

## In Oil Spill's Wake, Increased Surrenders

Transport of dogs relieves pressure on two overwhelmed Louisiana shelters

BY JIM BAKER



MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS

HSUS staffer Sara Varsa, deputy director of emergency services (on the truck), and Anne Arundel SPCA director of operations Robin Small unload one of 33 dogs transported from the St. Bernard Parish Animal Shelter and the Plaquemines Animal Welfare Society in Louisiana.

**When you think of those affected** by the Gulf Coast oil spill, you may envision of fishermen put out of work by the disaster, or of residents watching their beautiful coastline globbed with tar balls—or perhaps even of nonhuman victims, like the pelicans and dolphins sickened by the sludge.

But, in an eerie echo of Hurricane Katrina five years ago, you can add others to the list of those deeply affected by the tragedy: pets and their people.

In the summer, as oil continued to spew from the Deepwater Horizon well, many Louisiana residents began surrendering their pets to local animal shelters. It's difficult to determine how many of these pet owners depend on the Gulf of Mexico to earn their living—whether by fishing, working in the oil industry, or catering to tourists. But officials at animal welfare organizations in the state say they believe the oil spill played a direct role in the high numbers of animals who were given up.

Shelters in the coastal parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, and Terrebonne were inundated with a wave of relinquished pets. Those shelters experienced two to three times the number of relinquishments in the summer of 2010 compared to a year earlier, according to Ana Zorrilla, chief executive officer of the Louisiana SPCA, based in New Orleans.

“Knowing how bonded people are with their pets, it’s heartbreaking to hear of families having to make this kind of decision,” Zorrilla says, noting that pets are known to reduce stress and help people overcome depression. “The pets have become innocent victims of this disaster.”

Beth Brewster, director of the St. Bernard Parish Animal Shelter in Violet, witnessed the surge at her facility. Pet owners surrendered 117 animals in June 2010—up from 17 in June 2009. The May numbers were even worse: The municipal, open-admission shelter took in 288 pets that month, compared to 60 in May 2009.

“The overall thing that I’m hearing is the economy, the uncertainty of the future,” Brewster says. Many parish residents are fishermen, “and they feel like it’s going to be years before it’s back to what it was. So a lot of people are downsizing, moving to apartments. ... I’ve never seen an influx of highly adoptable pets like we’ve had.”

To try to relieve some of the pressure, in late June, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) transported 33 dogs from Brewster’s shelter and the Plaquemines Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), located in Belle Chasse, a short drive from New Orleans.

The dogs took a long ride from Louisiana to The HSUS offices in Gaithersburg, Md., where they were picked up by staff from animal shelters and rescue groups in Maryland and Virginia, and taken to their facilities to be placed for adoption. Loudoun County Animal Shelter, in Waterford, Va.; the SPCA of Anne Arundel

County, in Annapolis, Md.; and the Lost Dog and Cat Foundation, based in Arlington, Va., all stepped up to take in and place the dogs.

Sarah Barnett, emerging media manager for The HSUS and a longtime volunteer for the Lost Dog and Cat Foundation, helped coordinate the June transport and find shelters willing to help. She also made the trip to the two Louisiana shelters, and says it was easy to see they were facing a tough situation. "PAWS looked really crowded. Every room had dogs in it, kennels on top of each other. Everybody was taken good care of, but you could tell that they were just struggling to get any dogs out," she says.

When Sue Beatty, executive director of the SPCA of Anne Arundel County, got an e-mail from Barnett asking if her organization could take some of the dogs, Beatty was eager to assist, offering room for 10 of them. "I know the shelters in the Gulf Coast area are feeling the strain, with more pets being surrendered and more strays, and we just felt that since we had the space, we wanted to help out," she says.

The decision to accept some of the dogs was an easy one for Thomas Koenig, director of the Loudoun County Animal Shelter. His agency had enjoyed a comparatively light intake of dogs in the spring and summer, so there was extra room in the shelter for 11 of the Louisiana pets. Plus, Koenig says, it was simply an opportunity to step up and support two shelters that needed help. "We actually did two trips during Hurricane Katrina, when we brought dogs back from that area. ... [The dogs from the June transport] have such a fantastic story, and we have such a great community that wants to help, that we don't think there's going to be any problem getting them moved out pretty quickly."

The odds looked daunting that the dogs would have been adopted had they stayed in the Louisiana shelters, due to the sheer numbers of pets coming in. Barnett and Jacob Stroman, director of PAWS, were struggling to come up with a final list of dogs from his shelter who would be put on the transport, and Stroman suggested a toy poodle and a Yorkie mix as potential candidates. "I said to him, 'I don't want to take all your adoptable

## Animal Sheltering Online

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dogs," says Barnett, "and he said, 'Honestly, they've got just as much of a chance here as a pit bull.' And that kind of struck me."

