



Elisabeth Gambill-Niksich works with Rufus Brown and his dog Mikie during a June training class.

## Humane Hero | Volunteer leads HSUS anti-dogfighting program in Atlanta

**Tank the pit bull** swaggered into training one day with fresh fighting wounds and an intimidating sneer, lunging at every dog in his path. Trailing behind was Tank's owner, Mark, guarded and suspicious.

With no time to judge, chide, or even flinch, Elisabeth Gambill-Niksich threw a leash around Tank's large head and informed Mark about the ground rules of the 10-week obedience class: No cell phones, no yelling, and absolutely no hitting the dogs.

After two weeks of training, Tank was sitting on command, oblivious to the other animals. He allowed Gambill-Niksich to kiss his head and inspect his ears. Mark beamed at his companion's new attitude and regularly volunteered to help clean up after class.

For Gambill-Niksich, a type-A Southern belle with an optimistic streak, the transformation confirmed her approach as city coordinator of The HSUS's End Dogfighting in Atlanta campaign. "Everybody can relate to somebody on a human level," she says. "If you treat people with respect, you get respect back."

A full-time volunteer with a manicured hand in every element of the campaign, Gambill-Niksich oversees a team of more than 35

volunteers and anti-dogfighting advocates, including reformed dog-fighters and drug dealers. She shows participants how to replace their dogs' chains with collars and leashes, arranges for experts to speak about pet care and spay/neuter, and organizes fundraisers and law enforcement trainings. "Elisabeth is the backbone of the program," says Laurie Maxwell, deputy manager of the End Dogfighting campaign. "She never misses a detail."

During a recent trip to Chicago, site of the original End Dogfighting program, Gambill-Niksich rode around with anti-

**“Pitting animals against one another and causing them to fight just so that we can witness the bloodletting presents a clear moral choice for us. There can be no confusion on this issue. As decent people, we must act to stop it.”**

— SEN. ROBERT BYRD,  
NOV. 20, 1917–JUNE 28, 2010

dogfighting advocates—street-savvy men with deep roots in their communities—and learned more about the cultural life of inner-city neighborhoods.

Accompanying her on the trip was Ralph Hawthorne, the Atlanta program's lead anti-dogfighting advocate. Charged with recruiting students and enlisting community support, Hawthorne is a former gang member and drug dealer who has worked for violence prevention programs. In Chicago, he says, Gambill-Niksich bonded with the other campaigners over a shared dedication to saving animals. "She won over our anti-dogfighting advocates in a big way and helped them to see that we have more in common than we know," he says.

Growing up on fried chicken, barbecue, and the country club circuit, Gambill-Niksich began her transition to animal advocate after watching a video about factory farming. She joined animal protection organizations, became a citizen lobbyist lambasting whale hunts, and committed to a cruelty-free lifestyle. She also began cleaning cages at a local cat shelter and taught herself to trap feisty feral cats, paying to have them spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped before releasing them.

She met Tail and her sister, No Tail, after four years of trying to trap their mother from the woods behind her house. She eventually caught the siblings, took them to a vet, and released them into the night. Tail continued to lounge on woodpiles in her yard, but it took another five years before Gambill-Niksich could get close enough to touch the tip of her tail. Even then, the cat would whip around, cross-eyed. But Gambill-Niksich kept inching closer until the day that Tail, at age 8, came running up to the patio and tumbled onto her back. "I felt like I had arrived," she remembers.

Her feline family now numbers five, including a black kitten she stumbled upon dodging cars in a busy intersection. When she attempted to catch him, he tore into her hands—but she forced herself to hang on, ending up in urgent care.

After 15 years of working with feral cats, Gambill-Niksich figured she could handle a pit bull and began volunteering for the

End Dogfighting campaign when it launched in Atlanta in 2008. More than 70 people have entered the program since, seeking to transform their dogs into model pets under the tutelage of lead trainer Amber Burckhalter, who holds the weekly classes at her facility.

