

## Slow but Steady Progress in Peru

Peruvian animal shelters make do without a “culture of adoption”

BY SARAH OSTMAN



Animazul focuses its energy on spaying and neutering. Surgeries are performed in the homes of volunteers throughout the city; veterinarians operate on the dogs atop tables, and the animals recover on cardboard sheets on the floor.

**When Lourdes Chino goes to work** selling cigarettes and candy bars on a hilly street off the Plaza de Armas in Cusco, Peru, she doesn't go alone. She brings her dogs, Chiqui and Beto, with her. While the 14-year-old girl sits, calling out to tourists who pass her cart, Chiqui and Beto run free in the streets, picking through garbage and ducking into open storefronts to beg for scraps.

So far the two dogs have been fortunate; like many other dogs in Peru, they seem to have a sixth sense that keeps them out of harm's way. But, Lourdes acknowledges, letting them run free is risky. "People leave their pets on the streets," she says nonchalantly. "Sometimes, they are killed by cars."

Such casual attitudes about pet welfare are common in the developing nation, where Chiqui and Beto are considered lucky to have even a casual caretaker. Thousands of *perros callejeros* (street dogs) are less fortunate,

roaming the country's streets, often matted and infested with fleas, surviving on garbage.

"Animal abandonment is a huge problem in Peru, as well as many lower-income countries," says Molly Mednikow, the U.S. citizen who founded Amazon Community Animal Rescue, Education & Safety (Amazon CARES), an animal protection organization in Iquitos. "People that are struggling do not share the same bond with their animals as people in more industrialized nations."

This attitude makes for a unique set of challenges for those determined to help Peru's animal population. Indeed, animal shelters are a foreign concept to most Peruvians. Still, a few committed organizations are working to carve out their niche, control the pet population, and change public perception about strays, one family at a time.

Animazul, a small shelter built on desert land an hour outside Lima, has provided

refuge for abandoned dogs for the past nine years. Sixty dogs currently live at the shelter, dividing their time between large communal kennels and a dusty outdoor play area tufted with grass. The entire operation is run by six volunteers and one onsite caretaker who lives in an adjacent home.

In a culture where adopting a mutt is akin to adopting a rat, Animazul asks tough questions of its potential adopters: "Are you going to walk your dog?" asks one question in a 21-part adoption questionnaire on the group's website. "If you go away for more than a day, who will take care of it?"

The questionnaire is largely symbolic, though—an endorsement of the values the group would like to see in its adopters. But those adopters are scarce; once a dog arrives at the shelter, she's pretty much there to stay. Animazul is lucky to adopt out one dog per year, says shelter volunteer Samantha Winter.

"It is so difficult because they are all grown up," Winter says. "And most of the dogs ... are a mixture of many breeds, so people don't like that." The shelter's intake numbers are on the rise, she notes; frequently, volunteers find a dog or two dumped at the shelter's door in the morning.

But necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention. With no adoptions to speak of, Animazul has developed a new approach to make ends meet: sponsorship. Sponsors—mainly animal-loving Peruvians—send 70 soles (\$25 in U.S. money) per month to "adopt" a dog, underwriting the cost of that animal's food and veterinary care while he continues to live at the shelter. That program has proven more successful than traditional adoptions—nearly half the shelter's dogs are claimed by a benefactor, Winter says.

The group has also begun focusing on a larger mission: spaying and neutering. Surgeries are performed in volunteers' living rooms in neighborhoods throughout Lima; owners turn over their pets to a volunteer veterinarian who clips the dogs' nails, cleans their ears, and fixes them on the spot. The vets operate on the animals on folding tables, and the animals recover on sheets of cardboard on the living room floor—a less-than-ideal solution, but one that has enabled the organization to sterilize 120 dogs so far. The group hopes to reach more by going mobile. "Our dream is to have a van, to move from that street to this street and to have all the equipment and just operate and operate, one surgery after another," Winter says.

The group provides the surgeries at no cost to the owners—a crucial element. "If you say you have to pay 10 soles or 20 soles [\$4 to \$7 in U.S. dollars], the people won't pay that," she says.

It's not just a shortage of cash that's the problem, though. Cultural differences and a lack of education also lead to an exorbitant number of mistreated and abandoned dogs, especially in rural areas of Peru, says Mednikow.

In Iquitos, the humid jungle town where Amazon CARES is based, ill and stray dogs are especially common. Because the city is surrounded by water and is only accessible by boat or plane, Mednikow says, it's difficult for people to take animals with them when they move.

The city's distinct lifestyle adds to the problem. People in Iquitos are accustomed to living with open homes; doors are left ajar for ventilation, and children and pets alike spend their days in the streets. When they are inside, pets often serve a purpose, such as killing rats; when animals age and are no longer considered useful, Mednikow says, they are tossed into the street. These abandoned animals are left to forage for food and are infested with parasites, causing a health hazard.