The June transport, which took 19 dogs from St. Bernard and 14 dogs from PAWS, was a true lifesaver for the animals. "They were such awesome dogs," Brewster says. "But our intake has been so incredible ... the relief at just knowing they're going to a good, safe place, it took a load off the whole staff."

The transport helped relieve some of the pressure at the PAWS shelter too, according to Stroman—but that little bit of breathing room didn't last long, he says. "Within an hour and a half, I had to fill all those spaces." 

*In early August, The HSUS went south again, teaming up with the Louisiana SPCA to transport about 100 dogs from nine overwhelmed shelters and rescue groups to St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center in Madison, N.J. The majority of dogs were made available for adoption at St. Hubert's, while others were placed with partnering agencies across the state.*



MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS

A puppy transported from Louisiana to Maryland gets a cuddle from Sarah Barnett, emerging media manager for The Humane Society of the United States and longtime volunteer for the Lost Dog and Cat Foundation in Arlington, Va.

[scoop]

## For Better and For Worse

Which volunteer management practices make for happy employees?



**Volunteers are the lifeblood** of many a nonprofit organization. But what if the volunteers—through no fault of their own—think, speak, or behave in ways that make the actual paid employees crazy?

If this description sounds familiar, your shelter may be helping itself with one hand but hurting itself with the other. Staff's bad experiences with volunteers can turn the life-saving work volunteers can do into a major

headache, one that can actually undermine the mission of an animal shelter.

A recent study in the journal *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* aimed to shed some light on the management practices that can affect employees' attitudes toward volunteers. The researchers analyzed responses gleaned from surveying 270 animal shelter employees who work with volunteers to examine how their organizations' volunteer management practices affected the employees' rating of their experience with volunteers.

Respondents rated the volunteers they work with on how well they matched certain descriptions ("lazy," "hard-working," etc.). They also responded to questions about whether their organizations used certain volunteer management practices—for example, having a designated volunteer coordinator, a mandatory training for volunteers, job descriptions for volunteer positions, and

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so forth. Survey respondents also answered questions about their stress levels, workload, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, among others.

“Overall,” the researchers write, “the ratings were quite positive. More than 80 percent of employees described volunteers as hard-working, helpful, friendly, and kind to a ‘good’ or ‘great’ extent.” But, they note, there were downsides as well: Only 50 to 60 percent of employees said that volunteers know what they’re doing, or are open-minded, well-trained, and independent to a good or great percent.

While it’s easy to think of volunteer practices as a problem that can sit on the back burner while more pressing issues are dealt with, the researchers point out that employee views have a larger effect. Negative feelings about volunteers were predictive “of personal and attachment-related outcomes; namely, employees with poor experiences with volunteers reported being more stressed, overworked, and less committed to the organization.” Ineffective volunteers can have an effect that goes beyond the mere incompleteness of tasks assigned to them, negatively impacting the organization’s mission.

Since employee experience with volunteers can have such ramifications, how can groups achieve better outcomes? The researchers point to the efficacy of certain management practices: Respondents reported better experiences “when their organization had any (and especially all)” of the following factors:

- mandatory structured volunteer training
- a volunteer performance evaluation system
- a formal policy for handling volunteer problems
- a policy for dealing with employee-volunteer conflict
- formal volunteer recruitment efforts
- an interview or screening process for the “hiring” of volunteers
- social gatherings to promote volunteer-employee interactions.

To read the full report and see further recommendations and conclusions, see “Employee Experiences with Volunteers: Assessment, Description, Antecedents and Outcomes,” by Steven G. Rogelberg et al, published in *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (Vol. 20, No. 4). —CA 

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## Homeless in Paradise: Helping Mexico's Strays

The tropics aren't all sun and fun for animals, but local groups are lending a hand



ISLA ANIMALS

Alison Current comforts a dog treated at one of the clinics held by Isla Animals. Strays on the island have often faced mass roundups and inhumane killing methods, but Current's group is working to change that.

For thousands of spring breakers and vacationers, Cancun and its neighboring towns along the eastern coast of Mexico mean sun, surf, and sipping tequila. But many visitors who arrive to play and relax get a surprise: The areas along the coast of the Yucatan peninsula are startling not only for their beauty, but for the poverty that's all-too-apparent in areas beyond the luxurious resorts and white beaches.

As with most places coping with economic disadvantages, the animal population suffers alongside the human one. And some of the people who've arrived planning to do little more than lie on a beach feel compelled to try to help.

You can count Alison and Jeff Current among them. When the couple moved to Isla Mujeres—a small island northeast of

Cancun—their children were grown, and the Currents planned to enjoy life and build a new home. They didn't expect they'd come to share that home with a rotating cast of 20 or 30 of the island's stray puppies.

"Stray animals aren't good for the tourist industry," Alison Current says. "When things get bad enough, the government's answer is mass roundups. Often times it's the nicer, trusting dogs, maybe pets, that get picked up. The strays run and hide in the woods." Sadly, these dogs typically face poisoning or other inhumane forms of killing.

