Educating Through Outreach

By Geoffrey L. Handy

You're probably affiliated with a local humane society or animal control department that does some kind of community outreach. What is your agency’s outreach program like? Does it make the best use of its limited time and resources? Does it strive to reach all members of the community?

Questions like these should be asked by every humane organization and animal control agency from time to time. Evaluating the effectiveness of your community outreach program is an essential task that will ensure your agency is addressing the long-term needs of animals and the community itself.

“Even though your shelter is filled with people on Saturdays and other busy times, the majority of your community’s public never comes through the shelter’s doors,” says Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President for Companion Animals. “That’s why you need an
outreach program that goes to them. Humane organizations and animal control agencies are a vital part of the community and need to be seen and heard in all facets of community life."

Through effective outreach, you can go a long way toward maintaining the visibility of your organization and increasing the plight of the animals in your community.

Include Information That Educates

When you consider what the elements of your community outreach program should be, you shouldn’t only think about public relations or your agency’s image and visibility in the eyes of the public. You also need to think about community awareness of animal issues.

Protecting the animals in your community means changing the attitudes of the people who own them. As the only organized animal protective agency in your community, you have a mandate to educate the public about responsible pet ownership, pet overpopulation, and other animal issues. "I hear shelters say, 'Well, we don’t have the staff or the time to do much community education,'" says Wright. "The truth is, you don’t have time not to do it."

Fortunately, PR and education aren’t mutually exclusive components of an outreach program.

The Basics of Outreach

Planning ahead is essential before your agency can effectively take its messages to the public. You need to decide what you want to say and how, where, and when you want to say it. Then you have to check your resources—time, money, and talent. To make your program work, you may need to recruit volunteers to help you.

To ensure outreach success, your agency must first establish a credible public image. Such an image begins with the organization itself—the attractiveness of its facility, the quality of its staff, and the consistency of the materials it produces. Every interaction you have with the public makes an impact and is an opportunity to educate the public about responsible pet ownership and to provide pet owners with valuable information.

On the Cover: The Montgomery County (MD) Humane Society’s Health Fair for Pets improves awareness of the shelter and provides pet owners with valuable information.

The Humane Society of the United States, 5430 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 100, Bethesda, MD 20814.

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The Humane Society of Broward County’s car show educates a special segment of the community.

Outreach Tactics That Work

Planning and evaluation are essential tasks to ensure that your outreach program is doing the job. But how you implement your ideas will determine how successfully you alter community attitudes. Fortunately, you can exercise wide creative license in finding different ways to reach the public with your messages.

Outreach programs that educate people about animal behavior and communicate facts about animal problems (they are caused by people, not animals) and ways to solve them are particularly worthwhile. "Instead of just being the dumping ground for people’s problems," Wright says, "a shelter should be a place where pet owners can resolve some of these problems."

Adoption promotions, special events, or programs that seek to return lost pets to their owners can also be vital parts of an effective community outreach program.

The Tickler File

Animal agencies can streamline their yearly community education efforts with the help of a "tickler" file. Designed to jog the memory with timely reminders, tickler files are an easy way for outreach coordinators to keep abreast of the messages they should be providing the public at different times of the year.

A good way to set up the file is to install 12 folders, one for each month. In each folder, include a list of reminders and other information pertinent to that time of the year. Then before the beginning of every month, check the folder to see what public information campaign or other tasks you need to work on that month.

For example, the November file folder would remind you to discourage the public from giving pets as Christmas gifts. April’s folder would tell you it’s time to begin your annual campaign to warn the public of the dangers of leaving pets in hot cars during the summer. The February folder might even let you know that The HSUS’s "Prevent A Litter" Month (April) is fast approaching, and that it’s time to begin your preparations as a participant in that national pet overpopulation awareness campaign.
Just remember that for every person you do reach, there are always more who you have not reached, there are always more who you have not reached. The other pet owners in your community, as well as the rest of the public—people you may never, or rarely see—must also be reached.