In the years leading up to the founding of Amazon CARES in 2004, Mednikow says, these problems had grown out of hand. "It was impossible to walk five feet without stepping over a very ill, stray dog," she says. And many locals didn't just "step over" the dogs. Because the dogs were suspected of carrying disease, it was common for people to pelt them with rocks, beat them with sticks, or throw boiling water on them. One was doused in kerosene and set on fire. "Residents did this due to fear," Mednikow says. "People do not want these infirm dogs around."

Amazon CARES fought back with a campaign to educate the public, offering mobile veterinary and birth control clinics, humane education, and animal therapy for children with disabilities. Its success over the past five years, especially in the area of spaying and neutering, has been incredible: In 2009 alone, the organization sterilized more than 1,800 animals.

"When we started, we had to trap all the dogs and met with much resistance," Mednikow says. "Now we, sadly, have to turn people away from our campaigns, as we have people lined up to spay or neuter their pet."

The organization also keeps a shelter for abandoned dogs, many of whom are disabled. Most will stay there until they die—including the dog who, miraculously, survived the kerosene attack. But as with Animazul, adoptions are a constant challenge.

It's undeniable that Animazul and Amazon CARES are fighting an uphill battle. Jessica Higgins, former program manager for the Humane Society International's Latin American programs, explains that Peru does not yet possess a "culture of adoption." Therefore, Higgins cautions, those Latin Americans pioneering in animal protection

## Animal Sheltering Online

Your magazine isn't just in print—it's on the Web, too. Check out this issue's online extras.

- Go to [animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces](http://animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces) to download a poster encouraging pet owners to think ahead and prepare a disaster plan that includes their furry family members. For more information, go to [ready.gov/america/getakit/](http://ready.gov/america/getakit/) and [humanesociety.org/petsanddisasters](http://humanesociety.org/petsanddisasters).
- As a supplement to our Volunteer Management column on determining how to track information about your volunteers, go to [animalsheltering.org/databases](http://animalsheltering.org/databases) to read "Choosing a Volunteer Management Database," and go to [animalsheltering.org/volunteer\\_application](http://animalsheltering.org/volunteer_application) to read "The Volunteer Application."



The very idea of an animal shelter is often a foreign concept to people who are struggling themselves just to get by. But this little boy seems very taken with a tiny kitten at the site of a mobile clinic run by Animazul, an animal shelter located about an hour outside Lima.

## [scoop]

need to put their energy where it will be the most effective—and that may not be an animal shelter.

“Don’t start an animal shelter,” Higgins says. “Essentially you’re going to be running a sanctuary.” That’s fine, she says, “but in terms of making the biggest possible impact for the biggest number of animals, put those resources into spay and neuter. That is going to prevent a lot more suffering in the long run.”

There’s no telling how long it will take to change the general attitude about animal protection in Peru.

For now, stray dogs are just a regular part of the culture—a part most Peruvians hardly notice and don’t see changing any time soon.

But, Higgins points out, it’s important to remember that the fight for animals has to start somewhere. In terms of animal over-



Animal abandonment is a huge problem in Peru, and street dogs are a common sight throughout the developing nation. One such dog watches the activity at a mobile spay/neuter veterinary clinic run by animal protection organization Amazon CARES.

population and abuse, Peru “is probably not too different to how the U.S. was 50 years ago,” she says. “It took a major effort to get to where there aren’t strays everywhere in the U.S. It was not something that’s just inherent here.” **AS**

*Sarah Ostman is a journalist and graduate student from Chicago, Ill. She enjoys writing, traveling, and trips to the park with her 2-year-old shelter dog, Bailey.*

**EMERGENCY RELIEF Waggin™**  
drives to save pets' lives

# Support When You Need It Most

When disaster strikes, PetSmart Charities® Emergency Relief Waggin™ program sends vehicles stocked with essential supplies to disasters involving 350 or more pets, and provides grants to help agencies caring for pet victims of natural or man-made disasters.

Contact the manager of emergency grants at 1-800-423-PETS ext. 2840 for more information.

Visit [www.petsmartcharities.org](http://www.petsmartcharities.org) to learn more about our emergency relief efforts.

**PETSMART Charities.**

©2010-2011 PetSmart Charities, Inc. All rights reserved. 030-1009-004



## Toy Story

### Study finds that toys and eye-level placement help shelter cats find homes

BY JIM BAKER

**Shelters that want to increase** the odds of their cats getting adopted should consider putting toys into their cages and housing the felines at eye level.

Those two steps alone gave cats in one shelter a significant leg up on finding a new home, according to a study published in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* (Vol. 13, No. 2).

The study, “Factors Relevant to Adoption of Cats in an Animal Shelter,” looked at the effect of providing cats with toys, the location of their cages, and individual characteristics (activity level, age, sex, and coat color) on 111 cats available for adoption in an animal shelter—in this case, the ASPCA’s facility in New York City.