Current's work started with a bookstore that took in some local strays. "When the store closed for the day, the puppies would make a mess and cause problems. I told the owners I'd take the puppies at night, and bring them back in the day so people could

come to see them and adopt them," chuckles Current. "And here I am today!"

Her efforts soon evolved into Isla Animals, an organization dedicated to reducing the population of homeless dogs on Isla Mujeres and nearby areas on the mainland. Now in its 10th year, the group has helped nearly 4,500 dogs, including dogs sent to new homes in the U.S., strays rehomed within Mexico, and pets lucky enough to have Current knock on their owners' doors.

"In the poorer regions, I go house to house and check on the dogs and cats. If I find a sick animal, I will give them medicine and keep checking until they are well. A dog's life in Mexico is traditionally very short without some sort of intervention," Current explains.

Isla Animals started as a shelter, but soon realized the answer was in spay/neuter, says Current, who says she knows a lot of vets and "doggy people" in the area who help out. She pays local vets a small amount for performing surgeries. When new vets arrive from other areas, she invites them along for training, valuable to a vet just out of school.

Isla Animals focuses its efforts on routine spay/neuter clinics and owner education. The group's approach varies from one community to the next, Current says, but typically it sets up portable clinics at churches, community centers, or simply under tents. Volunteers bring in patients through a variety of methods, including public outreach and by personally rounding up strays.

At a clinic in a Mayan region two hours west of Cancun, the group "put together about \$8 worth of staples—rice, flour. We gave one to each person who brought their dog [for sterilization]. That was a very respectful community with deep ties to the church," Current says. "In other areas, that kind of offer might cause people to go out and steal a dog to bring to us."

### A Better Image for Animals

In addition to reducing the population, Current tries to improve the standing of the island's dogs. "We make a big deal about the dogs, especially to children. We'll tell them, 'What a great dog! Give your dog a hug for

me!’ We want to raise awareness, help them to honor their dogs.”

Once, a high school girl brought in a sick, starving stray she found roadside. The dog had abdominal swelling, and Current says they thought she might be pregnant. “It turned out she had a tumor. Tumor surgery isn’t done much in this area. A vet from New York who helps me out, Dr. Ina Obernesser, offered to do the surgery, so we took Carla [to New York for the surgery], and she soon got well,” Current reports happily. “But here’s the best part of the story: Carla was adopted [in New York] and lives in a huge house, with a pool, tennis court. They send me photos, and Carla lives like a star!”

Current is quick to thank the group’s many volunteers and partnering organizations, one of which is Cats & Dogs International (CANDI). Isla Animals has partnered with CANDI for many spay/neuter clinics, and Current says that Darci Galati, the organization’s president, has helped arrange transports of dogs and puppies to areas in the States where there are actually “shortages” of adoptable dogs. Pet Project Rescue, a Minnesota rescue group, has also helped find homes for dogs in the States.

“We met Alison in December 2007 ... we wanted to do something to support her efforts. She needed more outlets in the U.S. to which dogs could be flown, so we decided to see what we could do,” says Maia Rumpho-Stellpflug, director and founder of Pet Project Rescue. The group has since found homes for about 70 Mexican dogs.

Current feels lucky to be able to help. “I love what I do,” she says. “It can break your heart, but I love it.”

### Caring for Beach Kitties

Across the bay from Isla Mujeres, down the coast in the Riviera Maya region, you’ll find the artsy, low-key beach town of Playa del Carmen. You’ll also see plenty of stray and feral cats—but thanks to organized feedings and spay/neuter by Coco’s Cat Rescue, the animals have an ally.

Away from the grounds of restaurants and resorts, Coco’s set up an area called the Cat Café, which provides an organized feeding station where these colonies of sterilized cats can live without interfering with tourism. The concept was developed by the

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) in an effort to discourage stray cats from congregating around resort areas, where food is plentiful, and well-meaning tourists are happy to share. When the situation gets out of control, hotels often want to get rid of the cats, and may use inhumane means to do so.

When that happens, other cats soon take the place of the cats removed. “It becomes a never-ending story,” says Laura Raikes, who founded Coco’s Cat Rescue and brought the Cat Café concept to the Sandos Caracol Eco Resort & Spa in Playa del Carmen. She oversees two cafés, and plans to add more following the high tourist season.

Raikes moved to Mexico in 2002; her own beloved cat, Coco, died after being struck by an automobile. Believing that local drivers are careless about strays and wanting to help the many stray and feral cats she’d seen in the area, Raikes launched the rescue in March 2009 and named it in honor of her fallen pet.

Today, Coco’s Cat Rescue focuses on spaying and neutering stray and feral cats—the group has support from many local volunteers and veterinarians—and on rescuing and rehoming young kittens. The group also tries to educate and assist owners who couldn’t otherwise afford spay/neuter surgery. To date, the group has found homes for 280 kittens.