Take Your Messages To the Public

That’s why you need to actively take your messages to the community. This involves using a mix of tactics. Think about where and how you, as a regular citizen, learn about the world around you. You get information directly into your home through the mail and the media; away from home at the mall, supermarket, dentist’s office, library, or YMCA; and, of course, at other organizations’ events or meetings you attend on occasion.

The key is realizing that your agency’s name and message must be seen or heard through as many of these avenues as possible. The commuter who drives past the same billboard each morning, the woman who pages through the entire local newspaper every night, and the man who faithfully attends every Lions’ Club meeting can each be effectively reached in different ways.

As a result, you’ll need to utilize the media for your messages—radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and public service announcements. Place ads in your local newspapers or on billboards or buses.

Finally, don’t overlook that large segment of the community whose major source of information is the classroom—children. Humane education in the schools should be a top priority of any humane organization or animal control agency. "Childhood is where caring begins—and also selfishness and arrogance," says Dr. Randy Lockwood, HSUS Director of Higher Education.

Educational Outreach Made Easy

By Karol Syloxo, Ph.D., NAHEE

humane educator in Washington, DC, was horrified. A young student at a public school had killed a cat and then urinated on it. When the educator called this to the attention of the school’s counselors, she was told there were more serious problems to be dealt with.

Community outreach through humane education, not only in the schools but other public institutions and agencies as well, is vital. Without the informed support of police, judges, counselors, civic groups, clergy, doctors, and community and business leaders, your effectiveness as a humane organization is greatly hampered.

The National Association for Humane and Environmental Education (NAHEE, a division of The HSUS) has developed educational materials that have been used successfully in the classroom. Increasingly, these materials are being put to good use as a form of community outreach. Educational materials combined with concerted outreach efforts can help prevent tragedies like the one in Washington, DC.

The Power of the Media: Making It Work for You

By Kathy Bauch, HSUS Field Representative and Freelance Public Relations Consultant

Six NAHEE publications in particular lend themselves to being shared in the community by your organization. "Breaking the Cycle of Abuse," available in English or Spanish, introduces the concepts of animal and child abuse and explains that animal abuse is often related to violence against humans. The brochures are sold for $0.25 each in packets of 15 for $2.75.

*KIND News*, a newspaper for children, features stories, puzzles, contests, games, and other activities to teach children about animals and their humane treatment. Your organization may already “adopt” teachers, providing them with a complementary subscription. But how about “adopting” a hospital pediatric ward? Or ordering subscriptions to place in veterinarians’ or doctors’ waiting rooms? Don’t forget your own shelter’s adoption counter! *KIND News* comes in bundles of 32 copies. One year’s regular subscription (nine issues, one for each month of school) is $20 (adoptions are $18) and includes one issue of *KIND Teacher*, an educator’s guide featuring numerous reproducibles and quick activities for spare moments.

The *Drop Everything Else, Read (DEER)* kit contains a poster announcing "DEER Month" (any month set aside to encourage the reading of books about animals), recommended animal books, guidelines for judging books, and DEER symbols, bookmarks, and certificates for duplication. The kit costs $2. Your librarians and local camp counselors will thank you for providing them with a ready-made, interesting program.

*Sharing Sam* contains flannel story-board patterns and a script designed to introduce the young child (preschool through early elementary age) to the concept of proper pet care. Also included is an educational kit designed to unite school children in a project to increase the number of pets licensed in their community. Why not involve a local civic club in the project as well?

For an exceptional community project, order NAHEE’s "Playin TAG for Real" kit for $2. The TAG kit is designed to unite school children in a project to increase the number of pets licensed in their community. Why not involve a local civic club in the project as well?

Order "Pet Overpopulation: From Concern to Action." The Fort Wayne Department of Animal Control used ideas in this $2 kit to hold a successful “Happy No-Birth-Day” Party in a local mall, complete with cake, to highlight the need for spaying and neutering.