“The analysis revealed a greater adopter viewing of cats housed at eye level and of those with toys—even though the toys did not affect the cats’ behavior,” write researchers Jacqueline M. Fantuzzi, Katherine A. Miller, and Emily Weiss.

This report, the authors note, builds upon recent studies in shelters that suggest that a cat’s activity level, playfulness, and cage enrichments can affect the cat’s adoptability, and that simply placing toys in an animal’s cage can affect the perception of adopters.

Cats included in the study were domestic shorthair breeds between 12 and 39 months of age, with no known behavior or health issues. They had been in the shelter between three and 168 days. The 111 cats in the study (47 neutered males, 64 spayed females) averaged 22 months of age and had spent an average of 23 days in the shelter when the study began.

The cats were divided into two groups: the toy group and the control group. Cats in

the toy group were given a yellow plastic ping-pong ball and a “Cat Dancer” toy made of a piece of flexible yellow plastic strapping, fed through a hole in a rubber stopper wedged in the cage door. Part of the strapping stuck outside the cage, so that potential adopters could move the inner segment. Cats in the control group did not receive toys.

The study took place during 16 weekends from March through July of 2007. Each week-

end, five to eight cats who met the study’s criteria were assigned to the two study groups. The conditions of the study were in effect over Days 1 and 2, and adoptions were tallied for both days.

“Even though the presence of toys in cages did not affect the cats’ behavior, cats with toys were viewed more often than cats without toys. Adopters viewed cats in the upper tier [of cages] more times than cats in lower tiers ...” the researchers write. The study indicates that strategies that lead to more viewings of cats are likely to lead to more adoptions.

These findings suggest that shelters should consider housing cats who’ve been harder to place in cages that offer the best visibility. And, since adopters prefer to both view and adopt cats who are active, shelters might find it helpful to come up with ways of stimulating activity in their cat adoption areas. Even though the addition of toys to cages didn’t spark playtime, the toys did attract people’s attention—and that often led to adoption. **AS**

## Enormous. Wonderful. Possibilities.



The  
**CENTER** for  
**LOST PETS™**  
Using the Web to Find Lost Pets

Imagine if we all went to the same place when we lost or found a pet. Countless lost pets would be returned to the people who are missing them, freeing up space and resources in shelters for pets who need a good home.

The Center for Lost Pets can fundamentally change the way we look for our lost pets. But it can’t happen without you.

Learn more @ [www.TheCenterForLostPets.com](http://www.TheCenterForLostPets.com)



Made Possible By:  
**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES



## Tower of Power

Nevada kitty climbs to new heights—then learns the value of an exit strategy

Many cats venture no higher than the upper reaches of their kitty condos, the warm surface atop refrigerators, or the occasional bookcase. They enjoy having high perching spots from which to survey the territory, just like their big brethren in the wild.

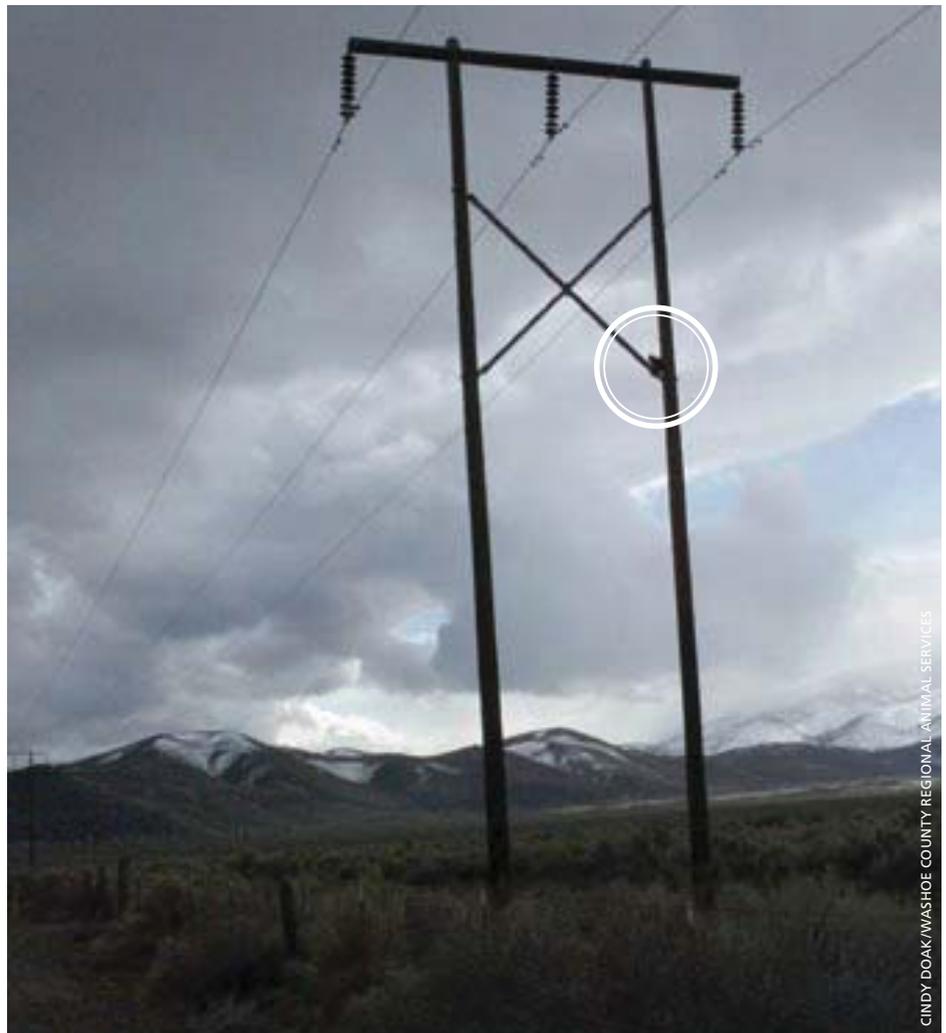
But one kitty in Nevada carried things a little too far, and required help from local animal welfare groups to follow the old rule that what goes up must come down.

