



## Best Friends Animal Society's No More Homeless Pets National Conference

### Connie's Weekly Newsletter

Last week I attended the Best Friends Animal Society's *No More Homeless Pets National Conference* in Jacksonville, Florida. With over 1,500 in attendance, the conference was the largest Best Friends has had to date, with almost half of those attending for the first time. Best Friends first introduced the *No More Homeless Pets Conference* back in 2001. That first year according to conference leaders, seventy-five people attended. Representatives from smaller animal welfare organizations including rescue groups made up the bulk of the attendees.

The focus of this year's conference was on community collaboration and the benefits of working with multiple agencies/organizations. Best practices were identified during the conference, with multiple sessions dedicated to each. Three areas that stood out to me were:

- Data collection and measurement;
- The relevance of shelter medicine, and;
- New innovative ways to help save animals, especially those most at risk including Pit Bulls and cats.

Given the average size of groups in attendance, it is no surprise that a study of animal management software conducted by Best Friends found that of the 196 network partner groups who responded, 40% admitted to using a spreadsheet(s) to measure their work and 20% reported not using any software at all. Of those that reported using software, PetPoint ranked first at 24%.

For the large number of rescues not using any type of management software within their organization creative solutions do exist. Animal welfare organizations using PetPoint might want to consider the following:

- Mentoring them through the process of signing up and using PetPoint while earning free chips for your group. We continue to offer our PURR Referral program which enables current PetPoint users the ability to receive donations of 24PetWatch microchips for referring other animal welfare organizations to PetPoint.
- Create a site in your database for the rescue groups you work with to access and enter their data. The security settings in PetPoint will allow you to restrict their access to just that site.

Another idea to help rescue groups build sustainable programs and have access to a powerful database platform like PetPoint came to me when speaking to a cat rescue operation based out of Toronto, Canada. They expressed interest in using PetPoint but have been challenged by the over 500 cats living in foster homes across the province of Ontario that are in need of microchipping. The unique, collaborative solution we are working on will allow them to contact the many PetPoint organizations spread throughout the province and ask them each to provide microchipping in-house. The rescue will thus purchase the chips but will ask the shelter to implant them. This will allow rescue groups to start PetPoint and get their cats chipped at the same time.

Shelter medicine was another key topic of discussion during the conference and considerable insight into one of the 'hottest' disciplines of veterinary medicine was offered. Dr. Julie Levy, Director of Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and her team combined of students and doctors were responsible for more than ten workshops given at the conference, as well as an exhibit hall of scientific studies organized by the school, and which focused on a variety of shelter topics.

Additionally, I was excited to learn about the success animal welfare organizations are having with implementing kitten nursery programs, including kittens under 2 pounds. Shelters report setting up separate areas with designated round-the-clock caregivers (with volunteers providing the bulk of the hours). These new programs are saving hundreds of lives. Denise Deisler and her team at Jacksonville Humane Society is just one group that has implemented such a program.

Reducing length of stay ('LoS') for the general shelter population was discussed as being integral to keeping the animals in shelters healthy and increasing their live release rate. A best practice example was provided by the Charleston Animal Society in Charleston, South Carolina. Joe Elmore and his team of four veterinarians (one of whom also has her PhD) met with us to help further design and develop the processes used to help create the

efficiencies necessary in allowing for paperless daily operations. In Joe's words, "we will not experience another summer like last year and we know that PetPoint has the tools to help us make it happen."

Public-facing veterinary clinics with spay/neuter programs are becoming an integral part of the tactical solution for saving more animal lives. Groups like the Humane Society of Tampa Bay are part of a growing group of shelters running very successful full-service veterinary clinics, and were represented at this year's conference. HSTB run by Sherry Silk, has experienced financial success from its new state of the art veterinary hospital which opened to the public in August 2012. With over \$700,000 in operating income generated during its first 12 months of operations, Sherry is using those funds to help offset the operating deficit in her shelter. See our special President's Message from last week's Post for more information.

We will be partnering with the Humane Society of Tampa Bay to build our first lifetime of health partnership program. The vision of this new partnership will be to use the power of pet insurance to drive pet owners to shelter operated veterinary clinics, who will then enjoy the savings of this PPO type program, and allow for participating shelters to build a long lasting client base.

This year's Best Friends Animal Society's *No More Homeless Pets National Conference* was an unforgettable weekend, and I am not just talking about the warm weather! I made some great new friends and learnt about new programs that I plan to pass on to other groups. If you have any questions or just would like to comment, please feel free to contact me directly.

#### Did you know?

Did you know you can get your dog's DNA test results delivered to you in as little as 4 business days? If not completely satisfied we will give you 25 standard microchips FREE of charge. [Click here](#) for more details and to place your order today.

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