NAHEE is pleased to share its educational materials with other organizations. To order any of these items, write the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education, 67 Salem Rd., East Haddam, CT 06423-0362, or call (203) 434-8666.

The DEER kit promotes reading as well as animal protection to community children.

“Rags: A Lesson Parents Will Thank You For,” a lesson plan that shows children how to avoid being bitten by a dog. This kit is only $4 and is perfect as a gift to preschools, day-care centers, or as a community education course.

For an exceptional community project, order NAHEE’s “Playing TAG for Real” kit for $2. The TAG kit is designed to unite school children in a project to increase the number of pets licensed in their community. Why not involve a local civic club in the project as well?

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the cost of a phone call. You can get news about your organization the price of paper and postage.

The downside of publicity is that you can’t force the media to use your information, to run what you want, or even to get the story just right. So why take the risk? Because when it works, the results can be tremendous. If your organization has ever been the subject of a news story—good or bad—you probably already know about the power of the press. The trick is to make it work for you.

To do that you have to understand something about how the media work. Begin with the fact that the media operate within a basic contradiction. Print and broadcast media need stories to fill their space and air time. But they also have a limited amount of space and time to fill. Consequently, there will be times that they will be receptive to relatively unimportant stories, and other times that a truly important idea gets rejected.

That’s one reason to keep in mind that your goal in working with the media is to develop a long-term relationship. You want the media to get to know your organization, to understand what it does, to be receptive when you call, and to call you as a source for issues concerning animals.

The basis of the relationship is familiarity. And just as you want the press and the public to become familiar with you and your issues, you have to get to know the media. That means keeping a list of the media in your community and the people who you should contact for different kinds of stories. You can compile your list from the phone book. But to really become familiar with the media, you have to read the newspapers, watch TV, and listen to the radio. That may sound obvious, but it’s surprising how many people who work with the media, even public relations professionals, don’t do it.

The more you know about the media, the more opportunities you’ll find to tell your story. And there’s almost always something to tell: new hours, changes in policy, special events, pet care tips, stories about rescues or special animals, visiting experts or celebrities, educational programs—the possibilities are virtually endless.

You’ll generally contact the media by phone or with a press release. You don’t have to be a great writer to produce a release. Just be clear and concise, and include as much of the essential information as possible in the first paragraph or two. There is a format for a press release; the most important elements are that it should be typed and double-spaced and that the name and phone number of your organization’s contact person should be near the top.

Contacting the media is only part of your relationship with the press. You also have to be prepared for the times that they call you, even when you’d prefer they didn’t. If someone is developing a story, they will do it with or without your help. Participating in the process is the only chance you have to exert any control over the outcome.

Whenever you talk to the press, regardless of who initiates the contact, keep these points in mind:

Avoid “no comment.” When people hear that, they assume that the speaker is hiding something. If you really can’t comment for legal or ethical reasons, say so. If you simply don’t have information when the question is asked, tell the reporter when you might have something to say. If you can’t comment but someone else could, refer the reporter to that person. If you just don’t know the answer, say so. If possible, offer to find out and get back in touch with the information.

Never, never, never lie to the press. When the truth comes out, as it generally does, it will be very public and very messy. And you can be sure that you won’t have a second chance with that reporter. This includes embellishing a story to get the press interested, in hopes they won’t notice that it’s not quite what you promised. They will, and they won’t be happy. And they won’t quite trust you the next time.

The underlying concept is credibility. The press is concerned about their credibility with the public, and they value credibility in their sources. Without it, there is no relationship.

Talking to the media can be intimidating, but you can minimize the discomfort with a little preparation. Before you are interviewed, concentrate on the key points you wish to make and on how to make them concisely. The best way to avoid problems of misquotes and quotes being taken out of context is to say exactly what you want to say, and then stop. Saying too much just opens the door to confusion and misinterpretation.