At a recent training, Beatrice Pleasant beamed as her 2-year-old pit, Rock, raced up an A-frame to rousing applause and barking. Pleasant resides in



## Bringing Down Cockfighters

When John Goodwin recalls the June raid of a suspected cockfighting operation in Ducktown, Tenn., what stands out in his mind even more than the 100 people charged and the 150 birds seized is the image of a little blonde girl, about 8 years old, crying amidst the chaos. "Her sorry dad brought her to a cockfight that got raided," he says, "and then he started just yelling at her and chastising her for being upset."

Since May, Goodwin and other HSUS staff have joined forces with law enforcement officials to bust eight animal fighting operations, from a North Carolina breeder of fighting dogs to a California cockfighting enterprise. Information from The HSUS's tipster hotlines, undercover investigations, and informant networks has spurred other agencies to take on raids of their own in recent months.

The immediate rewards—animals freed from suffering and perpetrators facing heavy fines or even jail time—are significant, but the long-term effects are equally important, Goodwin says: "These people have to be shut down because they're teaching a whole generation that it's OK to be cruel."

—Julie Falconer

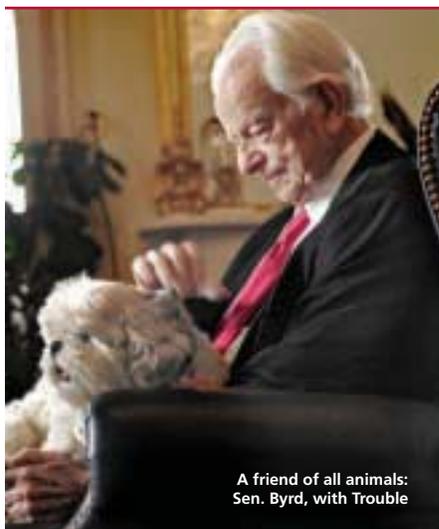
The Bluff neighborhood of northwest Atlanta, where police had found a dismembered body in a vacant lot two weeks before. She had rescued Rock as a puppy, his paws burnt from running around a supermarket lot. Although he slept in bed with her at night, Rock needed to be tethered to a fence when he first arrived at training to prevent skirmishes with other dogs. A few weeks in, he ignored waving baby dolls and banging trash can lids—deliberate distractions—and calmly sunned himself.

"These are wonderful people here," Pleasant says. "They are very patient and haven't shown us anything but love."

—Margie Fishman

➤ **LEARN MORE** about the End Dogfighting campaign at [humanesociety.org/magazine](http://humanesociety.org/magazine).

OPPOSITE PAGE: MARK YOUNG; THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: KATHY MILLAN/THE HSUS; WASHINGTON POST/GETTY



A friend of all animals:  
Sen. Byrd, with Trouble

## Torment in the Arena

Captive South Carolina bears used as bait in breed competitions

**Even through the fuzziness** of the undercover video, the action is unmistakable. At the sound of a whistle, three hounds are released by their owners. Barking furiously, they race across a few yards of dirt to face their quarry.

Chained to a pole with her back to a fence is a black bear who must somehow endure the onslaught. She snaps her jaws and swipes her paws in defense, occasionally rearing up to create space between her and her attackers. For hours on end, as many as 95 dog teams, released one after another, jump on, bite, and harass the drooling, panicked bear.

Seeking a ban on bear baiting contests in South Carolina, where they're not expressly prohibited, HSUS investigators filmed the events over a two-year period. The atmosphere of the multiday affairs—sponsored by hound breed groups affiliated with the American Kennel Club and United Kennel Club—resembles a carnival, says one investigator, complete with vendors selling T-shirts, crafts, and even puppies.

Dogs compete in cash-prize challenges such as water races, treeing, and baying of caged hogs and raccoons, but the main draw is the bear baiting competition, which participants refer to as a “bear bay.” The toughest hounds are crowd favorites, evoking laughter and applause when they find flesh. “The people love the really aggressive dogs,” says the investigator. “It’s clearly what they came to see.” For breeders who enlist their dogs in the event, the stakes include bragging rights and better prices for their pups.

