

Maddie's Fund founder Dave Duffield makes friends at Workday Inc.'s Bring Your Dogs to Workday.



A SCHNAUZER'S LEGACY

WHEN IT COMES TO ENDING PET HOMELESSNESS,
MADDIE'S FUND PURSUES A "BIG HAIRY AUDACIOUS GOAL"

BACK IN THE LATE 1980S, when Dave Duffield was relatively poor and uncertain about the prospects for a software firm he had founded, he knew he had a friend in his miniature schnauzer, Maddie. Duffield and his wife, Cheryl, vowed that if they became wealthy, they'd repay Maddie for the love and companionship she supplied during difficult times.

The business prospered, and the Duffields established a family foundation in 1994 that became Maddie's Fund in 1999, following their beloved dog's death in 1997.

Boosted by a \$300 million endowment from the Duffields, Maddie's Fund works to create a nation where no healthy or treatable pets are euthanized. The organization provides grants to animal welfare groups and veterinary hospitals, researches best practices in animal care and sheltering, and supports shelter medicine programs at vet

schools around the country. Among other projects, Maddie's Fund has teamed with The HSUS and the Ad Council on the Shelter Pet Project, a national ad campaign that promotes shelter adoptions.

In this edited interview with *Animal Sheltering* magazine associate editor James Hettinger, Dave Duffield and Maddie's Fund president Rich Avanzino discuss how the foundation tackles pet homelessness with terrier-like tenacity.

When you launched Maddie's Fund, how much did you and your wife know about pet homelessness?

Duffield: Not a great deal. We only knew that our Maddie had been such an important part of our lives, so we wanted to honor her. When we were thinking about ways to do that, Tony and Elaine La Russa founded their Animal Rescue Foundation in Walnut

Creek, Calif., and we were inspired by the story behind their foundation, their compassion for dogs and cats.

What were some of the most surprising things you learned?

Duffield: We realized early on that there wasn't as much of a focus on goals and strategic planning in most of the animal welfare organizations as we believed was necessary. So we regrouped and pursued more structure to our own organization, accountability measures for grantees, and so forth—more of a venture philanthropy approach, which has surely helped us as we've grown and taken on bigger challenges.

How have you applied your experience as a software developer and business owner to the challenges facing pets?

Duffield: This comes back to our venture

philanthropy approach to running Maddie's Fund. A large part of this philosophy is working with our grantees to put business plans in place, to create programs that have measurable results, and to support multi-year programs that require collaboration versus just operating expenses, for example. In any business, investors would require this of any company they support.

Additionally, I'm a big believer in an organization needing a mission, core values, and goals to support the mission. Jim Collins' *Beyond Entrepreneurship* is one of my favorite business books. I believe the mission we came up with for Maddie's Fund—to revolutionize the status and well-being of companion animals—is one of the best I've ever heard. It represents a "big hairy audacious goal" that may never actually be achieved, but it guides all our planning and decision-making.

In an earlier interview, you quoted ice hockey great Wayne Gretzky about the importance of knowing where the puck is going to be. Can you describe a time when you did the equivalent of that in your work with Maddie's?

Duffield: We've invested heavily in Maddie's Institute, our educational resource for the animal welfare community. We're also planning to step up our support of research and other long-term programs that could have a significant impact on not just achieving a no-kill nation by 2015 but sustaining that status forever.



Duffield (left) and Rich Avanzino with the Maddie's mascot

What do you see as the biggest challenges to ending the euthanasia of healthy and treatable pets in the U.S.?

Avanzino: I think embracing that it can be done, and it will be done, and that we can't waste any more time. I really believe it's an attitude change. The reality is we are the instruments of saving or ending companion animal lives. It's challenging as to why so many animals are coming into our system, but it's our job to basically see that they go home to somebody that will love them for a lifetime. We have to be committed to their survival and their placement with people that will care and nurture and love them.

You're optimistic that we can achieve this by 2015?

Avanzino: Absolutely, I think our prospects are excellent. Just before I came into the animal welfare field, the country was killing about 24 million dogs and cats a year, and we got that number to somewhere around 3 million dogs and cats per year. From our calculations, we have 2.7 million dogs and cats to save. From the surveys we've done, 17 million people are going to get a pet this year and haven't decided where they're going to acquire it from. If we can convince 2.7 million of those to get a companion animal from a shelter or a rescue, we will have achieved our goal, which is an adoption guarantee for the healthy and treatable animals of America.

What would you list as Maddie's Fund's greatest accomplishments over the past 15 years?

Duffield: I'm very proud of what Maddie's Pet Adoption Days have accomplished. Last year alone, we supported the placement of 8,432 dogs and cats in just two days. In the previous three years, we underwrote the placement of 6,722 dogs and cats. This year, we hope to help place another 10,000. That's a lot of lives saved.

Avanzino: We're getting to our goal, which at the time we announced it was considered a pipe dream. It was considered impractical; it was considered impossible. And I don't think anybody now considers it out of reach. There is a disagreement as to how fast we can get there and when we will be

able to plant the flag and say we've been successful. But everybody agrees that we don't want to kill our companion animals who are healthy and treatable and that we should be focusing on lifesaving solutions.

Have any of your pets since Maddie also guided or inspired your work?

Duffield: A number of years ago, we adopted a Havanese we named Riley. I just had a gut feeling that he was born in a puppy mill. Riley inspired us to go big in cracking down on puppy mills. Maddie's Fund recently partnered with The HSUS to create a Puppy Mills Online Action Campaign to reduce the number of dogs in mills, drive consumers to better sources for dogs, and secure stronger protections and improved standards for dogs in large-scale commercial breeding operations. So we're off to a good start.

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