There’s another way you can access the media, and that’s through the use of public service announcements (PSAs) on radio or television. They can be very effective, but if you have to produce the finished product yourself, it can get very expensive. Before you consider any kind of PSA, talk to the public service directors at the radio and television stations in your area. They can tell you what they might use in terms of length of message, type of message, and format. You may get lucky and find a public service director who has such an interest in your message that he or she will produce the spot for you. But at least you’ll get an idea of whether it’s worth the cost to you to produce and distribute a PSA.

Finally, accept the fact that working with the media can be very frustrating at times. Even when you have a great story and do everything right, it can be ignored or come out all wrong. Those may be the times that the temptation is the strongest to simply stop talking to the press. Don’t do it. In the long run, the momentary aggravations will be far outweighed by the benefits to your organization of an effective working relationship with the media.

Group Does Impressive Job of Spay/Neuter Outreach

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

wenty years ago, a group of seven volunteers at the Arlington Animal Welfare League in Virginia watched 53 “handsome and healthy” cats come into the shelter in just one Saturday afternoon. The cages were full. The carriers were full. Not one cat was adopted. The cats never had a chance. But these volunteers decided that day that somebody had to do something. So they did.

This was the beginning of SPAY, Incorporated (Society for the Prevention of Animal Young, P.O. Box 3240, Arlington, VA 22203). Now in its 21st year, this society has made a tremendous impact on pet overpopulation in its community and beyond. With no shelter, no clinic, and never more than a dozen volunteers, SPAY has garnered impressive results. Their outreach has extended from their home city of Arlington into all of Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and suburban Maryland.

Although SPAY’s founding members volunteered at a shelter, SPAY has never been affiliated with any shelter or humane society. They have done the work on their own. Eileen Galer, founder and president of the Los Angeles SPCA received great publicity for their cruelty tip line by holding a press conference.

The Los Angeles SPCA received great publicity for their cruelty tip line by holding a press conference.

Working with another community group brought publicity to the humane agency and the Girl Scouts.
of SPAY, has a very down-to-earth, independent attitude about getting their goals accomplished. "A lot of people forming similar groups call us for advice," she says, "and they think you’ve got to have contracts with the vets and you’ve got to get grants and municipal funds. That’s just nonsense. If you ask the vet to participate and he says ‘yes,’ that’s it. We don’t fool with grants—there are too many strings attached. We make our own money."

SPAY began with two participating veterinarians who agreed to spay and neuter pets for a low, fixed fee when they received a referral from SPAY. These fees, which have only increased once in their 21 years, begin at $30 to spay a cat and $35 to spay a small dog, including an overnight stay at the hospital. Fees to neuter males begin at $17.50 for cats and $25 for small dogs. Now SPAY has 12 participating veterinarians, and they arrange over 4,000 surgeries per year. Galer suggests that groups approach individual veterinarians rather than veterinary associations for participation.

To fund their efforts, SPAY began by holding yard sales and flea markets. For the last 12 years, they’ve had their own Thrift & Gift Shop in Arlington. The cozy little shop carries everything from toys and books to rare and valuable items. All merchandise is neatly labeled, displayed, and organized. Galer is proud of the shop and its success. "A lot of groups that try this just don’t know how to make money," she says. "Mostly, they don’t know how to price things to get the maximum amount." SPAY’s volunteers buy items from yard sales and flea markets and then resell them in their shop along with donated items. With the help of professional appraisers, they always price things right. "We bought an English biscuit jar at a yard sale for $2," Galer says, "and sold it for $200. You’ve got to know what you’ve got. And we make a point of letting people who donate items know what their things bring."

With just one paid advertisement in a local paper 20 years ago, SPAY has gone from handling 93 requests their first year to 4,233 in 1989. When asked how SPAY publicizes its service, Galer says, "Word of mouth.

