

Just Wright

Blow your own horn

by Phyllis Wright



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SHELTER SENSE

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Television and radio stations are required to provide a certain amount of air time for public service announcements.

Humane societies around the country have taken advantage of this requirement to air messages about the availability of pets for adoption, responsible pet ownership and other topics.

However, many city and county animal control agencies are not using this medium as they could be.

A 1973 survey of mayors and city councilmen named "dog and other pet control problems" as the most frequent topic of citizen complaints. Clearly an animal control department is a public service to citizens and should definitely use public service air time to reach the community.

One approach is to make public service announcements on a regular basis - say, once a week - on one of your department's achievements. If you have returned a beloved pet to an anxious owner or one of your officers saved a child from an animal bite, you have a good human interest story to take to the public.

You can also produce information announcements about how pet owners can obtain or renew licenses, reducing the number of telephone inquiries you will need to answer.

If your agency has a program for free vaccinations or if you make licenses available at shopping centers or other community locations, use public service air time to let pet owners know how your agency is serving them.

These are just a few suggestions as to how the animal control agency can reach out into the community and become more effective in the process. Other information channels include having ACOs distribute inexpensive flyers, or sending them into schools or to community club meetings to discuss animal problems.

If you take a fresh look at your community with the idea of gaining better communication, you can shed the image of "dog-catcher" and gain greater public cooperation. ■

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