Coco’s has built up many partnerships, including one with ViDAS (Spanish for “lives”), a nonprofit organization of veterinarians, veterinary students, and others dedicated to improving the lives of animals and people through veterinary medicine and education. Coco’s partnership with ViDAS has resulted in an annual, extensive spay/neuter event, operating on more than 100 animals a day for six days. “I am impressed and stunned daily by the volunteers that share my passion for these animals in need. I could not do this work alone,” says Raikes.

Also with the help of ViDAS, Coco’s recently opened a permanent clinic. Raikes, her husband Carlos, and other volunteers renovated the building, which includes play areas for kittens and rooms for quarantine. At the clinic, the group operates on cats and dogs six days a week, at greatly reduced costs to owners and often for free.



This sweet dog didn’t mind nursing some stray hungry kittens when the animals ended up together at a Mexican impoundment facility. All were slated for euthanasia, but Coco’s took them in and found them homes.



When volunteers from Isla Animals go around the island to help local pets and strays, they tend to get a lot of attention from the younger generation.

Raikes is happy to see the work having an effect. “Slowly, we are able to educate owners, one by one. ... Owners want to know what is needed to keep their animal healthy. As more low-income families have been able to sterilize their pet, friends and family do the same,” says Raikes.

One of her favorite stories involves a dog and three kittens who were at a local impound facility. Hearing they were going to be euthanized, Coco’s showed up to take them in. “When we arrived at the clinic, we found the kittens, nursing from the dog!” Raikes says.

Coco’s took in the cross-species family and kept them together until the kittens were weaned and ready for adoption. A family adopted the kind-hearted dog and named her Esperanza—the Spanish word for hope. 



## Choosing a New Path

After assisting with a major puppy mill raid, a longtime sheriff plans to switch to animal control

**In his long and varied career** in law enforcement, Larry Taylor has dealt with some of the ugliest situations imaginable. He's worked homicides, sex crimes, and drug enforcement during his 34 years as a cop, the last 12 of which he's spent as the elected sheriff of Benton County in southeastern Washington state.

But Taylor says he'd never seen anything like what he witnessed in Kennewick, Wash., in May 2009, when he took part in a raid that rescued 371 miniature American Eskimo dogs from a puppy mill. He saw dogs kept in shopping carts, and puppies confined to old apple crates half full of dirt and feces. Cages had no protection from the elements; in some cases, they held more than one dog and were so small that some dogs' flesh was growing into the wiring, Taylor recalls.

When he stuck his hand into one of the cages, the puppies clung to his arm "like flies clinging to a no-pest strip. ... They had their front paws wrapped around my arm, clinging to my arm with a death grip and whining, while their little tails were wiggling like a propeller with joy. When I pulled my arm out of the cage, I literally had to shake the puppies off my arm; they definitely did not want to let go. The impression that was clear to me was they were finally rescued from the horror that they had been living in." Taylor says the experience absolutely tore him apart.

Fast-forward to summer 2010, and the sheriff's career has taken a surprising twist.

Taylor, who had expected to run unopposed for a fourth four-year term as sheriff this fall, decided to not seek reelection. Instead, on Jan. 1, he'll turn in his sheriff's badge to manage the new 32-kennel Benton County Animal Control Facility—a dogs-only shelter that will serve the unincorporated portion of the county, a region that comprises the bulk of its 1,722-square-miles yet has never had animal control services. The shelter will cost \$820,000 to build, and Taylor will have an annual operating budget of about \$235,000, covering salaries and benefits for himself and his one animal control officer, as well as the costs of running the facility.



Sheriff Larry Taylor of Benton County holds one of 371 miniature American Eskimo dogs seized during a puppy mill raid in Washington state in May 2009. After participating in the raid, Taylor eventually decided to leave law enforcement and become manager of the county's new shelter for dogs.

Taylor expects his new job to be incredibly busy, stressful, and radically different from his current one. He's taking a big pay cut—his salary will drop from \$106,500 to \$72,000—and instead of the 227 people who make up his current department, he'll have a single employee. He estimates his new annual budget will be equal to the money allotted to run the sheriff's office for about four days.

Taylor acknowledges that some people consider his new job a step down, but his view is that he's had a long career as a law officer, and now it's time for him to do some-

thing that's both completely different and vitally important. He'll be laying the foundation for animal control in the unincorporated portion of Benton County, which is plagued by stray dogs who form packs and harass livestock. Currently, when people in the region call the sheriff's office about stray or abandoned dogs, deputies have to tell them they have no resources to help, he says.

Taylor, who will turn 55 by the end of his current term, doesn't plan to work in animal control for decades. He expects to stick with it for a maximum of seven years, and hopes

to establish a structure that will continue after he's gone. "It'll be a wonderful legacy to leave behind," says Taylor, a lifelong animal lover who grew up in the area, "and how wonderful is that?"