It’s all carried out with an apparent blind eye to the bear’s misery. At one event, when the investigator heard a girl remark that the bear seemed to be crying, her father responded, “No, no, honey; she’s having fun.” Those familiar with the animals’ normally shy nature know better: Biologist Carrie Hunt describes the videotaped bear’s jaw popping and foaming at the mouth as signs of agitation and fear. In one video, she notes, the bear looked to her handler, as if to wonder when he was going to lead her out of the ring.

Bear baiting has been a target of animal advocates since the 17th century and is only known to occur in Pakistan and South Carolina. In South Carolina, the contests are promoted as a method of training hunting dogs to bay, or corner, bears in the wild—a distinction that, under state regulations, would make the activity legal. But many participants use different dogs for baiting than for hunting, and many of the bears themselves are docile animals who’ve lived their entire lives in captivity; one undercover clip shows a bear’s owner leading her quietly by a leash into the arena. They’ve also had their teeth pulled and claws filed down to prevent injury to the dogs. “If a dog got as close to a bear [in the wild] as they do in these training events, that bear would shred that dog,” says Andrew Page, senior director of The HSUS’s Wildlife Abuse Campaign.

Citing these discrepancies and the inhumane nature of the events—including documented instances of dogs making repeated contact with bears in violation of state regulations—The HSUS wants the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to revoke the permits of the owners of bears used for baiting. Though no new bears can legally be taken into captivity, it’s small comfort for those already facing lifetime imprisonment of up to 30 years.

The HSUS has shared the results of its investigation with DNR officials, who were still maintaining as late as July that they have no authority to regulate the events. Page feels differently. “There’s clear evidence that what’s going on at bear baiting competitions violates the cruelty statutes,” he says. “When we bring it to their attention, they say ‘not our problem.’ It is your problem. You signed the permit; you granted these individuals the ability to have these bears. You can’t walk away from it.”

—Arna Cohen



## Paradise Found for Rescued Horses

**It was a desperate scene.** I ached for the 49 horses, mules, and donkeys standing before me on barren pasture, their ribs and hips jutting out. Many suffered from infected hooves, parasite infestation, and untreated wounds. One bore a haunting resemblance to my beloved horse Skipper, grazing contentedly back home.

And some were already dead, known to us only through the bones we stepped over.

I'm an HSUS equine protection specialist because I want to improve the lives of horses. But in the course of my work, I often witness the darkest side of human nature.

What makes the pain more bearable are the reminders that for every animal abuser, hundreds more people want to help. In this case, local citizens were the first to step up and complain to authorities about the conditions on Gary Belcher's West Virginia property. In response to a request from the Wayne County prosecutor's office, an HSUS team arrived in May to assist the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Shelter in the seizure. Throughout the next month, we were joined in round-the-clock care by United

Animal Nations volunteers, while Angel Acres Horse Haven Rescue identified new homes.

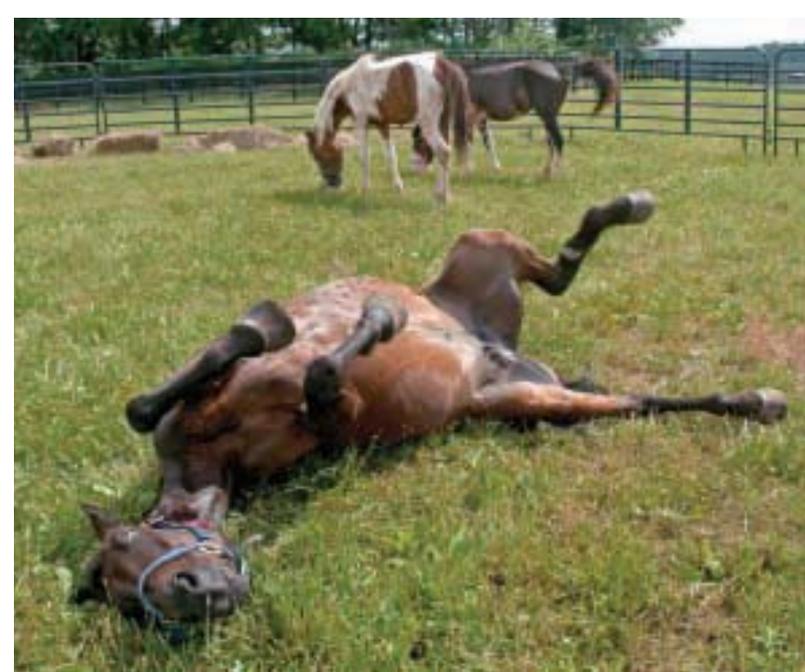
Just when volunteer resources began to dwindle, a generous offer came from Elizabeth Tate Winters, who owns the Maryland property where I keep Skipper. "Why don't you bring them here?" she asked. "I have several pastures I'm not using."