It was early March when Washoe County Regional animal services officer Cindy Doak responded to a report of a cat stranded in the crook of a power pole, some 40 feet up, in a rural, windswept part of the county, which encompasses the cities of Reno and Sparks. People who live nearby and others who'd driven past had been calling her department to alert officers to the cat's situation.

So Doak went to check it out, and quickly verified that the cat was still there—and that there was no way she could rescue him without assistance. She notified her supervisors, who contacted a local company with a boom truck—the kind with an extendable arm with a basket at the end for a person to stand in—that had helped in other instances when cats had gotten stuck out of the reach of animal control officers.

The truck arrived shortly, and Doak stood back to watch as the employee went up in the bucket. Though not a professional animal handler, the man got lucky: The trapped cat was amenable to coming down. "The cat just sat there, and he reached over and patted the cat, and the cat sat there and looked at him," says Doak. "So he picked the cat up and held it against him, and I had the cage and everything, so when he came down, he just handed me the cat. I put him right into the transfer cage, and took him right to the truck," she says.

Doak took the cat—a handsome, black-and-white male—back to her shelter, where she shared the news of his high-wire act with Kiersten Phillips, lead cat caregiver at the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) in Reno. In Washoe County, the impoundment facility for animals is in the Washoe County Regional Animal Services Center, which is



CINDY DOAK/WASHOE COUNTY REGIONAL ANIMAL SERVICES

In early March, this kitty got himself stranded 40 feet from the ground, on a power pole in rural Washoe County, Nev.—not a good place for a cat to be. Luckily for him, residents of nearby homes, and motorists passing by, spotted him and alerted local animal control.

in the facility shared with NHS. Doak's department typically keeps stray animals for a five-day holding period, giving owners time to claim their pets, but Phillips was eager to take in the rescued cat more quickly. She knew that if the shelter publicized his unusual story in a press release, word would get out, and someone would likely reclaim or adopt the cat within days. Doak agreed to let her take him.

But the fortunate feline still needed a name, as he had no collar or ID tags. Doak did the honors: "I said, 'Let's call him Sparky,'" she says, laughing. "She thought that was cute, so they just put that on there.

I mean, what else you gonna call a cat on a power pole?"

The newly christened Sparky was neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and made available for adoption. Based on his good condition and friendly demeanor when she rescued him, Doak draws some conclusions about Sparky. "He either was somebody's cat, or had been somebody's cat. He was about a half mile from houses, there's a lake, there's a park and stuff right there. So he probably got out there, doing cat things—hunting, whatever he was doing—and I bet the coyotes were on him, and chased him up the pole," she says.

Word got out about Sparky, thanks to a press release from the shelter and an item on a *Reno-Gazette Journal* blog, and a local TV station picked up the story, too. That's how a man in the area learned about Sparky, and quickly phoned his wife in her car, telling her to immediately go to the shelter to see the cat. The couple had been looking for their own lost cat for two months, and the husband thought that Sparky might be him.

Phillips brought Sparky out to the visiting room to meet the woman. "He was loving on her so much it was hard for her to look at him [to see if he was her cat]. He was such a sweet, sweet guy," she says. Sparky turned out not to be the couple's lost pet, but the woman felt the charm of his "electric" personality and decided to adopt him anyway. Within about a week of being rescued, Sparky had found a new home.

It was a happy ending for the high-climbing kitty, but not an unusual one for a pet in the Reno area. NHS and Doak's animal control agency work together closely, along with many rescue groups and other

humane organizations, in their goal of creating a no-kill community. Together, NHS and Washoe County Regional Animal Services have achieved a countywide save rate of 90 percent for dogs and 89 percent for cats.

For Doak, who's been with her agency more than eight years, the whole episode with Sparky couldn't have gone better.

