communications.

Office Politics, Poochy-Style

Want to increase productivity in the workplace? Boost employee retention? Win friends and get your staff members to actually talk to each other?

Forget everything you ever learned in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* or the pages of *Inc.* magazine. You've got something much more influential at your feet: a dog.

The writers of all those management tomes will probably never be able to quantify the mysterious team-building powers of drooling tongues and wagging tails. But for those interested in adding a rung for canines to the corporate ladder, the authors of *Dogs at Work: A Practical Guide to Creating Dog-Friendly Workplaces* make a compelling case.

A cross between an HR manual for the poochy set and a Ms. Manners column for their owners, this new book from The HSUS emphasizes the positive effects of bringing dogs to work: greater creativity, lower blood pressure, more personal interactions. Pet writer Liz Palika and HSUS chief economist Jennifer Fearing also provide tips for keeping it that way, offering step-by-step advice on everything from house-training issues to designated dog-free zones. Sample policies from The HSUS and other organizations address potential liabilities and list procedures for preserving harmony among the species.



► **TO ORDER** a copy of *Dogs at Work* for \$21.95, visit humanesociety.org/hspres.

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