Once out of the trailer at Paradise Stables, the horses tentatively took in their surroundings before rolling in the grass and relishing drinks from overflowing buckets. Sizing them up by the fenceline, young 4-H volunteers armed with apples and carrots began plotting ways to adopt them.

In June, Belcher pleaded guilty to misdemeanor animal cruelty and was barred from owning or residing with animals for five years. But he was fined only \$900—a pittance to pay for such suffering.

For The HSUS, it's just the beginning; the case is a clear example of the need to keep fighting for stronger cruelty laws, says HSUS West Virginia state director Summer Wyatt. But for the horses, at least, their long journey has come to an end. — *Stacy Segal*

▶ WATCH THE VIDEOS at [humanesociety.org/magazine](https://www.humanesociety.org/magazine).





## An Unlikely Water Ballerina

Hannah P. Motamus has become the water creature she was always meant to be: a pygmy hippo who twirls like a synchronized swimmer in her pool at The Fund for Animals Wildlife Center.

Staff at the Ramona, Calif., wildlife rehabilitation center and sanctuary—operated in partnership with The HSUS—built the 25-foot-long, 3 ½-foot-deep pool last year. In the months since, Hannah has thrived, says center manager Chuck Traisi. A loner by nature, the hippo spends her days napping under thick brush or dozing in the mud pond in her 13,000-square-foot enclosure. After dinner, she takes a dip, rotating between the pond and pool.

“It’s amazing to watch her adapt,” says Traisi. “Even though she was never in the wild, she has modified her behavior to a very natural setting.”

When Hannah was confiscated from a California home, she had adequate food and drinking water but was confined to an arid backyard, denied the shade and deep swimming area that her species thrives on. After she arrived at the Ramona center, staffers helped her damaged skin rejuvenate to a supple gray and created the mud hole for basking.

The relatively shallow pond was a temporary fix, as staffers knew Hannah needed to be able to submerge in water to be truly at home. With the generous donation needed to build a pool secured last year, Hannah now has her happiness. — *Pepper Ballard*

## At Mississippi Puppy Mill, Love Amid Squalor

Even a protective mask couldn’t stop a tiny terrier from expressing his gratefulness to The HSUS’s Beau Archer during a July seizure in Carriere, Miss. Most of the 120 dogs ran in fear or tried to bite, but a few sought attention from their rescuers.

“Every time I bent over to get another dog, [the terrier] would come up and lick me on the chin,” says Michelle Cascio, casework coordinator for the HSUS Wilde Puppy Mill Task Force.