"That cat *wanted* to be rescued. ... He needed help, and he knew it. And he was totally calm. ... He was like a textbook cat rescue. He was totally cooperative about being picked up off of that power line way high in the air, he was fine about riding down in a bucket, he was fine about being handed to me, he was fine about going into the carrier. He had no issues whatsoever about anything."

Maybe Sparky was so mellow because he knew the folks trying to help him sure beat the alternatives: staying stranded 40 feet high in the air; or trying to climb down on his own, only to risk running into any coyotes lurking about. Sparky seemed to know the



When Kiersten Phillips, lead cat caregiver at the Nevada Humane Society, heard about the rescue, she knew the cat would be adopted quickly once she got the word out. Seen here with Phillips, the cat dubbed Sparky found a home within a week.

odds were against him, and he recognized a good thing when he saw one.

"He was just extremely lucky to be spotted," Phillips says. "If you look at the pictures of how little he was [on the power pole], he's just a very lucky boy." 🐾

**Innovative Animal Care Equipment That's Built to Last**

**Before**      **After**

**Replacement Kennels**

See our website for a full line of grooming, boarding & veterinary equipment.

**Cages**

Slam Latch  
easy to close

Raised Flooring  
keeps paws clean & dry

Divider Panel  
converts 1 cage into 2

Waste Tray  
removable for easy cleaning

**Free Catalog**  
www.directanimal.com | 940.433.2173

**DIRECT**  
ANIMAL PRODUCTS  
A Division of Tristar Metals, Inc.



## Dirty Dogs Bathed Dirt Cheap

A shelter's onsite dog wash cleans up pooches and brings in moola

While the K9000 may sound like a robot attack dog from outer space, it's actually a coin-operated dog-washing machine. And in Edmonton, Canada, it's not only popping out cleaner pooches, it's helping the Edmonton Humane Society bring in cash for real, earth-bound shelter dogs.

The K9000 wasn't executive director Stephanie McDonald's first choice for spiffing up local animals. Before the recession settled in, when the organization was planning for construction of its new facility, its goal was to have a full-service grooming salon onsite.

But, McDonald says, once the economy shifted, she felt that would end up being a risky venture for the shelter. So she started googling to see what backup options were out there. She wanted a system that would be durable and allow people to use it with little staff supervision.

There are other systems available, but the K9000 seemed to fit her shelter's bill—it

didn't require an extra room for maintenance, and the height of the platform seemed user-friendly and safe for the animals. Plus, she notes, "it's a stand-alone unit, so basically, you just need water and power and a drain, and that's it. It's really minimal in terms of what a shelter has to put together."

Rechristened the Muddy Paws Self Serve Wash & Groom by the shelter, the canine cleanser has paid for itself in the 10 months since it was installed. Given the device's hefty price tag—McDonald says her organization paid \$20,000 Canadian for it; the pricing listed on the company's website is \$18,495 in U.S. dollars—that's saying something.

The dog wash has functions for soap and water, and a dryer as well. Pet owners are with their dogs throughout the process, and do the washing personally, using the hose to wet, lather, and rinse. At Edmonton, the wash costs visitors \$10 for 10 minutes of use; they can pay for more time if they choose.

All those wet dogs add up. "We average 500 to 600 dollars a week on this unit," McDonald says. "It takes about 20 to 30 washes to get clogged up with hair, so our janitors just go by and take out the clumps as necessary. Aside from that, so far it's been a virtually zero-maintenance, huge cash cow for us."

Edmonton Humane widely publicized the dog wash when it opened its new facility, and continues to promote it to new adopters as well. People about to adopt learn about the shelter while they wait. "We kind of follow the Disneyland model, where as you're waiting in line you watch these little clips," says McDonald. The videos cover the basics of the adoption process as well as the shelter's return policy, what to do if an adopted animal gets sick, and shelter programs that are available to assist new owners. One of those programs is the dog wash.

*Exposure!*

*Exposure!*

*Client Driven!*

*Client Approved!*

*Exposure!*

*Let your animals strut their stuff*

Chameleon Software puts your pictures on PetHarbor.com, and automatically uploads them to AdoptAPet, Petfinder and other top sites.

Give your animals the ultimate chance of finding a new home or returning home after being lost!



“[The video] says something like, ‘You may not want to take your animal home a little dirty ... because at the shelter we do our best, but we just don’t have the opportunity to give them a full wash. So if you want to get them clean and ready to go, just head over there for 10 dollars.’”

The operating costs are minimal, McDonald says—soap, some minimal staff time to ensure the room is kept clean, and, of course, water—but, she points out, shelters use water like crazy already. (Steve Putnam, executive director of the National Federation of Humane Societies, notes that federation members get a 10 percent discount on the equipment and special pricing for ongoing supplies.)

McDonald’s one caveat about the installation is that, were she to do it over again, she’d have different flooring installed in the room. “I didn’t realize it would be as wet a room [as it is],” she says. The room has industrial laminate flooring, and she thinks epoxy resin flooring would have been a better option.