SPAY began by calling people who ran pet give-away ads in the paper, and they continue this practice. In addition, they leave business cards in pet shops and the local shelters. Whatever the means, the message gets out and the phone keeps ringing. The only paid member of SPAY is the person who answers the phone, and she currently takes up to 600 calls per month. When a caller requests help in finding a low-cost surgery, SPAY refers him or her to the closest participating veterinarian. A certificate for the surgery is mailed to the caller, who then makes the appointment directly with the vet. SPAY handles none of the money, as the veterinarian receives payment when the animal is picked up after the surgery. (Shots or other required care is additional.)

If the veterinarian can’t collect the fee, he knows that SPAY will cover it. “We’re professional,” Galer says. “They never have any problems with us, and that keeps them satisfied with the arrangement.”

Last year, SPAY provided $3,921 in assistance to those who couldn’t afford to pay. Galer says they will cover the cost “because the pets deserve it, and if we don’t do it, no one will.” The proof of SPAY’s effectiveness lies in the statistics: Before they began in 1969, they have arranged for the sterilization of over 59,000 animals. Their veterinarians report that about 50 percent of the referred pets are pregnant. One veterinarian’s experience is particularly enlightening: from 188 cats he aborted 899 kittens and from 32 dogs he took 242 puppies. And the Arlington shelter has seen a dramatic reduction in the numbers of pets euthanized since SPAY began in 1969. During that year, the shelter euthanized 5,475 dogs and 1,718 cats. In 1989, the shelter euthanized 930 dogs and 445 cats. Other local shelters report similar reductions, all during a span of time in which the human population in the area has grown tremendously. Of course, the shelters themselves have provided low-cost spay/neuter as well. But SPAY Incorporated reaches segments of the community that the shelters don’t. As Galer says, SPAY has “accomplished wonders.”

Getting the Neighborhood Involved in Spay/Neuter

I t’s hard enough working for an animal shelter and having to see so many unwanted animals euthanized because there aren’t enough homes for them. But when you see the animal control truck on your own street picking up stray and unaltered animals, it becomes almost too much. Phyllis Stein, founder and past president of the Chesapeake Humane Society (P.O. Box 15061, Chesapeake, VA 23323), had this experience. But rather than giving up, she decided to pull the neighborhood together and do something about the problem. “If I don’t do it, who will?” she reasoned. “I can’t even change this little neighborhood, what can I do?” I was very gratified with the results.” She composed a letter, which she distributed to each household in her neighborhood, asking people to join her in a community garage and bake sale to raise money for the spaying and neutering of unaltered pets in the neighborhood. Stein explains that “the letter worked out well. People who were not necessarily animal lovers donated things for the sale. It was a nice one-day thing—quite easy—and the money lasted for over a year. Now all the animals in the neighborhood are altered, and I haven’t seen the animal control truck since.” The event raised almost $300, and the money helped alter six neighborhood pets. Stein explains that right after her letter went out, several neighbors took the initiative to alter their pets using their own money. The money raised at the sale went to help those who could not afford the surgeries on their own.

“This is a very subtle way to educate,” Stein notes. “People came up and just visited. No one was offended or had anything bad to say about it. It was all upbeat.”

Person-to-person Outreach: Treat ‘Em Like a Dog

By Robin Weirach, HSUS Program Director, Great Lakes Regional Office

It’s frustrating for us to realize that we don’t really mean it. We’re just angry and frustrated with people for doing cruel or ignorant things. People in the animal protection movement have a strong desire to make people more compassionate. But we can’t cram compassion down the throat of mankind, nor can we humiliate people into being kinder. We must learn how to get through to humans in much the same way we would train a dog.

When you want to teach a dog to stop ripping up the carpet in your home, your gut reaction is to drag the dog over to the hole and point at it, yell at the dog, and force it to understand your
The sad fact is that no matter how bad your day may be, if you treat people poorly, you are hurting the animals by deteriorating the credibility of the organization you work for. If the public does not believe that your organization is truly humane and caring about animals and humans, there is a strong chance that public support and cooperation will be difficult to muster. The cooperation of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and even judges will be affected by the treatment they and the general public receive from your organization.