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) assisted the sheriff's office with the puppy mill raid. Dan Paul, Washington state director for the organization, says Taylor was clearly committed to ensuring the dogs' welfare and publicizing the mill's deplorable conditions. "I think the event spoke to him," Paul says.

Taylor views the raid—which also involved PetSmart Charities, county officials, local veterinarians, shelters, and rescue volunteers—as a tremendous success. The puppy mill owner pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree animal cruelty, a felony, and nine counts of second-degree animal cruelty, which are misdemeanors. A county judge sentenced her to 90 days on a work crew and forbade her from owning animals for the next five years, according to news reports. And not only did the raid save the lives of the 371 Eskimo dogs (only five had to be euthanized, for medical reasons), it also prompted the county commissioners to fund animal control and build the new shelter.

Taylor expects the facility to be finished by late December and fully operational by early January. He's writing the policies and procedures, and has become a certified euthanasia technician. He's hired his lone employee, who'll pick up stray and abandoned dogs in the county; he's arranged for local inmates to clean the facility. He expects the kennels to fill up quickly, but still hopes to create a shelter where dogs are euthanized only upon a veterinarian's recommendation or a court or law enforcement order. With a limited staff and operating budget, he says he'll be looking for donations and volunteers. He believes his biggest challenge will be getting dogs adopted out or turned over to rescue groups. He hopes to have every dog spayed or neutered before adoption, but currently has no budget for such a program; he has set up an account with the county treasurer's office and is soliciting donations.

The plan to bring animal control to unincorporated Benton County encountered a few stumbling blocks, Taylor acknowledges.



The scores of American Eskimo dogs and puppies rescued in the raid on the puppy mill in Benton County were kept in inhumane conditions. This dog, for example, was housed in a shopping cart. Others were confined to rusty pens caked with feces.

Proposed shelter sites were rejected for a variety of reasons before a location was secured in the city of Kennewick. Taylor's initial plan was to create an animal control division within the sheriff's office, and two county correctional officers expressed an interest in filling the allotted ACO positions. After attending animal control training in Seattle, the officers changed their minds and decided to keep their current jobs—they had the impression that serving as the shelter's two animal control officers would be too much work, even with sheriff's office personnel handling administration, according to Taylor. Finally, a local union planned to file an unfair labor practice charge if he had a union member (a lieutenant) supervising non-union ACOs.

The proposed department, now with one manager and one ACO, was moved under the commissioners, but Taylor says no one from about 850 county government employees sought the manager's position. Early this year, the county administrator chuckled when Taylor suggested he could retire as sheriff and seek the job of shelter manager.

But he wasn't kidding. He recalls telling the two correctional officers who changed their minds about working as ACOs, "It's something that's true to my heart ... I saw the pain and suffering of all these American



A mother nurses her pups in a temporary shelter at the Benton County Fairgrounds after being rescued in the raid on the puppy mill in Kennewick, Wash.

Eskimo dogs at this puppy mill. I'm not going to let this program fail." 🐾

*Donations to the new shelter's spay/neuter program may be made out to "Benton County Treasurer" and sent to Benton County Sheriff's Office, Attn: Sheriff Larry D. Taylor, 7122 W. Okanogan Place, Bldg. B, Kennewick, WA 99336.*



## Once More, With Spirit

A stray relies on the kindness of strangers to find a better home



BEAUMONT ANIMAL SERVICES UNIT

Jackson, the vagabond Weimaraner/pit bull mix who spent some quality time with the Beaumont Animal Services Unit in Texas during his cross-country travels, pauses to pose for a picture with (left to right) KFDM reporter Ashley Rodrigue, officer Dustin Carraway, and Cathy Barber, a trucker who agreed to pick up Jackson in Beaumont and drive him back to California.

**The call last February** reporting a stray dog at the local Marriott seemed routine enough to officer Dustin Carraway of the Beaumont Animal Services Unit here in Texas. He arrived at the hotel to find a beautiful, friendly Weimaraner/pit bull mix lounging near the pool as though it was the middle of summer rather than a chilly midwinter day. He collected the dog and transported him back to the shelter.

At the shelter, Dustin scanned him for a microchip, and the wand started beeping. This dog had a chip! In his excitement, Dustin cleared the scanner and scanned the dog a second time: nothing. No chip was coming up.

After multiple scans, Dustin came to me to see if I could scan the dog and have any better luck. After my first scan, nothing—but after a couple more scans, bingo! A chip ID number again popped up on the scanner.

We found that the chip had slid down the dog's shoulder and was not directly on top of his neck.

Officer Carraway wrote down the information and started trying to track down the dog's owner. The chip led to the Rancho Cucamonga Animal Shelter in California. It turned out that the dog's name was Jackson, and he had been adopted four days earlier by two truck drivers in Ontario, Calif. Rancho Cucamonga had held an adoption event at the Travel Centers of America, a truck stop in Ontario, during the Susanne Spirit USA Road Show, a music and talent show that's held there every Tuesday and Sunday. The adoption event was the shelter's last-ditch effort to try and find Jackson a home—at the time, the dog was just days away from euthanasia. Susanne Spirit holds adoptions at her show every weekend, helping find homes for the

dogs—many of whom get adopted by truck drivers from all over the U.S.