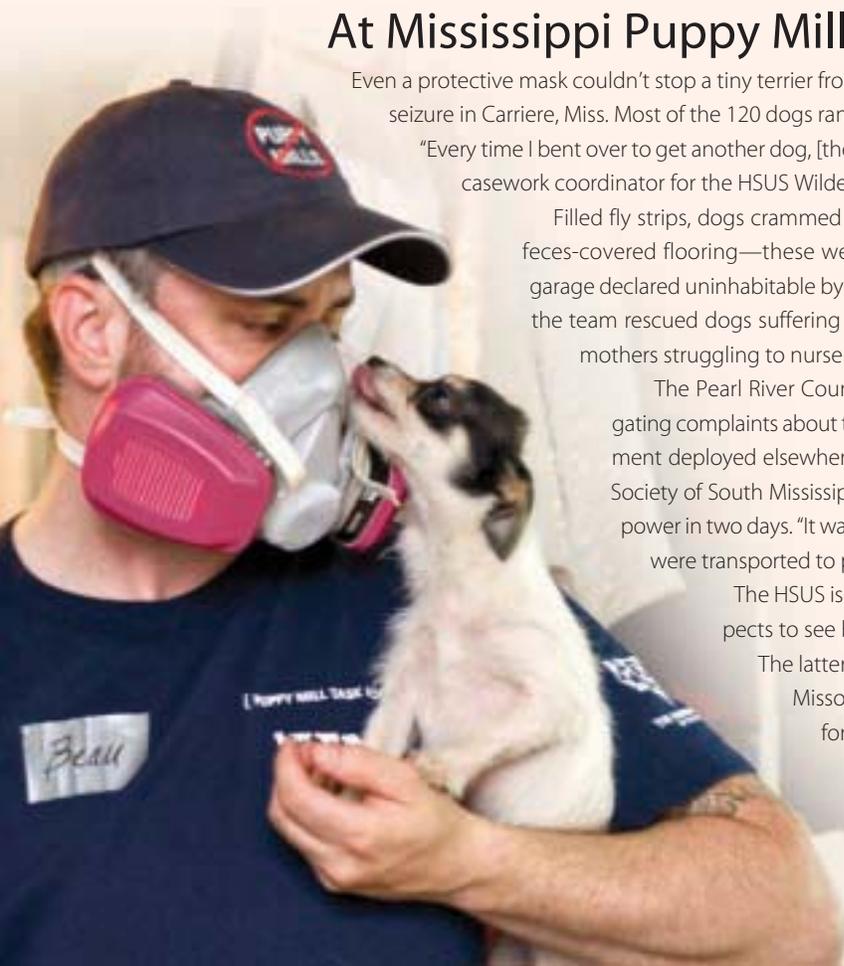
Filled fly strips, dogs crammed into bird cages, and two Westies huddling on a bookshelf to escape feces-covered flooring—these were the sights greeting HSUS staff at the “kennel,” a filthy house and garage declared uninhabitable by veterinarians. Enduring ammonia fumes and sweltering temperatures, the team rescued dogs suffering from severe matting, fleas, skin infections, and eye injuries. They saw mothers struggling to nurse their young and found the body of a newborn puppy in the refuse.

The Pearl River County sheriff’s department had requested HSUS assistance after investigating complaints about the mass breeding facility. With most other HSUS responders and equipment deployed elsewhere, the team had to act fast and improvise. Working with the Humane Society of South Mississippi and other local agencies, they rounded up trucks, crates, and manpower in two days. “It was literally meet every challenge and make it work,” says Cascio. The dogs were transported to partnering shelters and rescue groups to be put up for adoption.

The HSUS is pushing for reform in Mississippi, where state director Lydia Sattler expects to see bills this year making animal cruelty a felony and curbing puppy mills.

The latter is similar to a measure being put before Missouri voters; promoted as Missourians for the Protection of Dogs/YES! on Prop B, the campaign calls for raising care standards, limiting each facility to 50 breeding dogs, and codifying “puppy mill cruelty” as a crime. More than 190,000 citizens—twice the number required—signed petitions to put the Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act on the November ballot.

— *Arna Cohen*



THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: MIRIAM SCHIPPERS/THE HSUS; MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS; KATHY MILANI/THE HSUS

## Precious Cargo: A Gulf Coast Transport

"Every room had dogs in it, kennels on top of each other. You could tell they were just struggling to get any dogs out," Sarah Barnett recalled of the canine crowds she witnessed in Louisiana this summer.

As oil continued to spew into the Gulf of Mexico, shelters in coastal parishes were inundated with pets of people who had lost their livelihoods to the environmental disaster; intake at the St. Bernard Parish Animal Shelter alone skyrocketed by fivefold. "Knowing how bonded people are with their pets, it's heartbreaking to hear of families having to make this kind of decision," says Louisiana SPCA CEO Ana Zorrilla.