You may be saying to yourself, “I am polite; I don’t yell or swear or hang up on people. Isn’t that enough?” Rudeness can be severe and brash, or it can be as simple as giving someone the impression that you are insincere or uncaring. When people call your office and you have to refer them to another organization, they should not get the feeling that you are simply getting them out of your hair, but that you want to help them with their problem. By saying something as simple as “Please call us back if that agency can’t help you,” you have quickly shown that you are sincere. If you say, “We don’t handle that. Call so and so,” and then quickly hang up, you may leave an already frustrated person even more so.

When a fellow brings in his unalterable male dog because the dog won’t stay home, you might be tempted to say, “You realize that your dog will have to be put to sleep if you surrender it.” Instead, by saying something like, “I may be able to help you keep your dog from roaming; could I offer you some suggestions?” you may help the man keep his pet rather than surrender it.

Sure, some animals are surrendered simply for the convenience of the owners—they can’t be bothered with the beast. Nevertheless, they did choose to bring it to a shelter rather than dropping it off or simply ignoring its suffering. If you do not seize the opportunity to state your case politely, right then and there, you will never have the chance again. No one wants to listen to a bitter speech, but a person may listen to you if you show respect. If you tell the person off, you have lowered yourself, and you have failed in your mission to educate and prevent future ignorance.

Animal protection workers desperately need people to listen to their messages: “Get your cat spayed!” “Don’t let your dog run loose!” etc., etc. The best way to get people to listen is to speak respectfully. What we must never forget is that politeness and tact can also be spelled professionalism.

If we treat humans with the same understanding and patience that we lovingly give dogs and cats, we may go a lot farther in encouraging compassionate and responsible behavior.

A friendly smile can go a long way toward getting your animal protection message across.
The “Care-A-Van” is an innovative way to get humane messages out into the community.

“And we’re seeing where the needs are for the public. It’s been so good to get out into the community and listen to people for a change. We couldn’t have reached as many of these people before because they would never come out to the office. Now we can go to them.”

**Upcoming ACA Sessions**

The Animal Control Academy (ACA) is in full swing with seven of the fifteen session being held this year, including its meeting at the Los Angeles SPCA (5026 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045, (323) 732-0058). The money for the van was provided through a grant from the Edith Goode Foundation. The $10,000 grant paid for the trailer, its customization, and the equipment and materials to stock it. The Care-A-Van’s success may lead to grants being awarded for similar projects at other humane agencies, so the activities and uses of the van are being carefully documented.

In fact, everything about the Care-A-Van has been done with thoughtful planning and preparation. The volunteers staffing the van are well prepared. “Before we put it on the road,” Richard-son explains, “we had training classes for the volunteers. We wanted everyone to be familiar with the trailer equipment and our own materials. We all wanted to be saying the same things when people asked us questions.”

So far, reaction to the van has been positive. “People are seeing us and remembering that we’ve been by before,” Richardson says. The best thing about the Care-A-Van has been its ability to foster learning and awareness for the public and the SPCA staff. “The people who come to the van are learning how animal control works, how the shelter works, and what the laws are,” Richard-son notes.

**Shelters Participate in Earth Day**

On April 22, citizens and organizations around the world will celebrate Earth Day 1990, the 20th anniversary of Earth Day. It’s a special day of activities designed to show each of us how we can change our lifestyles and help stop the earth’s environmental destruction from deforestation, species extinction, ozone depletion, and other growing concerns.

The HSUS, with the slogan “Animals ... It’s Their World, Too,” will have a booth at the major festivities in Washington, DC, where it will distribute posters, literature, and other materials to help raise public awareness of the relationship between the environmental threats to our planet and the protection of animals with whom we share the earth. Several HSUS regional offices plan to participate in local activities that day and we encourage local humane organizations to get involved as well.