A couple traveling cross-country had adopted Jackson on the spot. They then headed for Florida and made a stop here in Beaumont, where Jackson jumped out of their truck and took off. They'd been unable to catch him and had to get back on the road for Florida. Jackson ended up at the Marriott Hotel—and that's when the call came to us.

After Dustin made contact with the Rancho Cucamonga Animal Shelter, the staff there contacted the adopters. They said that they were now headed for New York and could not turn around and head back to Beaumont, and they surrendered the dog over the phone back to the California shelter. But the dog was still with us in Texas.

The Rancho Cucamonga Animal Shelter contacted Susanne, who'd been upset by the whole situation. She called me here in Beaumont, and I told her not to worry, that Jackson would be safe here until she could find a way to get him back to California. Susanne was thrilled that we were willing to help save this little pup's life.

Susanne got on the phone and contacted Cathy Barber, a trucker who was sympathetic to the problem. Barber, who works for YRC



BEAUMONT ANIMAL SERVICES UNIT

Trucker Cathy Barber had plenty of time to bond with Jackson on their journey from Texas to California (with a brief stop in Chicago!). The two road warriors traveled almost 5,000 miles by the time they got to the end of their ride.

Glen Moore, based in Carlisle, Pa., was able to have all of her loads rerouted so that she could get to Beaumont and pick up Jackson to drive him back to California.

On March 1, about 18 days after Jackson was found at the hotel, Barber arrived in Beaumont. Thanks to donated services by our local PetCo, Jackson had been freshly groomed, and was given a warm farewell by myself and several animal services officers. A local video crew and reporter from KFDM recorded the whole event and aired a story about the adventure on Channel 6 news.

Barber had to make a few stops before she could get Jackson to California, so she and Jackson had plenty of time to bond. After a brief stop in Chicago they were on their way. They had traveled more than 5,000 miles when they finally arrived in Ontario, and they were treated to a welcome home party suitable for royalty. There was even a cake in Jackson's honor.

Today, Jackson is living a life of luxury with his new owner, Susanne Spirit. She fell in love with Jackson and his whole

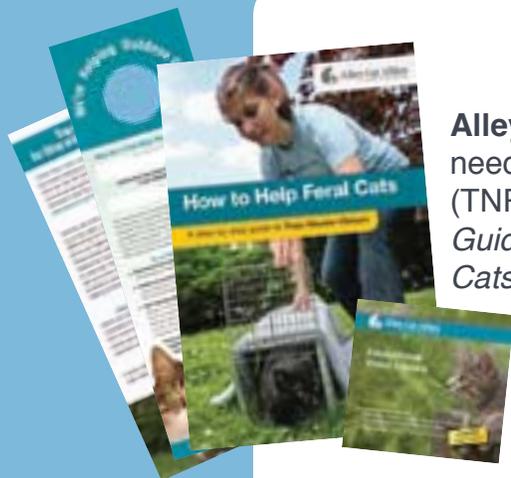
story and could not let him go. He is loving life and has even become the mascot for the Trucking Dog Program. In fact, since Jackson's amazing tale occurred, the Beaumont Animal Services Division and Susanne Spirit have teamed up for a second doggie rescue/transport. On May 1, Delilah, a beautiful female pit bull terrier Susanne spotted on our Petfinder page, traveled cross country to California with other good-hearted trucker friends of Susanne's and was adopted there.

This heartwarming story is one of the many examples of why I do my job in animal control. It feels so good when we can save even just one life. It's also a testament to the value of microchipping—and the benefits of scanning strays more than once! At the end of the day I can rest with a smile on my face, knowing that we helped this wonderful animal find a loving home with the most wonderful of people. **AS**



Jackson gets a farewell hug from Matthew Fortenberry.

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# Tattoo You

**Community rolls up its sleeves (literally) to show support for local shelter**

**Pets have a way of working** themselves into your heart.

A shelter fundraiser last summer showed that some animal lovers are just as eager to let them get onto their skin.

Last June, Freaks & Geeks Tattoo Sideshow in West Asheville, N.C., hosted a 12-hour tattoo and body-piercing marathon to benefit the Asheville Humane Society. Participants could choose among four paw-print tattoo designs for \$40, half off the \$80 that the shop normally charges. The shop's staff of three artists, including business partners Tiffany LeMeaux and Galen Holland, donated their time and supplies.

Daron James, owner of Diamond Thieves Body Piercing, volunteered his time to provide above-the-neck and belly button piercings during the daylong event for a discounted \$15.