The dog wash has proved popular with new adopters, but the majority of users are return visitors, some of whom come back on a biweekly basis. McDonald says she worried that, with Edmonton’s cold weather and copious amounts of snow, the wash might not be used consistently, but she says it’s been a nonstop activity. The room has windows, so people watch the washing going on as they wait, and some customers drive across town to use it to avoid clogging their own drains with pet hair.

One of the wash’s best sources of customers, though, is the shelter’s three-acre, members-only dog park. People who’ve let their dogs loose to run for a while come over and use the wash once their pooches are good and dirty. “I should have put a mud pit in the park, and then I could generate more money,” McDonald jokes. **AS**



The K9000 coin-operated dog-washing machine has proved a huge hit at the Edmonton Humane Society in Alberta, Canada, where it brings in \$500 to \$600 per week in revenue for the shelter. Staff member Stephanie Price uses the contraption to bathe a furry friend.

## Join Us in Sunny Florida!

 THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Presents

# ANIMAL CARE EXPO

**May 4–7, 2011**

Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort | Walt Disney World® Resort, Florida

**The best conference experience** in the animal protection field, Animal Care Expo is an unparalleled opportunity to recharge, learn new skills and strategies, and network with likeminded people from around the country—and the world!

Attend workshops on topics important to you, including animal care and behavior, community disaster planning for animals, staff and volunteer management, adoptions, foster care, community outreach, shelter and emergency veterinary medicine, field services and cruelty investigations, and street animal welfare in developing nations.

**For more information,**  
visit [animalsheltering.org/expo](http://animalsheltering.org/expo) or call 1-800-248-EXPO.



## A Georgia Berry Who's a Real Peach

A volunteer finds her niche aiding rescue operations

**When responders arrive** at the scene of a major cruelty bust, the amount of suffering laid out before them can be overwhelming. From puppy mills to the homes of hoarders to dogfighting pits, these rescuers work against the worst acts people commit against animals, determined to help these creatures survive, and ideally go on to experience some of the best that life has to offer.

It's a dirty job, but Jane Berry loves to do it.

A Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) volunteer from north Georgia, Berry's memories of dogs being led away from their abusive owners sustain her. She regards helping get those animals to better lives as some of the most important work she's done.

With her combination of dedication, animal-handling experience, and engaging personality, Berry has become a vital part of the fieldwork executed by The HSUS's End Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign.

"I think I just found my niche," says Berry, who was presented with a Humane Recognition Award at The HSUS's Humane Law Enforcement Awards ceremony last September. The Humane Recognition Award is given annually to members of the public who contribute to animal rescues and the enforcement of animal protection laws.

The work has been so engaging, Berry says, that the 14 years she spent working for a phone company—a job that took her from Milwaukee, Wis., to Rome, Ga.—feels like a lifetime ago. Berry left that job, and drifted through a few dead ends before she started fostering kittens to help a local animal shelter. "That was my way of keeping myself busy and out of [my husband's] hair," she says.

The work that started with a few kittens has become a way of life. A discussion with a friendly veterinarian encouraged Berry to launch The Sterile Feral in 1999 to help control the cat population in her county through trapping, spaying or neutering, and releasing feral felines. The organization quickly moved from her basement into a 2,500-square-foot clinic she and her husband purchased when the facility's retiring veterinarian put it up for sale. Today, The



Jane Berry, a volunteer for The Humane Society of the United States who lives in north Georgia, has quickly become an important part of the fieldwork carried out by The HSUS's End Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign. In September 2009, Berry received a Humane Recognition Award at The HSUS's Humane Law Enforcement Awards ceremony.

Sterile Feral clinic brings in veterinarians for two spay days a month; the vets donate their time to spay or neuter between 20 and 40 feral cats each day. To date, the organization has sterilized 6,337 cats.

After Berry had started the clinic, a chance encounter with someone who was looking for an adoptive home for a cocker spaniel-golden retriever puppy led Berry to start getting to know the canine set. She adopted the puppy—to the surprise of her husband—and named him Sparky. Before long, she had added dogs to her philanthropic endeavors, learning to handle them, and also coordinating a transport of companion animals from Georgia shelters to shelters in states with lower euthanasia rates. It's an effort she continues today,

nearly 10 years after Sparky lost his battle with cancer.

She didn't stop there. After seeing images of the devastation Hurricane Katrina wrought on the Gulf Coast, Berry orchestrated a one-woman rescue of 31 animals who had been left behind by their owners in a jam-packed shelter in Alexandria, La., and took them all back to The Sterile Feral clinic to be adopted. On a second trip to the New Orleans area, Berry met people working for the Washington (D.C.) Animal Rescue League and helped them deliver food to area shelters.

The contacts she made on that trip led to more work, and eventually to the beginning of Berry's relationship with The HSUS. When 10 dogs seized from the north Georgia property of known dogfighter

Gerald “Irish Jerry” Holcumb needed a place to stay in August 2008 while prosecutors were building their case, Berry’s reputation from her work in the field led The HSUS to come calling.