Recently, The HSUS mailed to humane societies and animal control departments a citizens’ guide entitled “101 Ways To Help Heal The Earth.” Produced for Earth Day by the HSUS and the Greenhouse Crisis Foundation, this informative guide offers tips on ways to conserve soil, water, light, power, and other resources. Write The HSUS for a copy if your shelter did not receive one. Copies cost $3.50 each.

Agencies that want more information about regional and local Earth Day activities should contact Earth Day 1990, Box AA, Stanford, CA 94309; (415) 321-1990.

**“Tip Line” Increases Cruelty Reports**

How do you encourage members of the public to report cases of animal cruelty or neglect? According to the Investigation/Rescue Department of the Los Angeles SPCA (5026 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016), the answer is logical: you tell them it’s a crime and make it easy for them.

That reasoning prompted the SPCA last August 30 to develop an animal abuse “tip line.” The toll-free number—(800) 540-SPCA—enables those who see animals being mistreated or in need of emergency care to dial from any of the Los Angeles vicinity’s six area codes and reach the investigation department directly.

“We realized that for every cruelty call we got, there were probably several cases that we never heard of,” said Sgt. Cory Whetstone, field supervisor for the division. By publicizing one, toll-free number as a “tip line,” they felt they could overcome some of the apathy, ignorance, and “I don’t want to get involved” attitudes that witnesses of animal mistreatment often feel.

Through January 1990, over 1,100 calls had been received on the line, 230 of which were reports of actual cruelty or neglect. When combined with the 750 reports taken over the SPCA’s original number, the total represented a 21 percent increase in the number of abuse or neglect calls since the tip line was established.

The SPCA attracted media attention to the tip line via a press conference at which they received a mayoral proclamation honoring their investigations and emergency rescue services, and unveiled new uniforms, badges, and vehicle equipment. They used that forum to announce the new number, which was soon reported and published by media all over the area.

Media coverage since then has centered around certain “human interest” tip line cases. To further promote the tip line and the illegality of animal cruelty, the SPCA recently prepared posters and radio and TV PSAs that feature the slogan: “Animal Cruelty—It’s A Crime.”

The department’s six humane investigators answer the tip line 13 hours a day; they may refer non-cruelty or non-rescue calls to other agencies. An answering machine greets callers after-hours, and emergencies are referred to the SPCA’s shelter dispatcher. In the future, the SPCA hopes to man the phones 24 hours a day and have 24-hour response for all cases.

For now, though, the investigators are kept busy enough, although they’re not complaining. As Whetstone says, “It’s hard for me to imagine now that we ever existed without the tip line.”

LA SPCA Humane Investigator Barbara Dellamarie checks over an emaciated dog discovered through the tip line.
Film Promotes Respect for Life

An outstanding new children's film by Erik Friedl, producer of Friend for Life and Kiss the Animals Goodbye, promotes respect and understanding for all living creatures.

Using the metaphor of a spider's web, Protecting the Web helps students understand that all living things are part of the earth's ecosystem and that choices they make in everyday life can help or hurt other living creatures. It encourages them to become more aware of the animals in their own lives, to appreciate wildlife (including insects and other animals we sometimes consider pests), and to be responsible pet owners.

Produced for Chicago's Anti-Cruelty Society specifically for students in upper elementary and middle schools, Protecting the Web is an excellent 15-minute educational resource for humane organizations. It touches on many of the issues that humane groups must deal with: habitat destruction, respect for life, pet overpopulation, responsible pet ownership, and euthanasia.

Touchingly written and narrated, this film and its beautiful photography will stimulate children to think about and discuss these important issues.

A teacher's guide accompanies the film to suggest activities and questions for further learning.