You might think such an unusual fundraiser would have a rather limited appeal, as it involves sticking needles into people's bodies and marking them permanently. Being tattooed or pierced requires a good bit of courage and commitment—but the fundraiser proved to be a major hit. "When we opened the doors at nine o'clock in the



Galen Holland and Tiffany LeMeaux, co-owners of Freaks & Geeks Tattoo Sideshow in West Asheville, N.C., cradle two kitties at the shelter—and show off a few tattoos of their own.

morning, we already had a line of people down the sidewalk, waiting to get tattooed. [The event] didn't even last 12 hours, because we ran out of supplies. We definitely didn't expect such an amazing turnout," says LeMeaux.

The tattoo artists did 52 paw-print tattoos that day, and about 20 people paid to get piercings. The event brought in \$2,740.

Additionally, for the entire month of June, Freaks & Geeks Tattoo Sideshow offered a \$10 coupon toward a tattoo for anyone who dropped off supplies for the shelter. "So we had an entire corner of our shop sort of dedicated to cat litter, food, pillows, bleach, and that kind of thing. I'm sure there was at least \$300 of supplies," LeMeaux says.

Katherine McGowan, the shelter's interim CEO/president, is grateful that LeMeaux and Holland organized the event to help homeless pets, and that the tattoo artists and piercer were willing to offer their services. "We were so pleased that they chose us. It was just a great, fun experience for us, and we realize it is a little different than the typical fundraiser that you see out there," she says.

This isn't the first time the business has raised money for an organization or cause. Last year, the studio put together a similar event to help fund breast cancer research, offering discounted prices on tattoos of pink ribbons, the symbol of support for breast cancer awareness.

It was an easy decision to have a tattoo marathon to benefit the shelter this year. LeMeaux was previously a veterinary technician for 12 years, working at clinics in Amelia Island, St. Augustine, and Jacksonville, Fla. She's been a vegetarian for more than 20 years, and describes herself as a lifelong animal advocate.

And several of the people who work at the shelter are her customers, too. "I definitely tattoo a lot of the staff there," she says, laughing.

One thing surprised both LeMeaux and McGowan. Many of those who lined up for tattoos were women in their 40s and 50s

## 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).

who were going under the needle for the first time. Their reasons varied. Some told McGowan that they were animal lovers, and they loved the paw-print design. Others said they believed it was for a good cause or they wanted a tattoo to memorialize a pet who had died.

One of the four designs that LeMeaux and Holland created was a paw print with a banner curling across it, and some customers who chose that design asked the artists to tattoo a pet's name inside it, which they did—free of charge.

"One gentleman I tattooed, he just wanted the word 'adopt' inside, which I thought was really cool. It was his first tattoo, as well," LeMeaux says.

Not only did the event raise thousands of dollars and supplies for the shelter, but it created lots of community goodwill for the studio. It's also likely made it a less intimidating place for those who might be mulling the merits of getting some skin art.

"I think it definitely takes away some of the stigma that tattoo artists tend to have—it makes us a little less frightening," she says. "These 50-plus-year-old women that have never stepped foot in a tattoo shop before felt completely comfortable coming in, and will probably come again."



**Free love.** Over one spring weekend, 41 animal welfare organizations in the San Francisco Bay area waived the adoption fees for 1,746 cats and dogs and got paid to do it. Maddie's

Fund sponsored the June 12-13 Matchmaker Adoptathon in Contra Costa and Alameda counties, awarding the groups \$500 for every animal adopted into a new home, for a total payout of \$873,000—almost twice as much as Maddie's had planned to spend. Dubbed a "financial stimulus package," the event was intended to mitigate the stress that the recession has placed on Bay area shelters and rescue groups. It wasn't just the cute and the cuddly flying out the doors, Maddie's Fund president Rich Avanzino told the *Contra Costa Times*; it was also the less-than-perfect animals, those with ailments or physical defects that made them harder to adopt. Oakland Animal Services led the pack,

placing 133 animals in new homes, while Paws and Tails Animal Rescue of Richmond, Calif., actually ran out of animals—the group adopted out all 45 of its available pets.

■ **There's a cat for that.** Your handheld may be able to find the closest Chinese restaurant or alert you to a great deal on duct tape, but can it lower your blood pressure or knead your aching muscles? No. For services like that, you need a cat. Playing off Apple's "There's an app for that" ad campaign for its iPhone, the ever-clever Oregon Humane Society in Portland ran its "There's A Cat for That" adoption campaign July 16-18 to get its user-friendly "overstock" into the hands of the public. Want an "energy-saving lap warmer"? Adopters could choose the LapPro application—a kitty who wanted plenty of affection. How about a "soothing sound machine"?

The PurrBox app (a cat inclined to purring) was ideal. Special discounts on fees resulted in the adoption of 53 kitten and 19 adult "apps" during the event. Cat owners want to know: Any chance of an app who'll scoop his own litter box?