To ease the pressure, Barnett helped coordinate a June transport from St. Bernard and the Plaquemines Animal Welfare Society—the first of at least two relief missions. The HSUS emerging media manager also volunteers for the Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Foundation, one of three Washington, D.C., area groups that welcomed this puppy and 32 other excited animals outside HSUS headquarters. Other responders to Barnett's call for adoption assistance were the Loudoun County Animal Shelter and the SPCA of Anne Arundel County. "I know the shelters in the Gulf Coast area are feeling the strain," says SPCA executive director Sue Beatty. "... We just felt that since we had the space, we wanted to help out."

Bouncing in the windows of adoption vans that would transport them to new lives, the animals seemed to shed their uncertainty as they hammed it up in the blanketed kennels for dotting fans.

"They were such awesome dogs," says a relieved Beth Brewster, director of the St. Bernard shelter. "... Knowing they're going to a good place and a safe place, it took a load off the whole staff." — *Jim Baker*



## Rescuing Neglected Animals in Montana

When rescuers entered an overcrowded facility for homeless animals in Montana in mid-July, they found a filthy building with dogs cramped in cages, pools of urine and water on the floor, and feces everywhere. Other dogs were kept outside in unshaded pens, and about 30 cats were crammed in an unventilated trailer where their waste soaked into carpeting and couches. Many later tested positive for feline leukemia.

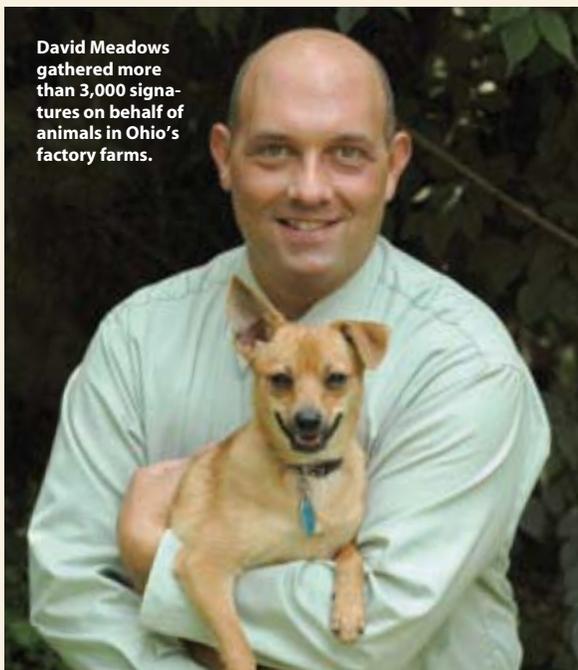
Coordinating the seizure for The HSUS was director of animal cruelty issues Adam Parascandola, who says the group had taken in more animals than it could care for, creating a hoarding situation. The decision to remove the animals followed citizen complaints to HSUS Montana state director Wendy Hergenraeder; after obtaining a warrant, the Fallon County Sheriff's Office asked for assistance. Sheltered temporarily by The HSUS and United Animal Nations, the cats and 60 dogs were soon transported to several shelters around the country.

One gray schnauzer was so badly matted that only a thorough shaving job revealed her breed, Parascandola recalls. When volunteers returned the dog, whom they'd named Sugar, to her crate, "it was quite the moment as they watched her jump in surprise at the sight of her own legs," says volunteer Summer Sears of Redmond, Ore.

Sears ended up adopting Sugar through her hometown shelter, the Humane Society of Central Oregon, and she marvels at how quickly the schnauzer has fit into the family: "How can this be the same dog that, less than three weeks ago, was the matted furball in those pictures, standing around in her own waste, never getting out of her crate [for] some fresh air and a walk?"

— *James Hettinger*





David Meadows gathered more than 3,000 signatures on behalf of animals in Ohio's factory farms.

