THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

THE HSUS SHELTER ADVOCATE TOOLKIT

The Importance of Positive, Productive Collaboration

So you've researched the best practices guidelines for shelters and have ensured that your community has all necessary support programs in place, and you are still are concerned about a practice or program (or lack of a core program) at your local shelter – now what? Talk with them about it! You may find that the shelter management isn't opposed to the policy change, or would be happy to implement the program if they had the resources and assistance to do it. The old adage "you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar" holds true, you are more likely to get a positive result if you approach them in a positive manner than if you assume that they don't care or that they are opposed to your idea. There are sadly far too many stories where opportunities for lasting, positive change are missed because a passionate advocate skipped the critical step of reaching out to the shelter and trying to partner together to make change happen. Your best chance for success is to try and work with your local shelter rather than against it. Remember, don't be discouraged if the change you want doesn't happen overnight – even slight forward progress can be positive, particularly if you are dealing with a government entity or an established institution that moves slowly. Be patient, and don't undermine the good forward strides you are making by expecting too much too soon – as in animal training, success lies in picking your battles, making the change as easy to achieve as possible, and rewarding any and all positive progress!

- o Pledge Regarding Humane Discourse: Positive change for animals can't happen if people feel threatened and unsafe; pledge to keep your community humane for both animals and the people who care about them.
    - ▪ http://www.humanesociety.org/news/news/2010/12/pledge_for_peace.html
    - ▪ www.animalsheltering.org/pledge
- o Coalition Building for Animal Care Organizations: Creating a humane community is too big a job for one person or group to tackle alone, effective collaboration is the easiest and most effective road to success.
    - • http://marketplace.animalsheltering.org/product/coalition_building_for_animal_care_organizations
- o Bridging the Communication Gap: The first step in working together effectively is learning to hear each other.
    - • http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/shelter-advocate-toolkit/bridging_the_communication.pdf
- o Use your political savvy: Your local politicians need to know how important a humane community is to you. By arming yourself with facts about your shelter's budget, costs for animal care, staffing considerations, and other factors you can help ensure that your municipal animal care organization gets the share of taxpayer dollars it needs to operate humanely and effectively.
    - ▪ http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/shelter-advocate-toolkit/saccountybosltr-nov2010.pdf

© 2012 The Humane Society of the United States.

- Start a "friends of" group: For municipal shelters that are not allowed to fundraise, starting a 501(c)(3) "friends of the shelter group" can be a lifesaver.
    - http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/magazine/may-jun-2012/friends-with-benefits.pdf
- Get creative about securing funding, etc.: In tough economic times, your shelter needs your help to acquire the supplies it needs to keep its animals happy and healthy.
    - http://www.animalsheltering.org/resources/policies_guidelines/tips_for_animal_care_organizations_economic_hardship.html