Holding those 10 pit bull victims was Berry’s first experience with abused fighting dogs, and Chris Schindler, The HSUS’s manager of animal fighting law enforcement, provided support and advice. Berry was surprised by how aggressive the animals could be toward other dogs while being so affectionate toward people. She also discovered how destructive they could be as a result of their bad training and pent-up energy; one dog destroyed every water hose he could get his mouth around, and others chewed through the steel and plastic buckets of drinking water.

At that point, Schindler explained how to make concrete bowls that the dogs couldn’t tip or destroy, says Berry, who gave the pit bulls nicknames like “Grandma” and “Big Daddy” as she looked after them. “It was quite an experience going from no

knowledge at all to being thrown in there and just learning as you go.”

Berry turned out to be a quick study. When Schindler called in the fall of 2008 to see if she could lend a hand at two north Georgia dogfighting raids—actions that resulted in 17 seized dogs and charges against prominent dogfighters Randall Thaxton and Ray Beavers—she was more than willing to begin the newest chapter in her animal rescue career.

These days, few raids go by without a similar phone call. “In a moment’s notice, she will be there on the ground helping us with very dirty, very long work,” says Ann Chynoweth, The HSUS’s senior director of the End Animal Cruelty and Fighting Campaign. “She’s very good at what she does. And there’s a level of trust and confidentiality involved, so there are a lot of issues that make it difficult finding people like her.”

On site at a raid, Berry typically manages the documents describing the physical condition of every dog seized for evidence. She has a reputation for going

above and beyond to make the job easier for her colleagues, Schindler says. When HSUS staffers accompanied a 15-hour transport of dogs seized from a French Lick, Ind., fighting operation, Berry stayed behind to organize the paperwork and wound up washing their muddy clothes to make their trips home easier. On another raid in North Carolina, Berry arranged for the use of a heated four-wheeled utility vehicle to help everyone stay comfortable in cold and rainy conditions.

“She has a very positive attitude for someone who has been working in the trenches for so long,” Schindler says. “... She’s so selfless with everything she does. And not just what she does with us, but everything she does is for the animals.”

It’s work Berry hopes to continue as long as she can. “It’s just a passion,” she says. “It’s probably something I’ll do for the rest of my life until I’m physically unable to.” **AS**



## Not All Kittens are Born Cuddly.

Feral kitten socialization information available at [alleycat.org/Kittens](http://alleycat.org/Kittens).

 Alley Cat Allies

[WWW.ALLEYCAT.ORG](http://WWW.ALLEYCAT.ORG)

Education • Advocacy • Action

## New Canine Cool in Kansas City

A shelter's new housing for dogs has tails wagging



JOSH SOLAR/WAYSIDE WAIFS HUMANE SOCIETY

The renovation features lots of shiny glass and bright colors—quite a change from the old, chain-link gates that filled the space before. The \$250,000 makeover has been a huge hit with shelter staff, the public, and volunteers like Julie Biersmith, who's catching the eye of a cute canine.

### Not in Kansas anymore, Toto?

That's OK: At Wayside Waifs Humane Society, just over the state line in Kansas City, Mo., you can check out some of the coolest shelter dog digs around.

In February, the shelter unveiled the \$250,000 makeover of its dog adoption center, in which it swapped out traditional, galvanized steel kennels for glass-enclosed "doggie apartments" with colorful back panels and "indoor living suites" for small groups of dogs to enjoy communal living.

The snazzy digs for dogs don't just look good—they sound good, too. Or rather, it's

the lack of sound that's a pleasant change from the soundtrack of frantic barking provided by canine residents at many shelters.

"In fact, one of the things I've commented on quite often with folks is how amazing it is that you walk into our dog adoption center, and it is silent," says Courtney Thomas, director of operations, who served as point person for the project. She researched different options, helped create the layout, and worked with T-Kennel Modular Systems Inc., to customize the dog housing.

"Other than in the morning, when we're doing the feeding, it is so quiet in there—almost in an eerie fashion, because it's something that we're so not used to," Thomas says. "It has created a much calmer environment for the dogs."

And, the shelter staff hopes, a healthier one, too.

The new accommodations—the word "kennel" almost seems too coarse for the shiny, glass affairs—were more expensive upfront, but Thomas says they are likely to reduce the spread of disease. Now, dogs are no longer able to touch noses—a behavior



JOSH SOLAR/WAYSIDE WAIFS HUMANE SOCIETY

The glassed-in dog runs at Wayside Waifs not only look sharp, but also keep dogs from touching noses, which can lead to cross-contamination and illnesses.