## A Friend of Farm Animals

**On a lunch break** from his job as a tech support manager in 1999, David Meadows fed his french fries to a starving stray. Soon enough Mewton staked her claim as the company cat, roaming the office by day and returning to the streets at night. But when Meadows found his frightened friend wandering one weekend, he decided enough was enough. “You know what?” he thought. “You’re coming home with me. I don’t want you to have to stay here this whole weekend all scared like that.”

Though he’s always loved animals, Meadows’ lunch-break encounter and ensuing rescue was the extent of his animal activism for a decade. But last year, when he got a much longer break after being laid off from his job in web design sales, the Dayton man turned the downswing in the economy into an upswing for farm animals.

With time on his hands and dismay in his heart about their ill treatment, Meadows began collecting donations of silent auction items for the advocacy organization Mercy For Animals. Less than a year later, he had become the top signature gatherer for a campaign to end extreme confinement of pigs, chickens, and veal calves in the state.

Led by Ohioans for Humane Farms—

an HSUS-backed coalition of family farmers, environmentalists, and animal welfare organizations—the campaign sought to put the issue to voters in November through a citizen ballot initiative. But Meadows was overjoyed when, just after volunteers had collected about half a million signatures, Ohio officials and humane and agribusiness leaders came to a preemptive agreement in June “that few people would have thought possible for Ohio even just a couple years ago,” says Paul Shapiro, senior director of The HSUS’s Factory Farming Campaign.

Negotiations among HSUS president and CEO

Wayne Pacelle, Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, and industry representatives led to the agreement to phase out crates for veal calves and gestation crates for pigs, as well as a moratorium on permits for new battery-cage facilities that confine egg-laying hens. Other provisions aim to crack down on puppy mills, cockfighting, the acquisition of exotic animals as pets, inhumane euthanasia methods for sick farm animals, and the transport of “downer” cattle.

In a state with historically weak protections for animals, the collection of so many signatures signaled mass support for reform—and served as a testament to the commitment of volunteers like Meadows. Spending up to 60 hours a week changing hearts and minds could have been taxing for some, but Meadows is far from the introverted computer nerd his background might imply, says the one-time wannabe standup comic. At times, he faced skeptics, but mostly Meadows was surprised by the number of people already angry about farm animal suffering.

An interest in health, fitness, and non-violence had led Meadows to become more involved in battling practices he’d long opposed but, “like a lot of people, I think I just

put on my blinders” when it came to acting upon his disgust. He has farmers in his family tree—his great-grandfather was so adept at smoking meat that local Amish people would bring him their turkeys and hogs—and believes those ancestors would be appalled by the abuse of farm animals. “The more I thought about that, the more it really just became part of my awakening process,” says Meadows.

When the elements of the agreement are enacted, Ohio will join seven other states—Florida, Arizona, California, Oregon, Colorado, Maine, and Michigan—that have cracked down on inhumane confinement practices. The early progress is good news for animals in other states, where The HSUS can now turn its attention to promoting further reforms.

As for Meadows, the experience has been so invigorating that he’s looking for a job that involves working with people and advocating for animals. “My goal now is to get out from behind the desk,” he says.

While he downplays his achievements, Mercy For Animals’ Corey Roscoe notes that his signature-gathering was no small feat for a new advocate: “David’s story should serve as inspiration to anyone who doesn’t think one person can make a difference to help animals.” — *James Hettinger*



THIS PAGE: FROM TOP: SHANNA RAMSEY; KATHY MILANI/THE HSUS; OPPOSITE PAGE: THERESA ERICKSON



## Shelter Spotlight: Southern Pines Animal Shelter, Hattiesburg, Miss.

**First came Hurricane Katrina**, knocking out the power and water supply. Then came a financial crisis that threatened to shutter plans for a first-ever spay/neuter clinic. As if that weren't enough, a fire ripped through the building late last year and killed four cats.

