As Seen on TV: New Ad Campaigns Expose the Truth

When it comes to animal protection, a picture really is worth a thousand words. Using video footage from animal rescues and undercover investigations, our first national television campaign launched in 2009, presenting the scope of problems facing animals to an audience of millions.

Narrated by actor and animal advocate Wendie Malick, the commercials debuted in August and revealed heartbreaking realities: puppy mills, horse slaughter, factory farming abuses, pet overpopulation. Animal cruelty doesn’t need to be exaggerated, says HSUS chief operating officer Michael Markarian: “What’s happening is bad enough, and we want people to see the truth.”

Our message has resonated in cable markets as diverse as Animal Planet and Fox News. By making animals a “top of mind” issue for the public, these commercials are an investment in the future of animal advocacy.

Coinciding with the new campaign is another media blitz that puts shelter and rescue dogs and cats in the big leagues with other public service advertising icons like Smokey Bear and Rosie the Riveter. Created by the Ad Council in partnership with The HSUS and Maddie’s Fund, the Shelter Pet Project includes radio and TV spots that educate the public about the causes of animal homelessness and encourage adoption.

It’s just one of many HSUS programs designed to help shelters boost their adoptions and save pets’ lives.

Building the Humane Movement

We often describe The HSUS as a “big tent” organization. When supporters of the cause range from Ellen DeGeneres to Rush Limbaugh, first graders to senior citizens, armchair advocates to puppy mill protesters, we have to be—building a humane movement means appealing to people of all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life. They may not agree on politics, religion, or all the issues we address, but one thing brings them together: the conviction that animals deserve respect and compassion.

Thinking they are lone voices may keep some people from moving from opinion to action. The HSUS reaches out with programs that give those people a place alongside millions of others who share the belief that animals matter. One voice joins with many, and a movement grows.

“I’d rather get an award here than be nominated for 25 Emmy Awards,” said celebrity presenter Bill Maher at The HSUS’s 23rd Genesis Awards, which honored artists, writers, and others in entertainment and the media who have raised awareness of animal protection issues.
Keeping the Faith: College Music Tour Promotes Compassion

In 2009, The HSUS’s All Creatures tour—organized by our Faith Outreach campaign—traveled to 25 clubs and religious universities spreading the message that people and institutions of faith are called on to act mercifully toward animals. The tour mixed music from Christian band The Myriad with screenings of the documentary Eating Mercifully, which looks at factory farming from a range of Christian perspectives. Some professors have since included the film in their courses, while several students have begun animal advocacy projects on their campuses.

With its St. Francis-Day-in-a-Box initiative, The HSUS also assisted more than 300 churches in expanding their October celebrations of animals and their patron saint. And our staff helped religious groups such as Flourish, an environmental stewardship ministry, begin incorporating animal protection themes into their outreach. On his blog, president Rusty Prichard wrote that The HSUS helped him see “what a no-brainer it is for creation care advocates to care about actual animals.”

Training Ground for New and Seasoned Advocates

“You know, we could do that.” The thought often flashes through Belinda Lewis’s mind when she’s attending The HSUS’s annual Animal Care Expo, the world’s largest conference for animal welfare professionals. The director of Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control in Indiana, Lewis says the ideas she takes home from the conference have “helped keep us modern.”

For advocate Elissa Katz, life hasn’t been the same since she attended another annual HSUS conference, Taking Action for Animals, where she learned about pigeon shooting contests in her home state of Pennsylvania. An attorney by profession, Katz has worked doggedly to shut down these senseless killings; in 2009, she convinced her state representative to introduce a ban.

Though their roles in animal protection are very different, Lewis and Katz exemplify the value of investing in the people on the front lines of the humane movement. From our annual conferences and training workshops to our academic programs and Lobby Days, The HSUS educates and empowers new and seasoned advocates. Through our Student Outreach programs, we cultivate the movement’s future leaders—our way of ensuring that the animals will always have powerful voices on their side.

2009 Impact: 4,700+ participants in Taking Action for Animals, Lobby 101 seminars, and state and federal Humane Lobby Days / 3,634 students in Humane Society University courses and workshops / 169,870 Facebook fans / 8.5 million Facebook cause supporters / 20,000 Twitter followers / 868,000 K-6th grade student readers of KIND News / 452,488 subscribers to All Animals advocacy magazine / 12,300 shelters, rescues, and animal services agencies subscribing to Animal Sheltering magazine and its companion e-newsletter