JOSH SOLAR/WAYSIDE WAIFS HUMANE SOCIETY

The new layout and accommodations in the dog adoption area of Wayside Waifs include three large spaces where groups of four or five dogs of similar size live (and play) together.

that can lead to cross-contamination and illnesses—nor can visitors go down a row of chain-link gates, petting one dog after another and helping germs and viruses work their not-so-merry way through the shelter population. There are 61 glassed-in dog runs, plus some smaller, double-stacked “quad” units that are used primarily for puppies, for a total of 71 separate housing units in the dog adoption center. Then there are three indoor living suites, each one used for a group of four or five dogs to live (and play) together. Overall, there’s room for about 100 dogs in the new center, according to Thomas.

“I think it has not only improved the atmosphere and the environment for the animals, but it’s made a huge difference in our staff’s level of satisfaction with the job that they’re doing, just to see the animals being so happy,” says Thomas. “Our volunteers love it. The public is just blown away when they walk through the doors.”

The response to the renovation has been so positive—from staff, volunteers, and the public—that the shelter’s board voted in late May to overhaul the 32,700-square-foot facility’s dog holding area to mirror the adoption center’s new look. It’s expected to cost an ad-

**Feline overwhelmed on your current kennel project...**

*We can help.*

**Consider hiring the kennel engineering specialists.**

- Indoor Air Quality
- Mechanical • Plumbing
- Noise Control
- Electrical

**Call us toll free 866.DLI.7078**

**Design Learned Inc.**  
Specialists in Animal Care Facility Engineering  
[www.designlearned.com](http://www.designlearned.com)

**At a Glance**

**Shelter:** Wayside Waifs Humane Society

**Location:** Kansas City, Mo.

**Staff:** 62 full- and part-time employees

**Capacity:** 800 animals

**Facility:** 32,700-square-foot building on a 44-acre campus that includes Wayside Waifs Memorial Park, opened in 1946, that contains the graves of more than 10,000 well-loved pets.

**Statistics:** In 2009, more than 6,500 pets were taken in; the shelter placed a record 5,200 pets into homes.

ditional several hundred thousand dollars. But the effort won't require loans or fundraising; the privately operated shelter already has the money set aside for operational expenses and capital expenditures, thanks to the generous donations of its supporters.

The decision to continue the renovation thrills Thomas, because it will mean that the effort to reduce stress in dogs will begin at intake, offering the animals a calm, quiet, and controlled atmosphere at the start of their journey.

Dogs aren't the only ones getting an upgrade. Improvements are afoot for feline residents, too. A new, 7-foot-by-7-foot window

has already been installed in the cat adoption area, and it can be opened to provide access to fresh air. Newly designed, extra-roomy cat kennels, also featuring glass door fronts, will replace older ones, and a large sunroom will be built, so that cats can enjoy direct sunlight. Changes to the entry area of the shelter—coming later this year—will allow the public a full view of the cat adoption area.

It's not only the shelter that's looking different these days, but the leadership at the top, too. Cynthia L. Smith took over as the new president in March, replacing Patti Glass, who retired after serving more than six years in the job. Smith is a newcomer to the field of animal welfare; she spent the bulk of her career in TV broadcasting in the Kansas City area. She came to Wayside Waifs in March 2010 after serving five years as president and CEO of Sunflower House, a child-abuse prevention center in nearby Shawnee, Kan.

Smith became an ardent animal lover thanks to Wishbone, a golden retriever she got for her now-21-year-old son when he was a child, on the advice of a doctor who said dogs could really help youngsters with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). "He became my son's reading companion, like a brother he could talk

**MOUTHPIECES**



Just add your organization's contact information and branding, and hang the materials up in your lobby or hand them out at your front desk, as appropriate. You don't even need to tear out the page: Go to [animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces](http://animalsheltering.org/mouthpieces) to download and print a clean PDF copy.

Send suggestions for future Mouthpieces to [asm@humanesociety.org](mailto:asm@humanesociety.org).



to. He really was a great companion dog," Smith says.

Smith had Wishbone trained to become a certified therapy dog, and, when he got cancer and had to go through chemotherapy, he (with Smith's help) "wrote" a book aimed at helping children who have cancer.

Wishbone, who died in January, left a deep impression on Smith. "I just felt like every dog needs a chance to find a great home, because of all they do for us," she says. "I am definitely an animal person. [This job] was made for me—that's what everybody said when they heard about it."

Smith says the remodeled dog adoption center is roundly praised by everyone who sees it, and she gets compliments from the public all the time. "They love it, because the dogs don't look like they're in jail. And you can see the dogs better, they're happier ..." The staff are happier too—because of the way the kennels are configured, Smith says, they're easier to clean, and staff can feed the dogs without opening the kennel doors.

She's already settled into a daily routine. "I walk through the shelter every morning, and see who's getting surgery, and then walk through and see who came in and how they're doing. And then every night, I walk by and see who's got a tag that says, 'I'm going home today,'" she says. 



JOSH SOLAR/WAYSIDE WAIFS HUMANE SOCIETY

The shiny, new glass-front kennels at Wayside Waifs Humane Society create a terrific showcase for dogs awaiting adoption, like this handsome shar pei mix.