But the staff of the Southern Pines Animal Shelter are resilient. In the wake of the storm, they filled garbage cans with water from a creek



Winston

for the dogs to drink by flashlight. Just before the opening of the spay/neuter clinic, they received an HSUS grant to cover a \$35,000 shortfall. And following the fire that gutted their office, they set up folding tables to process paperwork. "I saw our

office manager ... in the bed of her pickup, trying to work on payroll," says spay/neuter clinic director Valerie Rachal.

The idea for the clinic was hatched in 2008 at The HSUS's annual training conference, Animal Care Expo, which staff attended with the help of HSUS scholarships. Opened last year to curb the region's rampant pet overpopulation, the clinic has spayed and neutered more than 5,500 animals. In 2009, intake of stray and relinquished pets decreased for the first time in anyone's memory.

The shelter's efforts received a boost from an HSUS campaign to blanket Mississippi and Louisiana with powerful ads about the impor-

**STATS:** 23 to 26 employees in the shelter and clinic, 15 active volunteers, intake of 8,800 dogs and cats in 2009

**SERVICES:** Adoption; low-cost spay/neuter and microchipping

**WHAT KEEPS THEM GOING:** "Sheer tenacity takes us a long way," says board president Karen Reidenbach. "We rebuilt after a fire destroyed the shelter about 15 years ago. Katrina hit us hard, and of course we lost our office building to an arson in late December 2009. We don't let things stop us from carrying out our mission."

**FAVORITE ADOPTION STORY:** Reidenbach learned long ago to quash the temptation to adopt every animal in the shelter. But in the face of a skinny, "cute as a bug," Siamese-colored longhaired cat with bowel problems, resistance was futile. Now living permanently with Reidenbach and her husband, Eric, Winston—so named because of Eric's admiration for Churchill—is a healthy 14 ½ pounds. "He's got a lot of ragdoll in him, and he's the most affectionate and incredible little cat that I have ever been around," Reidenbach says. "... Every time I see him, he makes my heart smile."

tance of spay/neuter. To further help local organizations and their animals, The HSUS has also collaborated with the Ad Council and Maddie's Fund on the Shelter Pet Project, a national campaign promoting shelters and rescues as the best places to find a new friend.

"We've had individuals call to make an appointment, and they'll say, 'I saw your ad on television,' and I know that means an HSUS ad because we can't afford an ad on television," says Rachal. "I think the TV ads really caught their attention because they are so moving." — *James Hettinger*

➔ **LEARN MORE** about the Shelter Pet Project at [shelterpetproject.org](http://shelterpetproject.org).

## Inspired Reader Helps End Fox Penning

**Ron Wentworth's journey** of a thousand miles back and forth across Florida began with an *All Animals* exposé of fox penning—and ended with an impending statewide ban on the brutal practice. "The article was very shocking," says the retired commercial insurance underwriter from Sarasota County. "I was blindsided."

Wentworth couldn't believe it was legal to set packs of dogs loose on terrified coyotes and foxes who typically had been caught in the wild, shipped long distances without food and water, and then trapped in enclosures. With advice from HSUS Wildlife Abuse Campaign manager Casey

Pheiffer, Wentworth swung into action: He wrote letters to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and to his local paper. He gave The HSUS a donation earmarked specifically for efforts to end penning. He testified at hearings in Apalachicola and Lake Mary, and he met with his state senator's aide. He solicited support from his family, friends, and anyone else who would listen—even his dentist, cardiologist, and financial adviser, who all sent letters, too.

And he drove to Holt, Fla., to meet Christin Tank and her family. Profiled in the Nov/Dec 2009 issue, the Tanks had moved to their dream home, only to be joined later

by neighbors who let dogs tear coyotes apart limb by limb, in full view of their traumatized toddler.

After a brief provisional ban prohibiting operation of the enclosures by the FWC, public sentiment poured in from policymakers, animal and environmental organizations, and citizens like Tank and Wentworth, prompting a unanimous vote in June for a permanent ban. The FWC is expected to vote on publishing a final rule in September.

Describing himself as "naïve" about local and state politics, Wentworth says his activism started with a simple question: *How can my wife and I help?* "I just did it," he explains, "because I thought that people should do it."