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■ **Mercury meltdown.** Say it's sunny and 83 degrees. That's not hot enough to fry an egg on the hood of a car, but certainly warm enough to bake a dog if he's left locked inside it. Without proper ventilation, the temperature inside can increase by an average of 40 degrees within one hour even on a mild day, according to a study by the Stanford University School of Medicine. To make the point crystal clear, the Humane Society of Sonoma County in Santa Rosa, Calif., parked a car outside the shelter with a PAW (PETemperature

Automobile Weather) Gauge on its front seat. The device provided real-time interior temperature readings that were accessible online 24 hours a day. On June 29, the device's first day of operation, as the outside air temperature read 83, the temperature in the car rocketed to 109, even with all the windows cracked and a sun reflector across the windshield, reported the *Sonoma West Times and News*. The shelter's executive director, Kiska Icard, was inspired to set up the PAW Gauge after she witnessed a dog at an animal hospital receiving emergency treatment for heatstroke after being left in a car.

■ **An Ultrasound Approach.** Last December, the Washington Animal Rescue League in Washington, D.C., sent out invitations—designed by Alexandria, Va., direct marketing firm Griswold and Griswold—to attend a \$1,000-per-person dinner to raise funds for a much-needed ultrasound machine for the league's medical center. It might be risky to ask for so much money during these tough economic times, but Robert Blizard, the shelter's development director, thought it was worth a try. The invitation included the story of a tumor-stricken Yorkshire terrier rescued from a puppy mill who would have

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benefitted from ultrasound. Within days of the package's mailing, Blizzard received a call from a woman who wanted to donate the entire cost of the \$33,000 machine. "I thought that someone was playing a joke on me, that it was a prank phone call," says Blizzard. But the offer was indeed real. The event ultimately raised more than twice the original amount, covering the cost of the ultrasound, training personnel, and other medical center expenses. The package and the stunning results garnered the League and the marketing firm a gold MAXI (Marketing Award for Excellence & Innovation) from the Direct Marketing Association of Washington, which honors outstanding fundraising creativity and outcomes.

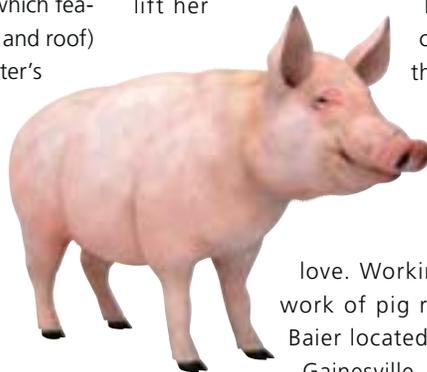
HUMANE SOCIETY SILICON VALLEY



**O Solar Mio.** If there's one thing California has plenty of, it's sunshine. The Humane Society of Silicon Valley in Milpitas decided to take advantage of nature's bounty by installing a state-of-the-art solar energy system in its 48,000-square-foot shelter cum animal community center. Tioga Energy of San Mateo, Calif., installed the system, which features solar panels (atop the carports and roof) that produce 33 percent of the shelter's electricity, and a white "cool" roof that reduces power demand by reflecting heat away from the building. The system, which went live on July 14, is expected to save the organization \$50,000 a year on power expenses. The shelter doesn't actually own the system—which is a good thing, according to former director Chris Benninger, who retired in September after heading the organization for 17 years. "You have to intimately understand the system to make sure you know that it is operating at peak efficiency," she says. "We're in the animal business, and I can barely spell solar paneling, let alone understand how the darn thing works." Instead,

the installation belongs to a banking institution that leases it to Tioga; Tioga maintains it and sells the power to the humane society at a rate guaranteed for 25 years. The center itself, dedicated in March 2009, was designed with a number of construction techniques and water- and energy-saving features that have earned it a Gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certificate from the U.S Green Building Council.

**This little piggy.** The Florida Keys SPCA in Key West is used to getting calls about stray cats and dogs, but stray pigs? Never. Until this past February, when a resident reported seeing a small pig running through the mangroves bordering the busy highway that links the Keys with the mainland. It took three animal control officers to catch the terrified swine, who was later estimated to be about 6 months old. No one came forward to claim her, so the staff set out to socialize the youngster—dubbed Hope—and find her a suitable home. Food and belly rubs turned out to be the way to her heart (isn't it the way to everyone's?). Hope came running for her daily meals of pig chow and fresh vegetables, followed by gentle ear-scratching and tummy tickling. "You'd start rubbing, and you'd see her legs start to fold, little by little, then ... she'd kind of flop down on the ground," says Cathy Baier, the shelter's dog training coordinator and behavior consultant, who cared for Hope during her stay. "She'd lift her



legs up so you could get in all the right spots." Within weeks, the frightened porker turned into a glutton for love. Working with a network of pig rescue groups, Baier located a couple near Gainesville, Fla., who were looking for a companion for their neutered male pig; after the pig was spayed and given a clean bill of health, a relay of drivers delivered the lucky little piggy, now named Hannah, to her new home. **AS**

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