The film is available for purchase from Pyramid Film & Video in 16mm format ($350) or on VHS Beta II videocassette ($300). Three-day rental is $55. For more information on Protecting the Web, Kiss the Animals Goodbye, or Friend for Life, call Pyramid Film & Video toll-free at 1 (800) 421-2304.

MSPCA Overpopulation Ads Available

A professional advertising agency commissioned by the Massachusetts SPCA (MSPCA) has created some outstanding materials that can be used for pet overpopulation awareness campaigns across the country.

Designed on a pro bono basis by Creative Director Stavros Cosmopulos and his staff at the Boston ad agency Cosmopulos, Crowley & Daly, the public service advertisements were produced for a recent MSPCA campaign. The effective ads contributed to a 39 percent increase in the number of spays and neuters done through the MSPCA's programs. Because of that success, the MSPCA is now encouraging others to utilize these materials in their communities.

Included are four powerful print ads, one of which is featured as this month's Reproducible (see opposite page). Humane agencies and animal control departments can order the complete set of four camera-ready ads—which are printed in various sizes on six glossy sheets—for just $2 per set.

Also available are two, 30-second television PSAs, one featuring a dog and the other a cat. Both PSAs take a unique but effective approach in persuading viewers to spay and neuter their pets. Both spots are available on one tape, which costs $20 (1" tape), $15 (1/4"), or $7 (1/2" for VHS).

Artwork from the MSPCA for billboards and mass-transit ads is available as well. The print materials are "generic" and include blank space to allow humane groups and animal control agencies to include their name and logo on them. The tapes allow organizations to include their own tag line at the end of them.

For more information, contact Elaine Birkholtz, MSPCA, 350 South Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02130; (617) 541-5008.

If animals were responsible for their own birth control, there might not be a need to kill millions of unwanted dogs and cats each year. That's the cost of not having your pet spayed or neutered. Fixed.

Even bringing a litter of puppies or kittens to an animal shelter is no guarantee they'll find a home before room has to be made for more. Having your pet spayed or neutered is the only way to reduce the sad number of ownerless dogs and cats destroyed this year. And it will also increase your pet's chances of living a longer and healthier life. That responsibility is yours alone.

You'll never stop your pets from acting naturally. But if you love them, you'll have them fixed.

Talk to your veterinarian. Or contact us for a free information packet on birth control for your pet.

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This ad provided by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Some tricks they’ll never learn.
**Congress Responds to Your Requests**

By Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals

Thanks to all of you and your members who contacted your senators and representatives, the United States’ Congress has proclaimed April 1990 as National “Prevent A Litter” Month.

Of all the community animal issues you face daily, none have more far-reaching implications than pet overpopulation.

I urge you to use this declaration and the support of Congress as ammunition in your efforts to educate your community about the consequences of this national tragedy.

Whether or not you participate in our “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter” Campaign, the only way to address this problem is through an active community outreach program. You must take your message about pet overpopulation—and all the other animal issues—to the community repeatedly. Use whatever means you can to ensure that people learn not only the importance of spaying and neutering their pets, but also what your organization does and what it stands for.

Sure, an effective outreach program requires manpower and funds, two resources we all know are hard to come by. But you must consider the long-term benefits to your agency and the animals in your care. Treating the root causes of community animal problems through outreach and education now will save you from treating their symptoms later.

And don’t forget that *Shelter Sense* can help. Most of the information we include inside these pages is meant to help you, the humane professional, perform your job better. But much of it is also fully intended for you to pass on to your community.

Of course, we always urge you to use the Reproducible to educate people through your newsletter or other local publications. But also feel free to pass along any other information you find in *Shelter Sense*. You never need special permission to reproduce it; simply give credit to “*Shelter Sense*/HSUS” where any reprint appears.

I realize that maintaining an active presence in your community can be an expensive and time-consuming task. But it’s a task you can’t afford not to do. You must be an active voice for animals in your community.

And because of the pressure you exerted on the U.S. Congress, that voice can now be even stronger.